Consumers wrongly believe fashion causes minimal pollution - report

By Nigel Taylor - June 10, 2022

It appears UK consumers mistakenly believe fashion is less damaging to the environment than aviation, shipping, food, and construction — which it isn’t.

However, on the upside, a new poll shows that fashion followers are willing to pay more for sustainable clothing.

But the overriding fact is that there’s a great need for the public to be educated about regarding the fashion industry’s true impact on the environment, new research, commissioned by Alchemie Technology, shows.

Only 7% of consumers think clothes shopping has the biggest impact on their carbon footprint – behind energy (42%), air travel and maritime shipping (28%), food (14%) and construction (9%).

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However, fashion is the second-worst polluter on the planet, second only to oil & gas, producing more CO2 than aviation and shipping combined, the report says. Textile production alone uses 1.5 trillion litres of water annually.

But the good news is that Alchemie’s poll of 2,004 consumers, which took place in April, revealed 59% are willing to pay more for clothes which have been made with less impact on the environment.

Meanwhile, 43% think clothes should be labelled with a sustainability rating, showing there’s a public demand for clothes to carry information about how much water and energy has been used in their manufacture.

Also, 66% of people think the fashion industry should invest in new technology that reduces the environmental impact of dyeing clothes.

Backed up by the findings, Alchemie Technology said it’s on a mission to reduce the fashion industry’s impact on the environment by transforming the textile dyeing process. Supported by fashion giant H&M and At One Ventures, Alchemie has developed a waterless digitally controlled dyeing technology, Endeavour, which claims to produce no wastewater and reduces energy consumption by 85%, compared to traditional dyeing.

Dr Alan Hudd, founder of Alchemie Technology, said: “The process of dyeing the clothes we wear is the worst part of clothing production, responsible for 3% of carbon emissions. If action isn’t taken now, it will make up 10% of global carbon emissions by 2050. By changing the way fabric is dyed we can stop the industry producing 500 million tonnes of CO2 in the next eight years.”

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