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## **All Sewn Up: Dismantling Fast Fashion Consumption as a Social Practice through Creative Empowerment and Consumer Collaboration**

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The socio-environmental impact of fast fashion is unimaginable in its scale. Producing thousands of styles, variations and sizes based on low cost and time-limited trends has led to a supply chain riddled with shortcuts in environmental protection and workers' rights. As clothes become cheaper, date quickly and last for less time, they are discarded by consumers for the upcoming styles, the production pace resulting in a global ecosystem depleted by resource extraction and awash with dyes, chemicals, emissions, micro-fibres and other pollutants (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2017). Yet the apparent reinforcing feedback loop (Acaroglu, 2017) caused by "tapping directly into consumers' growing demand for immediacy" (Hendriks, 2017) which has arguably been cultivated by the fast fashion industry itself, results in initial difficulty understanding where the weight of influence between brand and consumer actually lies. Despite the physical purchase being conducted by the individual, it could be that the relentless communication of new designs may have forged a social practice around fast fashion consumption, based on such brands fabricating and seamlessly facilitating common needs and desires, leading to what has been described as a sense of 'slavishness and passivity' (Cline, 2013) on the part of the consumer. This paper explores the theory that the consumption of fast fashion has become a social practice, where the fast fashion industry and its influence has grown so dominant that consumers have been unconsciously assigned a passive role fuelling its unsustainable growth. To test this theory, the 'Circulation of Elements in a Practice' model (Shove et al, 2012) is used, considering the question: 'what active role does the fast fashion brand remove from the consumer, and how can conscious leaders in fashion, the creative industries, and their infrastructure, support consumers to regain agency?'. Social Practice Theory suggests that three linked elements make up a social practice, allowing us to understand interdependencies and test consequences for possible interventions (Shove et al, 2012). This paper first uses the 'Circulation of Elements in a Practice' model to analyse these elements in relation to fast fashion consumption, before highlighting potential ways to break the links, thus weaken the practice (Darnton, 2020), by examining innovative case studies spanning community initiatives, creative empowerment, and consumer collaboration. Finally, the paper reflects on how the collective ingenuity of fashion leaders and their supporting networks could support a broader shift in consumer behaviour by creating a system-wide culture of creativity, community and collaboration that restores agency to consumers, crafts new social norms, and dismantles the unsustainable sway of fast fashion for good.