

A Critical Zooming in on the Fast Fashion Industry: Focusing on the Documentary Films *The True Cost* (2015) and *RiverBlue* (2017)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the problems in the global fashion industry relating to environmental pollution and the intensification of gender inequality in developing countries as portrayed in two films: *The True Cost* (2015) and *RiverBlue* (2017). These documentary films depict the effect of the current fashion industry, which revolves around various financial interests, on people in developing countries and on the planet as a whole. By considering aspects of these films' social role, function and influence, this paper takes a close look at how these films bring these serious universal issues to the screen, paying particular attention to its analysis of the many correlating aspects between environmental pollution and gender inequality as seen through these films. Both documentary films, as *acting media*, depict the social problems analyzed in this paper in an attempt to convey objectified truth and thereby demand change from the audience. They encourage participation in social improvement by communicating a message that uses the imagery in and popularity of the film medium to reach the widest possible audience. Additionally, they attempt to engage society in social change using the reality-oriented production methods characteristic to documentary films, resulting in a corresponding visible impact.

Key words

fast fashion, sweatshop, socio-critical film, documentary, *The True Cost* (2015), *RiverBlue* (2017)

Introduction

Consumption is one of the most important activities in economics. Smart and reasonable consumption rewards hard work; thus, buying clothes is a way for ordinary consumers to relieve stress and express themselves, as well as being a trend of

the times that emphasizes social contributions through industrial activities. As if to reflect this, the fashion industry has grown even more with the emergence of so-called “fast fashion”, in which seasonal changes occur every week of the 52 weeks of the year, rather than twice a year as they would traditionally have done (Ozdamar-Ertekin, 2017). Also known as “cheap fashion”, the fast-fashion trend has made a big difference in the lives of consumers. Global fast-fashion brands have begun to market their products and the process of shopping in general as if it were the right and responsibility of consumers to boost consumption by purchasing many low-cost clothing items and by thinking of shopping as a way to relieve stress (Hokins, 2014, p. 56). Amid this trend, the social responsibility of these companies has slipped behind excessive price competitiveness. “Shopping-happy” adverts (Hokins, 2014, p. 63) have further spurred consumers’ addiction to shopping; as a result, the fast-season shift, combined with the fashion industry’s cost-effectiveness, has been a fashion-industry pattern since the 2010s.

A turning point in this trend was the collapse of Rana Plaza, a major sweatshop plant in Bangladesh, in April 2013. According to Hapke (2004, p. 17), the term ‘sweatshop’ comes from the end of the 19th century, replacing the earlier term ‘sweated labour’ or ‘sweated system’. It has been noted that the word ‘sweater’ has entered the English language as a word used to describe one who works hard—a toiler—or a tailor who works overtime at home for an employer. Zwolinski (2006) understands this term on the basis of its historical, legal, social, and moral meaning; it is a commonly used term, but one that is understood in different ways by different people, depending on the context in which it is found (Rouge, 2016, p. 8). Bangladesh, with its 7,000 clothing manufacture plants that employ over four million workers nationwide (80 percent of whom are women) is the world’s second-largest clothing manufacturer after China (Alamgir & Alakavuklar, 2017; Epatko, 2018). It is the leading industry in Bangladesh’s economy, accounting for 80 percent of all exports. According to contemporary BBC reports (2013), the occupants of the Rana Plaza, which had been constructed to accommodate shops and offices, but actually housed many clothing factories, were told by the factory owners to return to the workplace despite the gold cracks found on the wall a day before the collapse that revealed the poor construction of this Bangladeshi clothing manufacturing plant. The accident killed 1,133 employees at five of the building’s clothing factories and injured another 2,500 (Schlossberg, 2019). Media reported this accident in Bangladesh and abroad, raising global awareness of Bangladesh’s clothing factory workers, who had been forced to work in poor conditions in order to secure competitive pricing for the fast fashion offered by global

brands. This has led to a growing sense of the problems within fast fashion, as well as a heightened scrutiny of the fashion industry (which exploits developing countries to produce low-priced products) as a whole. Excessive price competition has led to demands for greater social responsibility from the global fast-fashion brands that outsource production to developing countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and India, where labor costs are low.

