

# The Circular Economy

reading

What is the circular economy?

 Read the first part of the article and check your ideas.

## The Telegraph

November 2016



### Could reinvention solve our shopping addiction?

Swedish retail giant H&M seems an unlikely poster child for ecological living.

The High Street group, which owns brands including Monki and Cos and has more than 4,000 shops across the world, is one of the best known proponents of fast fashion.


It's a cheap and reliable source of trendy clothes which can be discarded as soon as another trend comes in.


Yet it has pledged to become "100% circular", ultimately using only recycled or other sustainable materials to make its clothes.

It's a journey that more fashion firms are beginning

to take, with the so-called "circular economy" - which eliminates waste by turning it into something valuable - being seen as a possible solution to the vast amount of clothes that end up in landfill.



 Which high-street, clothing retailers are the most popular where you live?

 Say whether you think these statements are true  or false  and then read the next part of the article and check your ideas:

- Three-fifths of clothing ends up in landfills.
- H&M sold £8bn worth of clothes last year.
- Spending more time talking up your eco credentials than actually changing things is called "green talking".
- Most clothes which involve a blend of materials such as polyester, nylon and cotton, are impossible to separate and recycle.
- Clothing sales are continuing to rise around the world, particularly among the growing middle class in the Western world.
- In 2014, nearly 14 items of clothing were produced for every person on Earth.



Last year, a fifth of the material H&M used was sustainably sourced. The move was aimed at keeping the garments out of landfill, where three-fifths of clothing ends up.

H&M's sustainably

sourced material makes up the equivalent of 100 million t-shirts - yet that is still a mere fraction of the £18bn worth of clothes it sold last year.

It's easy to accuse them of "green washing" - spending

more time talking up their eco credentials than actually changing how they do things.



After all, aren't fast fashion

and sustainability simply incompatible?

"We believe that you can be both and we are using our size and scale to do good," says Catarina Midby, H&M's UK sustainability manager.

The firm is investing in textile recycling innovations and research, but currently, most clothes which involve a blend of materials such as polyester, nylon and cotton,

are impossible to separate and recycle.

Clothing sales are continuing to rise around the world, particularly among the growing middle class in emerging market economies.

Globally the number of garments produced exceeded 100 billion for the first time in 2014, nearly 14 items of clothing for every person on Earth.

- Can you think of any firms that can be accused of green washing? In 2014, nearly 14 items of clothing were produced for every person on Earth. How many items of clothing do you purchase a year?
- Read the final part of the article and say who these people are while summarising their comments and opinions in your own words: Dr Helen Roby, Felix Poza and Geoff Lane.



Yet from the water and pesticides required to grow things such as cotton, to the chemicals and energy - mostly fossil fuels - involved in the manufacturing process, to our overflowing landfills, it's wreaking havoc environmentally.

"Overconsumption is the elephant in the room. We know it's a problem but we don't want to do anything about it," says Dr Helen Roby, a researcher at the Open

University.

Her recent wardrobe audit project found people vastly underestimated the number of clothes they owned.

Felix Poza, director of sustainability at Zara-owner Inditex, the world's biggest fashion retailer, says producing quality new fibres out of recycled garments is one of the sector's most important challenges.

It is currently working with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and several Spanish universities on potential solutions, and claims sustainability is at the heart of all its decisions. For example, unusually it doesn't advertise and it says it analyses demand to minimise waste.



Ultimately, he says, "To generate profit in the long term means operating in a sustainable way."

It is this fear that the supply of natural resources involved in production, for example water, could become more scarce, which is most likely to force change.

"If you operate in the lower end of the market where cost is absolutely key then an increase in the raw material price is absolutely disastrous," says Geoff Lane, a partner at PwC.

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- ④ Could you accurately estimate the number of clothes you own? Think about how many pairs of jeans, trousers, shirts, etc. you have. How much importance do you give to the sustainability of the clothing you buy? Would you pay a premium for recyclable clothes?
- ④ Find words in the article that mean the following. The part of the article they appear in is indicated.

## Part 1

- ① a very large shop selling goods to the public
- ② someone or something that represents a particular quality, idea or activity
- ③ a product or group of products that has its own name and is made by one particular company
- ④ a business or company

## Part 2

- ⑤ use your money with the aim of making a profit from it, for example by buying property or buying shares in a company
- ⑥ a nation's economy that is progressing toward becoming more advanced

## Part 3

- ⑦ a person or company that sells goods directly to the public for their own use
  - ⑧ money that you make by selling something or from your business, after you have paid all your business costs
  - ⑨ one of two or more people who own a company and share its profits and losses
- ④ Write questions with the words above, then, in pairs, ask each other the questions:  
*e.g. Which is the biggest retailer where you live? > Amazon is the biggest online retailer and Tesco the biggest bricks and mortar retailer.*



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🎯 What does the highlighted expression in this extract from the article mean?

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Overconsumption is **the elephant in the room.**



📝 There are other animal-related expressions used in business English. Complete these with the correct animals. The pictures above give some clues.

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 back the wrong _____ | support something that does not win   |
| 2 fat _____            | a wealthy and powerful person, typically one involved in business or politics |
| 3 _____ work           | the laborious part of a job   |
| 4 _____ market         | a market with falling prices  |
| 5 cash _____           | something that provides steady income or profit                               |
| 6 _____ trading        | hard, skilful bargaining  |
| 7 top _____            | the most important member of a group  |
| 8 _____ market         | a market with increasing prices   |

📝 Complete these sentences with the idioms:

- 1 The new members of staff always end up doing the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 Jim is the \_\_\_\_\_ here. He makes all the decisions.
- 3 Expect a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ as the UK negotiates Brexit with the EU.
- 4 People are keen to buy shares when it is a \_\_\_\_\_, but want to sell them when it is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 I voted for Hillary Clinton. I \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 Windows is Microsoft's \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7 People are fed up with boardroom \_\_\_\_\_ who award themselves huge pay increases.