

報告提名:

快速成衣產業背後的环境與勞工問題之探討

**The True Cost behind Fast Fashion
In Environment and Labor Issues**

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中文摘要

快速時尚是近年來才出現的新鮮產業，但是已經佔據幾乎整個全球的主流貿易市場。快速時尚產業多變的新風格、時尚設計、玲瓏滿目的商品及親民的銷售價位，都是吸引現代消費者的主要原因。但是在這個產業的背後有著鮮少人知道的秘密。為什麼我們能用低廉的價格買到時尚又新潮的衣服呢？事實卻是：在這划算的價格中，我們付的錢只是一小部分的金額，我們所生活的環境及發展中國家的廉價勞工才是那些快速時尚真正付出的代價。

這個產業有這惡名昭彰環境污染的名聲：快速時尚是世界上第二污染的產業，只輸給了石油產業。另一方面快速時尚產業的業主為了減少勞工成本，竟然非法雇用童工，甚至強迫工人超時工作，然而那些勞工所得到的薪水卻是低到求溫飽都有困難。這一篇研究報告的目的在於藉由官方資料及數據發掘快速時尚產業不堪入目、無人所知的慘酷事實。

關鍵字:快速成衣、污染、垃圾、勞工、低廉薪資

Abstract

Fast Fashion is now a new strong tendency in worldwide mainstream market; people enjoy its speedy changeable new style, trend based design, various choices and especially cheap price. Nevertheless, consumers rarely think why these products are so cheap that everyone can afford it. The truth is: money is not the only thing paid for in every bargain of Fast Fashion; our environment and labor right are also exactly what paid for indeed. Fast Fashion industry is notorious for its heavy pollution: the second dirtiest industry in world. On the other hand, in order to cut labor cost, Fast Fashion companies illegally hired child labors and forced workers overtime in low wages. This paper aimed to uncover the truly facts behind Fast Fashion Industry by offering authentic statistics and objective statements. The qualitative method was applied.

Key Words: Fast Fashion, pollutions, trashes, labors, low wages.

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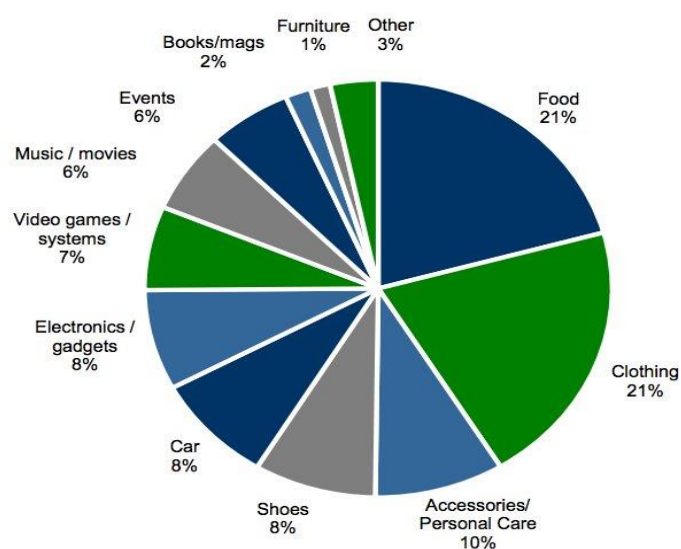
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Introduction

Providing a Thesis Statement
Review the History and Background of the Subjects
Providing a brief summary
Define Key Terms

Fast Fashion refers to “a term used to describe cheap and affordable clothes which are the result of catwalk designs moving into stores in the fastest possible way in order to respond to the latest trends.”[1] (Macmillan Dictionary). The Fast Fashion industry has been sharply rising within the past 20 years. The major consumers are 16 to 34-year-old generation. Besides, Piper Jaffray, investment bank which has surveyed approximately 120,000 teens and collected nearly 32 million data points on teen spending in fashion, beauty and etc., pointed out that teens are spending as much on food as they are on clothing (see fig.1).



(Fig. 1. A Breakdown of Teen Spending by Category)

Brands of Fast Fashion such as ZARA, H&M, FOEVER21, and UNIQLO...undoubtedly became teen's primary choice. However, have consumers ever thought why these fashionable designed clothes are so cheap? If we can buy a T-shirt with 5 dollars or lower price, how much the prime cost would be? How did Fast Fashion companies achieve such low cost when producing clothes? How much did they really pay out or what did consumers like us really pay for? The answer is: Our environment has paid prices for us buying cheap clothes.