Attention has also been focused on the cheap labor in Rana Plaza, where the outsourced manufacture of clothing by world-class fashion brands was undertaken with the aim of seeking maximum profit at the minimum fair cost. It seems clear that the perceptions of both the public and of fast-fashion industry leaders have begun to change due to this incident. Fashion Revolution, the most representative and the largest fashion-activism movement, was founded the wake of the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster by people within the fashion industry and by consumers who were concerned about the working conditions in sweatshops and the environment (Fashioninnovation, 2021; Fashion Revolution, 2021). Every year, Fashion Revolution organizes Fashion Revolution Week in the week surrounding April 24—the anniversary of the Raza Plaza disaster—in order to evoke a period of conscientization. In addition, self-reflective voices in the industry have become louder, while environmental and human rights organizations have accused brands of engaging in low payment and environmental pollution practices that they are forced to choose between. In addition, groups have formed that urge smart and conscious consumption by calling attention to the high social costs of low-cost fashion.

By analyzing two documentary films—*The True Cost* and *RiverBlue*—this paper follows the global problem within the fashion industry as observed through a camera lens, focusing on how they play a role as *acting media*. The films reveal and depict problems in order to encourage audience participation in social improvement.

Method

This paper analyzes how *The True Cost* and *RiverBlue* deal with environmental pollution, the devaluation of female workers' rights by the fast fashion industry in developing countries of Southeast Asia, and what these social changes have led to.

The way the target film deals with critical social topics was analyzed based on film sociology. The problem recognition and social influence of movies, including the relationship between movies and society, socio-critical documentary films, the direction they pursue and their relationship with audiences were all studied. By ex-

aming the two film analyses as well as media articles and academic papers related to fast fashion, the diverse perspectives of fashion, economics and Asian research have been included.

The True Cost, RiverBlue and socio-critical film

The True Cost (D: Andrew Morton, Ross & Morgan, 2015) and *RiverBlue* (Williams, Mazzotta, & McIlvride, D: Divid McIlvride & Roger Williams, 2017) are both documentary films produced amid the societal criticism brought about by the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh. This paper discusses the attempt by these films to promote a greater consciousness of these problems. It describes the cinematic techniques used by the directors to expose the unknown practices within fast fashion and the repercussions of such practices on society, as well as their approach to examining how change can be effected.

The True Cost, which was released at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, is a film that charges the clothing industry with both human rights abuses of low-wage workers and the pollution of the environment in developing countries. This film sheds light on this high level of inequality and addresses the fact that we are increasingly disconnected from the people who make our clothes (Ozdamar-Ertekin, 2017). The film, produced with \$80,000 in crowdfunding, is a director's interview that persistently questions the true costs of low-cost, fast-fashion clothing (Aust, 2015). Morgan, the film's director, traveled to 13 countries over two years, collecting information and conducting interviews with actors and influencers within the fashion industry, as well as with environmentalists, garment workers, factory owners, and supporters and promoters of fair trade and sustainable clothing production (Morgan, 2015). This film is a story about greed and fear, power and poverty, and it examines the connections between fashion, consumerism, mass media, globalization and capitalism (Siegle, 2015).

Released in 2017, *RiverBlue* is a film that chronicles the impact of the fashion industry on major river pollution worldwide. According to Bauck (2017), this film asks the audience one simple question: No one wants to buy a shirt that a person died to make, but what about a shirt that a river died to make? Over the course of three years, Angelo, as narrator, travels and calmly reports on the serious extent to which the pollution of rivers has been caused by the limitless production and consumption that accompanies the fast-fashion industry.

In 2019, the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom published 25 case studies that examine the regional effects of climate change on women in 11 Asian

and African countries. The report concluded that disasters such as droughts, floods and extreme weather have a greater impact on vulnerable communities, including on 70 percent of women worldwide, identifying climate change and environmental stress as common factors in the persistence of gender inequality (Cho, 2020). Data released in September 2020 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reaffirms this conclusion. Competition due to climate change and a lack of resources intensifies the existing gender imbalance; this, in turn, leads to the use of sexual violence as a means to strengthen privilege and increase control over resources. Pain and Rezwana (2020) provide examples of the interrelationship between cyclones and increased sexual violence; sexual violence increases both vulnerability to disasters and their social and economic impact in the form of structurally rooted oppression. In other words, environmental destruction, poverty, and patriarchal traditions lead to the worsening of sexual violence and natural disasters, as well as exacerbating the mismanagement of those disasters. Eastin's (2018) paper on climate change and gender inequality in developing countries argues that income and asset inequality inevitably drive women into the capital markets; these women have increased familial burdens due to the absence of men and a lesser ability to generate independent profits. This creates a vicious cycle of vulnerability to climate change for women in low-income countries, as they have little capability to achieve economic independence but are required to expand their human and social capital while only having access to low-wage jobs. Southeast Asian clothing factories are typical sites where the exploitation of low-cost labor sacrifices women's welfare to price competition in the global fashion market that exists behind the colorful and convenient façade of fast fashion.

