

卒業論文

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「Sweat Shops in the Age of Access: The Example of the Collapse of the Rana Plaza Building」

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**Sweat Shops in the Age of Access:
The Example of the collapse of the Rana Plaza Building**

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Abstract

ファストファッションはいまや私たちの周りに溢れている。しかし、服の素材、作り

手、どのような環境で作られたのかを知る人はほとんどいない。また、多くの消費者はそのようなことを気にも留めない。だが、これらは消費者が衣服を買うときに注意を払うべき最も重要な事柄だ。

2013年、21世紀の衣服産業の歴史において最悪の出来事が発生した。バングラデシュのラナプラザビルが崩壊したのだ。この産業事故は、消費者が過剰に衣服を消費したことが原因で引き起こされた。当時、ラナプラザビルの建物内で稼働していた縫製工場の労働環境は「奴隷工場」と呼ばれるほど劣悪だった。労働者は劣悪な環境のなか長時間労働に苦しんでいたのだ。

本研究の目的は、消費社会の構造に視点を置き、奴隷工場と消費者社会の関係を明らかにすることである。ファストファッションに関する先行研究は、クライン著「ファストファッション：クローゼットの中の憂鬱」がある。クラインは、ファストファッションの生産量と廃棄量、それらが与える環境への負荷、生産拠点である途上国の労働環境を明らかにしている。しかし、「商品が奴隷工場で作られたものであるという事実が消費者にどのように隠蔽されているのか」そして「奴隷工場がなくなる理由」については詳しく言及されていない。そのため、本論文では、リフキン著「エイジ・オブ・アクセス」やボードリヤール著「消費社会の神話と構造」なども用いながら以上の二点について明らかにする。

本論文では、第一に、バングラデシュのラナプラザビル崩壊事故の原因と被害の規模について述べる。第二に、事故後制定された「バングラデシュの火災と建物の安全保障（アコード）」と「バングラデシュの労働安全のための同盟（アライアンス）」という2つの協定について内容を比較する。また、バングラデシュの衣服産業の労働環境がアコードとアライアンスによってどのように改善されたのか公式報告書を用いて検証する。第三に、消費社会の構造の観点から奴隷工場が存続する理由を考察する。結論では、論文の概要とともに消費者が奴隷工場を廃止するためにどのような意識変革を行う必要があるのか述べる。

Introduction

We have lot of clothes overflowing around us. However, few consumers will know what materials the cloth is made from, who made it, and or what environment it is made in. Many consumers may not even care about such things. However, that is the most important thing consumers should pay attention to when consumers buy clothes. Because, the clothes are possibly made by young children or may have been made by workers who are forced to work long hours and suffer violence or they may have been made in a work environment in which human rights were violated.

In 2013, one conspicuous major accident occurred because many consumers did not think about these and consumed lot of clothes. The case is the collapse of Rana Plaza Building. That tragedy that produced large number of victims is the worst event in clothing industry history in the 21st Century.

The working environment of sewing factory which run in the Rana Plaza Building is called a sweat shop. According to Cline, sweat shops means factories and stores with low wages and very poor working conditions. In sweat shops, workers are forced to work for a long time there. Sweat shops are often used in the fashion industry because it is easy to separate high and low skilled jobs. The birth of sweat shops was around the 1880s, relied on immigrant labor in the United States. At the time, many

factories in the United States do pay less than the minimum wage and have used their low wages to compete in an industry obsessed with cost cutting. In 1911, an accident occurred in the United States. At the Triangle garment factory in New York killed 146 of its employees. The owners had locked to prevent theft, so many of workers could not escape from the factory. As a result, the huge victim occurred. It caused antisweat shop movement in the garment factory. Under the influence, since the early 20st century, the number of them gradually declined as moves were made to negotiate improved wages and working conditions for workers (Cline, 2012, pp44-45). The resurgence of sweat shops in 21st century is a byproduct of globalization of the economic system. As trade barriers are reducing, companies set up their factories in poor countries in South America and Southeast Asian countries where personnel expenses are cheap. Therefore called “Fast Fashion”, which brands try to provide the latest fashions as soon as possible and have led to strong competition to introduce new styles throughout the year at the cheapest prices possible.

