



Sustainable Fashion

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

Author: Rachel Arthur

Technical supervision, editing and support was provided by Catherine Beltrandi (UNEP), Atif Ikram Butt (UNEP), Garrette Clark (UNEP), Marie Daher-Corthay (UNEP), Alexandra Hanyue von Minden (UNEP), Bettina Heller (UNEP), Boris Le Montagner (UNEP), Maelys Nizan (UNEP), Elisa Tonda (UNEP).

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1

FASHION: THE CASE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

1.1 Introduction

The fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to the climate and ecological crisis. It is nature intensive, reliant on fossil fuels, polluting throughout its value chain and wasteful to the extreme. It is also predicated on a culture of overproduction and consumption, and facilitated by an underpaid workforce facing discrimination, unsafe working conditions and harassment.¹ Reported figures show the industry is responsible for between 2-8% of global carbon emissions, with a recent authoritative report placing it at 4%.²

Fashion is already exceeding numerous planetary boundaries and contributing significantly towards biodiversity loss through the pressure it puts on fragile ecosystems. It plays a part in more than 150 million trees getting logged each year³, and 93 billion cubic meters of water (m³) being used; the equivalent of roughly 4% of the annual global use of freshwater.⁴ The dyeing and treatment of clothes leads to water pollution affecting the primary waterways for populations in countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, China, Cambodia and beyond (see Annex 1). Meanwhile 35% of the world's ocean microplastics comes from the laundering of synthetic fibres.⁵

Much of this is the result of consumption, which has more than doubled in the past 15 years.⁶ The result of so much more product however, is also more waste – the equivalent of a garbage truck full of clothes is thrown away or incinerated around the world every second.⁷ In short, it is lucrative to produce disposable fashion, and increasingly encouraged by an industry growing at circa 5% per year.⁸

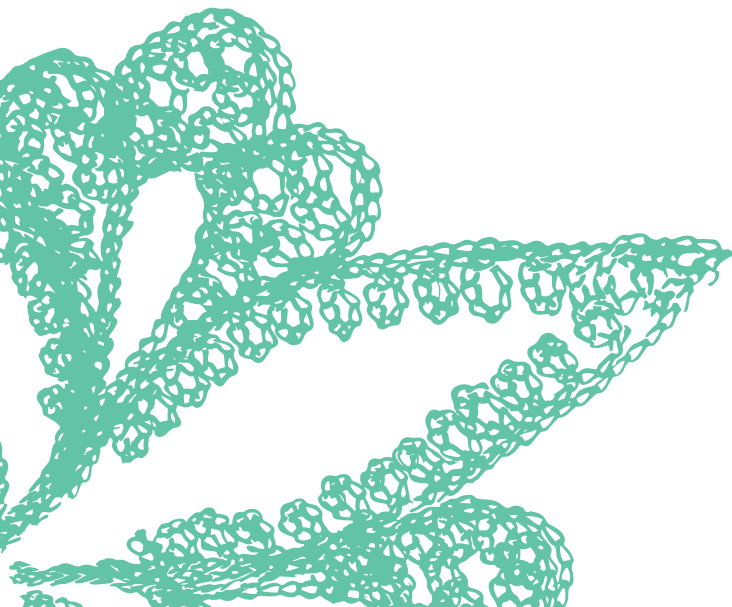
This industry structure also entails significant social impact. Garment workers frequently operate in unsafe conditions and are subject to exploitation, systematic underpayment, forced labour, severe health risks, and verbal and physical abuse.⁹ The fact that women make up the majority of the textile workforce means they are disproportionately affected by these issues.¹⁰ The industry is motivated to source from the cheapest countries and from those with the least protections in place in order to keep its margins down and volumes high. This, in turn, further heightens the environmental impact of the sector – the cheaper products are, the more is demanded, the more natural resource use required. There is a gap of two to five times between industry-standard wages and living wage benchmarks in the fashion sector worldwide, reports Labour Behind the Label, leading to many garment workers being unable to sustain their most basic needs.¹¹



- 1 Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution
- 2 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate
- 3 Canopy (2020) CanopyStyle, Canopyplanet.org
- 4 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future
- 5 Julian Boucher and Damien Priot, Primary microplastics in the oceans, International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2017, iucn.org.
- 6 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future
- 7 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future
- 8 Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry
- 9 Fashion Revolution (2020) Fashion's Future: The Sustainable Development Goals, Future Learn. Accessed September 2020
- 10 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking, Nairobi, Kenya
- 11 Labour Behind the Label (2019) Tailored Wages 2019: The state of pay in the global garment industry

Furthermore, fashion relies on a marginalised workforce, who in turn will be those most affected by climate change in the nations they reside, highlighting how the current structure of the fashion industry perpetuates climate injustice.

According to the Global Slavery Index, fashion is one of the biggest contributors to modern slavery, with the most at-risk countries for garment making including China, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Brazil and Argentina.¹² It is because of this, the term “Intersectional Environmentalism” entered the fashion dialogue in 2020 – connecting Black Lives Matter with the climate crisis and urging the sector to recognise the ways in which injustices happening to marginalised communities and the earth are interconnected.¹³



Accordingly, the fashion sector touches numerous Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - see Figure 1.1. For the sake of this strategy, this specifically includes SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), as well as SDGs 1, 5 and 8 (Poverty Alleviation, Gender Equality and Jobs). It is thus seen as crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The industry has taken note. The importance of addressing the crisis has been accepted.¹⁴ New sustainability agendas are announced on a frequent basis from players across the industry, while major coalitions have been established in order to drive the change required (see section 2). New materials are being considered, transparency is increasing, circular business models are on the rise. Inroads are being made. Similarly, consumer awareness of sustainable fashion is also gathering pace. Two thirds of respondents in a global survey are supportive of it¹⁵, with rising demands for the sector to minimise environmental impacts and protect human rights. This is particularly the case with younger and wealthier audiences.¹⁶

But it is not yet proving to be enough. On its existing trajectory (see section 1.3), fashion will not successfully contribute to the intention of the SDGs or the Paris Agreement Goals.¹⁷ ¹⁸ Despite the sector increasingly adopting sustainability as a core priority, solutions are not being implemented fast enough to counterbalance the negative environmental and social impacts of the growth it is otherwise seeing.¹⁹ If the industry doesn't change course, it will accordingly double the maximum required emissions to stay on the 1.5-degree pathway outlined by the Paris Agreement by 2030.²⁰

A more systemic approach is required to transform the way textiles are designed, produced, consumed, and disposed of, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report, Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain.²¹ Thus, fashion, which encompasses apparel and footwear, makes up a large part of the broader textile value chain, and thus will require coordinated actions by all stakeholders and across regions. “If the sector is serious about climate change, biodiversity loss and the interplaying social and economic injustice – like many who work within it claim – then systemic work is essential,” explain Dr Kate Fletcher and Dr Mathilda Tham.²²



¹² Walk Free Foundation (2018) Global Slavery Index 2018
¹³ Thomas, L (2020) Why Every Environmentalist Should Be Anti-Racist, Vogue.com, June 8, 2020
¹⁴ Fletcher, K. and Tham, M. (2019). Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan. The J J Charitable Trust
¹⁵ Fashion Summit & KPMG (2019) Sustainable Fashion A Survey on Global Perspectives
¹⁶ Fashion Summit & KPMG (2019) Sustainable Fashion A Survey on Global Perspectives
¹⁷ Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry
¹⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) Special report: Global warming of 1.5 °C, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
¹⁹ Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry
²⁰ McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate
²¹ UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya
²² Fletcher, K. and Tham, M. (2019). Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan. The J J Charitable Trust

COVID-19 has only exacerbated the situation – impressing the need for change and demonstrating further the damage the industry causes to both people and planet. Taking action on climate change is thus seen as a crucial element of the COVID-19 recovery strategy²³, making today an opportunity to accelerate the change towards more responsible consumption and production in fashion.²⁴

Fashion is well placed to lead this charge. As an industry, it is built on creativity with the potential to bring sustainability to life in ways that haven't yet been seen. "[Fashion] could provide a powerful opportunity for sustainable development if it were just engineered to empower and innovate, rather than exploit," Simone Cipriani, Chair of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, told Eco-Age.²⁵ There is accordingly a huge opportunity and responsibility for fashion to become both a cheerleader²⁶ and a driver for positive change. "There is space for a reframing to happen. We don't want to see the end of fashion, but of the system of destruction and patterns of behaviour that we're in. That then frees us up to talk about local production, about identity, and back to notions of culture and belonging. We can have a safer operating space that's still about creativity," said a participant in UNEP's consultation on sustainable fashion communication.²⁷

***Per Quantis' Measuring Fashion report: "As we face urgent environmental and social challenges caused by climate change and resource depletion, the efficacy of solutions will depend on the creativity, innovation and boldness so characteristic of the fashion industry."*²⁸**

This introduction sets the context for the issues the industry is facing as well as the landscape in which it finds itself both from a consumer insights (1.5) and policy perspective (1.6). It feeds into the campaign analysis of section 2, which in turn forms the basis of the strategy's communication needs and challenges of section 3 and the communication goal and objectives of section 4. It has been developed based on an extensive literature review, as well as a consultation period involving upward of 40 experts from across the global industry. It has also been informed by a series of workshops run by UNEP's Sustainable and Circular Textile Value Chain workstream.

Figure 1.1 Fashion and the Sustainable Development Goals

An illustration of the key SDGs related to the fashion sector, as considered for this strategy.



"[Fashion] could provide a powerful opportunity for sustainable development if it were just engineered to empower and innovate, rather than exploit,"

Simone Cipriani, Chair of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion



²³ Cook, G and Rommwart, M (2020) Fashion Forward: A Roadmap to Fossil Free Fashion, Stand.Earth

²⁴ L. Elle (2020) Inside the UN Environment Programme's New Report: Elisa Tonda Talks 'Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain', EcoAge, October 1, 2020

²⁵ Murray-Nag, B (2020) GCFA, Italia 2020: How North Star Award Winners The UN Are Driving Sustainability in the Fashion Industry, EcoAge October 14, 2020

²⁶ Cernansky, R (2020) The UN set 17 sustainability goals. It needs fashion's help meeting them. Vogue Business, February 20, 2020

²⁷ Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)

²⁸ Quantis (2018) Measuring Fashion: Insights from the Environmental Impact of the Global Apparel and Footwear Industries

1.2 Fashion and consumption

As outlined in Figure 1.1, the fashion sector touches multiple SDGs (see Annex 1 for a full analysis of fashion's impact on key SDGs). Central to all of them is SDG12 - Responsible Consumption and Production. Over the past 15 years, fashion consumption has more than doubled, while the number of times a garment is worn before being discarded has decreased 36%.²⁹ This has been fed by a growing global middle class, the rise of fast fashion and decreasing prices. In the early 1990s, Americans bought 40 garments per person each year. By the mid-2000s this had increased to 70 garments per person per year.³⁰

Concern now is focused on emerging markets where economic acceleration is currently ten times faster than that seen during the Industrial Revolution.³¹ This is coupled with the fact an estimated 2-3 billion additional middle-class consumers are expected by 2050.³² China is often talked about as the key emerging consumption market due to volume size, but other territories such as the Gulf are important to recognise also for the shopping behaviour seen. The average consumer in the UAE and Saudi Arabia respectively spends over six times and two times as much on fashion as those in China.³³

Beyond resource use, the additional challenge with increased fashion consumption is just how much is wasted every year; discarded into landfill or incineration. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, consumers throw away the equivalent of a garbage truck full of clothes around the world every second.³⁴ Globally, more than half of all fast fashion is disposed of within the same year³⁵, amounting to an estimated \$460 billion in total value.³⁶ On the production side, 25% of textiles

are wasted throughout the manufacturing process – this includes yarn, unfinished fabrics, defective pieces and overproduced or rejected garments.³⁷ Average overproduction is estimated around 20%³⁸, with brands well known for disposing of defective or unsold stock (deadstock), so as to protect intellectual property.³⁹

The concept of circularity is often touted as an answer to the overproduction and consumption challenge. This starts with upstream decisions at the design stage, all the way through to end of life. Currently less than 1% of textiles and clothes are recycled into new garments.⁴⁰ While 20% of disused textiles are estimated to be collected worldwide (though this vastly differs country to country – for instance 11% in Italy versus 70% in Germany⁴¹), most of this is downcycled for lower-value purposes such as insulation and furniture stuffing.⁴² The rest is exported to developing markets where it both damages local textiles businesses and causes more issues for the receiving countries trying to deal with it.⁴³

Countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are banning second hand clothing imported from the US and UK in order to bolster their own local manufacturing as a result. The same discussions are underway in the Philippines, Ghana and Kenya.⁴⁴



29 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future

30 Bain M (2018) Americans have stopped trying to stuff more clothes into their closets. Quartz, February 26, 2018

31 Y. Atsmon, P. Child, R. Dobbs, and L. Narasimhan (2012) Winning the \$30 trillion decathlon: Going for gold in emerging markets. McKinsey Q., no. 4, pp. 20–35

32 D. Wilson and R. Dragusanu (2008) Global economics paper No: 170. The expanding middle: The exploding world middle class and falling global inequality. Goldman Sachs Glob. Econ. Pap., vol. 1–21, no. 170

33 Business of Fashion and McKinsey&Co (2019) State of Fashion 2020

34 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future

35 McKinsey & Company (2016) Style that's sustainable: A new fast-fashion formula

36 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya

37 Global Fashion Agenda & Boston Consulting Group (2018) Pulse of the Fashion Industry

38 McKinsey&Co (2020) Biodiversity: The next frontier in sustainable fashion

39 Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

40 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future

41 European Clothing Action Plan (2018) Used Textile Collection in European Cities

42 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future

43 Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

44 Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution





For the fashion sector to hit the Paris Agreement Goals, it is said one out of five garments will need to be traded through alternative consumption models by 2030

There is however a signal of hope within the secondary market more broadly – with 'pre-loved' apparel sales expected to double by 2023, to reach \$51bn in value⁴⁵, and be twice the size of fast fashion by 2029.⁴⁶ The rental market is also expected to grow by 10% by 2023 to \$1.9bn.⁴⁷ Interest in this expands beyond developed markets with 90% of citizens in India for instance, interested in trying at least one new business model.⁴⁸ This growth is key – for the fashion sector to hit the Paris Agreement Goals, it is said one out of five garments will need to be traded through alternative consumption models by 2030.⁴⁹

Recognising the role of overconsumption and overproduction in the context of SDG12 is crucial for the way in which it then impacts across a multitude of the other relevant SDGs. Higher volumes inevitably mean higher impacts when it comes to climate, as well as across water, land and social issues. Proving the need for this strategy from UNEP, McKinsey & Co and the Global Fashion Agenda highlight that in order to stay on the 1.5-degree pathway of the Paris Agreement, the industry will need to redefine the current imperative of economic growth and rising consumerism.⁵⁰



45 ThredUp and Global Data (2019) 2019 Resale Report
46 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2020) 10 circular investment opportunities to build back better
47 ThredUp and Global Data (2019) 2019 Resale Report
48 WRAP (2020) Changing our clothes: Why the clothing sector should adopt new business models
49 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate
50 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

1.3 The industry's trajectory

According to UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2019, to stay on the 1.5-degree pathway outlined by the Paris Agreement, emissions need to fall by 50% by 2030 or 7.6% every year from 2020. To do so, countries need to collectively increase their commitments more than fivefold.⁵¹ Fashion by comparison, a sector with emissions equivalent to that of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom combined (if taking the 4% figure – see section 1 – into account), is currently on target to increase emissions by 2.7% every year.⁵²

The fashion industry has grown at an annual rate of 5.5% over the past decade⁵³, and is projected to continue at 5% annually through 2023, largely due to increased demand in Asia-Pacific and other developing markets.⁵⁴

The impact of COVID-19 aside, by 2030, the global apparel and footwear industry is therefore expected to grow 81% to 102 million tonnes in volume and \$3.3 trillion in value.⁵⁵ By 2050, total sales are expected to hit 160 million tonnes – more than three times that of today.⁵⁶



51 UNEP (2019) Emissions Gap Report 2019. Nairobi, Kenya

52 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

53 Business of Fashion and McKinsey&Co (2016) State of Fashion 2017

54 Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry

55 Global Fashion Agenda and Boston Consulting Group (2017) Pulse of the Fashion Industry

56 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future



Solutions are not being implemented fast enough to counterbalance the negative environmental and social impacts of the growth it is otherwise seeing.

If the industry doesn't change course, at current pace (assuming economic rebound post COVID-19 and continued growth as estimated), it will therefore double the maximum required emissions for 1.5-degrees, where it should also be looking to halve them.⁵⁷ While the industry is increasingly adopting sustainability as a core priority, the Global Fashion Agenda called out in 2019 that solutions are not being implemented fast enough to counterbalance the negative environmental and social impacts of the growth it is otherwise seeing.⁵⁸ This shows there is a need for intervention in order to shift the conversation from one purely about growth to a more sustainable industry at large.

1.4 COVID-19's impact on fashion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had huge ramifications on the fashion industry – from a dramatic and painful economic pause⁵⁹, to a subsequent humanitarian crisis throughout its producing markets.⁶⁰ With stores closed and consumers in lockdown, a 27–30% year-on-year fall in revenue was predicted for the global fashion industry in 2020.⁶¹ A global recovery is not expected before the third quarter of 2022.⁶²

The result of this has also meant order cancellations down the supply chain: a survey of over 500 facilities across the main production regions worldwide showed 86% had been impacted by cancelled or suspended orders in 2020, resulting in 40% struggling to pay their workers.⁶³ This amounted to an estimated \$3.8bn in value owed in Bangladesh alone⁶⁴ – one of the largest textiles producing nations – in turn impacting the employment and income of 2.27 million workers.⁶⁵ As a survey by the Worker Rights Consortium revealed, the declining incomes in global supply chains have led to

widespread hunger and inadequate nutrition among workers and their families. These alarming patterns are stated to be directly linked to apparel brands' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and the long-term trend of low wages for garment workers in global supply chains, which has left workers unprotected.⁶⁶ The impact of the Black Lives Matter movement happening at the same time only brought this story further to light as those brands supporting it were reminded how they were failing to address the injustices currently taking place within their own supply chains with predominantly BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of colour) workers subjected to dangerous working conditions and low wages".⁶⁷ Women, who make up the majority of the garment workforce, have been disproportionately affected – further exacerbating existing inequalities on workload, occupational segregation, distribution of unpaid care work and earnings.⁶⁸

The pandemic also highlighted the volume of overproduction and wastage within the fashion system, raising particular concerns for the resulting environmental impact of unsold garments this year.⁶⁹ But it also made consumers sit up and take note of their own volume of belongings – COVID-19 has reportedly seen a rise in sustainability concerns among consumers, with individuals shopping less, exchanging more and increasingly favouring purpose-driven brands.⁷⁰ According to McKinsey & Co, two-thirds of apparel shoppers in Europe say limiting climate change impact is more important to them compared to before COVID-19, with 71% planning to keep garments for longer and 65% intending to purchase more durable items.⁷¹

This should be taken with a relative pinch of salt however. It's important to pay attention to the intention-

action gap, where good intent does not translate into pro-environmental behaviours⁷², and the resulting behaviour of shoppers seen in some markets around the world as lockdowns were lifted. French luxury brand Hermès saw record sales in its flagship store in Guangzhou in China on reopening, for instance, bringing in \$2.7 million on the first day.⁷³