Why do we need films that represent social issues? In order to answer this question, an understanding of film sociology, which studies the relationship between film and society, is first needed. Cinema is universally considered to be one of the most effective cultural messengers, due to the way that it is able to capture scenes, make them come to life, and give them back to people. In line with Kracauer's (1960) film theory that states that film provides an open window to society, film can also be seen as a social product that is able to convey the wishes and emotions of the public. We might ask, then, how films can take a neutral and universal stance on problems such as environmental pollution or the still-widespread inequality between genders. From a sociological point of view, films have performed various functions according to the times in which they were produced. In the early days of film, the medium attracted its audience's attention as a novel form of entertainment; before and after war (for example, in South Korea and Germany)

films served the respective regimes' political ends by shaping public opinion and informing the process of warfare. They also acted a means of analyzing the audience's interests.

Among these films are those that offer social criticism; these encourage audiences to participate in active social change by capturing social issues on film. They have grown widely in terms of their themes, narrative style, and genre. Movies about Asian social problems have focused, to a great extent, on historical events or social problems faced by contemporary society; there has been much academic research into them. In particular, films portraying the historical and social events in the East Asian countries of China, Korea, and Japan have attracted much attention from their respective societies and have caused much social discourse (Sung, 2018; 2020). These films' themes have included the Nanjing Massacre and the Coronavirus Crisis in China, the Gwangju democratization movement and labor inequality in Korea, and the great East Japan earthquake and the collapse of the family in Japan. These are the representative themes found in socio-critical films. Joint productions by directors from Asian countries such as Taiwan and the Philippines, led by China and Korea, are also actively taking place around the issue of Japanese sexual slavery, which is a historical event that has affected all four countries. As such, documentary films have presented a point of symmetry to feature films, as they have focused on social issues and demanded social change, while declaring their independence in terms of how they generate their capital and are distributed.

This is, of course, a rough summary of the changing trends in the Asian socio-critical films produced by Asian directors. *The True Cost* and *RiverBlue* both reflect the perspectives of Asian countries that are being damaged by capitalist logic; they do so by turning their cameras on the boundaries between Asian and non-Asian regions and exposing environmental pollution and human rights abuses. These two directors' views are not limited to Asia but appeal to audiences worldwide. They encourage social participation while maintaining an objective that is not biased toward one place and which encompasses both Asian and non-Asian countries. The shift from a passive to active audience is significant in film sociology. Yoon-jung Choi and Yu-rye Kim (2017) state that the ultimate meaning of active audiences is to create another social discourse by deciphering and reflecting their social position, rather than accepting the content at face value. Furthermore, such active audiences' questions about social issues can be shared with others and, as serious discussions are held on the issue, they can serve as a force to bring about social change (Choi & Kim, 2017).

This paper will now examine how these two films communicate the problems on the screen and what social changes they have caused by doing so.

Results

Methods of Cinematic Representation

The True Cost and *RiverBlue* emphasize how communicating the importance of “conscientious consumerism”—awareness of what was bought and how it was made—is the first step in addressing the environmental pollution brought about by fast fashion and the anti-human working environment in East Asia. The two films, as Prentice (2016) has observed, contain strong and challenging messages that urge action. The films clearly state that they are designed to encourage large clothing companies to take greater moral responsibility and move to more sustainable practices. In order to convey this message to the audience concisely and clearly, without any distortion or exaggeration, the two films examine the problems of fast fashion from a universal and neutral perspective.

Both films use active narration techniques and interviews with experts in various fields related to fast fashion. The narration in the movie actively represents the director’s position; it leads the story, suggesting changes in the theme, and pointing out any problems. The narration is provided by the various speakers in the movie, and so is also in line with the purpose of the film. In addition, the narrative voice is constantly changing. In other words, all the characters in the two films serve as active speakers; they communicate issues regardless of their nationality, pointing out the problems of fast fashion from their position and emphasizing the gravity of the situation. The diversification of the speakers directly or indirectly shows that fast fashion has grown into a global business, while conveying the discriminatory situation experienced in Asia and beyond in the speakers’ own voices. The various characters are interviewed every time the theme in the film changes.