Fast Fashion Industry caused heavy pollution from beginning to the end, for example: it took 2,700 liters of water to produce the average cotton shirt and 11,000 to 20,000 liters of water to produce a pair of jeans. [2] (WWF). We may get our fix of fast fashion, but 750 million people in world are lacking of safe and clear water. With the growth of fashion industry, the cotton industry is facing increased demands, and it is usually accompanied by pesticide. There are 20,000 deaths per year as a result of pesticide poisoning, especially in cotton agriculture in the developing world. [3](EJF) What is more, children are also always the first victims of pesticide poisoning, although they have no directly participation in spraying, their house are close to fields and live surrounded by poisoned air.

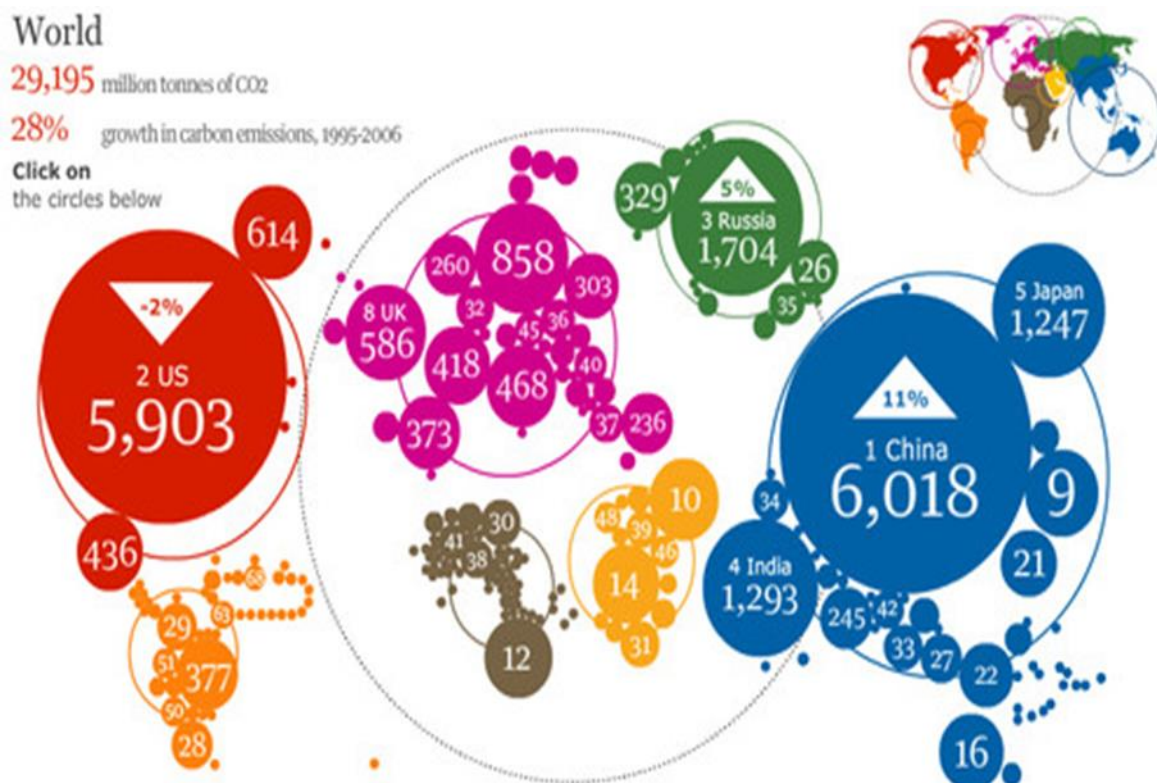
Children are not only suffered from toxic air but also the oppressed abuse of illegal child labor. According to a report from International Labour Organization, 73

million children are engaged in child labor worldwide, with 44.6 million of them in Asia [4] (ILO). In addition, the low wages forced labors to work longer time to struggle for living. They spent over than 12 hours staying in crowded, fragile and filled with chemical colorant factory, their health is really disturbing and unassured.