- 57 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate
- 58 Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry
- 59 Cook, G and Rommwatt, M (2020) Fashion Forward: A Roadmap to Fossil Free Fashion, Stand.Earth
- 60 Kent, S and Nanda, MC (2020) Fashion's Humanitarian Crisis, The Business of Fashion, April 1, 2020
- 61 Business of Fashion and McKinsey&Co (2019) The State of Fashion 2020: coronavirus update
- 62 Business of Fashion and McKinsey&Co (2020) The State of Fashion 2021 Preview: Can the Industry Rebound Next Year? October 22, 2020
- 63 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking, Nairobi, Kenya
- 64 Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Exporters Association (2020) Available at: <https://www.bgmea.com.bd/>
- 65 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion (2020) Making the UK a global leader in sustainable fashion
- 66 Worker Rights Consortium (2020) Hunger in the Apparel Supply Chain: Survey findings on workers' access to nutrition during Covid-19
- 67 Edited (2020) The Sustainability EDIT 2020
- 68 International Labour Organization (2020) The supply chain ripple effect: How COVID-19 is affecting garment workers and factories in Asia and the Pacific.
- 69 BBC News (2020) Coronavirus: Why the fashion industry faces an 'existential crisis', April 30, 2020
- 70 Boston Consulting Group (2020), Fashion's big reset, June 1, 2020
- 71 McKinsey&Company (2020) Consumer sentiment on sustainability and fashion in the COVID crisis
- 72 UNEP (2017) Consuming Differently, Consuming Sustainably: Behavioural Insights for Policymaking, Nairobi, Kenya
- 73 Achim, L (2020) Why Is Hermès Thriving In China Despite COVID-19? Jing Daily, July 24, 2020

Taking a more optimistic lens, a report from the New Standard Institute called Roadmap for the Rebuild, reads: "We will be forever marked by this experience: it has and will change mindsets, habits, loyalties and expectations for citizens and customers. There is more awareness now than ever that business must not do harm or even simply do less harm but must, instead, be a genuine force for good for both people and planet."⁷⁴ Either way, fashion brands, while facing a significant period of recovery, are also recognising the growing importance of sustainability as a business priority. Taking action on climate change is seen as a crucial element of the COVID-19 recovery strategy⁷⁵, making today an opportunity to accelerate the change towards more responsible consumption and production.⁷⁶

1.5 Increasing awareness

Beyond the impact of COVID-19, public awareness of "sustainable fashion" has more broadly been gathering pace. Internet searches for the term have tripled between 2016 and 2019.⁷⁷ A survey across the five largest European markets in 2018 by Fashion Revolution with market research firm Ipsos Mori, found 61% of people are interested in learning more about what fashion brands are doing to minimise their environmental impacts and to protect workers' human rights.⁷⁸

The same can be reflected globally. Research carried out across Hong Kong, London, New York, Shanghai and Tokyo, shows two thirds of respondents are supportive of sustainable fashion, and highest individually in Shanghai at 90%.⁷⁹ In fact, emerging markets demonstrate greater strength full stop, with The Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Co reporting 65% of consumers in developing economies are actively seeking sustainable

fashion versus 32% or less in mature markets.⁸⁰ Another study by Nielsen shows the propensity to buy from socially responsible brands is strongest in Asia-Pacific (64%), Latin America (63%) and the Middle East/Africa (63%).⁸¹ When it comes to demographics, the stats skew wealthier and younger with higher income groups and those aged 18-24 indicating as those most supportive of sustainable fashion.⁸²

When asked 'who is responsible for making fashion sustainable', 90% of consumers in a study by Mistra Future Fashion in 2019, stated the fashion industry and 52% stated international organisations such as the UN or EU.⁸³ Hubbub's UK study also shows 65% of consumers believe the government should urgently do more to reduce the impact of the fashion industry on the environment. The public is seen as particularly well placed to help put pressure on both businesses and governments for this change⁸⁴, providing a clear route for UNEP participation.



⁷⁴ New Standard Institute (2020) Roadmap for the Rebuild

⁷⁵ Cook, G and Rommwatt, M (2020) Fashion Forward: A Roadmap to Fossil Free Fashion, Stand.Earth

⁷⁶ L. Elle (2020) Inside the UN Environment Programme's New Report: Elisa Tonda Talks 'Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain', EcoAge

⁷⁷ Business of Fashion and McKinsey&Co (2019) State of Fashion 2020

⁷⁸ Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

⁷⁹ Fashion Summit & KPMG (2019) Sustainable Fashion A Survey on Global Perspectives

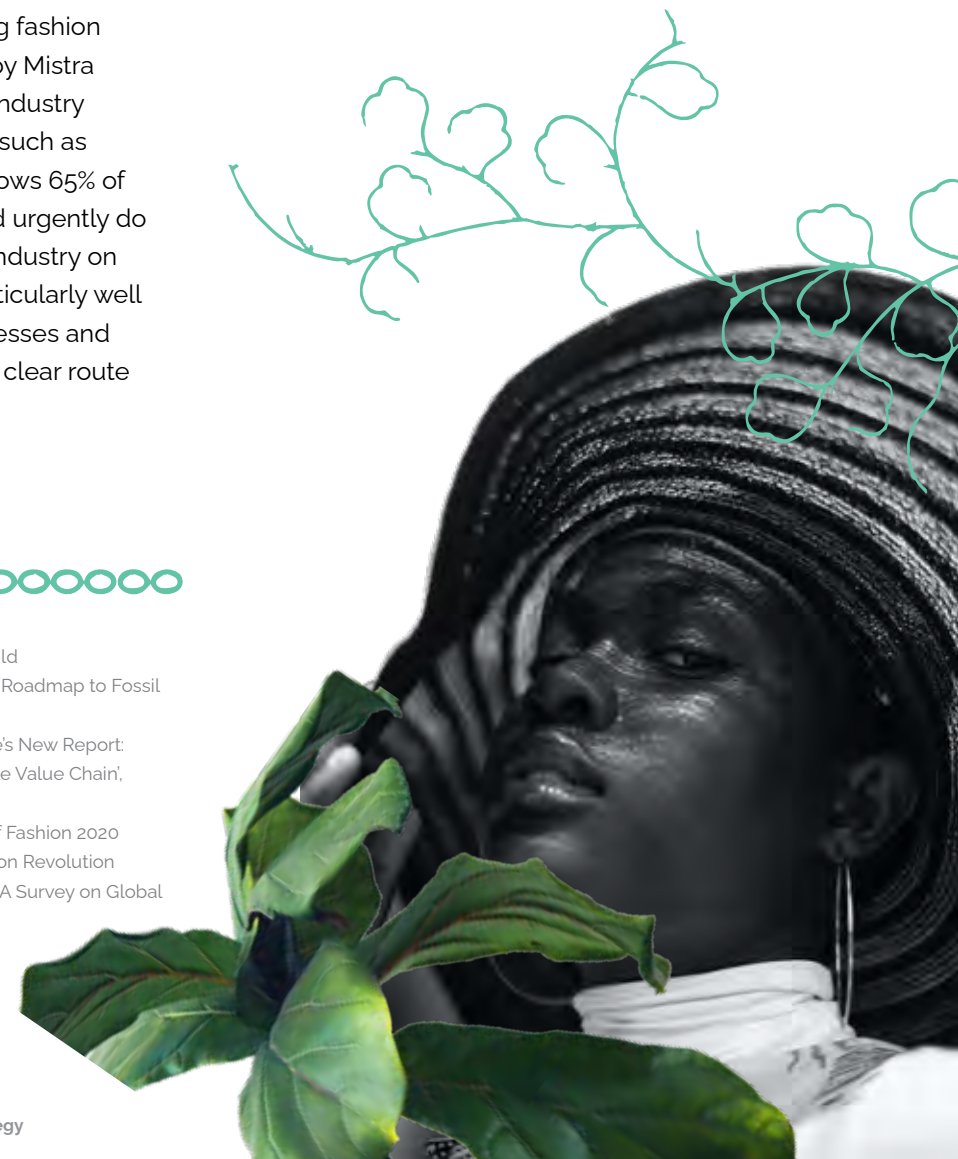
⁸⁰ The Business of Fashion & McKinsey&Co (2016) The State of Fashion 2017

⁸¹ Nielsen (2014) Global Consumers are willing to put their money where their heart is when it comes to goods and services from companies committed to social responsibility

⁸² Fashion Summit & KPMG (2019) Sustainable Fashion A Survey on Global Perspectives

⁸³ Lindberg, S & Ekman, M (2019) Consumers' perception & acceptance of material and design choice, Mista Future Fashion

⁸⁴ Lissaman, C & Paris, H (2019) Fixing Fashion: Who is doing what?, Common Objective



1.6 Policy insights

In order to achieve the SDGs by 2030, policymakers are instrumental in tackling the poverty, inequality, climate breakdown and environmental degradation the fashion industry is such a part of.⁸⁵ Speaking as part of the UK's Environmental Audit Committee's 'Sustainability of the Fashion Industry' inquiry, designer Katharine Hamnett, a long-time sustainable activist, said: "Legislation is the only way to implement change in the fashion industry."⁸⁶

According to non-profit advocacy group, Fashion Revolution, governments are not giving due attention to the fashion industry's unsustainable practices, nor doing enough to "uphold, implement and enforce the promises" they have made to protect people and planet through important international agreements such as the Paris Agreement.⁸⁷ Indeed, policy intervention is seen as crucial for the sector, because the pace of its own work is not fast enough.⁸⁸

While the industry has established a number of multi-stakeholder initiatives to drive change – setting guidelines, for instance, for decarbonisation (see section 2) – participation remains voluntary with little mechanism for accountability.⁸⁹ As per the UK's Environmental Audit Committee report: "[Governments] have allowed the fashion industry to mark its own homework for too long."⁹⁰

The policy work that does exist, falls loosely under key themes including the circular economy, modern slavery and environmental degradation and pollution (see Annex 2 for further detail). The majority of large-scale efforts are concentrated in Europe however, where momentum behind the likes of the EU Circular Economy

Action Plan is underway. In producing countries such as India, a New Textiles Policy is being developed focused on a modern, sustainable and inclusive sector⁹¹. In Bangladesh, The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is taking measures including updating conservation and environmental laws and imposing fines on polluters.⁹² But greater regulation and enforcement is needed. While China has also seen increasing efforts to crackdown on pollution particularly⁹³, there remains a gap for more progressive legislation around the sector in both China and the US, according to The Policy Hub, which focuses on circularity for the apparel and footwear industry.⁹⁴ It is hoped the new administration in the US, as well as China's recent commitments to net zero by 2060⁹⁵, could play a large role in changing this for the fashion and textile sector ahead.

According to UNEP's Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain report, global coordination needs to be addressed if stronger governance is to be attained.⁹⁶ Indeed the fact many of the issues are being handled nationally when they are international by nature, is part of the challenge. An overall policy approach, timeline and incentives must be aligned at an international level, per the Global Fashion Agenda.⁹⁷ It references the likes of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct as one example of this.⁹⁸

There is accordingly an evident need for more of a focus on policy, with a role for communication to impress upon international policymakers the importance of the fashion sector within the climate and ecological crisis. If there is one thing section 1 has demonstrated, it is the urgency that is attached to change within the fashion industry across a multitude of different layers. Numerous initiatives have accordingly been introduced across the

sector to drive this over the past few years; many of them collaborative by nature (see Annex 3 for a more detailed list). The two largest are the UNFCCC Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action⁹⁹, which contains the vision to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and the G7 Fashion Pact¹⁰⁰, committed to environmental goals across three pillars: climate change, biodiversity and ocean protection.



- 85 Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution
- 86 Fashion Roundtable (2019) Minutes from Fashion Roundtable's meeting with Extinction Rebellion's Boycott Fashion team
- 87 Fashion Revolution (2020) Fashion's Future: The Sustainable Development Goals, Future Learn. Accessed September 2020
- 88 Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry
- 89 Kent, S (2019) Will self-regulation solve fashion's sustainability problem?, Business of Fashion
- 90 Environmental Audit Committee (2019) Fixing Fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability, House of Commons
- 91 The Textile Magazine (2020) Ministry of Textiles formulating New Textiles Policy 2020, Indian Textile Magazine
- 92 Regan, H. (2020) Asian rivers are turning black. And our colorful closets are to blame. CNN Style, September 29, 2020
- 93 Regan, H. (2020) Asian rivers are turning black. And our colorful closets are to blame. CNN Style, September 29, 2020
- 94 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 95 Adair, T (2020) China's net-zero target is a giant step in fight against climate change. Financial Times, October 1, 2020
- 96 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking, Nairobi, Kenya
- 97 Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition (2019) Pulse of the Fashion Industry
- 98 OECD (2018) OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct
- 99 UNFCCC (2018) Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action
- 100 The Fashion Pact (2019) The Fashion Pact

2

CHARTING SECTOR INITIATIVES



The industry also has a multitude of other players working towards transformative industry goals as well as the nuance of individual progresses needed throughout the value chain – these vary from Make Fashion Circular by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to the work of the Global Fashion Agenda and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition. Meanwhile, the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion brings together UN agencies and allied organisations to coordinate action within the fashion sector.¹⁰¹ Then there are more specific entities designated to specific areas of the industry, such as Textile Exchange, Cotton 2040 or the Leather Working Group and standards covering everything from organic production to chemical use.¹⁰²

When it comes to campaigns dedicated to inspiring and driving a more sustainable fashion industry, the majority of efforts are also industry-facing. Among the more memorable or pertinent, is the Detox My Fashion initiative from Greenpeace, which led to 80 company commitments to detoxing¹⁰³, and the recent #PayUp Campaign, organised by Remake, a non-profit focused on human rights violations in the fashion industry, pressuring brands and retailers to pay their workers for orders in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What both of those have in common is how they've bled into consumer-facing activations, many of which otherwise focus on encouraging new behaviours. Fashion Revolution is perhaps the most established in this sense, with representation now in over 60 countries around the world. A core part of its work is focused on public awareness and education, and ensuring the conversation of fashion isn't just a Europe-centric one¹⁰⁴. It runs the annual Fashion Revolution Week to commemorate the anniversary of the Rana Plaza

disaster in Bangladesh, which saw 1,132 garment workers killed when a factory collapsed. This sees upwards of 2,000 events hosted by communities around the world each year.

Activist group Extinction Rebellion is similarly drumming up consumer awareness and brand responsibility with its protests during fashion weeks as well as at stores such as H&M. Its new Fashion Act Now campaign is focused on a roadmap for a "real crisis response". It previously ran a #BoycottFashion campaign in the bid to increase awareness on excessive consumption, calling for consumers to repair, reuse and recycle instead.¹⁰⁵

In China, Sustainable Consumption Week also promotes new responsible shopping behaviours through partnerships with retailers across 120 cities. Participating stores have grown from 80 to almost 2,000 in 2019, influencing more than 30 million consumers.¹⁰⁶ Brazil now has its own Eco Fashion Week, India runs a Circular Design Challenge as part of Lakme Fashion Week, while South Africa has an annual sustainable fashion awards.



¹⁰¹ UNEP (2019) UN Alliance For Sustainable Fashion addresses damage of 'fast fashion'. March 19, 2019

¹⁰² Lissaman, C & Paris, H (2019) Fixing Fashion: Who is doing what?, Common Objective

¹⁰³ O'Connor, T (2018) Greenpeace Report Spotlights Fashion's Progress on 'Detoxing'. Business of Fashion, July 12, 2018

¹⁰⁴ Salyer, K (2019) How young people are shaping the future of sustainable fashion. World Economic Forum, April 25, 2019

¹⁰⁵ Extinction Rebellion (2020) Extinction Rebellion call on fashion to transform our culture of consumption and destruction. September 29, 2020

¹⁰⁶ One Planet Network (2018) Green Sustainable Consumption Week, August 27, 2018

There are a multitude of other social media campaigns geared towards sustainable fashion, such as Oxfam's #SecondHandSeptember, or hashtags including #slowfashion, #OOTD (old outfit of the day) and #30wears.

UNEP's own Anatomy of Action campaign is a social media toolkit with a focus specifically on a Fashion Slow Down – inspiring individuals to “buy better clothes and stay away from fast fashion that mass produces at the cost of environmental and human justice”.¹⁰⁷

The Green Carpet Challenge has otherwise brought sustainable fashion to the attention of celebrities and the red carpet since 2010.¹⁰⁸

On top of this are campaigns put together by brands themselves. Through this lens, sustainability is gaining in prominence as retailers look to align themselves with more conscious communication. This includes physical activations like H&M's take back schemes through to the repair programmes at Patagonia. In the Philippines, Levi's ran a campaign telling consumers not to wash their jeans to help with the water shortage, Lacoste introduced a focus on biodiversity by highlighting species facing extinction, and UK department store Selfridges launched Project Earth – a campaign that includes new sustainable products, circular business models and an educational content programme. Vivienne Westwood famously has a tagline of “Buy Less, Choose Well, Make it last”, while Patagonia focuses on “Buy Less, Demand More”.

Transparency is another key theme, with brands including Everlane, Armed Angels and Gucci all sharing information about who their suppliers are and where their products come from as a starting point. Beyond traceability, impact measurement is growing in prominence alongside. Direct-to-consumer footwear brand Allbirds has recently introduced labels on its shoes documenting their carbon footprint for instance, while e-commerce site Zalando is set to make sustainability assessments mandatory for all brands it sells on its platform by 2023, in partnership with the Sustainable Apparel Coalition's HIGG technology tools. Others such as Net-a-Porter, ASOS, Galeries Lafayette and even Amazon are starting to showcase products they consider sustainable, responsible or conscious as specific categories. The challenge with this to date is the varying methods used for measurement, and thus disparity in the market as to what qualifies or otherwise.¹⁰⁹

Awareness of the fashion industry's unsustainable processes has otherwise been brought to the attention of consumers, the industry and policymakers alike off the back of a number of different global events and media moments. It is through such occasions that action has been spurred and a shift in behaviour witnessed. This includes the aforementioned Rana Plaza disaster as well Nike's sweatshops, Burberry's incineration of unsold stock and numerous documentaries exposing human rights violations and environmental destruction at the hands of the industry.

This analysis has shown that the sustainable fashion movement is undoubtedly gaining momentum, with goals and targets regularly being set by an increasing number of players in the industry, as well as a push for more in the way of policy being seen as a result. In spite of this, as highlighted in section 1.3, there remains to be seen much in the way of true progress, with the numbers continuing to point to a rise in negative impact towards 2030. This suggests a need for intervention, with an opportunity for UNEP to help fill some of the white space within communication. The next section will outline the communication needs and challenges that the situational analysis, campaign analysis and consultation period has inferred.