The True Cost, in particular, gives us glimpses into the lives of the different people who are either caught in fast fashion’s trap or who are trying to change the system. Minney (2012), founder and CEO of the fair-trade fashion brand People Tree, is a bright light in this regard. In order to enhance the objectivity of the message using more speakers and their stories, the film chooses inclusiveness rather than depth; as a result, the pace of conversation is fast. Similarly, *RiverBlue* is a documentary film that represents social issues, but it is not uncommon to choose a comprehensive development to capture a wide range of views. Along with the rap-

id development of the story, there are many changes in the film's tone. In *RiverBlue*, one speaker narrates the entire story. The speaker travels around the world for three years in order to uncover wealth imbalances and the seriousness of river pollution caused by fast fashion in Southeast Asian countries. The entire composition of the film takes the form of an epic structure that informs the audience of the seriousness of river pollution in each country, inviting it to be a companion on the speaker's trip and showing the artist's unfiltered view. The film continues by interviewing environmental organizations and related people in each country, vividly describing the situations at each stop along the way. In order to realistically capture the seriousness of river pollution, the film was shot in 5K ultra-high definition. These images evoke an instinctive and stimulating cinematic experience, promoting a positive movement of change in the fashion industry (Vancouver Sun, 2016).

The two films are also filled with the voices of specific characters related to the theme. *The True Cost* follows the daily routine of Shima, a 23-year-old worker at a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, who is one of several characters in the film. The film sheds light on the inequality prevalent in the fashion industry and highlights our increasing disconnection from the people who make our clothes; however, the scene where the audience follows the field worker and looks at her daily life serves as a device that directly connects the audience with the worker (Ozdamar-Ertekin, 2017). The film cross-edits individual interviews, with shots of people being followed in order to reveal the unseen lives of the Bangladeshi consume makers used by overseas brands. The camera follows Shima, who represents the women who make up 85 percent of all garment workers; it reveals her daily life, and sympathizes with the fact that she has no choice but to support her family by working in poor conditions. Throughout her interview, the camera focuses on and maintains an objective distance from her.

Another feature of both films is the directors' utilization of cross-cutting and parallel editing in order to skillfully convey the impacts of practices by global fashion brand chains from the diverse perspectives of East and West. Cross-cutting, which refers to an editing method that combines two or more concurrent events in different locations in order to bring them into context (Kim & Jang, 2004), is the most effective cinematic technique used to examine the escalation of dramatic tension and the characters' psychological conditions. Parallel editing refers to a slightly different technique (although some scholars do not distinguish it from cross-cutting); it is used to show more than one event in a single movie sequence, and thus creates tension by showing different points of view at the same time (Gaudreault, 1979). Parallel editing allows the audience to know something that

the characters do not, making the experience more engaging. Both cross-cutting and parallel editing are used to imply a relationship between different sets of actions.

The True Cost and *RiverBlue* portray two different views of fast fashion: those of East and West. This is accomplished through parallel editing and cross-compilation, vividly showing how fast fashion is understood and how its inherent problems are reacted to in contrasting ways in North America and Europe and in Asia, as well as showing how the three continents face each other. Through these techniques, the world in which the images of these two films are reconstructed is newly deployed according to the director's intentions; the films break away from simple descriptions and create new meaning. The intentional interventions by the two directors contribute, among other things, to maximizing Eastern and Western perspectives of the situation, making them more acrimonious.

An example of cross-cutting is seen in the opening sequence from *The True Cost*, during which different moments of action are shown at the same time. Cross-cutting and parallel-editing techniques, which place two extreme screen configurations continuously on one screen, are used throughout the film; these can be said to describe its basic narrative style. *The True Cost* uses cross-compilation to maximize the impact of the director's intention to produce the film; this takes place for less than two minutes during the introductory sequence, before quickly focusing the audience's attention on the problems the director wants to discuss. The cross-compilation shows female models and costumers in a colorful window display and posing in a fashion show, juxtaposing them with low-paid workers in East Asian countries. Images of East Asian and Southeast Asian workers, the spectacular exploitation of labor by global brands, street protests, and the enormous amount of spending on and pollution caused by the chemicals used in the manufacture of clothes are contrasted in order to convey the director's intentions to the audience. From a "fairness" perspective, the film shows, without filtration, the extreme differences between the East and West, projecting onto the screen truths that have previously been unconsciously hidden or willfully made invisible within the framework of capitalist logic.

