



Fast Fashion in the Age of Global Capitalism

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What is Fast Fashion?

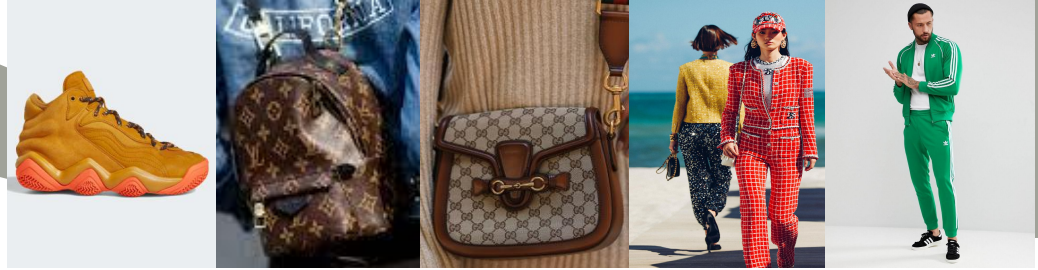
“An approach to the design, creation, and marketing of clothing fashions that emphasizes making fashion trends quickly and cheaply available to consumers.”

– Merriam Webster



Examples

ROMWE
SHEIN



A Short History of Garment Construction in the United States

- ❖ **1830s to late 1940s:** Overall decrease in the production of clothes in and outside of the home.
- ❖ **1950s & 60s:** A domestic apparel industry emerges as ready-to-wear clothes become cheaper.
- ❖ **Mid 1960s:** Retailers in the U.S. begin importing ready-to-wear clothing from Asian countries.
- ❖ **1970s:** Other industries begin outsourcing their manufacturing to predominantly Asian countries, lowering their cost to the public.
- ❖ **1980s–Now:**
 - Outsourcing manufacturing becomes the standard for apparel companies based in the U.S.
 - Interest in garment construction jobs rapidly declines in the U.S.

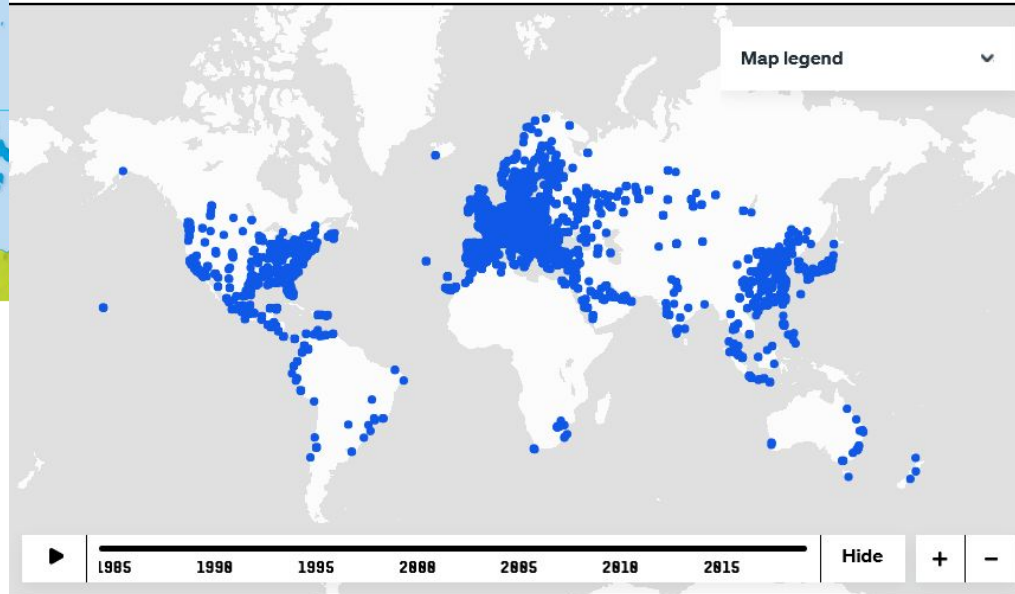
Where is Fast Fashion Produced?

- ❖ In the 80s manufacturing was originally primarily outsourced to China, especially Hong Kong.
- ❖ Today, the majority of fast fashion manufacturing is still outsourced to Asian countries with notable presence in China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh.
- ❖ Outsourcing to other areas of the Global South in Latin America and Africa is also common.
- ❖ In the past 5 years or so there has been increased interest in re-creating domestic manufacturing industries in the global North.



