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**Fashion Forecast:**

**Is Green the New Black?**

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Aral Sea

The three photographs depict the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan which has reduced dramatically in size due to cotton production. Uzbekistan is the second largest cotton exporter after the USA and the loss of the Aral Sea also impacts upon local employment (Black 2008; Allwood et al 2006). Additionally, the number of local people who have cancer and respiratory disease has increased and globally around 20,000 farmers die annually due to the inhalation of the pesticides required for cotton production (MacDonald 2006).

World Café

The World Café is a series of interlinking focus groups occurring simultaneously, where the participants move around the tables and continue the conversation with different participants to debate different perspectives and meanings (The World Café 2008). The familiar entity of a café encourages conversation through a relaxed atmosphere where the researcher and the other table hosts will actively participate in the discussions to expedite the conversation and fully explore the issues.

This research aims to understand consumer perception regarding the ethics which surround the fashion industry. The impact upon the environment from the fashion industry is growing due to consumer demand for an increased cycle of new fashion, decrease in garment price and the use of developing economies to reduce production costs. Although the fashion industry may not be at the fore of environmental concerns there is a body of evidence which suggests that current consumption levels are unsustainable and that consumer behaviour requires a change in order to be ethical. However, consumer behaviour is habitual and change will need to be facilitated easily and with additional consumer benefits (Memery et al 2005; Schaefer and Crane 2005).

Ethical concerns include production of scarce resources (Kilbourne et al 1997) and chemical use (Black 2008; MacDonald 2006; Allwood et al 2006) as well as the disposal of the garments, as landfill is not infinite (Morgan and Birtwistle 2009). Further, there are issues of worker exploitation in developing countries, child labour (Shaw et al 2006; Iwanow et al 2005; Adams 2002; Kolok and van Tulder 2002) and fashion miles incurred as garments travel around the world during the production and manufacturing processes (Black 2008; Wylie 2007). Although there have been fears over the detrimental and irreversible effects of climate change for many years, in 2009 it was reported that the original prediction was not only underestimated, but damaging effects are already occurring (McGrath 2009). The implications of climate change reversal will affect industry and consumption, and although this is an opportunity for innovation (Rogers 2003), consumers may be unprepared to change habits to accommodate environmental concerns and engage with practices ordinary consumers cannot comprehend and are physically removed from (Lyon 2006; Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Sayer 2000).

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Phase 1

Unstructured interviews with consumers

Develop a contextual framework

Phase 2

Semi structured interviews with retailers

Discuss the response to the contextual framework

Phase 3

World Café

Consumers and retailers discussing sustainability

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