The film also uses various news media, YouTube videos, and documentary materials to make its point. For example, it cross-cuts overseas news reports about the collapse of Rana Plaza with domestic news from Bangladesh, offering an objective report on the global media interest in the incident. This placement of objective press releases between interviews with relevant people serves to validate the interviewees' stories.

Social influence and effects

The True Cost and *RiverBlue* both raise the question: Are the clothes I bought made through a fair process? They have also both received a great deal of media attention since their release. The repercussions from these two documentary films and their portrayal of social issues have been significant. According to the British Columbia Institute of Technology:

Riverblue is the first in-depth look at fashion's effect on our water (⋯) Thanks to *RiverBlue*, a lot of ink is about to be spilt on this issue. Focusing, for the most part, on blue jean production, the film does an admirable job of showing the extent of the damage (Kelly, 2016).

In this way, the film began to attract the attention of the media, receiving awards at several environmental film festivals. The two films have not only raised public awareness, they have also spurred the transformation of global fast-fashion brands that outsource their production to developing countries. Expressing sympathy for the problems exposed by this film, a spokesman for H&M said that “the film raises important questions for the fashion industry, which H&M welcomes,” and that the brand has taken “significant steps to address the valid concerns raised” (Gustafson, 2015). Inditex, the parent company of Zara, Europe’s largest fashion brand, also said:

The company has implemented straight procedures to monitor all the supply chain through nine clusters in the different geographical areas. (⋯) Inditex agrees with the opinion of the Ethical Trading Initiative and understands that all the room for improvement in this never-ending task of achieving better supply chains must come from the joint effort of all the players involved in the industry (Gustafson, 2015).

Since the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse, major retail brands, their Euro-American consumers, and innumerable international labor rights organizations and their local affiliates have been closely monitoring working conditions in Bangladeshi apparel factories. A variety of foreign initiatives have been launched to improve factory conditions; these have focused on the establishment of safe working conditions. To ensure the safety of workers after the incident, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, which includes large US-brand companies among its members, was established, and the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety

was signed in 2013. A five-year commitment to the accord was signed by 220 European companies and trade unions (Ashraf & Prentice, 2019). The senior advisor for women's rights at the Human Rights Watch referred to this agreement as a kind of game-changer (Epatko, 2018; Siddiqi, 2021) in terms of how it has improved conditions for transparency in transactions, given a voice to workers, and strengthened safety requirements. The companies that signed the agreement have focused on establishing a system for fair symbiosis; this includes the provision of funding worth \$500,000 per year to support workers' inspection, treatment, and education programs (Epatko, 2018). In addition to this, as Tsing (2009) notes, large corporations want to control certain aspects of the supply chain (such as pricing, marketing, and logistics) but not others (for example, labor arrangements and supplier's strategies). Along with the above, various union organizations have been formed in an effort to improve working conditions in the country.

However, many improvements are still needed in terms of the fashion industry's social responsibility. Four years after the Rana Plaza collapse, a report on supply-chain transparency released by Human Rights Watch found that only 12 of 72 clothing and shoe companies had agreed to fulfill their transparency commitments by the end of 2017 (Westman, 2017). In addition, many of the agreements to ensure worker safety were only made in 2018, five years after the collapse. There has been significant improvement, but workers still face many challenges. It needs to be pointed out that, in 2018, workers were, on average, making as little as \$64 per month. Moreover, many small production plants are located in blind spots where the provision and monitoring of sufficient safety and social security for workers are still lacking, and where workers would not speak up for fear of losing their contracts.

Discussion

The two films discussed in this paper resulted in a heightened sense of responsibility in the fast-fashion industry and among individual consumers with regard to the poor working conditions and pollution in developing countries. The films delivered a message that encouraged consumer activities for better conceptual consumption, using the language of documentary film.

While writing the paper, I analyzed several articles and books (Afrin, 2014; Boudreau, 2020; Hokins, 2014; Minney, 2012) in various fields related to fast fashion, confirming that the relevant papers were concentrated in economic policy and Asian research papers. In addition, I reviewed a number of movie reviews and

newspaper articles (Friedman, 2015; Gustafson, 2015) that refer to these two documentaries, as they highlight the seriousness of the problem. Unsurprisingly, since the collapse of Raza Plaza in 2013, research papers on the poor working conditions in Southeastern Asian garment factory workers have proliferated, detailing the improvements made both in Bangladesh and abroad (Anner, 2020). However, it was difficult to find research projects and academic papers on this subject matter that were combined with any field of film studies. Particularly in the case of *RiverBlue*, I could only find interviews with the director and simple movie reviews; thus, not many articles exist that can be cited academically. It is regrettable that such a lack of prior research may cause the purpose and results of this paper to be seen as my own arbitrary interpretation. Starting with this paper, I hope that more academic activities will be undertaken that study the relationship between media and society with regard to social issues.

