

H&M: Sustainable Supergiant or Exploitative Enterprise?

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Audience: The audience should imagine themselves as the board of directors with general knowledge of H&M, but not a detailed awareness of the legal, financial or ethical issues.

Outline:

- Background of H&M
 - Definition of fast fashion
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 - H&M's role in fast fashion and what H&M looks like now
 - Their market shares, productivity, and economic costs
 - New merchandise is released weekly so clothing "seasons" have risen dramatically
- The problem
 - It is unsustainable to churn out this much clothing and it requires large amounts of textile waste to be discarded and the production harms the environment, the consumer and the worker.
 - False marketing through "greenwashing" products misleads the consumer
 - Materials used in the clothing production pollute the atmosphere, water sources, and harm humans and animals.
 - Overproduction harms the environment and results in environmental racism
 - Promises like Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals were broken
 - No laws about what counts as becoming "sustainable", but ethical violation
 - The environment has an intrinsic value which is overlooked in the name of profit
- The solution
 - Operate and manage their own manufacturing facilities by 2022 and become more transparent and strict with manufacturing sites they use
 - It would guarantee safe working conditions and environmental practices by tightening standards

Summary: H&M is the second largest fast fashion clothing manufacturer globally, but their production model based on high volumes of clothing and inexpensive prices is not sustainable. This business model exploits the environment, the worker, and the consumer. These poorly made items are designed to be discarded after a few uses so their materials are cheap and they pollute the earth at every stage of the garment cycle. H&M's false sustainable marketing misleads the consumer to believe their purchased clothing items are more environmentally friendly than they are. This "greenwashing" is unethical because it misrepresents the brand as something that it is not. The materials harm the environment which denies the intrinsic value of the planet. In doing so it harms future generations so that the present generation can consume far more than they need. It is unethical to overlook future needs in favor of current fashion choices. Further, many of the places where this clothing is manufactured or dumped are low-income and/or non-white communities which leads to an issue of environmental injustice and racism. It is unethical that some people share a disproportionate share of the environmental burden because they do not have the resources to fight against the location of these manufacturing facilities or dumping locations. As such, a solution must address both environmental and humanitarian concerns. Our solution is to operate and manage our manufacturing facilities by 2022 and become more transparent and strict with the manufacturing sites that we use. Humans and the environment have the right to not be harmed, so we have the duty not to harm them in the name of a profit.