The purpose of the research is to clarify the relationship between sweat shops and the structure of consumer society from the viewpoint of the structure of consumption society. There is the previous research *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion* written by Cline. Cline picks up some fast fashion brands such as H & M,

Target and GAP to clarify the production and waste volume of fast fashion, the load on the environment, and the working environment of developing countries, which is the production base. However, there is no description about “how companies hide the existence of sweat shops from consumers”, and “why sweat shops will not go away.” Therefore, in my thesis, take up the collapse accident of Rana Plaza Building which occurred in Bangladesh of the second largest clothing production in the world and will clarify the above two points by mainly using *The Age of Access* written by Rifkin and *The Consumer Society* written by Baudrillard.

This essay will be broken down into four sections. The first is the using the official report will verify the factor which caused the collapse of the Rana Plaza Building in Bangladesh and the background. The second, using the official report will verify how these factors have been improved by the two agreements “Accord on fire and building security in Bangladesh” and “Alliance on worker safety in Bangladesh” which established after the collapse of the building. The third section will consider the reason why sweat shops will continue to exist in Bangladesh from the viewpoint of the structure of the consumer society. The conclusion provides an overview of these issues discussed and will show how consumers in the future should live in a consumer society to abolish sweat shops.

Part 1: The background of the collapse the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh

On April 24, 2013 at 9 am, an eight-story commercial building, Rana Plaza, in the city of Savar in Bangladesh collapsed. The building contained 27 clothing factories serving mostly European and American fashion brands like, Primark, Benetton, and H&M. In addition to these, a bank, apartments and several other shops were there. The building collapse resulted in the deaths of more than 1,100 and injured more than 2,500 individuals. In recent study of this accident (Garrett, 2013) reveals these factors in the collapse; “a weak building management system”: (i) Land that is inappropriate for multi-story construction, (ii) poor quality construction materials, (iii) illegal expansion, and (iv) poor regulation and enforcement of building standards, “unequal relationship between worker and factory owner” and “high demand for fast fashion in world markets.”

First, (i) Rana Plaza was built on a land that was inappropriate for a multi-story construction. The owner of the factory proceeded to build the building by giving bribes to Bangladesh government officials and directed burying garbage in the swamp. (ii) Very poor bar and cement were used to build the building. Materials were changed to inferior ones for cost reduction, so the strength was weaker than the originally designed

building, and the collapse was promoted. (iii) Originally, the Rana Plaza was planned to be a four-story building, but floors were illegally added without proper permission or approval from the government. The owner of a garment factory in Bangladesh is generally well tied to political elites. About 10% of the total members of the Bangladesh government seats are owned by factory owners or their families. Mohammed Sohel Rana, who is the owner of the Rana Plaza Building, made illegal architecture by using a network of political, financial and social ties that span the worker's community from the factory. (iv) According to the building code of Bangladesh, all newly constructed buildings must apply for and receive a certificate of occupancy from a government agency. About 4,000 buildings have been built every year since 2008, but only six of them have been certified by the government. This statistic clearly shows that there is significant corruption in the entire Bangladesh construction industry, allowing building owners easily abuse the system.

Second, the Bangladeshi news media reported that inspection teams had discovered several cracks in the structure of the Rana Plaza on the day before the collapse and warned of the danger. Shops and a bank immediately closed, but the owners of the factory forced employees to work even though many workers evacuated

and hesitated to enter the building. One of the victims of the collapse looked back at the time and testified as follows:

None of us wanted to go to the factory that day. They forced us to go there. It was the end of the month and we would not get paid for that day if we were absent. We are very poor and we cannot bear that loss. (International Labor Rights Forum, 2015, p52)

Before the accident, the Bangladesh government had ratified International Labor Organization (ILO) commitments and Generalized System of Preferences trade preferences (GSP). According to Bolle, the ILO originated as an organization comprised of workers and governments officials to promote “proper working system” around the world. Since 1972, Bangladesh has been a member of this organization and has been had a responsibility for ratifying these following rules as a government: “freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining”, “the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor”, “the effective abolition of child labor, including the worst forms of child labor” and “the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.” Also, the GSP in US trade originated as an organization which provided preferences for certain products are exported by developing countries to support their economic development. These workers who ratify this agreement have rights defined as: “the right of association,” “the right to organize

and bargain collectively,” “a prohibition on the use of any form of forced or compulsory labor,” “a minimum wage for the employment of children and protection against the worst forms of child labor” and “acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health.” However, the Bangladesh government has not been able to fully comply with these treaties (Bolle, 2014, pp3-5).