World Rivers Day creator Mark Angelo, who appeared as a narrator in *RiverBlue*, said in an interview that “the film would like to play a positive agent for change and make this issue known more. We want to press the issue” (Kelly, 2016). I agree that Angelo’s intention was for this film to play a prominent role in informing audiences of the social costs of fast fashion. While some social change has been visible in the media, one might ask if the conceptual consumption and improvements in working conditions in Southeast Asian clothing factories demanded by the film have occurred to the extent that Angelo hoped. In response to this question, I have no choice but to acknowledge the comment by Prentice (2016) that the influence of these two films on the creation of practical problem-solving guidelines and any real policy change has been quite small. In light of the fact that Zara founder and fast-fashion innovator Amancio Ortega became the world’s second-richest man, it is difficult to confirm the nature of any specific contributions by these two films in terms of how they address the social inequality created by the fashion industry. In fact, some reviews of *The True Cost* argue that the only solution suggested by this film is to reorganize the current fashion industry and the global capitalist system—nothing specific is proposed as a means to accomplish this (Prentice, 2016; Scherstuhl, 2015). In addition, millions of consumers addicted to low-cost clothing consumption are unlikely to change their buying habits in response to the film (Scheck, 2015). Friedman (2015) also pointed out that the film oversimplifies several aspects of the fashion industry and that the director overlooked many gray areas in his attempts to describe the problem from multiple angles.

These points once again remind us of the limitation that the medium of film,

like other artistic activities, in that it may be only ‘visual entertainment’ and cannot instigate direct measures such as social laws and legislation. Despite sympathizing with these critical reviews, I do not agree with Prentice (2016), in particular, who said that, if the film changes consumers’ shopping habits, it puts a burden on consumers by showing that they have the power to change the entire system. The reason why I paid attention to these two documentary films that point out and criticize inequality in the capitalism of fast fashion is not because of how clearly these films provide solutions to the problem, but rather because of how these two films, as Siegle (2015) and Morgan (2015) as well as Blanchard (2015) said, seek to raise awareness and interest in the problem and provoke more controversy in society.

Hobson (2013) also raises some fundamental questions; namely, can we blame the clothing industry alone, or do we all, as purchasers of cheap clothes, bear responsibility for the disaster in Bangladesh and the numerous other such incidents that afflict the clothing industry worldwide? Do we really want fast fashion for which workers must give their lives for? Michael Albert, an anti-capitalism activist, said that “our negative or critical messages don’t generate anger and action but only pile up more evidence that the enemy is beyond reach” (Albert et al., 1998, p. 7). However, these films do not stop at merely arousing the audience’s anger and expressing their concerns. Both films faithfully perform their role as acting media that can contemplate solutions (Hobson, 2013). The idea “Change minds first, then change the law”, which is advocated by films as acting media to criticize social issues and bring about positive changes in the audience, is also confirmed in these two films. Looking at the impact of these films on society in this respect, it is apparent that they have successfully raised awareness among an unspecified number of consumers and have encouraged those who are involved to become more sensitive to the issues the films cover. This is because the starting point of a documentary that deals with social issues is to recognize the truth; we can expect real change only when there are more popular movements. In this regard, the relationship these two films have with society can be found in their performance as positive agents for change.

Of course, I, as a researcher who has been analyzing socio-critical films for many years, do not see movies as synonymous with politics either. These films serve as a loudspeaker that can amplify social problems and contribute to the creation of a new society by shaping public opinion and drawing sympathy from their audiences.

Hence, it is important to see the significance of the two films analyzed in this paper as eye-opening documentaries that have made experts in the fashion in-

dustry and smart consumers aware of the real costs behind fast fashion (Olsen, 2017). Bearing in mind that *The True Cost* was produced through the crowdfunding of \$80,000 and that the audience's interest in and response to the topic was already significant even before its production, one could say that the starting point for a true systematic change had already been established (Gustafson, 2015).

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