107 One Planet Network (2019) Anatomy of Action, November 13, 2019

108 Eco-Age (2019) The Green Carpet Challenge, February 22, 2019

109 Kent, S (2020) Amazon wants you to know what products are sustainable, Business of Fashion



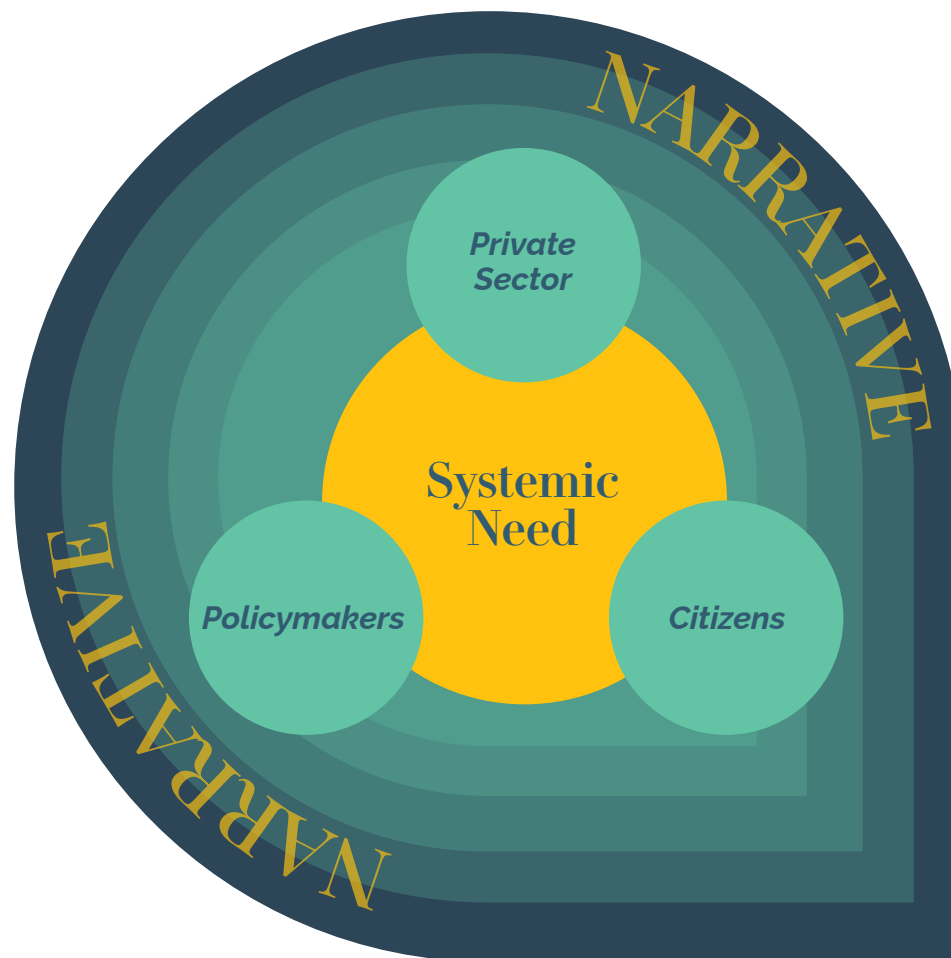
3

COMMUNICATION NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

From the literature review and situational analysis of the fashion sector relative to a more sustainable future aligned with the SDGs, there are some evident communication needs and challenges. This section serves to outline these against the framework illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 – Sustainable fashion communication framework

UNEP's Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain report concluded that priority needs were stronger governance and policies, industry-wide collaboration and finance, and changes in consumption habits. This strategy takes those same three focus areas and applies them through the communication lens. These stakeholder groups – each of which interconnect and heavily influence each other – are anchored in the middle by the need for systemic change, and encircled on the outside by the imperative of fostering a new narrative.



3.1 Systemic change required

3.1.1 Urgent and bold global action

There is a clear and pressing need for radical and systemic action to drive change in the fashion industry within the next 10 years due to the scale of its contribution to the climate and ecological crisis, its reliance on resources and expected growth trajectory, as well as the creative opportunity it has to lead. This is required at a much more rapid pace than we're seeing today¹¹⁰ and from a global perspective.

Importantly, it must recognise the need for overarching systems change, and not just the idea of working harder to evolve the existing model. Indeed, progress towards a sustainable fashion industry thus far remains fragmented and incremental relative to the Paris Agreement Goals¹¹¹, thus a larger framework backed by policy and enhanced by consumer pressure is crucial for the scale of transformation needed.

UNEP is well placed to champion this from a communication and public advocacy standpoint, coordinating across regions to position the fashion sector as a leader in global efforts towards sustainability. It is important the organisation is as bold within this strategy as it has been with the climate crisis and biodiversity at large – acknowledging in as profound a way, the change that is required.¹¹²

This is only further the case in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting the opportunity for the industry to “create a more just and sustainable approach, which builds greater long-term resilience.”¹¹³

3.1.2 Addressing consumerism

To address the systemic change required within the fashion industry, means confronting the “imperative of economic growth and rising consumerism”. Beyond major value chain abatement efforts, this is what McKinsey & Co and the Global Fashion Agenda suggest needs to be redefined in order for the industry to stay on the 1.5-degree pathway beyond the year 2030.¹¹⁴ This remains, however, the “elephant in the room” when it comes to industry discussions¹¹⁵; discussed predominantly only by activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Fashion Revolution. Yet, as per UNEP's Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain report: “Implicit in the definition of a sustainable textile value chain is that [...] consumption cannot go unchecked, regardless of how efficient and circular the system is able to become.”¹¹⁶

This is all the more the case in light of the 2-3 billion new urban (mostly young) consumers coming online, whereby fashion plays a big role in aspirations.¹¹⁷ Any communication strategy must ultimately, therefore, drive the sector towards addressing the overconsumption it perpetuates. Doing so will require tapping into its ingenuity and creative spirit to “decouple value creation from volume growth”.¹¹⁸

3.2 Citizens: Driving behaviour change

3.2.1 Global consumer opportunity

The industry is currently lacking unified consumer-facing initiatives on a global scale. The work that does target consumers, tends to primarily come from brands, existing as a multitude of different and often confusing messages (see section 2). According to sustainable business network, Common Objective: “Initiatives or

campaigns with global reach that are aimed at fashion consumers are relatively scarce compared to initiatives aimed at business.”¹¹⁹

The result is that while awareness is on the rise – with internet searches for the term tripling between 2016 and 2019¹²⁰ – there remains a disconnect between fashion and the climate and ecological crisis for the average member of the public.

It's also important to note that communication efforts are much heavier in key western markets – especially in Europe – and less so in other territories around the world. There is therefore a clear global communication opportunity to help push this forward. Fashion Revolution is the outlier here - the one organisation working around the world with a clear consumer communication agenda. It is advocating for greater awareness and education about the systemic challenges facing the global fashion industry.



¹¹⁰ Future Impacts (2019) The Future of Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

¹¹¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) Special report: Global warming of 1.5 °C, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

¹¹² Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)

¹¹³ All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion (2020) Making the UK a global leader in sustainable fashion

¹¹⁴ McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

¹¹⁵ Arthur, R (2020) Fashion's Existential Crisis: Questioning the Growth Imperative. Eco-Age, June 15, 2020

¹¹⁶ UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya

¹¹⁷ One Planet Network (2019) Anatomy of Action, November 13, 2019

¹¹⁸ McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

¹¹⁹ Lissaman, C & Paris, H (2019) Fixing Fashion: Who is doing what?, Common Objective

¹²⁰ Business of Fashion and McKinsey&Co (2019) State of Fashion 2020



There is a clear and pressing need for radical and systemic action to drive change in the fashion industry within the next 10 years... there remains a disconnect between fashion and the climate and ecological crisis for the average member of the public.

3.2.2 Is product clarity enough?

While interest in sustainable fashion is growing, there remain significant barriers to sustainable shopping, including practical challenges such as expense and inconvenience, and lack of knowledge or understanding on impacts.¹²¹ Studies show that while sustainable practices are becoming increasingly important, quality and aesthetics still dominate as the most important drivers of purchasing behaviour in fashion.¹²²

Furthermore, only 13% of people worldwide are willing to pay more for sustainable fashion.¹²³ There is a big debate surrounding the connection between sustainable fashion and privilege.¹²⁴ As Angelica Cheung, editor of Vogue China, said on the topic: “When people are still working on their basics — getting enough food, their first house, their first wardrobe of clothes — you can hardly draw their attention to the finer details of life, like the environment. It will only fundamentally get more attention when society becomes generally affluent.”¹²⁵



¹²¹ Ikea (2018) Climate Action Starts at Home

¹²² McKinsey&Co (2020) Bubbles pop, downturns stop, McKinsey Quarterly

¹²³ Fashion Summit & KPMG (2019) Sustainable Fashion A Survey on Global Perspectives

¹²⁴ Jackson Gee, T (2019) Is Fast Fashion A Class Issue? Refinery29, May 28, 2019

¹²⁵ Indvik, I (2019) Angelica Cheung, fashion's conduit to China. Vogue Business, March 26, 2019



Consumers also want sustainable fashion to be easy – with one of the most common barriers stated being that “sustainability is hard”, resulting in inaction.¹²⁶ Even those who do want to make more sustainable shopping choices, are faced with confusion (via for instance, labelling) over what to buy. As per Fashion Revolution: “The information that consumers have at the point of purchase is still absent, confusing, unverified, lacking credibility and/or focused only on positive attributes rather than a more holistic and more honest account of the impacts.”¹²⁷

Fashion Revolution has campaigned hard for greater transparency, particularly around supplier information. The sector is stepping up in this regard, translating that call to action into greater sharing of impact also, as evidenced by brands such as Allbirds and called for by the likes of Zalando (see section 2). Shoppers say they want this information to be able to make the right decisions more easily. According to a study by Hubbub, 64% of UK adults would like labelling that clearly shows information about the sustainability of their clothes.¹²⁸ Other research demonstrates 76% of consumers think they need more education about what is and is not sustainable.¹²⁹ Labelling is a significant focus of work for UNEP across multiple sectors.¹³⁰

The challenge here however is that due to enormous complexity, the data being used to achieve this within fashion isn't yet at a place to make it viable, accurate or reliable enough at scale.¹³¹ Organisations such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition and HIGG Co are focused on this space, but many key players have pushed back against policy that would make this mandatory in the EU until there is better data available to do so.¹³² This suggests that while supporting consumer product

labelling is a potential route this strategy could take, advocating for such policy at this stage would not be the most productive course of action.

3.2.3 Cognitive dissonance

While there is an overwhelming need to confront the issue of overconsumption (see section 3.1.2), behavioural science shows that presenting consumers with information (via labels as one example) does not create change alone. “The problem with an approach that prioritises information, is it ignores what makes us human. Our desires. Our fears. Our prior beliefs. Our hope,” explains Tali Sharot, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscientist at University College London.¹³³ Even when things are known and understood, there is still the



¹²⁶ Johnstone, M. L. and Tan, L. P. (2015) Exploring the Gap Between Consumers Green Rhetoric and Purchasing Behaviour, *Journal of Business Ethics*. 132(2), pp.311-328.

¹²⁷ Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

¹²⁸ All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion (2020) Making the UK a global leader in sustainable fashion

¹²⁹ Shearsmith T (2020) 83% of consumers reportedly feel misled with sustainability buzzwords, *The Industry*, January 23, 2020

¹³⁰ UN Environment Programme (2019) Consumer Information Tools and Climate Change. Nairobi, Kenya

¹³¹ UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya

¹³² European Commission (2020) Environmental performance of products & businesses – substantiating claims. Accessed December 1, 2020. Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12511-Environmental-claims-based-on-environmental-footprint-methods>

¹³³ Sharot, T (2018) Intelligent People Have Greater Difficulty Changing Their Beliefs. *World Economic Forum*, June 14, 2018

"intention-action gap"¹³⁴, which is usually at the hands of cognitive dissonance – where someone knows that buying disposable clothing is negative, for instance, but reasons away from the idea that their individual actions will be significant or that the outcomes of, in this case, climate change, will personally impact them.

There are thus better ways to encourage green behaviours than through guilt-tripping or asking people to be noble. A study in the US showed that messages emphasising personal behaviour can have the paradoxical effect of reducing individual willingness to tackle climate change.¹³⁵

For a sustainable fashion industry, it's important that consumer behaviour evolves so there's less overconsumption, more buy-in for circular business models, reduced climate impact through responsible garment care, and maximum value achieved from extending the life of items.¹³⁶ But this strategy should not be based on communicating or raising awareness through information alone.

Education plays a crucial role, and is indeed at the heart of the change¹³⁷, but this strategy must also present consumers with both an alternative narrative to guilt (see section 3.5) and actionable choices. It's not enough for instance to encourage consumers to shop less, or not to shop fast fashion stores, without showing them other options available to them – second-hand shops, local sustainable brands, rental sites. And while this is a rapidly growing space, it's also important to note the limited access to quality versions of such solutions outside of major developed cities as yet.¹³⁸

3.2.4 Social currency

Sustainable lifestyle choices need to become visible status symbols (CISL). "People [are] looking for 'social proof' that sustainable behaviour is desirable, or positive 'social cues' to reassure them that they are doing the right thing."¹³⁹

This role of aspiration particularly plays a part within the fashion sector by the very nature of its business – a model predicated on popularity and exclusivity. Fashion is also about self-identity, providing opportunities for consumers to belong to certain tribes or trends, especially within the youth sector.¹⁴⁰ Yet "social responsibility has an image problem".¹⁴¹ Indeed many high-profile celebrities today are the ones promoting cheap and disposable fashion¹⁴², with powerful fast fashion players backing such messaging with big media spends and heavy discounting to encourage purchases.



134 UNEP (2017) Consuming Differently, Consuming Sustainably: Behavioural Insights for Policymaking. Nairobi, Kenya

135 DeWeerd, S (2020) People tune out climate messages about personal responsibility. Anthropocene, October 6, 2020

136 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya

137 One Planet Network (2019) Nesi Forum Málaga 2019 Conscious Consumption, April 30, 2019

138 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)

139 Manning, C. (2009). The psychology of sustainable behavior: Bringing about voluntary behavior change

140 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)

141 Reconsidered (2018) Making Change Sustainable: How insights from the world of behavioral science can supercharge the way companies embed social responsibility into their business

142 Siegle, L (2019) How Instagram Influencers Fuel Our Destructive Addiction To Fast Fashion, HuffPost, February 7, 2019

143 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)



It's entrenched behaviour, but social influence is needed in order to encourage wider uptake for sustainable fashion and circular business models instead – to make it seem the ultimate in 'cool' and desirable, and not just worthy. In doing so, communication must be done to a level that is as seductive and engaging as that of fashion's own marketing machine.¹⁴³

"We want people to recognise that what is stylish and desirable is also what protects human rights and our living planet," wrote Fashion Revolution.¹⁴⁴

This strategy should therefore look to engage celebrities and influencers (big and small) beyond the usual eco voices – aligning them to the sustainable fashion agenda in order to reach far wider consumer groups, not only to raise awareness but incite a sense of aspiration around it. This is globally relevant too, with social proofing especially powerful in key markets such as China and Japan.¹⁴⁵ This is something Vogue China has been experimenting with already, as one example, running editorial with influencers talking to sustainable fashion. The conversation has begun in many key markets, but needs amplification.

As per UNEP's Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain report:

"New, innovative campaigns are needed that extend the reach of existing campaigns, for example using social media influencers and United Nations ambassadors to change lifestyle perceptions of what is 'fashionable.'"

In turn this will also help with geographic spread by way of domino effect – the more social acceptance there is of, for instance, new services in the circular economy, the more market entrants there will be.¹⁴⁶

3.3 Policymakers: The power of advocacy

3.3.1 International policy underpinning

Within sustainable fashion work, there is clear understanding that policy underpins the ability for systemic change. However, while there is increasing focus on this in terms of regulatory outputs – especially in Europe – there remains a gap when it comes to pace and globalisation. The EU expects to see progress within the next few years¹⁴⁷, but there is a severe lack of direction in other markets (notably in the US and China). In the UK where there has arguably been the most attention paid to the subject at the national government level, every recommendation put forward by the Environmental Audit Committee in 2019 was rejected¹⁴⁸ – despite many of them already existing in other key markets such as Sweden and France. There remain numerous hurdles to overcome in order for policy to help direct change within the sector.

While progress is being seen in some policy areas, one of the biggest challenges is awareness of this need and the ability to convince international governments to take the sector seriously. There is a clear role for UNEP here to build awareness around why fashion is an important sector for international governments to address, as well as to impress the urgency and boldness of the change that is required. The notion of fashion as inconsequential within the climate conversation has to shift on a state level.

3.3.2 Opportunity for activism

While the consumer-use phase of fashion is responsible for circa 20% of overall emissions¹⁴⁹, there's a wider opportunity to raise awareness in order to not only evolve habits towards the circular economy, but to put pressure on businesses and governments for change.¹⁵⁰ Doing so would have the ability to both reshape consumption culture and accelerate radical change within the policy arena. Raising awareness should therefore be seen as a prerequisite or major catalyst for making other actions feasible.¹⁵¹

This communication need sits under the header of policy because of the impact consumer awareness and activism can help drive with regulators. A seminal article written by author Elizabeth Cline for Atmos in 2020¹⁵², advocates for less in the way of ethical consumerism and more consumer activism akin to that seen in the 20th Century. She refers to ethical consumerism as "a grossly



144 Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution
145 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
146 Mistra Future Fashion (2019) Policies changing the playing field, August 1, 2019
147 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
148 Environmental Audit Committee (2019) Fixing Fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability
149 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate
150 Lissaman, C & Paris, H (2019) Fixing Fashion: Who is doing what?, Common Objective
151 Future Impacts (2019) The Future of Sustainability in the Fashion Industry
152 Cline, E (2020) The Twilight of the Ethical Consumer. Atmos, October 19, 2020



inadequate and unequal response to our most pressing problems”, and calls for consumers to use the energy that goes in to curating an ethical lifestyle to tackle root causes instead. “When we compel companies and governments to change, that change becomes available to everyone, instead of just the consumers who know about or can afford ethical products,” she writes. The Guardian adds that environmentalism is arguably the most successful citizens’ mass movement there has been – it has been done before and can happen again.¹⁵³

Addressing gaps in public awareness then is an opportunity to empower citizens to demand better of governments and of businesses. Action at scale will only happen with considerable advocacy.¹⁵⁴ This strategy in its bid for bold, systemic change, must therefore inspire citizens to hold to account and put public pressure on both policymakers and the private sector, in doing so providing them with the motivation and incentive needed.¹⁵⁵

3.4 Private sector: Uniting the industry

3.4.1 Ensuring accountability

The fashion sector is overloaded with industry initiatives, different signatory groups, certifications and standards. In spite of various attempts to unite the industry under one umbrella framework towards progress, it remains relatively confusing, is often considered overwhelming and doesn’t need more adding to the noise. This strategy must accordingly be complementary to what is in the market already, rather than repetitive. This suggests it does not need to be shaped as yet another coalition or set of promises uniting the private sector, but rather enhancing of the frameworks the industry is already aligned with.

The other angle it can support is accountability. Fashion has one of the most fragmented and complex value chains on earth¹⁵⁶, meaning it can all too easily shirk responsibility. It’s for this reason so many collaborative multi-stakeholder efforts towards change have been established. However, there is still a sense that brands themselves are marking their own homework¹⁵⁷ and that such self-policing is unlikely to see the industry overcome its challenges. Per the Business of Fashion with regards to the G7 Fashion Pact, which is deemed the most advanced coalition in the sector: “Participation is voluntary, signatories will choose how they meet the group’s targets and there’s no mechanism for accountability if they don’t.”¹⁵⁸



153 Harvey, F (2020) ‘We’ve had so many wins’: why the green movement can overcome climate crisis. The Guardian, October 12, 2020

154 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya

155 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

156 European Parliamentary Research Service (2019) Environmental impact of the textile and clothing industry, January 2019

157 Environmental Audit Committee (2019) Fixing Fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability

158 Kent, S (2020) Will self-regulation solve fashion’s sustainability problem?, Business of Fashion.




According to the New Standard Institute's Roadmap for the Rebuild report: "While it is critical to have these avenues for the industry to come together to work on common challenges, we must be clear that most of these are industry-led (and often industry-sponsored) initiatives. With the industry setting its own pace of change, these initiatives alone will be insufficient."¹⁵⁹ This suggests once more there is greater need for a policy framework that goals and targets could be measured against and the industry held accountable for.

3.4.2 Marketing sustainability

In spite of significant effort from various non-profit organisations, as well as increasing media coverage, the most powerful voices within the sustainable fashion space are those of the brands themselves.¹⁶⁰ Fashion designers and retailers, perhaps more so than any other sector, have established paths of communication with large customer bases, and sustainable collections launched with impressive marketing budgets, are an increasing norm.¹⁶¹

A frequent criticism being levelled at the sector around such pushes however, is greenwashing - whereby companies engage in false or misleading environmental claims or oversell underwhelming eco-initiatives.¹⁶² The Norwegian Consumer Authority for instance called out H&M for the "misleading marketing" around its Conscious Exclusive collection, stating that it was providing insufficient information about the sustainable nature of the clothes.¹⁶³ A recent article in the Financial Times, referred to a glut of misinformation within the fashion industry and the ability for brands to say whatever they want.¹⁶⁴ A recent report found 83% of consumers feel misled by green and sustainable buzzwords in retail advertising.¹⁶⁵



The most powerful voices within the sustainable fashion space are those of the brands themselves.

