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FASHION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
DIFFERENT DIRECTED VECTORS*

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In a modern society, characterized as a “consumer society” (J. Baudrillard), the tasks of reducing the environmental consequences of economic growth are actualized. According to experts, the second largest industrial polluter today is the fashion industry, which is second only to the oil industry. The article examines the mechanisms of influence of fashion as a factor in stimulating consumption in modern society. In the context of the growth of the fashion industry, the threats to sustainable development arising at the stages of production, consumption and utilization of fashion industry products are investigated. The conclusion is made about the need for self-determination of the place of belarusian producers in the global fashion industry, taking into account increasing environmental threats.

Keywords: fashion industry, consumer society, significant consumption, J. Baudrillard, sustainable development, structural policy, light industry, natural rent, fashion, national economy.

РАЗВИТИЕ ИНДУСТРИИ МОДЫ И УСТОЙЧИВОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ:
РАЗНОНАПРАВЛЕННЫЕ ВЕКТОРЫ

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В современном обществе, характеризуемом как «общество потребления» (Ж. Бодрийяр), актуализируются задачи по снижению экологических последствий экономического роста. По оценкам экспертов, вторым по величине промышленным загрязнителем в мире сегодня является индустрия моды, которая уступает лишь нефтяной промышленности. В статье исследована мода как фактор стимулирования потребления в современном обществе. В контексте роста индустрии моды исследуются угрозы устойчивому развитию, возникающие на этапах производства, потребления и утилизации продукции. Делается вывод о необходимости самоопределения места отечественных производителей в мировой индустрии моды с учетом нарастающих экологических угроз.

Ключевые слова: индустрия моды, общество потребления, знаковое потребление, Ж. Бодрийяр, устойчивое развитие, структурная политика, легкая промышленность, природная рента, мода, национальная экономика.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern society or the society of abundance (J. Baudrillard [1, p. 25]) is characterized by a change of «an order of consumption, which is an order of the manipulation of signs» [1, p. 33]. An increasing number of items, along with their objective functions, are endowed with sign functions, which often become primary, which predetermines the choice of the modern buyer. Consumption is mediated by the processes of choice and constant renewal of things, in which every consumer seeks to participate, since he «experiences his distinctive behaviours as freedom, as aspiration, as choice. His experience is not one of being forced to be different, of obeying a code, – says J. Baudrillard. – To differentiate oneself is always, by the same token, to bring into play the total order of differences, which is, from the first, the product of the total society and inevitably exceeds the scope of the individual» [1, p. 61].

The institute establishing the general order of differences in modern society is fashion, which symbolizes social differentiation. Despite the fact that the fashion industry has emerged into a full-fledged sphere relatively recently (the second half of the 20th century), today it is one of the fastest growing industries. At the same time, the general ideology of economic growth and the justification of consumption play a significant role. Quantitative assessment of the development of the fashion industry is difficult, because it affects all spheres of human activity. This makes it difficult to assess its environmental externalities, which, however, is a pressing issue in the context of sustainable development.

RESULTS AND ITS DISCUSSION

Although under the fashion influence the principles of behavior and the way of life of people are formed, traditionally in economic research the fashion industry primarily includes the production and consumption of textiles, clothing, shoes, accessories, and perfumery. According to some authors (V. P. Ivanitsky [2], N. A. Kryukova [3], E. A. Lisova [3], M. S. Shcheglov [2]), the clothing industry forms the core of the fashion industry, according to the others (T. A. Bozina [4], V. M. Osipov [5], V. A. Titov [5], V. V. Khokhlov [4]) are rightly attributed to the fashion industry in the services sector. In the context of the study of the relationship between the development of the fashion industry and sustainable development, it is advisable to consider the fashion industry as a system of production, distribution, appropriation and consumption of fashionable goods with significant exchange value, the operation of which is aimed at the production, intellectual, creative and informational activities of subjects of various sectors of the economy that ensure constant renewal of these goods.

The development of the fashion industry is usually evaluated on the basis of indicators of light industry, wholesale and retail trade, design services for clothes and shoes [6]. Often in the literature, the clothing industry is characterized as «environmentally friendly production» [7, p. 34]. Such a thesis is fair in the context of a comparative analysis of the direct impact of production processes in various industries on the environment. Indeed, garment production is characterized by a low level of environmental pollution in comparison with other economic activities attributable to industry. While the share of production of textiles, clothing, leather and fur products in the total volume of manufacturing industry production in the Republic of Belarus in 2017 was 4.43 %, this type of economic activity accounts for only 2.05 % of pollutant emissions into the air from stationary sources. In terms of the «water use» indicator, the share of production of textiles, clothing, leather and fur products is comparable to its share in the volume of production of the manufacturing industry – the share of this type of activity in the total water use of the manufacturing industry reaches 4.9 %. In terms of water discharge, the share of the studied type of activity is only 0.5 %.