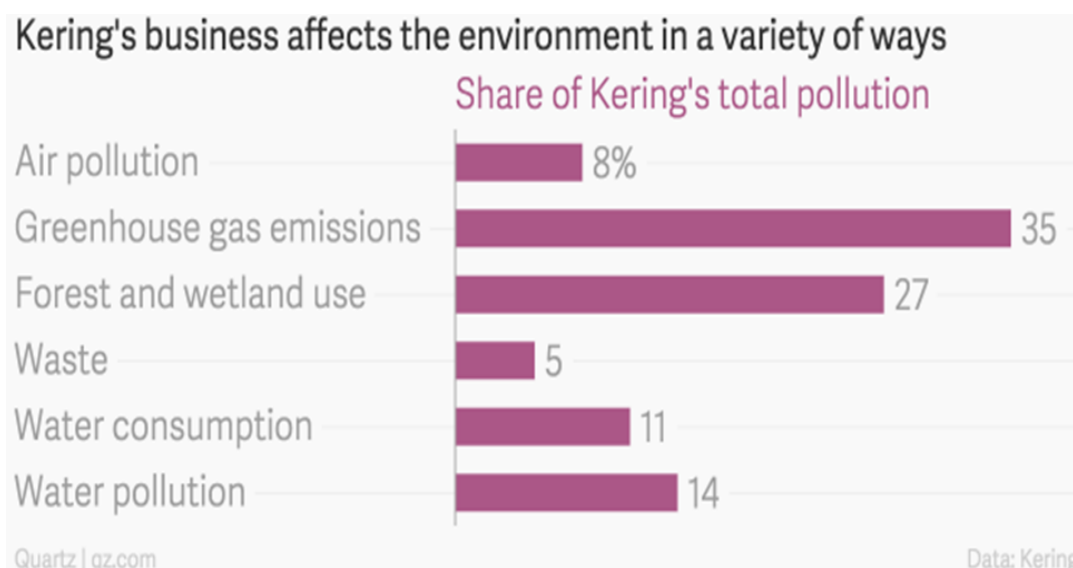
We have referred to impartial environmental website and sources of human right concerned organization to make sure our statements are authentic and certifiable. Through this paper, we aim to expose the subtly and hidden truths which concealed under booming Fast Fashion Industry. Consumers have every right to know whom and what paid price for their wearing. By gradually noticing the environment and underprivileged workers, the change of consuming behaviors will push Fast Fashion companies to reform their malpractice.

Chapter One: Environment Issue

Fast fashion leads to many harmful effects toward our environment. We can buy clothes at a very cheap price in many popular retail stores because of the material used to create them such as synthetic fibers and inorganic substances. Therefore, these clothes are unable to degrade naturally and continuously pile on our land. What's more, the man-made fiber which is one of the materials of clothes like polyester requires huge amounts of oil for their production [5] (IsnSomerhalder Foundation). This production will release harmful carbon emissions into the air which can cause respiratory problems. And also, a large number of chemical such as toxic dye which used for production often get into the water sources near the factory plants. In addition to these bad effects, shipping and transportation for these products has also caused an increase of nitrogen oxides into the atmosphere, due to the burning of fossil fuels [6] (Environmental Impact). We can refer it to the statistics from environmental best practice program. (See figure 2.) And, from the above information, we can conclude that the materials used to create clothes will pollute air pollution, water pollution, and accumulate garbage. It's a vicious cycle. According to the company of clothing named Kering, we can know how they connect with one another. (see figure3.)



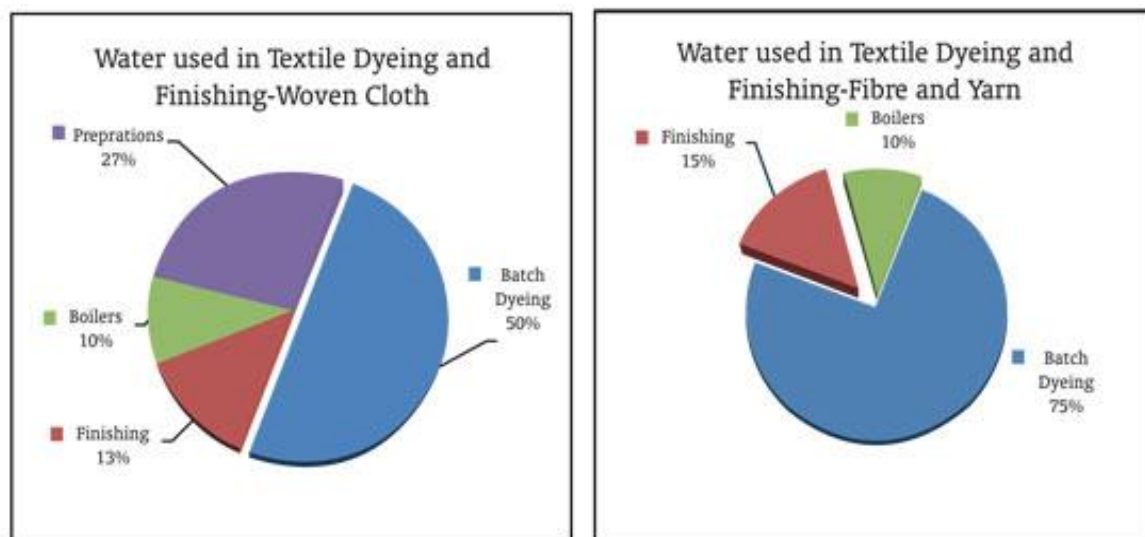
(Fig.2. Air pollution caused by clothes to the world)