Fast Fashion's Global Takeover

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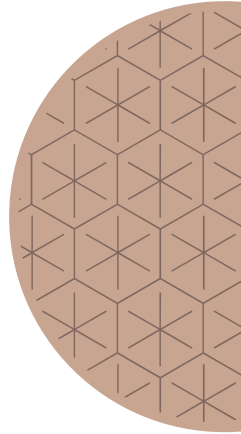
Source: Thinknum Alternative Data - [Open dataset](#)

Capitalism & the Fast Fashion Industry

“What attracts the garment industry? It tends to be where the rule of law is weakest. Where people are so desperately poor that, en masse, they’re willing to work in almost any conditions... It’s not indentured servitude or slavery but in a way it is. Throughout the supply chain, an incredible amount of money is being made by these brands. A significant amount of money is being made by the factory. But the workers are nowhere near a living wage.”

David Welsh
Labor Organizer, Solidarity Center

Working Conditions & Wages



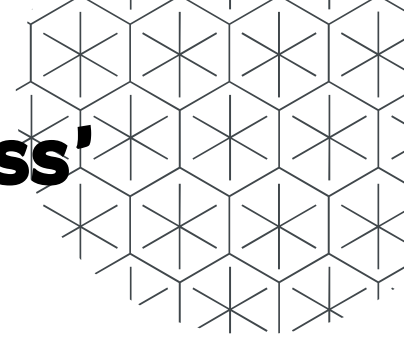
Working Conditions & Wages

- ❖ In the majority of fast fashion factories, garment makers are paid at or below the minimum wage.
- ❖ The majority of these workers are impoverished women with male managers and recruiters.
 - More numerous reports of physical and sexual abuse than male dominated industries in the same areas.
- ❖ Workers are regularly coerced to work overtime.
 - Threats of termination, pay decreases, and/or cut hours
- ❖ It is common for workers to be denied legally mandated breaks and bathroom breaks.
- ❖ Encouraged to minimize social interactions while working.

Understanding Fast Fashion Through the Transnational Capitalist Class

- ❖ Traditional models of global capitalism identified states as the primary actors in global capitalism.
- ❖ This model has historical value, but struggled to account for the emergence of international industries and global supply chains.
- ❖ Leslie Sklair suggested rather than states, individuals were the primary actors in global capitalism.
- ❖ Actors could be categorized into 4 fractions:
 - Corporate
 - Political
 - Technical
 - Consumerist

The Transnational Capitalist Class' Reproduction of Fast Fashion



- ❖ The corporate fraction of the TCC is defined by its control over transnational corporations.
 - It is presently very much in the interest of the TCC to make fashion as fast as possible so that they can profit off of it.
- ❖ The consumerist fraction of the TCC is identified by its promotion of a lavish and consumption-driven life style.
 - Fast fashion is presented as an opportunity to engage in this sort of lifestyle by mimicking the purchase patterns and fashion sense of the ultra-rich.





6 OUTFITS FOR UNDER \$40 🤯





The Future of Fast Fashion?

Resources

- ❖ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fast%20fashion>
- ❖ [Innovation Resource Center for Human Resources- Evolution of the Clothing Industry in the United States](#)
- ❖ [JL Collins \(2002\)- Mapping a Global Labor Market: Gender and Skill in the Globalizing Garment Industry](#)
- ❖ [V Bhardwaj & A Fairhurst \(2010\)- Fast Fashion: Response to Changes in the Fashion Industry](#)
- ❖ [T. Lan & S. Zhu \(2014\)- Chinese Apparel Value Chains in Europe: Low-End Fast Fashion, Regionalization, and Transnational Entrepreneurship in Prato, Italy](#)
- ❖ [Lectra \(2019\)- Made-in-the-USA Apparel Manufacturing: The Journey, the Resurgence and Solutions to Meet a Growing Demand](#)
- ❖ [Vice News \(2015\)- From Sex Worker to Seamstress: The High Cost of Cheap Clothes](#)
- ❖ [L Sklair \(2016\)- The Transnational Capitalist Class, Social Movements, and Alternatives to Capitalist Globalization](#)
- ❖ [P. Ngai & J. Chan \(2012\)- Global Capital, the State, and Chinese Workers: The Foxconn Experience](#)
- ❖ [C.K. Lee \(2009\)- Raw Encounters: Chinese Managers, African Workers and the Politics of Casualization in Africa's Chinese Enclaves](#)