Within the advertising sector, increasing efforts are being made not only to keep such green claims in check, but to actively take a stand and encourage clients to promote more sustainable messages. Purpose Disruptors is one such organisation – a network of advertisers with the vision to only “promote attitudes, lifestyles and behaviours that are consummate with a 1.5 degree world” – or in other words to ensure that communication actively paints a picture of what achieving the Paris Agreement Goals could look like rather than detract from them.¹⁶⁶ Its ‘Change the Brief’ campaign is accordingly about encouraging clients to promote more sustainable values, attitudes and behaviours to their audiences. There is evident application here for fashion.

Interestingly, however, of the sustainability initiatives that do exist within the fashion sector, there is little that addresses marketing and advertising specifically, despite a clear need for unification on such messaging. In fact, in many cases there appears a disconnect between sustainability and communication teams internally, with both operating in siloes. While the industry may not require another pledge or coalition, there’s evidently a need for a business-to-business conversation about the way brands communicate sustainability across the sector at large, with a credible framework or guideline required.¹⁶⁷

The consultation period of this strategy also saw large concern around different interpretations of what “sustainability” or “circularity” actually mean within the sector. There is a need for common definitions and unity on the matter. Some of this relates to the aforementioned desire for product labelling (section 3.2.2), and simultaneously connects to previous work between UNEP and ITC on the Guidelines for Providing

Product Sustainability Information.¹⁶⁸ But another opportunity for this strategy lies in getting access to and educating consumers via brands, and perhaps most meaningfully by putting some structure around the way they already communicate with them beyond just the product itself.

3.4.3 Media as audience

There is also a need for the media to align fashion’s sustainability goals with its own work – reducing messaging that is counter to the wider aims of the sector under this header. The fashion media is wildly powerful, dictating trends and in many instances through history, making and breaking designer names. It is built on the premise of promoting newness and consumption.

While sustainable fashion has indeed been deemed “fashionable” in recent times, the media remains relatively complacent in covering this industry through the lens of the climate crisis. This is even more the case when looking beyond the product pages of such publications, where stories about sustainable fashion are now increasingly present, and instead turning to the financial or business news teams where little attention is paid to this sector.¹⁶⁹

“Climate change touches virtually every beat in the newsroom, meaning that nearly every journalist has something to contribute to its coverage,” reads a study by the Columbia Journalism Review.¹⁷⁰



- 159 New Standard Institute (2020) Roadmap for the Rebuild
- 160 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 161 Preuss, S (2020) 32 Sustainability efforts of the fashion industry in September 2020. Fashion United, October 16, 2020
- 162 Cline, E (2020) Can We Stop Greenwashing? Patagonia
- 163 Hitti, N (2019) H&M called out for “greenwashing” in its Conscious fashion collection. Dezeen, August 2, 2019
- 164 Indvik, L (2020) Sustainable fashion? There’s no such thing. Financial Times, November 12, 2020
- 165 Shearsmith T (2020) 83% of consumers reportedly feel misled with sustainability buzzwords, The Industry, January 23, 2020
- 166 Purpose Disruptors (2020) Purpose Disruptors – Our Vision
- 167 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 168 UNEP (2017) Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information. Nairobi, Kenya
- 169 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 170 Hertzgaard, M and Pope, K (2019) The media are complacent while the world burns. Columbia Journalism Review, April 22, 2019



The New Standard Institute says there is huge onus on the fashion media to “responsibly cover the vague world of sustainable/ ethical /mindful/ conscious/ green/ eco- conscious/ eco-friendly fashion” and to ensure accuracy in its reporting.¹⁷¹ An opportunity may lie here to both drive awareness and provide information and education accordingly. This strategy will therefore need to incorporate the media industry as a key audience and potential partnership group.

3.5 Fostering the new narrative

3.5.1 Imagining what's possible

A sustainable transition for the fashion industry has to start with a change in cultural narrative. Fashion needs to be less about new, cheap and disposable, more about quality, longevity and equity.¹⁷² As identified in section 3.2.3 however, it is not enough to provide consumers with information about this need and expect them to change. It is also not enough to expect them to demand better without presenting them with a vision for what that future could look like.

According to The Climate Story Lab, there is an opportunity for utopian storytelling – painting a picture of what it is we are fighting for.¹⁷³ “We need more stories of the future. Stories where we are not simply talking about reducing carbon emissions - we transform our broken economy and tackle the roots of inequality,” said filmmaker Avi Lewis. Change agency Futerra shows that consumers respond better to the idea of a “low carbon heaven” than that of climate hell. It encourages a narrative that changes hearts, minds and even behaviours by imagining better.¹⁷⁴ This strategy must therefore look at reimagining the fashion sector towards



a positive future; fostering the new narrative that others have already begun to speak of in order to make it the most widely accepted version of this industry. It must accordingly embrace ideas such as quality, longevity and equity, as well as regeneration, new value sets and care. It must also demonstrate successful solutions in action within such a future – showing how the vision can become a reality.

3.5.2 Spotighting biodiversity and nature

Of the sustainable campaigns dominating within the industry today, there has been a lot of focus around social responsibility, climate change, pollution and transparency. While each of these areas are still in need of significant further work, there has been little relative attention paid to biodiversity or nature-based solutions. Loss of biodiversity is just as catastrophic as climate change, declared Sir Robert Watson, chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and former chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in a headline on The Guardian in 2019.¹⁷⁵ That story accompanied a report, spearheaded by IPBES that found nature is being eroded at rates unprecedented in human history.¹⁷⁶

Biodiversity is a core pillar of the G7 Fashion Pact, but sees a gap when targeting consumers and policymakers, where there is a lack of connection between natural habitats and the clothes we wear.¹⁷⁷ There is thus a clear opportunity here to raise awareness relative to the ecological aspect of the crisis specifically. Beyond just connecting habitat loss and nature degradation with garments, however, spotlighting biodiversity also provides the potential to align with the goal of section 3.5.1 to focus on positive storytelling. “The

story about nature and communities is so much more powerful than pollution and climate. It’s about doing more good not just less bad,” said a participant in UNEP’s consultation on sustainable fashion communication.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, nature provides a regenerative and restorative narrative whereby fashion becomes part of the solution. In doing so it also connects back to other key areas including climate, pollution and social responsibility.

3.5.3 A global/local approach

There is a need for both a global and local approach to this communication strategy. The scale of the challenge confronting the fashion industry means there is a global need for change, and for awareness and education to be aligned towards the systems goal. However, it is also essential that messages and activities are adapted on a regional basis in order to ensure relevance.

The outline of this strategy in of itself shows how heavily weighted the reporting on sustainable fashion is in Europe and the Global North, relative to what have traditionally been considered producing markets, or the Global South. The UN regional offices are currently operating numerous activities dedicated to this cause – across the likes of India, China and West Asia – but a more concerted global push looking at the Global South as consuming markets as well is needed.

It’s also important to note that “sustainable fashion” means something different in different places. Recycling is part of certain traditional cultures in Africa, for instance¹⁷⁹, while second hand is seen as high quality in Japan¹⁸⁰ yet still somewhat stigmatised in China¹⁸¹ and in India¹⁸² (albeit evolving at pace in both places respectively).¹⁸³ “We don’t all see sustainability in the

same way, and we’re not all coming from the same starting point,” said a participant in UNEP’s consultation on sustainable fashion communication.¹⁸⁴ English is also the dominant language for this topic, immediately excluding many other populations. This strategy must therefore work to recognise regional nuance, ensure a localised approach and a multitude of different entry points.



- 171 New Standard Institute (2020) Roadmap for the Rebuild
- 172 Future Impacts (2019) The Future of Sustainability in the Fashion Industry
- 173 The Climate Story Lab (2020) Report Out: UK Edition 2020
- 174 Futerra (2018) Sell the Sizzle
- 175 Watson, R (2019) Loss of biodiversity is just as catastrophic as climate change. The Guardian, May 6, 2019
- 176 IPBES (2019) Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- 177 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 178 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 179 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 180 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 181 Holland, O. (2020) Can China look past counterfeits and superstition in its burgeoning second-hand fashion market? CNN Style, August 31, 2020
- 182 Kaur, H (2019) Delhi’s local street markets are filled with second-hand clothes that both vendors and buyers term as export surplus. Patriot, April 11, 2019
- 183 Majumdar, M (2019) Clothes swaps and second-hand sales become trendy in Indian cities. The Hindu, October 24, 2019
- 184 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)

3.5.4 Centering justice

With the focus on imagining a better future and ensuring regional nuance, this strategy must also centre environmental and climate justice within its storytelling, taking an intersectional approach to environmental issues. As per Climate Story Lab: "People of colour and those in the Global South are at the forefront of dealing with environmental devastation, and many times their voices and climate solutions are not included. We can begin to centre Climate Justice by acknowledging the perspectives of those on the frontlines, and by refusing to tell stories that deepen existing inequalities and injustices."¹⁸⁵ This requires addressing the situation that the current fashion industry relies on and profits from BIPOC workforces and cultures, while often excluding them from sustainable fashion conversations.¹⁸⁶ An important step towards tackling this issue is thus the commitment to actively centre and leverage the voices of BIPOC workers, activists, journalists, entrepreneurs and other public figures through this strategy.

In fact, "justice" should sit at the heart of a new narrative altogether, and be the only context within which 2030 sustainability ambitions are set, according to Futerra co-founder Solitaire Townsend.¹⁸⁷ Injustice and inequality is the backbone on which the fashion sector is built, enabled by cheap labour and resource extraction – practices that need to be traced back to colonial roots. Thus, any form of communications strategy about the climate and ecological crisis must also acknowledge those it is not only impacting the most, but so reliant upon. Environmental and social issues must be recognised as intrinsically weaved together, as they are in reality.¹⁸⁸ Only so, the strategy can envision a future where fashion is circular, rooted in justice with climate, gender and racial equity at the forefront.¹⁸⁹

In the same vein, it must empower such communities to tell their own stories – doing so in a way that uplifts and enables them to be seen as success stories in their own right, not as people being given a handout. "We need to think about how we share their stories without being condescending so we don't paint the privilege market once more as the saviours," said a participant in UNEP's consultation on sustainable fashion communication. It should be about giving participants agency and audiences more authentic stories.¹⁹⁰



185 The Climate Story Lab (2020) Report Out: UK Edition 2020

186 Pitcher, L (2020) Young BIPOC Designers Are Leading the Sustainable Fashion Conversation. Teenvogue.com, October 28, 2020

187 Townsend, S (2020) Your 2030 Sustainability Targets Are Wrong. Forbes, June 7, 2020

188 Thomas, L (2020) Why Every Environmentalist Should Be Anti-Racist. Vogue.com, June 8, 2020

189 Threading Change (n.d.) Our Work, Threadingchange.org

190 The Climate Story Lab (2020) Report Out: UK Edition 2020





4 SETTING THE VISION

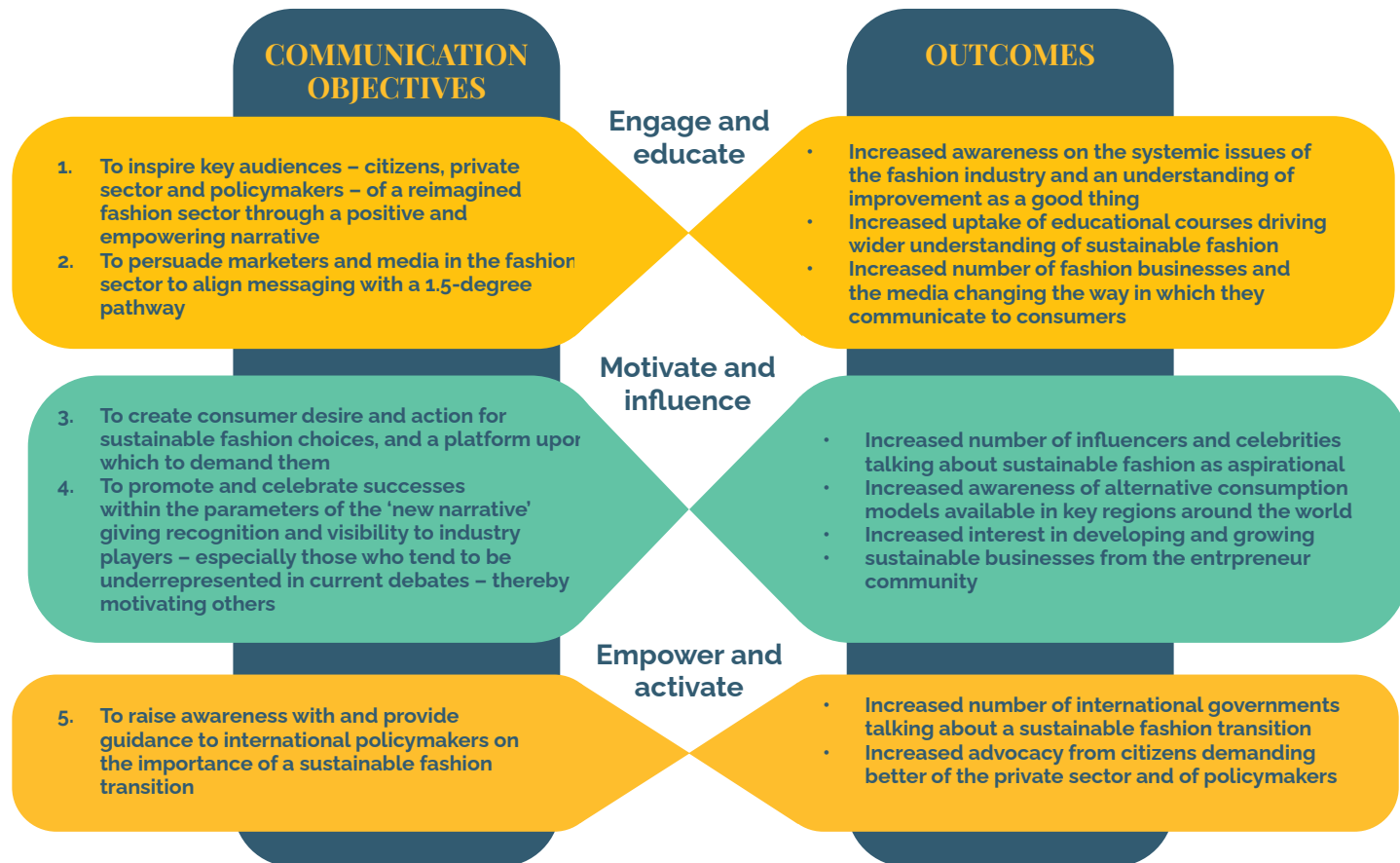
storytelling and engaging with influencers in order to disseminate key messages. It must show citizens the alternative choices they have available to them to empower them to change their shopping behaviours, as well as give brands the tools to help consumers on such journeys. More than that, in a bid to drive systems change, it must inspire citizens to demand better of businesses and of governments, in turn impressing upon such stakeholders the urgency and boldness of the change that is required.

Figure 4.1 outlines the more specific objectives and outcomes that will service this overarching goal.

Accordingly, the following vision for the strategy has been articulated:

To build demand and inspire action for a positive fashion future, by changing the dominant narrative of the sector from one of extraction, exploitation and disposable consumption, towards regeneration, equity and care.

Figure 4.1 Communication objectives and outcomes



The communication analysis of this strategy (section 3) shows there is not enough progress in the fashion sector to drive change within the timeframe needed. This is particularly the case when it comes to consumer awareness, industry accountability and policy breakthroughs. More so is the fact the thinking to date is not big enough relative to the scale of the challenge.

There is therefore a clear opportunity for this strategy to be bold in its approach, considering change on a systemic basis for the sector. It must help to foster the new narrative for fashion - focusing on positive future

4.1 Theory of change



4.2 Message framing

Against the backdrop of the fashion sector's connection to the SDGs and within the context of COVID-19, the communication needs and challenges and the outline of the vision and objectives of this strategy have demonstrated a clear need for the new sustainable narrative for the fashion sector to become the dominant one. More specifically, this leads towards a goal to paint a picture of a new and positive future.

Doing so does not need to start from a place of zero. Dr Kate Fletcher and Dr Mathilda Tham have already done this piece of imaginative work for fashion, presenting a Research Action Plan called Earth Logic that envisions an industry connected with nature, people and long-term healthy futures.¹⁹¹ "In order to deal with the profound challenge of critical biodiversity loss and irreversible climate change, the role of imagination is crucial... imagination is concerned with how to join the world, within its limits," they write. Rather than presenting a crass ideology, they suggest that today's approach to economic growth logic is far more of a fantastical or escapist approach in the reality of the earth's resource limitations.



¹⁹¹ Fletcher, K. and Tham, M. (2019). Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan. The J J Charitable Trust

This also relates to Kate Raworth's model of Doughnut Economics which talks to the notion of 21st Century thriving by creating a safe and just space for humanity, existing between the foundation of social wellbeing and an ecological ceiling¹⁹² – something that very readily applies to the challenges the fashion industry is facing.

Both can be used as a foundation for the message framing this strategy will be built on. In doing so, it will embrace new modes of storytelling, exploring ideas that move away from the doom and gloom of climate change – the guilt, shame or sacrifice frequently presented – and instead towards ideas like care or optimism.^{193 194} It's about people emotionally connecting and feeling good about the role they can play whether as citizens, entrepreneurs, policymakers or beyond¹⁹⁵, and about embracing the fact COVID-19 has shown major change is entirely possible.

Fashion has a unique position within the climate crisis as one of few consumer sectors built on creativity. It thus has potential to bring sustainability to life in ways that haven't yet been seen. As per section 1, Cameron Saul, co-founder of the Bottletop Foundation, said: "Fashion can be the cheerleader. It can carry people and voice in a way that nothing else can. We all relate to fashion."¹⁹⁶

There is a responsibility that comes with that power. As author Amitav Ghosh wrote: "When future generations look back [...] they will certainly blame the leaders and politicians of this time for their failure to address the climate crisis. But they may well hold artists and writers to be equally culpable – for the imagining of possibilities is not after all, the job of politicians and bureaucrats."¹⁹⁷

Creativity is what will shape tomorrow. And that must provide the foundation for this entire strategy.



- 192 Raworth, K (2017) The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries
- 193 Fletcher, K. and Tham, M. (2019). Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan. The J J Charitable Trust
- 194 The Climate Story Lab (2020) Report Out: UK Edition 2020
- 195 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)
- 196 Cernansky, R (2020) The UN set 17 sustainability goals. It needs fashion's help meeting them. Vogue Business, February 20, 2020
- 197 Ghosh, A (2016) The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable



5

AUDIENCE GROUPS



Underpinning the vision for this strategy is a need to reach three key audience groups: citizens, the private sector and policymakers. As per the Theory of Change model highlighted in section 4.1, raising awareness and motivating individuals within the general public to demand the sector to shift, is seen as the catalyst for the policy and industry changes required.

The private sector also plays an important role from the outset via the direct access it has to consumer audiences. Fashion brands are the dominant communication vehicle for sustainable fashion today, thus carry increasing responsibility. This must be taken into account, making businesses, as well as the communication sector itself, another primary audience for the work.

Governments or policymakers complete the primary audience list, albeit approached indirectly via, for instance, citizens, news media and advocacy groups.

Each of these are explained here in more detail, highlighting what the asks are for each within the scope of this strategy.

5.1 Citizens

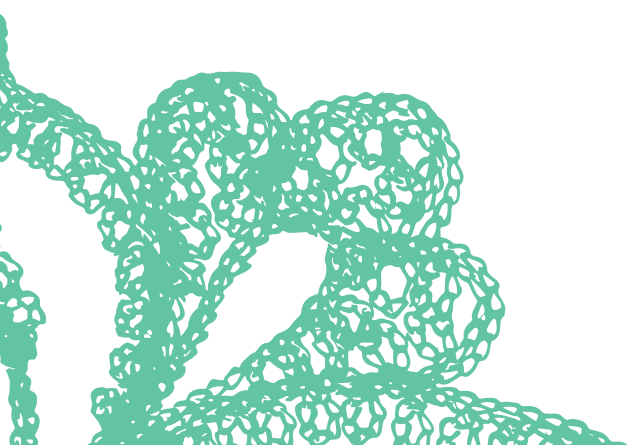
Section 1.5 of this strategy demonstrated the fact there is increasing interest in sustainable fashion from the general public. Demonstrable growing consumer demand will only help fuel further change, meaning uptake expanding beyond early adopters to reach wider individuals is key.