(Fig.3. The pollution caused by the clothing industrial)

Nowadays, the biggest market of clothes is in China. And, of course, it will have the significant cost to China and to all over the world. For water pollution, according to the World Bank 17 to 20 percent of industrial water pollution comes from textile

dyeing and treatment, indeed 72 toxic chemicals in China’s water originate solely from textile dyeing[7] (China water risk). Moreover, from the water footprint on the website named Indian textile journal, we can trace the statistics of water and chemical use in textile dyeing and clothing industry. (See figure4.)Of these, 30 cannot be removed. What are worse, polluted water causes 75 percent of diseases and over 100,000 deaths annually, the World Health organization has said. People who live along polluted waterways are at much higher risk of being sick. Because the main rivers go into sea finally, the pollution is connected from one country to another country. As a result, we need to pay more attention on it. It’s highly related to our health.



Source: EnviroWise (1997), 'Water and Chemical Use in the Textile Dyeing and Finishing Industry', Environmental Best Practice Program, GG62, P37.

(Fig. 4. Water footprint)

Other environmental problem brought up by fast fashion is “trash” namely the textile waste. This includes not only the clothes that aren’t being sold out but also the

clothes being thrown away by buyers after they become out of favor [8] (The Real Reason You Should Rethink Your Next Fashion Splurge). From the statistics shown in True Cost, the clip points out the average American tosses 82 pounds of textile waste each year, which adds up to 11 million tons of the stuff alone in their country [9] (The True Cost). Sadly, we might reckon textiles can be approximate 100 percent reusable or recyclable, however, the fact shows textile recovery rates for recycling remain relatively low globally. Another estimation offered by the Environmental Protection Agency says “the average individual throws away 70 pounds of clothing each year, which generates 14.3 million pounds of textile waste. So not only are people tossing their goods; they’re not recycling them either.”

Something arouses wide concerned from the textile waste problem is that these textiles are not biodegradable, which means they can lie in our landfills for at least 200 years. “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Brundtland Commission, 1987)”. In other words, we are now depriving a clean and safe environment of our future generations gradually in the long run. Worst of all, due to the process to make clothes faster and cheaper, the dyes these textiles colored are generally in poorer quality. Thus, after these textile wastes being buried under our landfills or disposed randomly, they will release harmful and hazardous gases into the

air we expose to later on. The main air pollution problem in the textile industry is the production of VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds), which take the form of visible smoke and invisible but objectionable odor. Emissions of VOCs mainly arise from textile finishing, drying processes, and solvent use.

To make textile industry transform to a more substantial and environmental friendly industry, several initiatives has been taken to reduce impact on environment. First, we can start up with the eco-materials development, designers and manager Camilla Norrback said “In my role as a designer, I have explored new materials and garments made of bamboo, recycled PET bottles and soy fibers.”Another example of new materials and production is Tencel, which is soft and lightweight with many uses and is made from cellulose. Next, smart materials should also be introduced to the market. Smart textiles are materials that can sense and react to the change of surroundings. “If the fabrics can change their pattern, shape or structure, we get variety of expressions from the same material.”Linda Worbin, the conductor of School of Textiles in Boras answered. In terms of the environmental issue, it can alter the buying habits of lots of people because most of us usually feel the needs to replace and change clothes and other textiles often. Due to these promising new technologies, innovative materials and international initiatives, we certainly can bring changes and ameliorate the textile industry negative influences to environment.

