

The Council of Fashion Designers of America, Inc.

CHMUN XIX
Specialized Agency

Committee Background:

The Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) is a non-profit group established in 1962 by Eleanor Lambert, an accomplished publicist who can be accredited with spreading the silhouette of American fashion in common lifestyles. The council boasts 474 American fashion designers with specializations in a variety of garments. The CFDA stands to raise money for charitable causes as well as fashion events. The council organizes New York Fashion Week and hosts the annual Fashion Awards that rewards those who have had a significant impact on the American fashion industry. The CFDA also provides career advancement opportunities with mentorship and other educational programs. Additionally, the CFDA advocates for rights of the fashion designers such as intellectual property and supply chain issues. The council also works to better the toxic promotion of unrealistic beauty standards and unethical manufacturing methods. The current CEO of the CFDA is Steven Kolb, holding the position for 10 years and has plans to expand the group in light of high revenue growth rates by increasing media promotion, developing a manufacturing center in New York City, and adjusting New York fashion shows to adapt more to technological advancement and changes in consumerism. Thom Browne, a well renowned designer, was elected as the CFDA's Chairman of the Board of Directors and is determined to focus on the creative foundation of the fashion industry by empowering newer designers and ideas.



Topic A: Protecting Intellectual Property Rights

In an industry built off of creativity and imagination, the originality of many designers is stolen in the name of ease and comfortability, putting up significant barriers for aspiring fashion connoisseurs to enter the field. Many small designers cannot afford to apply for industrial design patents and subsequently the costs of an infringement lawsuit, making them more susceptible to having their work copied without consequences. Even a seemingly small breach of these rights can cause a company to suffer from major losses. In the U.S., legal protection is provided when the design is made, however, many find loopholes such as claiming patents from foreign authorities. An excessive amount of products with similar logos and designs leads to trademark dilution and saturates the market with pieces that all resemble each other and ultimately deteriorates the value of the original design. With the widespread use of social media, counterfeiting has gotten much more prevalent and effortless. Social media accounts can be created to mimic the marketing of the company they are counterfeiting, attracting customers with techniques such as hashtags and promotions and creating official websites. The lower prices of these copied designs appeals to customers who don't bother to confirm the validity of the company, pushing the designers whose ideas were stolen out of the market. Moreover, counterfeit goods lead to a loss of jobs especially when these products are usually outsourced and mass produced and may tarnish the reputation of a company if a customer does not distinguish between the counterfeit and real product. In some cases, counterfeit merchandise can also prove to be harmful for customers in regards to makeup, hygiene and electrical products. Fraudulent sellers may manage to bypass safety regulations and sell products with toxic products and avoid facing any repercussions for it. In order to ensure the future of fashion and innovation that will allow for a variety of unique ideas to enter the market, it is imperative that action is taken to protect designers' rights to their own ideas.



Questions to Consider

1. How can fraudulent sellers be identified on social media?
2. How can promoting the use of trade secrets play a role in securing originality?
3. How can legal protection be made more accessible to businesses with few resources and influence?

Helpful Links

1. Intellectual property rights in fashion
 - a. dlapiper.com/en-ro/insights/publications/2023/03/intellectual-property-rights-in-fashion
2. Fashion Industry and Intellectual Property Infringement
 - a. <https://www.kashishworld.com/blog/fashion-industry-and-intellectual-property-infringement/>
3. Intellectual Property in the Fashion Industry
 - a. <https://igerent.com/intellectual-property-fashion-industry>



Topic B: Sustainably Revolutionizing the Fashion Industry

The current era of fashion is built on instant gratification and ever-changing trends which allow fast fashion to emerge as a dominant force and revolutionize the way we consume clothing while raising pressing ethical and environmental concerns. The mass production of clothing often results in the excessive use of non-renewable resources and greenhouse gas emissions. One cotton shirt requires 3,000 liters and in countries that lack regulative measures, much of this toxic wastewater ends up in larger bodies of water. In order to sustain the extremely low prices that fast fashion brands sell their products at, the companies often have to replace cotton with synthetic fibers such as polyester that contain plastic and emit even more carbon than manufacturing cotton. These plastics do not break down very quickly, therefore polluting oceans and killing marine life. Clothing trends have been evolving faster than most companies can even process, and the promotion of fashion on social media only exacerbates the trend cycle. With consumers consuming advertisements as they scroll through apps such as TikTok or Instagram, they are exposed to countless brands that advertise their clothes as affordable while failing to convey the quality of the material. The combination of fast moving trends and low qualities that only last a few wears leads to a copious amount of clothes being thrown out and filling up landfills as many of these clothes, by design, cannot be recycled. The incineration of this clothing releases many harmful gasses that can be dangerous to those residing in close proximity.

Along with the environmental repercussions of fast fashion, humanitarian crises arise as well. Sustenance for mass production required a reduction of major input costs, and many fast fashion companies do so by outsourcing manufacturing to poorer countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam, where they can get away with paying extremely low wages due to liberal labor laws. These companies also



extricate themselves from managing the production itself to avoid being liable for the unethical labor practices. Less than 2% of the 75 million workers that are employed by fast fashion companies earn a viable wage, the majority of these workers are in the factory for over 15 hours every day in dangerous conditions. They are exposed to thousands of chemicals for long periods, making them incredibly susceptible to lung diseases and cancer. In addition to these health concerns, the infrastructure of the factories themselves are rarely up to code; the danger of these unregulated conditions was exhibited when the Rana Plaza Factory fell in 2013, killing 1,100 people and injuring 2,500 more.

Furthermore, celebrity endorsement of companies that follow unethical practices only encourages the public to purchase fast fashion. For example, world famous singer Beyonce's involvement in a commercial for H&M would have increased the brand's validity ten-fold. Her wide fanbase, consisting largely of impressionable teenagers and young adults, is more likely to buy from the company, further fueling the tendency to over-consume. Similarly, popular fast-fashion brand SHEIN partnered with numerous big names including Khloe Kardashian and even celebrity stylist Law Roach for their SHEIN X 100K challenge. Additionally, when users of social media apps post videos showing their large purchases off of a fast fashion store, they contribute to the normalization of overconsumption

Fast fashion is proving to be the demise of dedicated and passionate designers who value the quality of their work and are contributing to the degradation of our environment.

Questions to Consider

1. How can ethical labor practices be implemented without infringing on a country's natural sovereignty?
2. How can the influence of public figures be redirected to promote sustainable fashion?
3. What alterations can be made to the manufacturing process to maintain affordable prices while ensuring the longevity of the clothing.



Helpful Links

1. What is fast fashion and why is it a problem?
 - a. <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/fashion-clothing/what-fast-fashion-why-it-problem>
2. The environmental costs of fast fashion
 - a. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/environmental-costs-fast-fashion>
3. Fashion and the circular economy
 - a. https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/fashion-and-the-circular-economy-deep-dive?ga=2.156801339.1219036575.1660665039-170758297.1654013160&gad=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw84anBhCtARIsAISI-xdLSJ3R8zvwk5YlkeyDUm4cNPOOXcFwq60BH_UJDSg3aG00s9ZrmE_caAtB-EALw_wcB



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www.redpoints.com/blog/fashion-intellectual-property/.