At the same time, in the structure of environmental protection costs in the manufacturing industry, the costs of Belarusian enterprises for the production of textiles, clothing, leather and fur products are 3.43 % or 16.4 million rubles. Most of these funds (13.4 million rubles) are spent on the protection and rational use of water resources, then follow the costs of protecting the environment from pollution by industrial waste (1.8 million rubles) and the cost of protecting the atmospheric air, preservation of the ozone layer and climate (1.9 million rubles). The indicators of the production of textiles, clothes, leather goods and fur by the production of industrial waste look very «eco-friendly» – only 126.6 thousand tons per year (according to 2017) or 0.26 % of manufacturing industry waste [8]. Thus, light industry in the Republic of Belarus is characterized by a relatively low level of negative impact on the environment, comparable to the value of the costs of enterprises of this type of economic activity for its protection. The main source of pollution is the textile and leather industries, which have a negative impact primarily on water resources.

Using a systematic approach to assessing the impact of light industry on the environment leads to the expansion of the object of study – the production of textiles, clothing, leather and fur – to the fashion industry, the production base of which it is. In the face of increasing environmental threats, increasing negative anthropogenic impact on nature, updating the search for mechanisms to solve environmental problems, consider the environmental costs of material production in isolation from other parts of the value chain and consumption chains becomes insufficient. «Today, – notes S. Yu. Solodovnikov, – the essence of the concept of sustainable development is the development of socio-economic mechanisms for managing social and natural systems at the regional, national and global levels in order to ensure sustainable growth of the population's well-being with minimal damage to the environment and human health» [9, p. 58]. Therefore, the environmental impact of the fashion industry should be subject to a comprehensive assessment.

As soon as the scopes of the studied area expand from raw material suppliers to the consumption and utilization of consumer products, the assessment of the environmental impact of the fashion industry becomes the opposite. Today «the apparel industry accounts for 10 % of global carbon emissions and remains the second largest industrial polluter, second only to oil» [10]. Soil contamination by pesticides when growing cotton, high water consumption (for example, «2 billion pairs of jeans are produced every year, and a typical pair takes 7,000 litres of water to produce. For a t-shirt, it takes 2,700 litres of water to make just one – that's the amount of water an average person drinks over the course of 900 days» [11]), the use of petroleum for the production of synthetic materials, chemicals for the production and dyeing of textile materials are just some of the negative effects of the fashion industry on nature. Low environmental standards and their non-observance in countries where the global production of textiles, footwear and clothing is concentrated today, allows the leaders of the fashion industry to get excess profit by appropriating natural rent, almost without reimbursing environmental costs.

In addition to non-observance of environmental imperatives of sustainable development, such countries maintain extremely low social standards – child labor is actively used, wages remain extremely low, there are virtually no social guarantees, labor safety requirements are violated, which leads to irreversible destructive social and environmental consequences. The largest industrial disaster in recent years in the fashion industry was the collapse of the building where the clothing factories were located, which happened in 2013 in Bangladesh. In order to avoid violating the tight deadlines for the work of the owners of the garment industry, the requirements for evacuating workers from a building in disrepair were ignored. His collapse caused the death of 1,129 people and injured about 2,500 people [12]. At the same time, global corporations that receive excess profit at the expense of third countries are practically not responsible for human and environmental damage, since they only place orders for outsourcing work.

The following statistics testifies to the scale of consumption in modern society: for example, Americans today consume three times more than fifty years ago, they buy twice more clothing than twenty years ago. «In 1991, the average American bought 34 items of clothing each year. By 2007, they were buying 67 items every year. That's a new piece of clothing every four to five days» [11]. Estimates of consumption are astounding: «Nearly 70 million barrels of oil are used each year to make the world's polyester fiber, which is now the most commonly used fiber in our clothing. But it takes more than 200 years to decompose. More than 150 billion garments are produced annually, enough to provide 20 new garments to every person on the planet, every year. Americans throw away about 70 lbs of clothing per person every year» [10]. The sharp increase in the pace and volume of clothing consumption in recent years is due to the acceleration of fashion cycles and the spread of the «fast fashion» phenomenon, as well as the growth of population on the planet. Today «the average person buys 60 percent more items of clothing and keeps them for about half as long as 15 years ago» [13, p. 12]. On the one hand, the rapid growth of effective demand for fashion goods provides the possibility of creating and saving millions of jobs, as well as the growth of entire national economies. On the other hand, the consequences of increasing effective demand and changes in the structure of consumption leads to a sharp increase in the negative impact on the environment.