The ultimate ask of this strategy to citizens as an audience group, however, is to demand better of the private sector and of policymakers in order to work towards the envisioned positive fashion future.

Fashion is relatively unique in the sense that when considering citizens as an audience group, it touches everyone on the basis of those wearing clothes. In this instance, anyone with any level of discretionary spend on fashion is thus a potential target individual. To narrow the focus, this strategy will focus on Millennials and Generation Z specifically. These groups are evidenced to have the most interest currently in sustainable fashion¹⁹⁸, have a growing purchasing power¹⁹⁹, and are indeed the audience in place to shape the future. It is important however that this doesn't zone in on the stereotype of female fast fashion buyers alone. Doing so would ignore the growing market for streetwear consumption - as just one example - whereby men are primarily the ones powering a market expected to see double digit sales growth on its current valuation of \$50 billion over the next four years.²⁰⁰ It would also suggest luxury is not as culpable in perpetuating the spirit of overconsumption as its fast fashion counterparts, which this strategy rejects.



¹⁹⁸ Amed, I. et al (2019) The influence of 'woke' consumers on fashion. McKinsey & Co, February 12, 2019
¹⁹⁹ Davis, D (2020) Gen Zers have a spending power of over \$140 billion, and it's driving the frenzy of retailers and brands trying to win their dollars. Business Insider, January 28, 2020
²⁰⁰ Maguire, L (2020) What the Supreme VF deal means for streetwear. Vogue Business, November 10, 2020



It will be essential to recognise that further segmentation of these broad demographics will be necessary country to country, acknowledging that attitudes to sustainability will be at varying levels of sophistication depending on geography (as per section 8.1). It will need to take values, beliefs and motivations into account.

Accordingly, this strategy also acknowledges individuals as citizens specifically and not just consumers. On that same basis, by considering citizens, the strategy also notes their roles as other stakeholders with a part to play in shifting this sector - influencers, business owners, policymakers, investors and more. Part of this strategy then is about humanising fashion again - making even those in the highest levels of the industry connect to the clothes they wear and the impacts they have on the environment. Individuals thus who have any level of influence - be it celebrities with a large audience, social media influencers, prominent media voices and personalities within the sector, or indeed the UN's own Goodwill Ambassadors - also belong to this group of citizen actors.

5.2 Private sector

Within the private sector, another primary audience for this strategy is fashion brands and retailers who currently communicate to the general public about sustainable fashion. This is already happening at pace, with an increasing number of campaigns and messaging released from the industry with a nod towards eco credentials (as per section 2). But this is incredibly varied in terms of how sustainability is defined, thus often confusing in the way it is portrayed to consumers.

This strategy will not aim to directly drive awareness with the private sector over the need for change at large - the initiatives outlined in section 2 show this understanding is already there and being acted upon. Where it can help, however, is in aligning the sector on how to talk to consumers about it in order to address behaviours directly. The design-led businesses with the fashion sector have enormous power in the reach they have and the influence over consumers they hold - they are the ultimate architects of desire. In fact, the private sector is arguably the largest communication vehicle for sustainable fashion today. What such businesses say, is believed.

This strategy therefore identifies this audience group as having a specific responsibility around communication. While those making significant progress should be championed, such efforts need to be communicated with the right intentions.

The ask for this audience group then is to ultimately change the way in which they communicate with consumers, aligning messaging with the 1.5 degree pathway of the Paris Agreement.

This participant group includes businesses both big and small - from those who are already signatories of, for instance, the UNFCCC Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, to SMEs in both developed and developing regions around the world. On that basis, this also includes innovators and entrepreneurs focused on creating new models, as well as emerging designers, academics and students working towards progress in this space. Chiefly, it must seek to communicate with those who are themselves the communicators -

those working in marketing, PR, branding and social media within such organisations, and not just those on the frontline of sustainability teams. As a result, the communications and media sector must also belong here, incorporating magazines, newspapers, television shows and advertising agencies. To effect change, this strategy must reach not just the advertisers themselves, but the way in which those advertisers are disseminating their messages.

5.3 Policymakers

For change to happen in the fashion sector at the scale required within the timeframe available, significant regulations will be required in order to both mandate and incentivise the uptake of more sustainable fashion around the world. While this is already happening in markets like the EU, it is necessary on a much wider international level, especially given the interconnected nature of global fashion value chains. The ask of this strategy towards the policymaker audience then is to increase the conversation about a sustainable fashion transition in order to ultimately drive change at the regulatory level. This also implies enforcing mechanisms that prevent the deliberate outsourcing of unsustainable practices to other national markets where the absence of regulations is then often used as an excuse for human rights violations.²⁰¹



201 Clean Clothes Campaign (2021) Fashioning Justice

Making policymakers more aware of this as a need is a key objective, meaning direct engagement with governments is thus essential. While UNEP can play a role in making its member states more aware - through, for instance, the presentation of this strategy and sharing of leadership success stories - on a wider scale, policymakers themselves will be an indirect audience as an offshoot of the work with citizens, encouraging individuals to raise their collective voices to make governments aware of such demands, especially in key regions. As a result of this, a subset of participants under the policymaker heading will be NGOs or influential advocacy groups.

In addressing the changes needed to drive a more sustainable fashion sector, this communications strategy contributes towards UNEP's mandate towards a "balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development".²⁰²

As outlined in section 1.1, it contributes to the ambition of Agenda 2030 and SDGs, and accordingly the Decade of Action to drive this forward, recognising the crucial role the fashion sector plays in reaching such targets. More specifically, it aligns with the programmatic work of

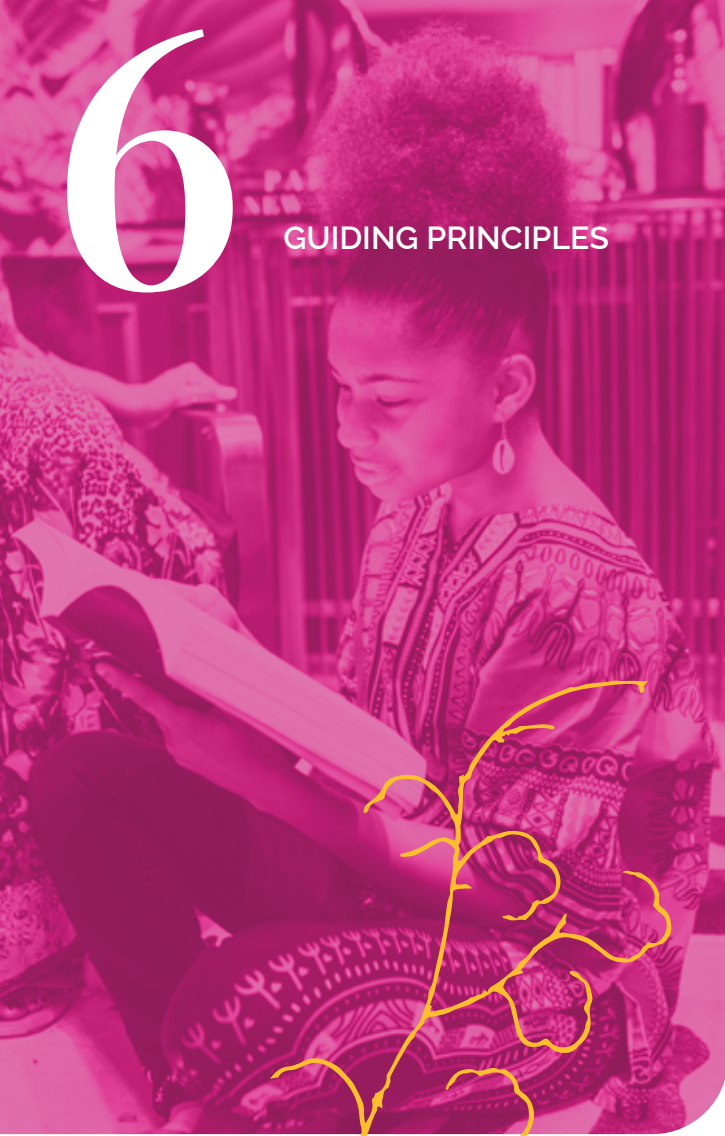


²⁰² UNEP (2019) Proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020- 2021



6

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



UNEP including the Medium-Term Strategies of both 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, the Programme of Work 2020-2021, and the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, as further outlined here:

6.1 UNEP Programme of Work 2020-2021

With an intention to launch in 2021, this sustainable fashion communication strategy will help progress UNEP's Programme of Work (PoW) 2020-2021 in the immediate term.²⁰³ Feeding off of the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021, this aims to influence and increase demand for sustainable products and services. More specifically, it is focused on "creating policy messages that allow engagement with lifestyle influences and on campaigns, advocacy and awareness-raising activities in key lifestyles sectors, such as food, mobility, housing, leisure, fashion and electronics". It recognises that focusing on the demand side - in fashion's instance, on consumer and citizen voices - is an indispensable accompaniment to initiatives focused on sustainable production.

This sustainable fashion strategy will therefore similarly prove a crucial contribution to the PoW in its first phase. It will further align to and take its lead on numerous additional areas of focus, not least its intention to champion partnerships and enhance collaboration both internally and externally.

6.2 UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2022-2025

The intended communication on the fashion sector directly supports UNEP's proposed MTS 2022-2025,

building in turn on that of the MTS 2018-2021.²⁰⁴ This focuses on three interconnected crises in climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, which are seen as primarily linked to current unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. The strategy shows that "the scale and pace of a global response to these three challenges is failing to reverse or even slow this deterioration". And that "addressing environmental degradation requires an integrated focus on climate, biodiversity, chemicals and waste, natural resources and pollution". The fashion sector, as demonstrated in section 1, links directly to these three crises, meaning driving change within it is crucial to achieving the MTS objectives of climate stability, living in harmony with nature and towards a pollution-free planet.

This communications strategy will therefore take an integrated approach in terms of its environmental focus. It will take nature as its jumping off point, as per the communication needs and challenges of section 3.5.2 to align to a positive narrative of restoration and regeneration; in turn supporting the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

It will further connect to the MTS, by contributing towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns. "Prioritizing resource-intensive sectors for



²⁰³ UNEP (2019) Proposed programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020- 2021

²⁰⁴ UNEP (2016) Medium Term Strategy 2018-2021

a shift to sustainable consumption and production could achieve very significant economic, social and environmental gains." Fashion's reliance on natural resources makes it a primary sector for consideration under these goals. This includes specific objectives such as: "Enhanced support for ecosystem-based policies and restorative and regenerative practices to reduce habitat fragmentation from agriculture and food systems, extractive industries, infrastructure and other resource and nature intensive value chains." And: "Increased advocacy and information sharing on behavioural and educational tools and curricula, and mechanisms to inform and influence consumer choices through increased awareness of the chemical, greenhouse gas, environmental, resource and waste footprint of goods and services."

Fashion's significant influence within the cultural conversation and particularly through digital channels, means this strategy for sustainable fashion can also contribute towards the MTS's aim to focus on highly innovative forms of communication, and on engaging and amplifying a range of different voices through digital spheres and social media.

6.3 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

This sustainable fashion communication strategy also supports the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP)²⁰⁵, and more specifically into the programme on Sustainable Lifestyles and Education. Its vision for a "world where sustainable lifestyles are desirable, beneficial and accessible for everyone, enabled,

supported and encouraged by all sectors of society, including governments, the business sector and civil society", plays into both the objectives of this strategy and the target audiences it has identified.

Beyond these three macro stakeholder groups, it also acknowledges educational institutions and cultural influencers, communication and media organisations for the impact they can have in turn on individuals, businesses and policymakers. The fashion sector can, for instance, contribute to the 10YFP by helping to frame messaging in a creative and inspiring way, as well as by embracing "climate activists and cultural influencers as the new 'policy wild cards'."

6.4 UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

Finally, this strategy also links with the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration strategy²⁰⁶, which is aiming to "prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide". It will contribute towards its ambition to increase "global awareness of the severe threats of climate change and biodiversity loss as well as the positive values attached to trees, charismatic wildlife species and other representatives of intact ecosystems", by highlighting the fashion sector's relative association and positive contribution it can make. In doing so, it will similarly aim to capture "hearts, minds and imagination" surrounding a culture of restoration.

Further to that, it will align with the Decade's rights-based approach in development of its plans. The overarching principles that will guide it include, for instance: the understanding that human rights are universal and inalienable; restorative justice achieved through dialogue, participation and accountability;

recognizing that cultural and natural heritage is perceived and defined by the owners and originators of that heritage.



205 UNDESA (2014) 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

206 UNEP (2020) The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration



7

STRATEGIC APPROACHES



From the knowledge gained in analysing the situation, identifying the communication needs and challenges, and determining the objectives, the following three strategic approaches have been determined:

7.1 Social mobilisation

To create a new narrative within the fashion sector, means mobilising across all identified audience groups, throughout communities, over cultural divides, and to differing levels of society. This strategy proposes to reframe fashion as a positive force for good in the context of the climate and ecological crisis; raising awareness of its current place within the conversation as a negative contributor, and empowering collective change whereby civil society, the news media, activists and beyond both embrace and demand an alternative, positive future instead.

It will do so by showcasing the art of the possible through partnerships with the communication and media sector, as well as through tie-ins with digital and social media influencers, and access to educational opportunities. It will focus on creating inspirational as well as aspirational messaging about an equitable, just, regenerative sector; one that is in tune with nature and the environment, and capable of providing creative, economic and social opportunities for all involved. This will be achieved on a global and local level. This ties directly to objective 1, to inspire key audiences – citizens, private sector and policymakers – of a reimagined fashion sector through a positive and empowering narrative, and to objective 3, to create consumer desire and action for sustainable fashion choices, and a platform upon which to demand them. Accordingly, it then ties to the intended outcomes of increasing awareness on the systemic issues of the fashion industry

and an understanding of improvement as a good thing; increasing uptake of educational courses driving wider understanding of sustainable fashion; and an increased number of influencers and celebrities talking about sustainable fashion as aspirational.

To take this one stage further, this strategy will - and must - also do so through direct educational activities with the private sector itself in order to reframe the powerful impact its own communication strategies have. This ties to objective 2 – to persuade marketers and media in the fashion sector to align messaging with a 1.5-degree pathway, playing on one of the biggest challenges highlighted in section 3.2.4 of how sustainable fashion must compete with the seduction and engagement of the traditional sector's existing marketing machine. The intended outcome here is to increase the number of fashion businesses and the media changing the way in which they communicate to consumers.


7.2 Behaviour change

Within the citizen audience group, the intention is also to maximise the desire established through social mobilisation to push towards behavioural change. As per section 3.2.3, merely *informing* individuals of the need to shift their habits is proven an unlikely route to optimal return, thus this strategy must also *show* alternative choices. It will not just demand that they no longer buy or enjoy fashion, but demonstrate how they can shift their purchasing power towards some of the different models available to them today instead. This ties again to objective 3, to create consumer desire and action for sustainable fashion choices, and a platform upon which to demand them.

It is important to note this strategy sees this as a secondary focus within the strategic approaches, behind both social mobilisation and advocacy. While educating individual consumers about how to change their purchasing habits is most certainly a positive, it is understood from the communication needs and challenges, that even doing this at scale will not result in the sector's systems change required. Consumers are not accountable for overconsumption and overproduction alone. Behaviour change of citizens as an outcome of this strategy is therefore ultimately a nice-to-have and not a specific objective.

Its presence here then is more to do with influence. Driving behavioural shifts persuades the wider audience groups (private sector and policymakers) of the need for change, contributing to a wider model of adoption. As consumers, citizens can incentivise the industry by showing where they are willing to spend, in the process demanding more in the way of alternative business models, repairs services, or products that last longer or are made from more sustainable materials, for instance. Doing this also motivates further uptake within the sector - encouraging entrepreneurship and corresponding investment, helping to extend further the move towards a more sustainable sector. Citizen behaviour change is therefore about creating an enabling environment for sustainable development and progress, in doing so ultimately taking away the onus on the citizen to make conscious consumer choices, by working towards a future where sustainable options are the default available to them in the first place. Accordingly, this ultimately ties to objective 4, to promote and celebrate successes within the parameters of the 'new narrative' giving recognition and visibility to industry players, thereby motivating others. It then links with the

intended outcomes to increase awareness of alternative consumption models available in key regions around the world, and to increase interest in developing and growing sustainable businesses from the entrepreneur community.



This strategy proposes to reframe fashion as a positive force for good in the context of the climate and ecological crisis; raising awareness of its current place within the conversation as a negative contributor, and empowering collective change whereby civil society, the news media, activists and beyond both embrace and demand an alternative, positive future instead.

7.3 Public advocacy

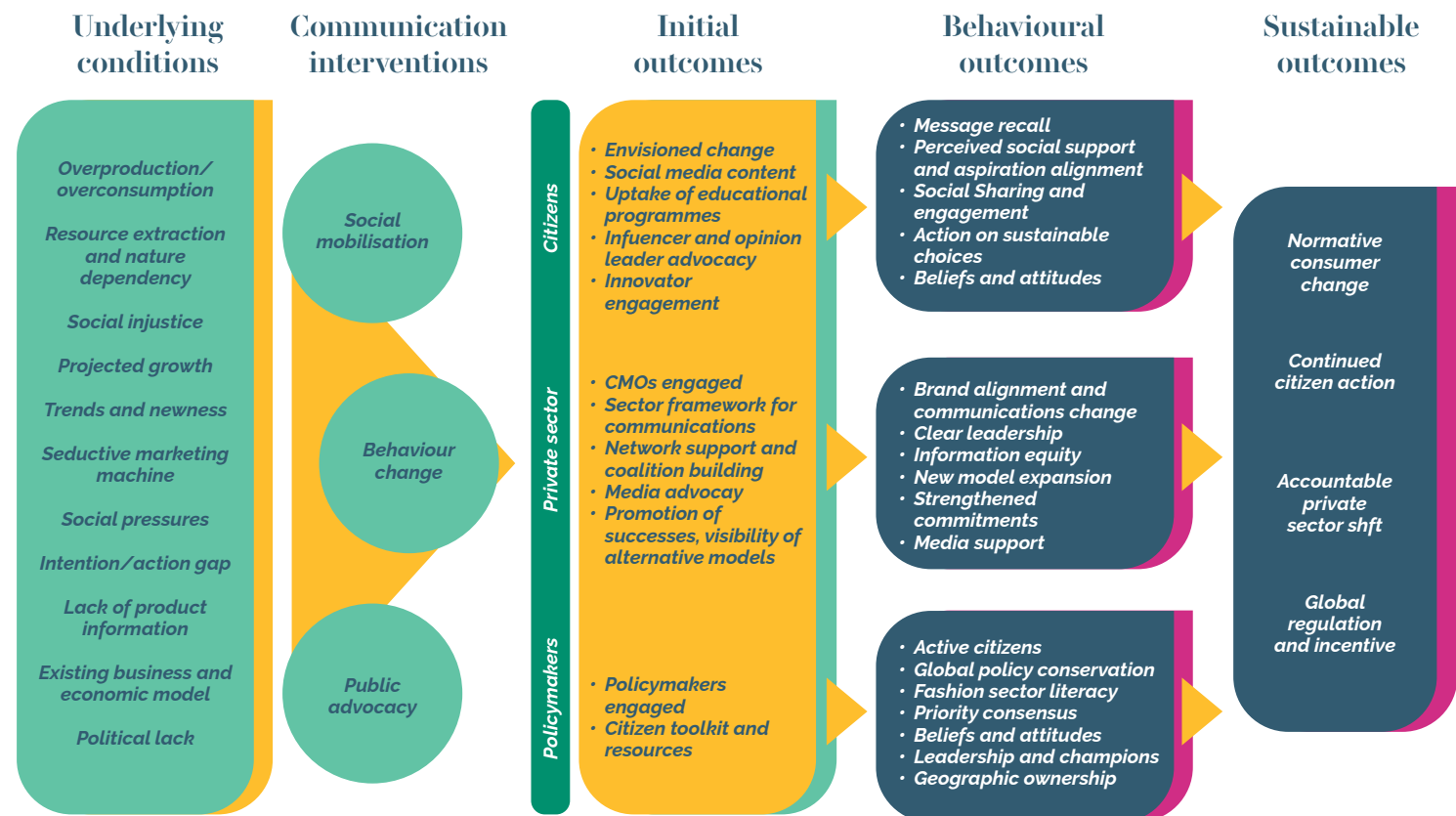
Underpinning this strategy is the recognition that systems change within the fashion sector will require a global policy framework to enable it. In calling for increased awareness and provided guidance for international policymakers on the importance of a sustainable fashion transition in objective 5, it therefore aims to contribute towards that theory of change. It will do so by helping citizens to recognise that the industry as it stands is highly detrimental, empowering them to demand its change. The general public can, for instance, support or advocate for regulations within the sector

- such as for tariffs on waste or incentives on more sustainable materials. By raising their voices, citizens will help policymakers see this as an important issue, as has been seen with such youth movements as Fridays for Future.

