



Majority of the UK public feel clothing brands should be responsible for supply chain impacts Landmark survey highlights lack of trust in information provided by fashion giants

London, January 10th : Almost three-quarters of the UK public (74%) think clothing brands should be responsible for what happens in their supply chains and should ensure garments are manufactured in an environmentally friendly way - but only one in ten (11%) feel consumers are kept well-informed about the impacts of clothing manufacturing on the environment and people, according to a wide-ranging new survey.

Opinion polling by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the [Changing Markets Foundation](#) and the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#) also found that eight out of ten UK people (79%) feel brands should provide information on their environmental commitments, and over half (55%) would be put off buying from a brand associated with pollution in its manufacturing. Eight out of ten (79%) feel clothing brands should provide information on whether the workers in their supply chains are paid a fair living wage, and more than half (54%) would be put off buying from a brand that does not do so.

The findings are the result of a comprehensive survey in seven countries of public perceptions about environmental and labour issues within the fashion industry and the supply chains of clothing brands.

They come amid rising calls for the UK fashion industry, which contributes £28 billion to UK GDP annually according to the [British Fashion Council](#), to become more sustainable and transparent. An ongoing Parliamentary inquiry into the sustainability of the fashion industry has heard evidence about the environmental footprint of clothing, forced labour in fashion supply chains and textile waste.ⁱ According to the Ethical Consumer Markets Report 2018, last year also saw an almost 20% jump in the market for ethically-produced clothing and a 22.5% increase in second-hand clothing purchases, indicating that consumers are increasingly acting on their environmental concerns.ⁱⁱ

“This is the most comprehensive consumer survey to date looking at perceptions of environmental and social standards in the clothing industry. It shows that people expect brands to take responsibility for what happens in their supply chains, both in terms of their workers and the environment. All the indications are consumer mindsets are changing: they want more accountability, and more information and they are increasingly putting their money where their mouth is” said Urska Trunk of the Changing Markets Foundation.

Trust in brands

The survey indicates that although the public wants more information about the clothes they buy, the majority of the UK public are sceptical about the credibility of information communicated by brands. Less than one in five (18%) would trust sustainability information provided by clothing brands themselves. In addition, less than one-quarter (23%) think that industry self-regulation is the most effective way to minimise the impacts of the fashion industry on the environment. On the other hand, a majority find consumer pressure (62%) and government regulation (52%) as the most effective ways to achieve this.

Luxury brands listed generally considered no better than budget and high-street retailers

The polling revealed some surprising perceptions around luxury versus low-cost brands. For example, only 6% of consumers associated luxury label Gucci with having a sustainable supply chain, the same percentage as Primark.

Concern about low wages

Seven in ten (69%) feel the fashion industry pays low wages to workers in its supply chain, and an equal proportion say it is difficult to know if the brands they buy from meet higher ethical standards.

The majority of UK consumers (60%) would pay 2-5% more for their clothing if it meant factory employees were paid a fair living wage.

“These findings show that people in the UK want more information on working conditions and would be put off buying from brands who are not paying a fair living wage. It’s time for the government to act if the industry is not going to,” said Dominique Muller of Labour Behind the Label, Clean Clothes Campaign UK.

Concerns about viscose

The survey also reveals two-thirds of the UK public (66%) think clothing brands should provide information about their viscose suppliers and two in five (39%) say they would not believe a brand if it said that it was difficult to find out information about its suppliers and which production methods they use.

Viscose is a plant-based fibre that’s an increasingly popular alternative to cotton or synthetic products. But viscose production uses toxic chemicals which have been shown to harm the environment and people’s health if not tightly managed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Major high street and online clothing retailers, including Zara, ASOS, H&M and Marks & Spencer, have recently committed to a Roadmap towards responsible viscose manufacturing. Low-cost retailer Primark is among a number of brands facing pressure to follow suit. The Ipsos MORI polling shows that only 6% of UK shoppers think that Primark has a sustainable supply chain.

Since November, 240,000 people have visited the [Ecomark](#) website, a parody Primark online store, with thousands calling on the company to reveal who supplies its viscose and join other retailers in signing up to the Changing Markets [Roadmap](#) and committing to cleaner viscose supply chains.

“It’s high time for companies like Primark to clean up their act and become more environmentally responsible. Thousands of Europeans and Primark customers are calling on the company to make a new year’s resolution to clean up its viscose supply chain. Solutions exist and many other companies have already committed, so there should be no more excuses,” said Virginia Lopez Calvo from WeMove.EU.

For more information on the polling, interviews and images, please contact Patricia Roy, patricia@communicationsinc.co.uk, +34 696 905 907

Notes:

About the Polling

Ipsos MORI were commissioned by the Changing Markets Foundation to undertake a consumer poll amongst adults aged 16-75 in seven different countries; UK, US, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain. A total of 7,701 interviews were carried out, with over 1,000 interviews achieved in each country, as specified below.

Total	UK	USA	France	Germany	Italy	Poland	Spain
7701	1117	1117	1100	1093	1076	1109	1089

Demographic quotas were set to achieve a representative adult sample of respondents within each country. Data are weighted back to the known population of each country.

The survey was carried out online, via Ipsos MORI’s online omnibus panel (i:omnibus) between 19 – 26 October 2018.

As the survey was carried out online, it is representative of the online population only (c.90% across all countries).

Comparisons between countries are made when they are statistically significant. As the survey took place via an online panel, and therefore with a self-selecting sample, the margins of error are higher. Technically statistical significance and confidence intervals only apply to random probability sampling; however good quality quota surveys have been found to be as accurate in practice.

The questionnaire included the following topics:

- Questions related to how people purchase their clothes, and the choices they make relating to sustainability.
- Perceptions of sustainability issues within the fashion industry, and the supply chains of clothing brands.
- Views on workers' rights and pay in the garment manufacturing industry.
- Specific views on the use of Viscose in the clothes manufacturing process.
- Views on current and alternative clothes certification schemes.

The Changing Markets Foundation partners with NGOs on market-focused campaigns. Our mission is to expose irresponsible corporate practices and drive change towards a more sustainable economy. www.changingmarkets.org / @ChangingMarkets

Clean Clothes Campaign is a global alliance dedicated to improving working conditions and empowering workers in the global garment and sportswear industries. It brings together trade unions and NGOs covering a broad spectrum of perspectives and interests, such as women's rights, consumer advocacy and poverty reduction. www.cleanclothes.org / @cleanclothes. Labour Behind the Label acts as the UK coalition for the Clean Clothes Campaign www.labourbehindthelabel.org / @Labourbehindthelabel.

ⁱ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/sustainability-of-the-fashion-industry-17-19/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/EC%20Markets%20Report%202018%20FINAL.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://changingmarkets.org/portfolio/dirty-fashion/>