Along with the negative impact on the ecology of the processes of production and distribution of textiles, footwear and clothing (from agricultural organizations to retail chains with finished products), there is the problem of recycling, processing and recycling these products. Changes in the structure and culture of consumption, its intensification cause a rapid increase in the scale of this problem in modern society, in which the level of consumption of goods becomes an indicator of implied social mobility. J. Baudrillard writes about this: «By their number, redundancy, superfluity and formal extravagance, by the play of fashion and all that exceeds pure and simple function in them, objects merely *simulate the social essence* – **status** – that grace of predestination which is only ever bestowed by birth to a few and which the majority, having opposite destinies, can never attain. This hereditary legitimacy (whether of blood or of culture) is at the very heart of the concept of status, the key concept in the whole dynamics of social mobility. Underlying all aspirations, there is this ideal end of a status by birth, a status of grace and excellence. And status also haunts the environment of objects. It is status which arouses this frenzy, this berserk world of knick-knacks, gadgets, fetishes, all of which seek to mark out a value for all eternity and prove salvation by works, since salvation by grace is unattainable. Hence the very particular prestige of the ancient object, which is a sign of heredity, of innate value, of irreversible grace» [1, p. 60]. While the ideology of fashion and consumer society functions under the sign of universal social mobility, there are practically no sociologically justified chances for a cardinal increase in status.

J. Baudrillard categorically declares: «The consumer society needs its objects in order to be. More precisely, it needs to destroy them. The use of objects leads only to their dwindling disappearance. The value created is much more intense in violent loss. This is why destruction remains the fundamental alternative to production: consumption is merely an intermediate term between the two» [1, p. 47]. And also: «the order of production only survives by paying the price of this extermination, this perpetual calculated 'suicide' of the mass of objects, and that this operation is based on technological 'sabotage' or organized obsolescence under cover of fashion. Advertising achieves the marvellous feat of consuming a substantial budget with the sole aim not of adding to the use-value of objects, but of subtracting value from them, of detracting from their time-value by subordinating them to their fashion-value and to ever earlier replacement» [1, p. 46]. Today «it has become normal for clothes to be bought, worn a few times, if at all – and thrown away at an ever increasing rate. Reports suggest that almost all of the clothes thrown out with domestic waste could be used again, with estimates that as much

as 95 percent could be re-worn, reused or recycled – depending on the state of the textile wastes. Instead, in countries with dominant consumer cultures, the vast majority of old clothes are thrown out with our household waste and end up in landfills or incinerators, amounting to millions of tonnes of textiles waste worldwide. Reports show that this is the fate for over 80 % of clothes thrown out in the EU» [13, p. 13]. The value of a thing as such is reduced, which is expressed both in its consumer and symbolic functions; the value of being able to quickly update things is increasing, which in itself is a sign.

As S. Yu. Solodovnikov rightly emphasizes, «any society is not something monolithic, but is divided into many social classes that have specific socio-economic interests, and the interests of a number of these classes will always not correspond to the direction of sustainable development» [9, p. 58]. Therefore, there is a need for a strong «state», which, being a representative of public interests, would create conditions for the implementation of the concept of sustainable development at the national and regional levels, and would also defend these interests in the international arena. Especially important is the role of the state in transitional economies, to which the economy of the Republic of Belarus can still be attributed: «in transformational economic systems it is necessary for the state to play a leading role in configuring the socio-economic interests of social actors» [14, p. 17] to ensure economic growth in compliance with environmental imperatives.

CONCLUSIONS

Although at first sight light industry is a fairly eco-friendly sector of the economy. But when considering the fashion industry and its impact on the environment, an extremely low degree of environmental friendliness of the latter is found. The scale of technological threats arising from the rapid development of the fashion industry, necessitates the adoption of measures to prevent these threats on a planetary scale. Compliance with environmental imperatives should be developed in two directions, both in terms of strengthening the state's role in protecting public interests through the development of environmental protection technologies and improving the mechanisms for regulating the appropriation of natural rent, and through secondary use and subsequent processing of goods, as well as the transition to a type of consumption called «sustainable consumption».

Strengthening environmental threats due to the global growth of the fashion industry does not mean that domestic producers should reject claims for a place in this system, since such a refusal would in no way affect consumption volumes, but would provide even greater competitive opportunities for foreign producers of goods and services in the fashion industry. The presence on the Belarusian market of a large number of imports of goods classified as fashionable opens up opportunities for realizing the potential of the studied industry on the new technological basis, taking into account the assessment of the level of environmental costs and distribution of responsibility, as well as the development of mechanisms to reduce them.

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