The outcomes for public advocacy accordingly are an increased number of international governments talking about a sustainable fashion transition and increased advocacy from citizens demanding better of the private sector and of policymakers. This strategy will provide the tools to facilitate this; either through educational opportunities, or direct resources that encourage

citizens to get involved. It will do so by establishing partnerships with relevant advocacy groups and key events. In doing so, the dependency of the sector's future isn't just about individual consumption choices, it's about a mass movement. In this sense, it's about citizens using their own voices to influence others, via relationships, social media, or by demanding more of businesses and ultimately policymakers. Collectively it will be a combination of consumer choices (normative change) and citizen voices (advocating for political change) that will drive the systems shift required.

Figure 7.1 Pathway to a sustainable fashion sector



8

COMMUNICATION PHASES



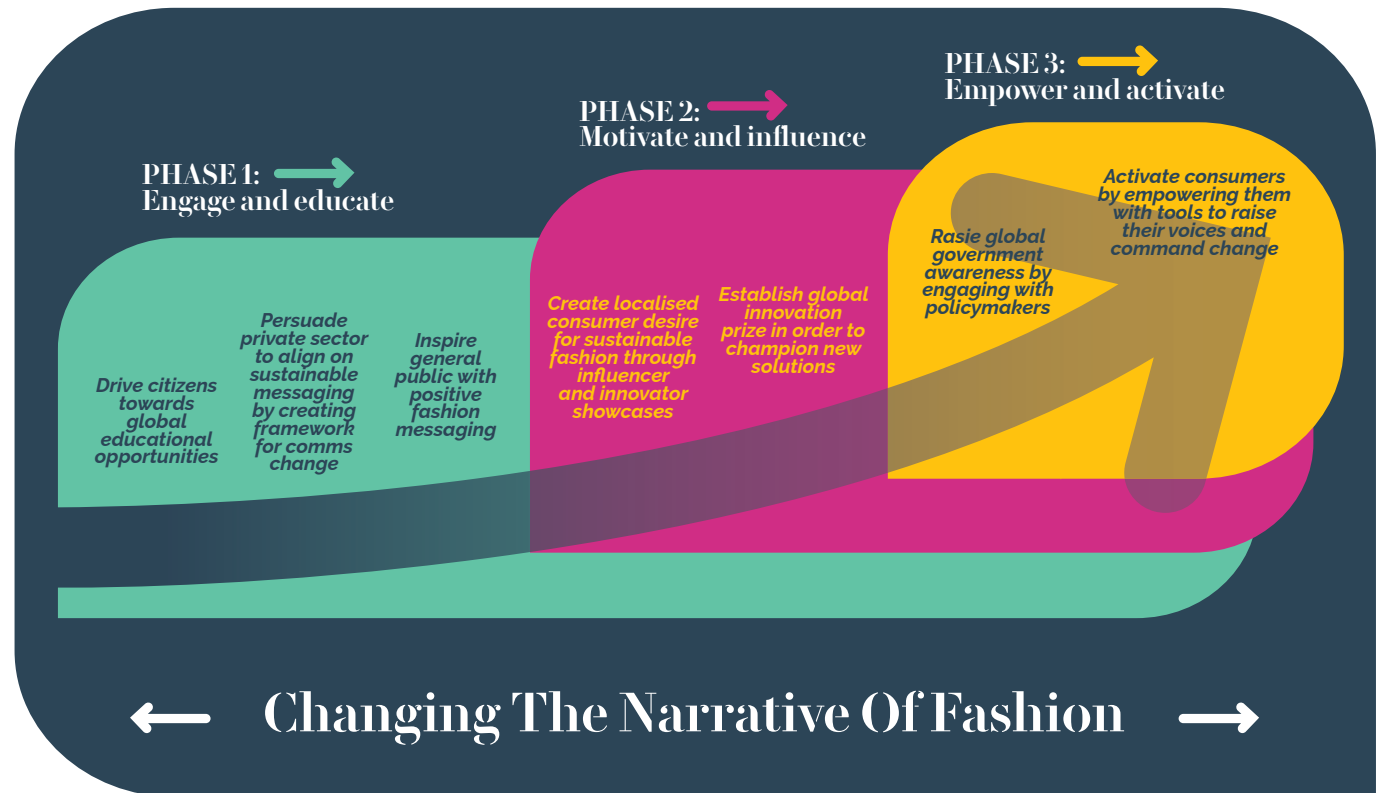
be UNEP putting a stake in the ground in support of a systemic shift within the sector, while providing a longtail of storytelling to support it.

Phase two is about motivating and influencing – in doing so shifting norms of the key audience groups. It has a heavy focus on showcasing the general public new opportunities for sustainable fashion, answering the objective to create desire and aspiration by leveraging social media influencers and celebrities. In its ambition to demonstrate how purchasing power can shift towards alternative models, it will also promote and celebrate successes and support innovations in order to both bring more of such solutions to light and motivate others along the same path.

Phase three is about empowering and activating – it is focused on sustaining and reinforcing the change by taking the citizen-facing initiatives and using them to advocate for policy change. It will do so by both engaging policymakers in order to generate greater awareness around the sector's needs for a sustainable transition, and providing tools for citizens in order to empower them to demand the changes required.

An opportunity for a fourth phase may be added in order to replicate and scale the work. This will need to be based on assessment of the first three phases of work.

Figure 8.1 Communication phases visualised



The strategy will take a phased approach over the course of three years as a minimum, with each phase building on the one before it sequentially, putting the seeds in place for the next phase of implementation. Efforts around each will grow and expand as more partners and geographies come on board.

Phase one intends to engage and educate - it will build a supportive discourse, starting from a place of awareness raising by inspiring the audience through storytelling on the one hand and providing access to educational courses on the other. It will also bring the private sector along on that same journey by addressing the power they have in their own storytelling. This is intended to

8.1 Geographical adaptation

As highlighted in section 3.5.3, sustainable fashion means different things in different regions. The strategy's phased approach, while global in its intention, must therefore ensure it is adapted to local markets with a multitude of different entry points. This will be carried out through both social media assets and influencer selections particularly. The strategy will also pilot certain campaigns in one or two markets before rolling out to wider regions - it will do so in partnership with relevant UN regional offices, acknowledging how it must also work to align with their own strategic goals and objectives, as well as processes and capacities. As per UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2021: "UNEP aims to be globally coherent and locally responsive, for a truly universal approach, as a 'one size fits all' approach will not work."²⁰⁷

It must also acknowledge developing economies such as India, China, Brazil and Africa as rapidly rising consumer markets, creative meccas and buoyant media landscapes, not just as producing nations feeding into western ideals. It may in fact find benefit in focusing on these markets especially. Similarly, it should recognise the opportunity to put sustainable fashion more on the radar of US audiences under the new administration. It will also be critical to look at translating any toolkits and resources into different key languages.

8.2 Strategic partnerships

Each of the key phases of work will be brought to fruition through partnerships both with internal UN offices, and leading external organisations spanning educational institutions, non-profit organisations, ambassadors and

media outlets and platforms. UNEP will not directly own or create the majority of activities suggested for this strategy, thus establishing a multi stakeholder approach will be the key to both its success and its reach.

The intention of this strategy may also integrate well with ongoing and planned initiatives by both internal and external partners, thus helping to advance objectives for all parties involved.

Ideal partnerships have already been explored accordingly and are outlined in the activity sets of section 9.



207 UNEP (2016) Medium Term Strategy 2018-2021

9

ACTIVITY SETS

The following 12 activity sets are recommended in order to bring the objectives and vision of the strategy to life under the aforementioned phases and targeting the three overarching audience groups of citizens, the private sector and policymakers.

9.1 Create a digital home

Objective 1: To inspire key audiences – citizens, private sector and policymakers – of a reimagined fashion sector through a positive and empowering narrative.

Primary audience: Citizens, private sector, policymakers

Suggestion: The strategy will need a home in order to showcase the work and the partnerships established. The recommendation is for a website that brings together the various efforts of the entire strategy, supplemented by additional content relative to the subject matter. It may either live as its own entity, or exist under a larger ambit within the UNEP universe. While some of the work will be original creations (as per further activity sets) it will otherwise be a place of curation - somewhere for storytelling to live, with innovations, event news, social media content, articles and more highlighted alongside. Through the partners involved in the strategy, it will further point users to other reading and resources.

As a result, it will serve as both a place of information on UNEP's efforts, as well as an actionable jumping off point for ways in which key audiences can otherwise get involved. Taking the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration website as its inspiration, it will also be able to show the ambition of the strategy as well as its milestones. The website can accordingly serve as the

initial launch opportunity for the strategy - setting out the intentions of the work otherwise planned. It should be translated into key languages identified.

9.2 Reimagine the fashion sector

Objective 1: To inspire key audiences – citizens, private sector and policymakers – of a reimagined fashion sector through a positive and empowering narrative.

Primary audience: Citizens, private sector, policymakers

Suggestion: The anchor for the strategy should be a creative campaign envisioning a new fashion future. A 'hero' piece of multimedia content will take the lead on changing the dominant narrative of the sector, providing audiences with an understanding of the systemic challenges the industry faces and the inspiration for what a positive, regenerative and equitable version could look like instead. It could take biodiversity as a jumping off point for instance - truly showcasing fashion's connection to nature - while also incorporating social justice as a central part of the messaging (as per sections 3.5.3 and 3.5.4). It should be powerful, entertaining and emotionally engaging, positioning fashion as a core part of the solution to the wider climate and ecological crisis the world is facing. It will incorporate a call to action that motivates people to find out more and get involved with calling for the sector to change.

The campaign could find its inspiration in the work of Earth Logic²⁰⁸, as outlined in the message framing of section 4.2, as well as the Great Reset campaign initiated by the advertising sector's Purpose Disruptors.²⁰⁹ Purpose Disruptors may also provide a partnership opportunity on that basis to both bolster the ambition and operationally put out a request for proposal (RFP) to advertising agencies in order to solicit the best creative solutions.

A partnership with YouTube's fashion division is also a potential opportunity with the aim of seeding the campaign to wide audiences. It should otherwise live on the strategy's website, and be disseminated widely via the UN's own networks and through social media (see 9.3). A variety of longer form and short segment versions will need to be produced accordingly.

9.3 Amplify the campaign via social media

Objective 1: To inspire key audiences – citizens, private sector and policymakers – of a reimagined fashion sector through a positive and empowering narrative.

Primary audience: Citizens

Suggestion: The strategy suggests running a social media and influencer campaign to surround the hero content of section 9.2 in order to amplify its efforts. A paid media strategy would bolster efforts further should funding allow, bringing new people into the conversation and not just those already converted. This will need a variety of digital visual assets produced, such as shorter form videos and still images, and a hashtag created to unite them all. The assets will need to be adapted dependent on the channels the campaign

targets. Potential platforms included in that list will be the aforementioned YouTube, as well as the likes of Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Weibo, WeChat, TikTok and beyond.

A partnership with TikTok could be a strong opportunity relative to reaching the youth audience particularly. This is a prime example of where disposable fashion is securing shoppers through heavily targeted campaigns using key influencers on the one hand²¹⁰, but also where Generation Z are educating on sustainability increasingly.²¹¹ An influencer tie-in with the platform specifically for this UNEP sustainable fashion work could have the double impact of not just extending reach, but helping change minds of impressionable viewers used to seeing a very different kind of message from the sector.

A broader influencer strategy should look to engage the Goodwill Ambassadors to support the hero campaign by sharing it on their own platforms. This could include Gisele Bundchen, Ellie Goulding and Ian Sommerhalder on the global stage, as well as key regional voices such as Dia Mirza in India and Li Bingbing and Karry Wang in China. Short filmed introductions from each ambassador would help create a personalised approach. Other unexpected celebrities may also be enlisted - those starting to engage with sustainability and the environment, but with a significant presence in the fashion sector already, for instance. Surrounding that should be a global influencer play, looking at key fashion names across social media platforms, who can help spread the message of a reimagined sector. All of the work should also have a significant PR launch attached to it.

9.4 Curate broader stories of change

Objective 1: To inspire key audiences – citizens, private sector and policymakers – of a reimagined fashion sector through a positive and empowering narrative.

Primary audience: Citizens, private sector, policymakers

Suggestion: The strategy recognises that having a global hero campaign, while bold in its vision, will be all the more successful if it is accompanied by examples of a new fashion future as told from those actually creating the change. A further activity at the launch of the reimagined fashion campaign then will be to call for the best of what else is out there in multimedia form, whether from industry, activists, innovators or grassroots initiatives. This will tap into the regions specifically, acknowledging and spotlighting local efforts around, for instance, regenerative practices, forward thinking innovations, new business models and beyond. It will particularly aim to seek out stories from indigenous peoples and local communities, and examples of climate and social justice. This could also tie into the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration strategy, as well as explore potential partnerships with the likes of Regenerative Futures, a Generation-Z-founded organisation dedicated to realising what a regenerative



²⁰⁸ Fletcher, K. and Tham, M. (2019). Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan. The J J Charitable Trust

²⁰⁹ Purpose Disruptors (2020) Purpose Disruptors – The Great Reset

²¹⁰ Twigg, M (2020) Shein: the stealth Chinese brand that helped bring down Topshop and Miss Selfridge. The Telegraph. December 2, 2020

²¹¹ Huber, E (2020) Gen Z Is Using Fashion TikTok To Fight Climate Change. Will It Work? Refinery29, September 25, 2020

world looks like, and sharing that insight through a graphic novel, editorial pieces, podcasts and beyond.

The initiative could be launched as a contest, with selected winners announced at a key moment and showcased as an exhibition on the website as well as across UNEP channels. The ambitious version of this activity would not just call for short stories to be shared, but provide a platform on which in-depth and longer films can be created, thus also providing greater incentive and equity in participation. A partnership with non-profit documentary filmmaking organisation, The Doc Society, for instance, could establish a fund or a prize to make this viable at scale. Netflix would be a potential distribution partner.

9.5 Support targeted education access

Objective 1 and 3: To inspire key audiences – citizens, private sector and policymakers – of a reimagined fashion sector through a positive and empowering narrative, and to create consumer desire for sustainable fashion choices, and a platform upon which to demand them.

Primary audience: Citizens

Suggestion: To move citizens along the funnel from awareness to action, the strategy recommends supporting access to educational courses for the most engaged audiences to participate in so as to learn further what the depths of sustainable fashion change looks like. This has the dual potential of both increasing the understanding of the sector's necessary shift with the general public, as well as stimulating participation in the sustainable transition from professionals already in the sector and those potential professionals ahead, be

it students, recent graduates or young entrepreneurs. UNEP can play a role in ensuring it is made available and promoted in developing nations and not just through, for instance, a European lens.

There are already a multitude of efforts surrounding sustainable fashion education available in the market, thus it does not make sense for UNEP to create something new. Through the consultation period of this strategy, a handful of partnership opportunities have presented themselves. One example is the industry-leading Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF), a University of the Arts research centre based at London College of Fashion, which recently launched its Fashion Values programme. This builds on its 'Fashion and Sustainability: Understanding Luxury Fashion in a Changing World' MOOC in partnership with Kering, which has seen over 58,000 participants from 191 countries to date. It is now introducing four new programmes, covering Fashion and Nature, Culture, Society and Economy. UNEP is invited to participate by sharing relevant content for both the courses and the coordinating digital platform, and to promote it across key regions around the world. This coordinates with the strategy's goal to work in developing markets, through partnerships CSF has already established with further global institutions including NIFT in India and Tsinghua in China. An extension of this partnership is explained under activity 9.10.





9.6 Establish a sustainable fashion communication guide

Objective 2: To persuade marketers and media in the fashion sector to align messaging with a 1.5-degree pathway.

Primary audience: Private sector

Suggestion: As evidenced in section 3.4.2, there is both an opportunity and a need to put a framework together relative to how sustainability is communicated by the fashion sector. This acknowledges the powerful marketing machine behind so many of such brands – the idea of them as architects of desire – and the confusion or greenwashing that currently exists within messaging. As a result, a core piece of work for this strategy should lie in delivering a communication guideline – a written report outlining what good looks like when it comes to messaging for the fashion industry within the intended new narrative, as well as advice for encouraging more sustainable consumer behaviour alongside. This will quite literally serve as a framework for fashion brands and businesses on how to align messaging with that of the Paris Agreement Goals and the SDGs, thus only promoting sustainable lifestyles accordingly. It would take influence and inspiration from advertising organisation, Purpose Disruptors, which is advocating for a shift towards communications that “promote attitudes, lifestyles and behaviours that are consummate with a 1.5 degree world” with its Change The Brief work.²¹²

A first phase of this work has already been undertaken in 2021. A consultation focused on sustainable communication as a driving force in the fashion sector’s climate response was carried out with 160 organisations

from across the global value chain, convened in collaboration with the UNFCCC Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action. This led to a new commitment added to the Fashion Charter, launched at COP26, taking immediate effect with all current signatories. This is to: “Align consumer and industry communication efforts to a 1.5-degree or Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) compatible pathway, as set out by the Paris Agreement Goals, as well as a more just and equitable future.” A corresponding UNEP web story was published during COP26 detailing the process that was undertaken in a bid to secure further industry engagement.²¹³ This included a set of draft recommendations that are intended to serve as the basis for the full guideline detailing a structure for implementation and measurement in 2022. The intention would also be to provide case studies and examples of best practice for others to learn from.

9.7 Convene sector marketers and storytellers

Objective 2: To persuade marketers and media in the fashion sector to align messaging with a 1.5-degree pathway.

Primary audience: Private sector

Suggestion: As a follow-up to the communication guideline suggested as activity 6, the strategy recommends sharing this knowledge with the wider sector in key markets around the world. A PR campaign



²¹² Purpose Disruptors (2020) Purpose Disruptors – Our Vision

²¹³ UNEP (2021) Communication must play a critical role in fashion’s climate response. UNEP, November 8, 2021

could run to promote the guide and encourage its uptake, but benefit would lie in convening sector marketers and storytellers in order to more directly share best practice and tips for driving communications change. This could take the form of a podcast series as one option, a wider events programme, or a spectrum of training materials.

While there are numerous conferences already established dedicated to sustainability within fashion, the audiences are rarely composed of those in marketing or communication roles. An event programme could thus be dedicated to sustainable messaging and storytelling, targeting directly chief marketing officers, marketing directors, social media managers, PR officers, advertising agencies, media planners, journalists and beyond. It could showcase those brands that have adopted the guideline as a framework for their own communication since launch, and discuss key ways in which the industry's messaging needs to continue to evolve in order to play a role in helping the sustainable transition. This would also support SMEs and other small players to pick up and implement the guidelines. The overarching focus should be on a convening dedicated to changing the dominant narrative of fashion.