Chapter Two: Labor Issues

Give brief introduction to this chapter
Point out the three main issues separately

To elaborate labor issue behind fast fashion, we're using 3 aspects to show the evidence of exploitation: Working environment, inhuman management, and low wages.

Labor-Working environment

In order to make profits, the industries might sacrifice the labors' rights or safety [10] (bloomberg.com). Working environment is essential to labors' health. It would be dangerous for labors, if they were exposed to dangerous environment, such as harmful chemical or shaking buildings. Without careful examinations and regulations, labors' health and safety are often put in danger. Some employers would ignore the problems in order to keep their factory running. Gradually, it becomes a way to exploit the labors.

Tannery Industry:

To begin with, the process of tannery puts labors' health into danger. For example, Kanpur, which is located in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India, on the Ganges River, is famous for its leather industries. The industry has become so successful, with more than 90 percent of its products manufactured for Europe and the

United States. “Chrome Tanning, the process most common today based on the use of chrome salts and requiring only a few hours. But tanneries effluent affected society. It effect and pollute the water and air which the people most and cause the different and dangerous types of disease in all the living component of the area.”[11] In the recent findings, not only chromium was found in the waste stream, but a new examination indicates that there are more hazardous chemical being found in the waste which factories have discharged. Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, Nickel and Chrome (VI) are the harmful chemicals, which are found in farmland. “According to the World Health Organization, these heavy metals have a lethal impact on public health when they enter the food/water chain. Cadmium is a potent kidney toxicant and Mercury is a potent neurological toxicant. Chromium (VI) is a known human carcinogen. Other metals too are potent sources of renal, neurological, skin diseases and blue baby syndrome affecting infants.” [11] (The Free Library) Beside the labor in the tannery factories, these carcinogens exist in the groundwater, farmland, and the river. People intake the water and use the vegetables that grow from the contaminated farmland. As the results, inhabitants are exposed to the hazardous chemicals on the daily basis.

Inhuman management:

Another case that has shown severs working environment affects labors’ safety is the disaster of Rana Plaza. On April 24, 2013, the Rana Plaza garment factory in

Dhaka, Bangladesh collapsed, killing more than 1,000 workers. “It blamed the mayor for wrongly granting construction approvals and recommended charges against the building’s owner, Sohel Rana, and the owners of the five garment factories in the building that could result in life sentences if they are convicted.”[12]As the cracks start to appear in the shaking building, many workers are driven by fear and flee.

However, the building’s owner, Sohel Rana, and the owners of the five garment factories force workers to return their job and threat the workers that if they refuse to return the building; they won’t get paid for the month. “The owner, Sohel Rana, brought paid gang members to beat the women and men workers, hitting them with sticks to force them to go into the factory.”[13]Next morning, the building has collapsed, causing 1,137 dead at Rana Plaza. In fact, the building has already been pointed out unsafe by inspector. It is the bosses of the factories that make workers sacrifice their lives in exchange for the big profits from the merchandise.

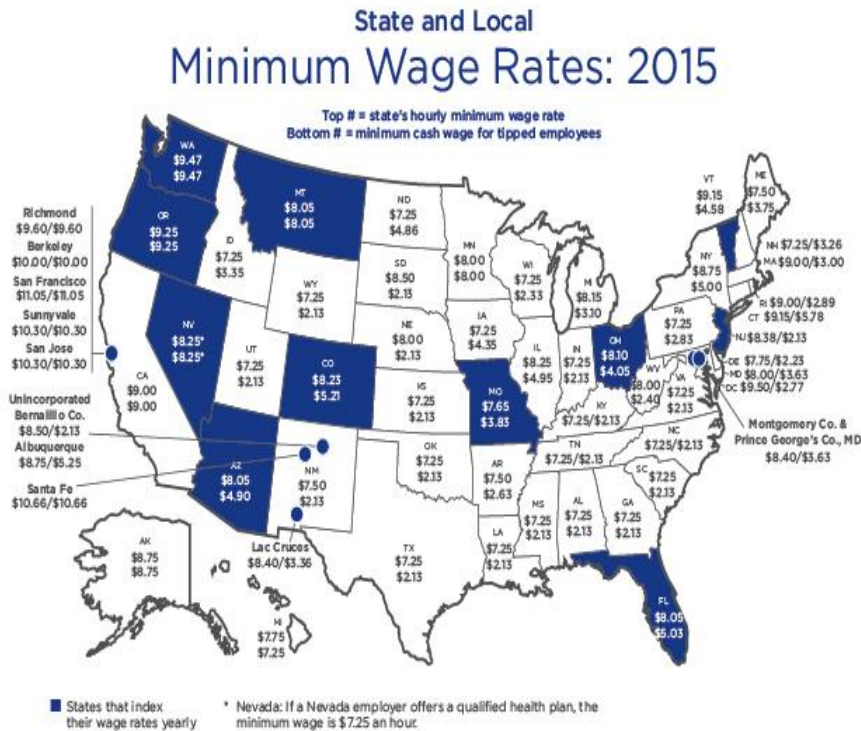
Consequently, labors are the ones paying the real price for the cheapest clothes.

