DISRUPTING LONDON FASHION WEEK: CHANGING MARKETS FOUNDATION LAUNCHES GREENWASH.COM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

• Greenwash.com launched during London fashion week - highlighting rampant greenwashing in the fashion industry supported by Extinction Rebellion, former founder of People Tree Safia Minney and climate campaigner, Bel Jacobs
• Survey reveals 74% of UK consumers either distrust or are uncertain about green claims made by fashion brands
• The launch follows increased scrutiny of the environmental impact of fashion brands, including recent controversy surrounding Pretty Little Thing’s runway show

Changing Markets Foundation, has today (Monday 21st February) launched Greenwash.com to expose ‘rife’ greenwashing in the fashion industry as London Fashion Week draws to a close.

Protesters from Changing Markets and Extinction Rebellion gathered outside The Old Selfridges Hotel to shine a light on greenwashing by fashion brands with banners and flyers directing people to ‘Greenwash.com’.

Activists used the opportunity to target executives, editors and influencers inside, urging people to visit the website which showcases the variety of tactics fashion brands use to claim their products are sustainable.

Research by Changing Markets shows that nearly 60% of green claims for clothing are misleading or unsubstantiated according to guidelines from the UK’s Competition and Markets Authority. This comes as more than 85% of UK consumers started making more sustainable lifestyle choices over the past two years.1

However, a recent survey commissioned by the Changing Markets Foundation with YouGov found that 62% of consumers across five key markets (see notes) either distrust or are uncertain about green claims made by fashion brands. This rises to 74% in the UK.

Greenwash.com aims to underscore fashion’s greenwashing problem by showing consumers just how widespread it is across products, adverts and projects from brands, including fast fashion, high street retailers and luxury, even those taking part in the London Fashion Week.

The website launch follows wider controversy around Fashion Week’s environmental impact, with Pretty Little Thing’s runway show coming under scrutiny for the brands treatment of garment workers and production rate of clothes.

George Harding-Rolls, Campaigns Adviser at the Changing Markets Foundation, said: “When fashion brands greenwash it’s more than just marketing. Greenwashing dupes customers into thinking they’re making sustainable choices when they’re not. Worse still, greenwashing can deceive us into thinking that progress is being made and prevents systemic action to alter the destructive trajectory of the fashion industry. Currently, the industry is critically unregulated, creating an open playing field for fashion brands to greenwash with few consequences.

“We are here at London Fashion Week, with the fashion world watching, to launch Greenwash.com, helping people better spot these marketing sleights of hand and to demonstrate that we need binding legislation to bring this polluting sector within planetary boundaries.”

Bel Jacobs, Climate Campaigner and former Style Editor for Metro said: “As Fashion Week draws to a close, we are reminded of the global negative impact the industry has both on our environment and the people working throughout the supply chain. Without stronger regulation, this issue will just continue to worsen. Urgent change is crucially needed to halt the disastrous environmental and human effect of the industry.”

Examples on the website include a pair of ASOS trousers claiming to be “mono-material” and have “zero-waste design” and to be "easier to recycle”, when in reality they are a blend of polyester and nylon and impossible to recycle. A coat from M&S featured on the site is made partly from recycled bottles and is claimed to be ‘kinder to the environment’, but without disclosing the exact volume or providing any evidence for the green claim.

The project also includes greenwashing in ads such as those promoting Boohoo’s new Ready for the Future collection, which promotes the false solution of using recycled plastic (PET) bottles in clothes to encourage shoppers to support the brand.

Many of the examples on Greenwash.com are products claiming to be sustainable that are made from high percentages of synthetic fibres, such as polyester.

Safia Minney, MBE and former Global CEO of People Tree & Founder of Fashion Declares! said: “It is clear that we have overshot the 1.5 degree pathway and we are now heading for well over 2 degrees. LFW does little to address the climate, ecological and social emergency we are facing and greenwashing from fashion brands hides the fact that we need to cut production by 75% or more.

“A radical shift will involve kicking out the fossil fuels that the industry is reliant on and transitioning to low impact, regeneratively grown materials that promote carbon drawdown and low carbon high social impact hand crafted products. Greenwashing is masking the truth and getting in the way of the systemic change needed for our future.”

www.changingmarkets.org

ENDS

Notes to editors

Media contact:
Charlotte Radcliffe
charlotte@higginsonstrategy.com
Further detail on synthetic fibres and PET recycled clothing:

Last year, Changing Markets reported that synthetic fibres – derived from fossil fuels – represent over two-thirds (69 percent) of all materials used in textiles, requiring more oil than the annual consumption of Spain. Production of polyester alone emits as much as 180 coal-fired power stations annually.

Brands such as Nike and Inditex were also found to use more than 10 million gallons of oil each year to make their collections.

Many brands greenwash their largely synthetics collections by using recycled PET bottles to make clothing which is then labelled as a sustainable material. Changing Markets flags this as greenwashing as it removes PET bottles from the circular economy where they could be recycled back into bottles several times.

At the end-of-life clothing from PET bottles can no longer be recycled and will end up incinerated, landfilled or shipped abroad to be disposed of, creating further waste and saddling low-income countries with plastic pollution.

Changing Markets Foundation:

The Changing Markets Foundation was formed to accelerate and scale up solutions to sustainability challenges by leveraging the power of markets.

Working in partnership with NGOs, other foundations and research organisations, we create and support campaigns that shift market share away from unsustainable products and companies and towards environmentally and socially beneficial solutions.

For more information visit https://changingmarkets.org/

Polling:

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 8,651 adults in the UK, Germany, France, Spain and the USA. Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd - 14th December 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been given an even weighting for each country to produce an ‘average’ value.

- For a full breakdown of polling results please contact charlotte@higginsonstrategy.com

Fashion Declares!

Fashion Declares is an industry wide, grassroots movement that urges people at all levels within the fashion industry to tackle the current climate, ecological and social emergency.

https://fashion-declares.org/