Dependent on resources and funding, this could take place at the smaller end of the scale as a simple webinar series, with different versions held in key markets, or more boldly, as a physical congregation providing the opportunity to discuss the subject matter in depth across the course of a day. The latter would take inspiration from the likes of Mindshare's Huddle event, a festival of ideas, collaboration and entrepreneurship for and about the advertising sector.²¹⁴ It could also connect in with other industry leading events targeted at marketing professionals such as Advertising Week or the SDG

Media Summit, and work with potential partners such as the Laudes Foundation.

9.8 Ensure UNEP participation at key fashion events

Objective 2: To persuade marketers and media in the fashion sector to align messaging with a 1.5-degree pathway.

Primary audience: Private sector

Suggestion: The strategy should also help to elevate the intention of the communication guideline by ensuring UNEP representation speaking to it around the world. A PR strategy should be established to place UNEP and partners as spokespeople on the matter of sustainable fashion storytelling within the media, as well as on podcasts, webinar panels and at key global events for the sector. The latter should include sustainability focused conferences such as the Copenhagen Fashion Summit or the festivities of Fashion Revolution Week (and its Fashion Question Time event particularly), as well as wider fashion business conferences and trade shows, including BoF Voices and the FT Business of Luxury Summit. Regional events should also be targeted, as well as different fashion weeks worldwide.

9.9 Promote alternative consumption models

Objectives 3 and 4: To create consumer desire for sustainable fashion choices, and a platform upon which to demand them, and to promote and celebrate successes within the parameters of the 'new narrative' giving recognition and visibility to industry players, thereby motivating others.

Primary audience: Citizens, private sector

Suggestion: In a bid to move the citizen audience towards behaviour change, this strategy will turn once more to the influencer space in order to address the objective of creating desire and aspiration for sustainable fashion and alternative consumption models. It recommends a campaign promoting innovators via the power and reach of fashion influencers (and micro-influencers) - some of whom could be heavily focused on sustainability already, others new to the space and learning about it alongside their audiences. Rather than just getting them to talk or post on the subject, however, it would take the mantra of 'show, don't tell', using the influencers' platforms to demonstrate some of the alternative models of fashion consumption available to citizens today.

One suggestion would be to take inspiration from the 'Share the Mic' initiative created off the back of Black Lives Matter in 2020, which saw white celebrities amplify black female voices by handing over their Instagram accounts for a day.²¹⁵ As a result, this campaign could pair a diversity of influencers with entrepreneurs and innovators who have market-ready solutions in place. This could similarly take place with Instagram takeovers, a webinar series or in-person events. This should also tie in with the UN's Act Now campaign, which has a specific focus on 'Zero Waste Fashion'²¹⁶, in terms of determining



²¹⁴ Mindshare (2020) Huddle 2020: Huddle for a better future

²¹⁵ Devaney, S (2020) The Important Reason Why White Celebrities Are 'Sharing The Mic' Today. Vogue.co.uk, June 10, 2020

²¹⁶ UN (2018) UN Act Now campaign

the criteria on which entrepreneurs and innovators are recruited. (A positive from the UN Act Now campaign in return would be for users to be able to share such acts with their own networks through a social integration mechanism). A partnership with an organisation such as Fashion for Good - a platform for sustainable fashion innovation - could help with the recruitment process itself on a global scale, while an influencer agency should be brought on board to establish who the influencer voices are.

This work should also particularly target the regions, with the intention to run a pilot in one key market to begin, and then scale it thereafter. The strategy recognises that partnering with local influencers and innovators and helping the regions to develop specific communication plans around it, has the potential to engage thousands of different people than a global effort would otherwise achieve. Ultimately it should show citizens that they don't have to just buy new things to be engaged with fashion, but that there are many different opportunities open to them in their own home market.

A media partnership would help to amplify this work further, either through the specific platform being focused on (eg Instagram, WeChat), or rather with a publishing company such as Condé Nast, which has fashion representation in multiple countries through the Vogue brand.

9.10 Champion local entrepreneurs

Objective 4: To promote and celebrate successes within the parameters of the 'new narrative' giving recognition and visibility to industry players, thereby motivating others.

Primary audience: Private sector

Suggestion: In its ambition to demonstrate how purchasing power can shift towards different models, the strategy may also support an innovation or entrepreneurship prize in order to champion and help power some of these solutions, and particularly, to incentivise them to further establish in wider geographies. This could be achieved by adding a category to an existing awards, or by partnering with an incubator or accelerator (such as Fashion for Good) in order to feed into its programmes. A more ambitious version could look to establish its own judging panel and funding for an award with other industry-leading organisations involved. At minimum it is about giving visibility to entrepreneurs and thereby recognising their efforts. The strategy recommends this ties directly to the reimagined fashion future outlined in activity 2, and even the curated stories of activity 4. The more ambitious version could set a specific challenge, such as one focused on restoration for instance, thus tying it again to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The educational partnership outlined in activity 5 with the Centre for Sustainable Fashion's Fashion Values programme also relates here. This is taking the theme of its four MOOCs and setting a challenge each year calling for submissions to win six months of mentoring from its industry-leading partners in Kering, Condé Nast and IBM. UNEP is invited to become a fourth partner, whereby a spokesperson would be required to help set the challenge, judge the submissions and participate as a mentor. A hackathon will also run in advance of each challenge deadline date, with the potential for UNEP to play host in different markets around the world. Depending on resources, this activity could be instead of the strategy's own innovator award, or as well as - serving as a potential talent pool for it.

9.11 Engage policymakers

Objective 5: To raise awareness with and provide guidance to international policymakers on the importance of a sustainable fashion transition.

Primary audience: Policymakers

Suggestion: With an underlying goal to raise awareness with policymakers, the strategy recommends presenting to member states at the United Nations Environment Assembly, as the primary global platform for environmental action. This would provide an opportunity to lay out the case - by showing the science - as to why making headway within the fashion sector is so crucial relative to Agenda 2030. It would also report on progress made on the work thus far and drive engagement by sharing examples of leadership success stories. The intention would be to activate member states by highlighting bold transformative action, presenting solutions and calling for champions. A further



piece of work to map and identify potential champion policymakers would help to amplify these efforts.

A next step would be to support this policy action by sharing insights and materials that make it feasible. The strategy thus also suggests developing a toolkit for policymakers that documents recommendations for progress in the sector at large, advising on specific policies and providing examples of best practice from other markets. This would tap into numerous partners already working in this space, and could be achieved in direct collaboration with the UNEP team focused on sustainability and circularity in the textile value chain, which has a heavy focus on policy as a key workstream.

9.12 Drive citizen advocacy

Objective 5: To raise awareness with and provide guidance to international policymakers on the importance of a sustainable fashion transition.

Primary audience: Citizens, policymakers

Suggestion: As evidenced in section 3.3.2, this strategy recognises that for truly transformative action to happen at the national and international government level, there needs to be motivation or incentive to encourage policymakers to do so. Action at scale, according to UNEP's Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain report, will only happen with considerable advocacy.²¹⁷ Demand side pressure is key, and is proving successful through such groups as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, which between them have mobilised millions to participate.

As a final, but crucial, activity therefore, the strategy

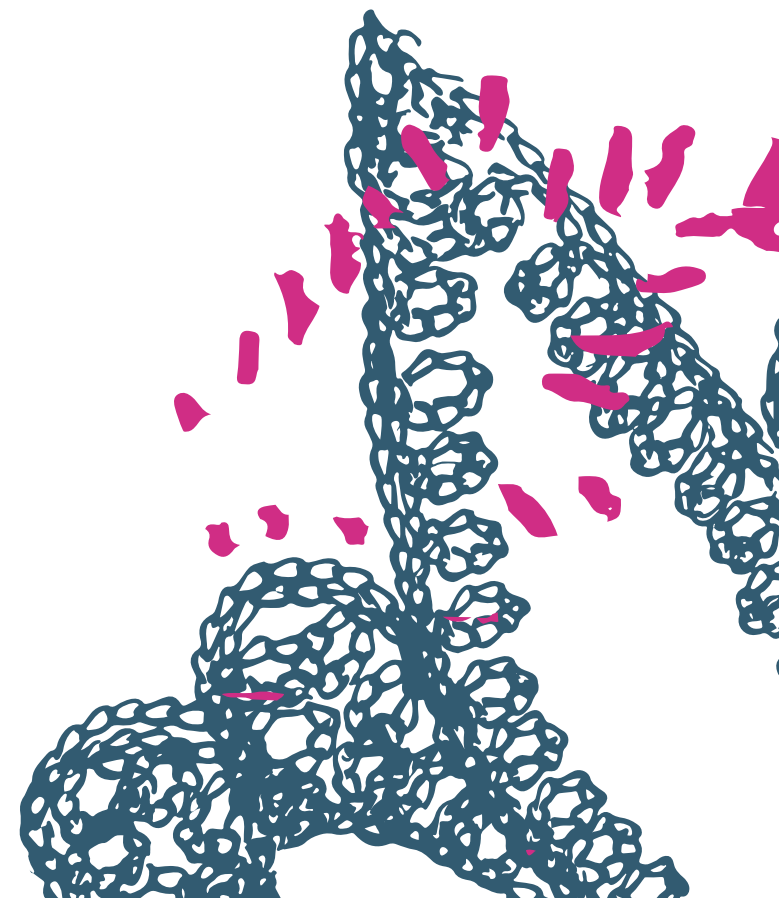
must not only inspire citizens to demand better within the fashion sector specifically, but provide them with the tools to hold the private sector and governments to account directly.

This work is one of the primary focuses of non-profit organisation, Fashion Revolution, as referenced throughout this document. This strategy recommends a partnership opportunity focused specifically on citizen advocacy accordingly. Doing so would help to elevate and increase the reach of Fashion Revolution's efforts around the world, while directly contributing towards the vision of this strategy. In a concrete sense, this would include supporting the organisation's 'Get Involved' guides, as well as other resources, to encourage action directly. One way would be to introduce new areas of focus, such as that of biodiversity and nature, or restoration and regeneration. Another would be to support the translation of this material into key UN languages so they can be utilised by the regions as well, facilitating concerted advocacy efforts on a global scale.

This should also connect with the UNFCCC Race to Zero campaign²¹⁸, which has two related actions for citizens: 1) "Increase demand for apparel manufacturers and consumer goods companies to design products with high content of recycled materials, low/zero carbon footprint, strong durability and low levels of obsolescence." 2) "Pressurise governments and businesses to provide comprehensive options for recycling and find innovative ways to repair, reuse and upcycle end-of-life goods."



217 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya



10

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The strategy will monitor and evaluate progress throughout the three-year period in line with each of the activities. In figure 10.1 an outline of indicators relative to the activities is compared to the original outcomes scoped against objectives in section 4. This will form the basis of the plan.

Figure 10.1 Key performance indicators

OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS
Increased awareness on the systemic issues of the fashion industry and an understanding of improvement as a good thing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a digital home 2. Reimagine the fashion sector 3. Amplify the campaign via social media 4. Curate broader stories of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors and average time spent on the campaign's digital home • Message recall on main campaign launch and resulting positive consumer association with sustainable fashion future • Reach and engagement of the main campaign through PR and social media launch and influencer tie-ins • Minimum of 10 curated stories sharing regenerative practices, forward thinking innovations and new business models relative to the sector
Increased uptake of educational courses driving wider understanding of sustainable fashion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Support targeted education access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants on education courses increased in key UN regions
Increased number of fashion businesses changing the way in which they communicate to consumers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Establish a sustainable fashion communication guide 7. Convene sector marketers and storytellers 8. Ensure UNEP participation at key fashion events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downloads of sustainable fashion communication guide • Intention for all businesses signed up to the UNFCCC Fashion Charter to agree to work towards aligning with the guide • 1-2 key businesses demonstrating full alignment with guideline and provision of case studies accordingly • Number of webinars held or audience size attracted to dedicated events on the subject • UNEP presence at minimum of three key fashion events as an expert speaker on the topic
Increased number of influencers and celebrities talking about sustainable fashion as aspirational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Promote alternative consumption models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of three influencers or celebrities paired with innovators per each region participating • Reach and engagement of the campaign through PR and social media launch per each region participating
Increased awareness of alternative consumption models available in key regions around the world	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Promote alternative consumption models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message recall on businesses showcased in influencer and innovator pairings per each region participating
Increased interest in developing and growing sustainable businesses from the entrepreneur community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Champion local entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of innovators or entrepreneurs applying for the innovator award in each key region • Demonstrable year-over-year growth on applications as this activity is replicated and scaled
Increased number of international governments talking about a sustainable fashion transition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Engage policymakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message recall on sustainable fashion transition from UNEA • Downloads on policy toolkit
Increased advocacy from citizens demanding better of the private sector and of policymakers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Drive citizen advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downloads of citizen action resources in key UN regions

ANNEX

Annex 1: Fashion and the Sustainable Development Goals

The fashion sector touches numerous SDGs. For the sake of this strategy, this specifically includes SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), as well as SDGs 1, 5 and 8 (Poverty Alleviation, Gender Equality and Jobs).

This section breaks each of them down further, explaining how they connect with fashion.

SDG 13: Climate Action

The fashion industry is built on agriculture and petrochemicals, and perpetuated by a throwaway, linear consumption model; all of which feeds into a growing carbon footprint.

The sector is responsible for between 2-8% of global carbon emissions, depending on which resource referred to. The complexity of the industry and its lack of detailed reporting makes precise assessment difficult, but the most recent authoritative report places it at 4%, or 2.1 billion tonnes of GHG emissions in 2018, which is equivalent to the size of France, Germany and the United Kingdom's emissions combined.²¹⁹

63% of clothes are made from synthetic fibres, which are plastics made from fossil fuels.²²⁰ Around 70% of

emissions come from upstream activities such as materials production, preparation and processing, while the other 30% are the result of retail operations, the consumer use-phase and end-of-life activities.²²¹

In short, greenhouse gases are emitted throughout the entire value chain – from the farming and production of materials to their manufacturing, shipping, consumer use and ultimately disposal. If it continues in the same way, the industry will miss the 1.5-degree pathway outlined by the Paris Agreement by 50%.²²²

SDG 6 and 14: Clean Water and Sanitation and Life Below Water

The production and consumption of apparel and accessories also play a significant role relative to water pollution, particularly attributable to the dyeing and treatment phase of textiles. There are 1,900 chemicals used in clothing production, 165 of which the European Union classify as hazardous to health or the environment.²²³

In Bangladesh, industrial pollution accounts for 60% of water pollution - with textiles the second largest contributor after tanneries.²²⁴ Textile dyes have even been proven present in vegetables and fruit.²²⁵ In Indonesia, the Citarium river, which supplies water to 28 million people, has an estimated 280 tonnes of chemical waste dumped into it each day, at the hands of over 200 textile mills and garment factories.²²⁶ Similar statistics can be found for China, Cambodia, Turkey, Uzbekistan and more.

Microfibres are also of increasing concern, whereby the consumer-use stage sees small plastic particles shed into water systems, poisoning marine wildlife and in doing so impacting biodiversity and human health. Around half a million tonnes of microfibres are estimated to end up in the ocean from the washing of textiles including polyester, nylon and acrylic each year. An estimated total of 35% of the world's ocean microplastics comes from the laundering of these synthetics.²²⁷

SDG 15: Life on Land

Fashion is also directly linked to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Its reliance on nature links it to



218 UNFCCC (2020) UNFCCC Race to Zero campaign

219 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

220 Lenzing (2017) The Global Fiber Market

221 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

222 McKinsey&Co and Global Fashion Agenda (2020) Fashion on Climate

223 European Parliamentary Research Service (2019) Environmental impact of the textile and clothing industry, January 2019

224 Mehta, A (2018) Apparel brands join forces to clean up their act in Bangladesh. Reuters Events

225 The World Bank (2014) The Bangladesh Responsible Sourcing Initiative: A New Model For Green Growth, South Asia Environment and Water Resource Unit

226 Whiteside, D (2018) Indonesia aims to banish toxic waste from lifeline river. Reuters

227 Boucher, J & Friot D (2017) Primary Microplastics in the ocean: a global evaluation of sources, International Union for Conservation of Nature

soil degradation, deforestation and water contamination, an issue that only a handful of companies have been actively engaged in addressing.²²⁸

According to Biodiversify and the Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership, the largest impacts on nature occur at the start of the value chain, during the production and harvesting of commodities such as cotton as well as for animal skins.²²⁹

By 2030, it is projected the fashion industry will use 35% more land for fibre production, the equivalent of 115 million hectares.²³⁰ Cotton cultivation uses 2.5% of the world's arable land, yet requires 200 thousand tonnes of pesticides and 8 million tonnes of fertilisers per year, some 16% and 4% of total global use.²³¹ This is contributing to the fact over 40% of insect species are facing extinction due to intensive agriculture and the use of insecticides and pesticides.²³² Meanwhile, man-made cellulose fibres, which are derived from wood, see more than 150 million trees logged each year²³³, up to 30% of which may come from endangered forests.²³⁴ Both of these processes damage soil quality and erase natural habitats.

Biodiversity is also impacted by the end-of-life stage of fashion consumption. 73% of textile waste is incinerated or ends up in landfills²³⁵, and between 30 and 300 species are lost per hectare during the development of just one landfill site.²³⁶ According to the Global Fashion Agenda, "biodiversity, along with the conservation and restoration of nature, should therefore urgently be taken into account in the industry".²³⁷

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

See section 1.2

SDGs 1, 5 and 8: Poverty Alleviation, Gender Equality and Jobs

Social justice is another crucial element of the way the fashion sector plays into the SDGs, touching poverty alleviation, gender equality and jobs. The industry employs more than 60 million workers worldwide, 80% of which are women, according to the International Labour Organisation.²³⁸ Around the globe there continue to be cases of modern slavery, a severe lack of living wages and harassment.

The industry is motivated to source from the cheapest countries and from those with the least protections in place in order to keep its margins down and volumes high. Workers frequently operate in unsafe conditions and are subject to exploitation and verbal and physical abuse.²³⁹

Such conditions in turn further heighten the environmental impact of fashion. The higher the volume production, the more natural resource use the industry relies on. Yet the only way it can produce so much and let shoppers buy it so cheaply, is because of the fact it pays so poorly. There is a gap of two to five times between industry-standard wages and living wage benchmarks in the fashion sector worldwide, reports Labour Behind the Label.²⁴⁰ It is commonly believed were the industry to pay a living wage across the board, it would directly benefit the environmental footprint of the industry as a consequence.²⁴¹

Furthermore, fashion relies on a marginalised workforce, who in turn will be those most affected by climate change in the nations they reside. According to the Global Slavery Index, fashion is one of the biggest contributors to modern slavery, with the

most at-risk countries for garment making including China, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Brazil and Argentina.²⁴² It is because of this, the term "Intersectional Environmentalism" entered the fashion dialogue in 2020 – connecting Black Lives Matter with the climate crisis and urging the sector to recognise the ways in which injustices happening to marginalised communities and the earth are interconnected.²⁴³



228 Kent, S (2020) Will self-regulation solve fashion's sustainability problem?. Business of Fashion

229 Biodiversify & CISL (2020). Developing a Corporate Biodiversity Strategy: A Primer for the Fashion Sector

230 Global Fashion Agenda & Boston Consulting Group (2017) Pulse of the Fashion Industry

231 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking. Nairobi, Kenya

232 Sánchez-Bayo F, Wyckhuys KAG (2019) Worldwide decline of the entomofauna: A review of its drivers. Biological Conservation. 2019

233 Canopy (2020) CanopyStyle, Canopyplanet.org

234 D.G. McCullough (2014) Deforestation for fashion: Getting unsustainable fabrics out of the closet. Guardian, April 25, 2014

235 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future

236 Sciencing (2018) The effects of landfills on the environment. April 19, 2018

237 Global Fashion Agenda (2020) CEO Agenda 2020

238 Huynh P (2015) Employment, wages and working conditions in Asia's garment sector: Finding new drivers of competitiveness. ILO

239 Fashion Revolution (2020) Fashion's Future: The Sustainable Development Goals, Future Learn. Accessed September 2020

240 Labour Behind the Label (2019) Tailored Wages 2019: The state of pay in the global garment industry

241 Interview conducted during UNEP consultation period on sustainable fashion communication (2020)

242 Walk Free Foundation (2018) Global Slavery Index 2018

243 Thomas, L (2020) Why Every Environmentalist Should Be Anti-Racist, Vogue.com, June 8, 2020

244 UN Environment Programme (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in

Annex 2: Policy progress

According to the UNEP report on Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain, strategic options available to regulators include “ensuring transparency, taxing resource use and environmental pollution (while shifting taxation away from labour), increasing brand level accountability, including through risk-based due diligence, disclosure, sharing and reporting mechanisms, and setting up minimum requirement standards for textile products on the market (and restricting those products that do not meet the standards). Other incentives governments can put in place include VAT reductions, import benefits and funding for start-ups”.²⁴⁴

The policy work that currently exists, falls loosely under key themes including the circular economy, modern slavery and environmental degradation and pollution. This section explains some of this further.