Low wages:

According to the National Restaurant Association’s diagram (see fig.5) which shows the hourly minimum wage in American where varied fast fashion retailers are from. Retailers such as, Gap, Urban Outfitters and H & M are from America.

According to the chart, none of America state have minimum wage lower than seven

U.S. dollar an hour whereas the labors of Cambodia, one of the county that have dependence on the garment industry, have been demanding a \$177 monthly minimum wage when the living wage in Cambodia is \$ 1021 since 2013[14](JOBS WITH JUSTICE)



(Fig.5 Going up: 23 States to Increase Minimum Wage in 2015)

Living wage in Cambodia	\$1021
Minimum wage of garment workers	\$140
	\$ U.S. dollar

One of the reason why labors in garment industry are getting low wage is the

fast fashion industry have a growing dependence on a business model that encourages some fashion chains to push for the lowest prices from subcontracted factories in countries that already have some of the leanest production costs in the world, according to Bloomberg. The business models that only that make profit from exploit labor from low-waged countries is used in fast fashion industry again and again.

According to the Bloomberg, H & M among the largest buyer of ready-made garments in Bangladesh, has posted gross margins higher than 50 percent for the past 10 years.

Others including, Gap and Urban Outfitters never exceeded the low 40s during that time. In another word, almost every fast fashion companies have 50 percent of profit after deduct the cost of distribution. Why fast fashion companies can have such high profits? Especially, most of the fast fashion stores are locate in prime location and super models, movie stars and celebrities often hired as the endorsement of the store.

The answer lies in the labors in garment industry. By building factories in third world countries where fast fashion companies doesn't have to pay much money to the labors highly cuts down the cost. As a result, fast fashion industry becomes one of the biggest industries in the world.

Conclusion

Summarize the points in the two chapters
Give suggestions

For all we know, clothing from fast fashion retail stores is trendy and inexpensive. However, while we pay for a similar piece of famous-branded clothes with a relative lower price, we didn't even think about what is really happening behind these fancy appearances.

The research shows that fast fashion industries create a lot of pollutions, including, mostly, water and air ones, which are related to people enormously. It is the second dirtiest industry in the world besides oil [15] (Glynis Sweeny). Without knowing these harmful impacts, we just buy this clothing in a bargain price naively. Besides, the fabrics, nowadays, which fast fashion clothing industries use are unfriendly to the earth. No matter the fabric or dyeing, both gradually ruin the nature. Customers of fast fashion stores do not know about these bad influences on the Mother Nature. They either know about how terrible the influence will be on the human beings. Being exposed amid the polluted air and consuming the toxin groundwater, people's health would be damaged and brought to cancers or diseases. [16](Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries. 2nd edition).

In addition to the environmental issues, labors who work for the companies

also suffer. When we pick up the favorite clothing from million ones, the labors work restlessly overtime. What's worse, they deserve the wages more than they receive.

The owners mostly wanted was to make profits, and they merely cared about who worked for them. Not until the accident of Rana Plaza Collapse occurred, this issue had not even been brought up in justice. However, more and more people start concerning about the image of the brand, and the environmental pollutions were also brought to concern. That's why more institutions appear. We should support the companies which manufacture their product with eco-friendly materials, and take labor right and human right serious. Also we should stop buying the clothes from fast fashion stores, so we could reduce the harm which this industry makes to the earth.

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Fig. 5 “Going up: 23 States to increase Minimum Wage in 2015” National Restaurant Association, December 9,2014. Web May 29, 2016.