Circular economy

A big focus of current efforts is around the circular economy, or policy that helps under key headers of reducing waste, increasing recycling and incentivising reuse. In Europe, for instance, the EU Commission’s Circular Economy Action Plan aims to accelerate the transformational change required by the European Green Deal, while building on circular economy actions implemented since 2015.²⁴⁵ Central to this for fashion is a Waste Directive that requires all textiles to be collected separately in Member States by 2025, and a consideration on targets for textile waste re-use and recycling by the end of 2024.²⁴⁶

As a part of this, an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme is also being considered. This already

exists in France (since 2006), where clothing companies have to pay an upfront fee relative to how much product they produce, and this helps fund the collection of waste and recycling infrastructure.²⁴⁷ In the UK, EPR was one of the recommendations from the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC)’s Fixing Fashion report that was rejected by parliament, but is being considered as part of its Resources and Waste Strategy by 2022.²⁴⁸

France is also ahead when it comes to regulating the way in which brands destroy items of clothing in order to protect intellectual property by selling it at a discount. In 2019, it announced a ban on the destruction (incineration) of unsold fashion goods, obliging businesses to donate, reuse or recycle them instead, to be implemented by 2023.²⁴⁹

Repairs also come into the conversation here. A handful of governments are providing incentives and making it easier to restore and reuse clothing and textiles. Sweden for instance offers a 50% tax break for repairs on shoes and clothes, among other items, while Austria has recently agreed something similar.²⁵⁰

As a part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, the European Commission is also proposing the introduction of labelling on all EU products, using Product and Organisation Environmental Footprint methods. The aim is to substantiate claims by ensuring reporting is based on standardised data. While this idea of a universal scoring system is deemed a positive by the industry, feedback on the initiative shows the methodology is not yet deemed good enough for adoption.²⁵¹

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation would further like to see global policy efforts that would incentivise the use of recycled materials and disincentivise the use of virgin materials.²⁵² The UK’s EAC report also recommended a tax on textile products with less than 50% recycled PET as part of the government’s proposed tax on virgin plastics, which comes into force in 2022. Elsewhere in the world, the issue is less about waste creation and collection as waste imports. Countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are banning second hand clothing imported from the US and UK in order to bolster their own local manufacturing. The same discussions are underway in the Philippines, Ghana and Kenya.²⁵³



the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking, Nairobi, Kenya

²⁴⁵ European Commission (2020) European Commission Circular Action Plan

²⁴⁶ European Parliamentary Research Service (2019) Environmental impact of the textile and clothing industry, January 2019

²⁴⁷ Fashion Revolution (2020) Fashion’s Future: The Sustainable Development Goals, Future Learn. Accessed September 2020

²⁴⁸ Defra Press Office (2019) Government’s response to the EAC’s report on fast fashion, Gov.uk

²⁴⁹ Rreuse (2017) Reduced taxation to support re-use and repair

²⁵⁰ Piringier, M & Schanda, I (2020) Austria makes repair more affordable, Right to Repair

²⁵¹ European Commission (2020) Environmental performance of products & businesses - substantiating claims

²⁵² Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion’s Future

²⁵³ Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

Modern Slavery

When it comes to social justice, the fashion industry has a long way to go to ensure fair practices throughout its value chain, but policies do exist in a handful of key markets. The Modern Slavery Act in the UK for instance, which became law in 2015, requires companies with revenue of over £36 million to produce a 'modern slavery statement' every year.²⁵⁴ The Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act follows a similar framework in Australia as of 2019. However, the effectiveness of the laws can be questioned in both instances, as there are no penalties for companies that don't comply, nor are there independent reviews.²⁵⁵

France has a stronger version again with the Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law, passed in 2017. This goes beyond reporting on risks, and demands all businesses of more than 5,000 employees domestically, or 10,000 employees worldwide, to "identify and prevent adverse human rights and environmental impacts resulting from their own activities, from activities of companies they control, and from activities of their subcontractors and suppliers".²⁵⁶

Fashion Revolution calls for such due diligence to be legally mandated because it would mean a more proactive approach to identifying, monitoring and measuring human rights and environmental impacts across supply chains. In doing so it would make it harder for companies to turn a blind eye to poor working conditions and environmental degradation.²⁵⁷ The EU is also considering legislation on due diligence obligations for supply chains in the garment sector.²⁵⁸ Meanwhile, The Circle is an NGO that has put together a framework for a global living wage for the fashion industry.²⁵⁹

Environmental degradation and pollution

The fashion industry's impact on air and water pollution is one area where legislation is in need in producing markets around the world. Where the likes of the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act have mandated environmental responsibility in the United States, for instance, since the 1960s and 70s, the same cannot always be said elsewhere. "This industry is now operating in countries where there is both a lack of technical capacity and oftentimes a lack of political will, to put basic environmental restrictions in place to help to ameliorate [its] impact," said Linda Greer, Ph.D Environmental Toxicologist.²⁶⁰ She calls for real-time monitoring and reporting of discharges, noting that when it's measured it is also more likely to get addressed by policymakers.

Efforts are underway in some markets to address water particularly, with China putting laws around water pollution and illegal discharges as one example,²⁶¹ and Bangladesh's International Finance Corporation working with the Bangladesh Government on labor, safety and environmental performance, including through looking at reducing water and energy consumption.²⁶² But greater regulation and enforcement is needed.²⁶³

Microfibre pollution is also being addressed as part of the anti-waste law for a circular economy in France. As of January 2025, all new washing machines in France will have to include a filter to stop synthetic clothes from polluting waterways.²⁶⁴ This is yet to exist elsewhere, though reducing microfibre pollution was also a key part of the EAC's recommendations in the UK.

Globally, there are also policy efforts being made towards reducing environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, which will impact the fashion industry.

Annex 3: Campaign analysis – deep-dive

Herewith a list of initiatives and campaigns within the fashion sector aimed towards driving a more sustainable industry. This should not be considered a completely comprehensive outline, but a starting point on the leading efforts.

Initiatives

The two largest initiatives relative to a more sustainable fashion industry are the United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action and the G7 Fashion Pact.



²⁵⁴ Kelly, A (2015) The UK's new slavery laws explained: what do they mean for business? The Guardian, December 14, 2015

²⁵⁵ Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

²⁵⁶ European Coalition for Corporate Justice (2017) French Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law

²⁵⁷ Fashion Revolution (2020) Fashion's Future: The Sustainable Development Goals, Future Learn. Accessed September 2020

²⁵⁸ European Parliamentary Research Service (2019) Environmental impact of the textile and clothing industry, January 2019

²⁵⁹ The Circle (2019) Fashion Forward: Towards a Legal Framework for a Living Wage. November 2019

²⁶⁰ Fashion Revolution (2020) Fashion's Future: The Sustainable Development Goals, Future Learn. Accessed September 2020

²⁶¹ SgT Group (2018) China Environmental Policy and the Textile Industry in 2018, SgT Textile Quality Management

²⁶² International Finance Corporation (2017) Building a sustainable textile and apparel market in Bangladesh

²⁶³ Regan, H. (2020) Asian rivers are turning black. And our colorful closets are to blame. CNN Style, September 29, 2020

²⁶⁴ Fashion Revolution (2020) Why We Still Need A Fashion Revolution

But the industry also has a multitude of other players working towards transformative industry goals as well as the nuance of individual progresses needed throughout the value chain.

- **United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action**

The United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action was launched COP24 in Poland, in 2018 and renewed at COP26 in Glasgow, UK, in 2021. It contains the vision to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, drawing on methodologies from the Science-Based Targets Initiative. It has over 100 signatories spanning organisations including adidas, PVH Corp, Inditex and Burberry.

- **G7 Fashion Pact**

The G7 Fashion Pact is a coalition of companies from across the fashion sector committed to environmental goals across three pillars: climate change, biodiversity and ocean protection. Announced in 2019 off the back of a mission given to luxury group Kering's Chairman and CEO, François-Henri Pinault, by French President, Emmanuel Macron, it has more than 60 signatory companies to date, ranging from Gap and Zara to Chanel and Prada, as well as those within the Kering group. An update announced in October 2020, showed further commitments specifically to sourcing lower-impact raw materials, eliminating plastic packaging and establishing biodiversity blueprints.²⁶⁵

- **Ellen MacArthur Foundation - Make Fashion Circular**

The Make Fashion Circular initiative from the Ellen

MacArthur Foundation launched in 2017 to bring together key players from across the industry, including brands, NGOs, innovators and more. Its aim is to help shape a new textiles economy aligned with principles of circularity, as per a report of the same name launched by the foundation in 2017.²⁶⁶ Brands including Burberry, Stella McCartney, H&M Group and more are signed up as core partners.

- **Global Fashion Agenda - 2020 Circular Fashion System Commitment**

The Global Fashion Agenda also launched a commitment encouraging the industry's transition to a new circular system by 2020. It is signed by 94 fashion companies with the aim of calling on EU policymakers to build towards a circular economy.

- **The United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion**

The United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion brings together UN agencies and allied organisations to coordinate action within the fashion sector. Its aim is to reduce fashion's negative environmental and social impacts, turning it into a driver of the implementation of the SDGs. Members include Connect4Climate, Ethical Fashion Initiative and UNECE.

- **Others**

There are many other initiatives and organisations established to work towards a more sustainable fashion industry, including the likes of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, an alliance focused on sustainable production across apparel, footwear and textiles with over 250 members; the Apparel

Impact Institute, which focuses on identifying the environmental impacts of the apparel and footwear industries; the Ethical Fashion Initiative, which strengthens social enterprises in emerging economies by connecting them to global brands; the European Clothing Action Plan, which aims to reduce clothing waste across Europe and embed a circular economy approach, and the Transparency Pledge, which helps companies commit towards greater transparency in their manufacturing supply chains.

A number of fashion brands including Burberry, Timberland and H&M have also recently signed a Call to Action from Business for Nature – a coalition of global organisations – asking governments to adopt policies to reverse nature loss within the next 10 years.²⁶⁷ The Science Based Targets initiative is also gaining momentum within the fashion industry, but has only seen just over 50 companies from the sector committed to them thus far.²⁶⁸ Similarly the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector is frequently referred to by leading voices.

Then there are more specific entities designated towards specific areas of the industry, such as Cotton 2040, Leather Working Group, Sustainable Fibre Alliance, Woolmark, WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme), and more. On top of that are the huge number of standards that exist related



²⁶⁵ The Fashion Pact (2020) First Steps to Transform Our Industry

²⁶⁶ Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future

²⁶⁷ Business for Nature (2020) Business for Nature's Call to Action

to the industry, whether about cotton prices, farmer welfare, child labour, forced labour, organic production, working conditions or chemical use.²⁶⁹

Campaigns

When it comes to campaigns dedicated to inspiring and driving a more sustainable fashion industry, the majority of efforts have been industry-facing. There are however an increasing number of consumer campaigns focused on encouraging new behaviours. This list is broken down accordingly:

Industry campaigns

- Among the more memorable or pertinent campaigns on the environmental side of the industry, is the Detox My Fashion initiative from Greenpeace, which aimed to highlight the issue of toxic chemical use within fashion. The outcome led to 80 company commitments to detoxing. ZDHC (Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals) is an organisation that launched following the campaign, with the Roadmap to Zero programme working towards a 2020 goal.
- PETA regularly campaigns for the humane treatment of animals in the clothing industry, as well as for larger biodiversity issues. Most recently at London Fashion Week, PETA protested against the use of exotic skins used in collections, calling for brands to use vegan materials instead. PETA works through public education, cruelty investigations, research, animal rescue, legislation and protest campaigns.
- CanopyStyle is a campaign from environmental

not-for-profit Canopy, aiming to stop the use of viscose from endangered forests. It asks fashion brands to pledge against it and instead support the development of new fibres and solutions.

- The Conscious Fashion Campaign, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, focuses on driving support of the SDGs at global fashion industry events. It does so by facilitating partnerships advocating for sustainable solutions and innovations.
- The #PayUp Campaign, organised by Remake, a non-profit focused on human rights violations in the fashion industry, was launched to pressure brands and retailers to pay their workers for orders in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its efforts have unlocked some \$22 billion globally.
- The Clean Clothes Campaign is a network aiming to improve working conditions in the clothing and sportswear industries. It does so by putting pressure on companies and governments to ensure the rights of workers throughout the global supply chain are respected.
- Labour Behind The Label campaigns for living wages, worker safety, and for better protection of exploited workers in the UK garment industry. In light of COVID-19, its work has focused on calling brands to step up and protect those who make their clothes as the economic fallout of the pandemic worsens.
- The Living Wage Project launched by women's NGO, The Circle, is aiming to establish a legal

framework obliging companies to pay garment workers a living wage.

- Numerous other social justice campaigns exist designed to support garment workers in the supply chain, including the Asian Floor Wage which launched the #GarmentMeToo campaign to end gender-based violence in Asia, and The Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity, which campaigns to improve worker conditions in Bangladesh, successfully getting international brands and retailers to sign the Accord on Fire and Building Safety.
- Similarly, there are a number of industry-facing design challenges aiming to shift the industry to more sustainable design practices. One example is the Circular Design Challenge in India run between UNEP and Lakmé Fashion Week, and the recently launched Future Fashion Now, launched by WeDesign in collaboration with The Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the UN. The Global Change Awards by the H&M Foundation meanwhile celebrate innovative new solutions for the sector each year. Brazil also now has its own Eco Fashion Week, while South Africa has an annual sustainable fashion awards.



²⁶⁸ Science Based Targets (2020) Uniting Business and Governments to Recover Better

²⁶⁹ Lissaman, C & Paris, H (2019) Fixing Fashion: Who is doing what?, Common Objective

Consumer campaigns

- Strictly speaking, Fashion Revolution could also sit under the header of industry-facing campaigns for its work influencing brands and retailers as well as policymakers towards change. Where it stands apart however, is in its consumer activations. A global movement with representation now in 60 countries around the world, a core part of its work is focused on public awareness and education. It runs the annual Fashion Revolution Week to commemorate the anniversary of the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh. This now sees upwards of 2,000 events hosted by communities around the world each year. Transparency is another central focus feeding into social media campaigns it runs including #WhoMadeMyClothes, getting people to talk about the people behind the fashion supply chain, and #LovedClothesLast, encouraging consumers to rethink consumption. Its Fashion Transparency Index is an annual industry-facing report related to this cause; aiming to incentivise brands to disclose more information to help consumers find credible information about the working conditions and environmental impacts of what they are buying.
- Extinction Rebellion is drumming up consumer awareness with its protests during fashion weeks as well as at stores such as H&M. Its new Fashion Act Now campaign is all about creating a roadmap for a “real crisis response” from the fashion industry, aligned with ensuring it contributes to the 1.5-degree pathway established by the Paris Agreement. It previously ran a #BoycottFashion campaign in the bid to increase awareness on

excessive consumption, calling for consumers to repair, reuse and recycle instead. Fashion Weeks are also a main target for demonstrations, with everything from faux funerals to mass protests held to capture public attention.

- Oxfam’s #SecondHandSeptember encourages consumers to only buy second hand for the 30 days of September. eBay also participated in the campaign in 2020, launching a vintage auction on its site.
- UNEP’s Anatomy of Action is a social media toolkit with a focus specifically on a Fashion Slow Down – inspiring individuals to “buy better clothes and stay away from fast fashion that mass produces at the cost of environmental and human justice”.
- Fashion Our Future is a campaign inviting consumers to make a series of pledges about the way they consume fashion – including renting, shopping vintage, buying sustainable viscose and more. The launch engaged a multitude of high-profile celebrities and influencers to participate in the initiative, including Jameela Jamil, Amber Valletta, Eva Chen, Derek Blasberg and Adwoa Aboah. The motto of the campaign is “No one can do everything, but everyone can do something”.
- WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) in the UK ran the Love Your Clothes campaign to encourage consumers to buy smarter and keep clothes for longer. Love Not Landfill was adopted on top of that campaign, focused on driving collection of unwanted clothing in a bid to up second-hand sales rather than sending items to

landfill.

- In China, Sustainable Consumption Week promotes new responsible shopping behaviours through partnerships with retailers across 120 cities. Participating stores have grown from 80 to almost 2,000 in 2019, influencing more than 30 million consumers.
- The Green Carpet Challenge was launched by Eco-Age co-founder Livia Firth and journalist Lucy Siegle back in 2010 in a bid to make the red carpet more sustainable. Red Carpet Green Dress, founded by Suzy Amis Cameron, is another organisation aligned with a similar mission of transforming celebrity events with sustainable designs.

Media moments

Awareness of the fashion industry’s unsustainable processes has also been brought to the attention of consumers, the industry and policymakers alike off the back of a number of different global events and media moments. It is through such occasions that action has been spurred and a shift in behaviour witnessed. Some examples include:

- In April 2013 the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, which housed five garment factories, collapsed killing 1,132 people and injuring more than 2,500.²⁷⁰ The tragedy exposed the hazardous working conditions for many garment workers and sparked a number of campaigns advocating for worker protection.
- Nike came under scrutiny in the 1990s when

activist Jeff Ballinger produced a report detailing the low wages, poor working conditions and evidence of child labour in its Indonesian factories. The sweatshop scandal caused major backlash in the west and severely damaged Nike's reputation for years to come.²⁷¹

- In 2018, luxury brand Burberry was exposed for burning £28.6m of unsold stock in order to protect its brand image. The company fell under fierce criticism from the public, with the pressure causing the brand to end such practice.²⁷²
- An undercover report by The Sunday Times discovered that factories supplying BooHoo.com in Leicester in the UK, were paying workers as little as £3.50 an hour. The report shocked the

public as the allegations were on home turf in the UK, and not in distant developing nations. It led to the reopening of the UK's Environmental Audit Committee's Fixing Fashion case.²⁷³

- Numerous different film documentaries have also caused a stir with consumers and are good examples of education on the topic. These include (but are not limited to): The True Cost (2015), which shows the dark side of fashion through human rights violations and environmental destruction; River Blue (2016), which demonstrates the extreme water pollution from the fashion industry through its irresponsible disposal of toxic chemical waste; and Fashion's Dirty Secrets (2019), an investigation into environmental impact caused by cheap clothing.



270 International Labour Organization (N.d) The Rana Plaza Accident and its aftermath

271 Robertson. L (2020) How Ethical is Nike?, Good On You

272 BBC (2018) Burberry burns bags, clothes and perfume worth millions, BBC News, July 19, 2018

273 Vidhathri Matety (2020) Boohoo's sweatshop suppliers: 'They only exploit us. They make huge profits and pay us peanuts', The Sunday Times, July 5, 2020