As the Bangladesh government failed to build an equal relationship between workers and factory workers, many workers had to stay at Rana Plaza Building on the day of the incident as in the testimony above.

Third, Bangladesh is one of the world's leading clothing exporters. Especially the fashion brands in the US and Europe which are consumed on a large scale all over the world contract with many sewing factories in Bangladesh. It can be said that the Rana Plaza Building had have to illegally expand because consumers all over the world are trying to consume a large amount of clothes at a minimum cost. At first, companies were forced to lower production costs to satisfy consumers' desire to get cheap and stylish clothes. As a result, production have been transferred to plants in developing countries like Bangladesh, but in order to meet the growing demand for fast fashion, which is growing year by year, the production speed has to be increased rapidly. Worker

in Bangladesh were forced to excessive working hours in proportion to consumption.

That was the daily routine of workers at Rana Plaza Building. Then, the imbalance of global consumption and production can be said to be an indirect cause of this accident.

In June 2013, not to let the same industrial accident repeat, some of the global fashion brands and retailers that held sewing factories in Bangladesh signed the formation of two separate fire and building safety initiatives: Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (Accord), a legally binding agreement between companies and unions, and Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, an industry initiative (Alliance).

Part 2: Accord and Alliance

The Accord was signed on October in 2013 by over 200 fashion companies such as H&M, Primark and others from over 20 countries in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia, two global trade unions, IndustriALL and UNI Global, eight Bangladeshi trade unions and four NGO witnesses. The aim of the Accord is to build a safe and healthy working environment in which no worker needs to be afraid of fires, collapse of building and other accidents.

The agreement insists on there are six key factors. First, the Accord is a five year legally binding agreement between brands and trade unions to ensure a safe working environment in the Bangladesh industry. Second, an independent inspection is supported by brands and trade union that conclude the agreement. Factories are inspected against the Accord Building Standards, which are largely based on the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) and the National Tripartite Plan of Action (NTPA). They need to inspect all factories within two years and complete a report within two weeks after inspecting each factory. If problems are found, the auditors can request to the factory owner to stop the factory's operation until the building defect is repaired. It is also possible to request the Bangladesh government to order an evacuation of the building

until implementation of strength tests or proper actions are taken. Third, public disclosure of all factories, inspection reports and corrective action plans (CAP). CAP means remedial actions which is taken with clear timelines and a financial plan signed off by each signatory and shared with other signatories. Forth, a commitment by signatory brands to ensure funds are available for remediation and to maintain sourcing relationships. Each fashion brands company needs to donate funds proportional to its volume of orders to support the inspection program. Fifth, democratically elected health and safety committees in all factories to identify and act on health and safety risks. Every factory must set up a safety and health committee consist of factory managers and workers who are chosen by the trade union. Sixth, worker empowerment through an extensive training program, complaints mechanism and right to refuse unsafe work. Safety inspectors are defined as responsible for making a working environment that enables workers to exercise the right to refuse work and not to enter the building without discrimination and loss of wages if they think that it is not safe (Accord, 2017).

In contrast, the US garment industries like Gap, Walmart, and other 26 companies rejected the Accord and launched their own plan: “the Alliance.” The agreement separates into five sections. The first is standards & inspections. The Alliance standard are based on the factory evaluation guidelines of the NPTA formulated by Bangladesh

Institute of Technology (BUET). Factory inspections are done on the basis of these. The second is remediation. The factory receives the initial inspection report and create CAP. CAP is confirmed and decided by factory owner and Alliance staff. Based on that, the factory starts repairing. The staff of the Alliance makes up to three visits to ensure that the restoration work reported from the factory is done reliably. Finally, a final inspection is conducted by a third party. The factory that does not pass inspection will be closed.

The third is worker empowerment. Anonymous worker hotlines are established to strengthen worker empowerment and to raise safety condition without fear of retaliation. The information gathered will be shared and verified with the Alliance hotlines staff by the factory manager. The fourth is training. Factory workers and managers can receive basic fire safety training of the Alliance. The objective of training is to inform workers and factory managers how to evacuate when a fire occurs. The fifth is sustainability. The Alliance obliges for Alliance member companies to work on improving the working environment in cooperation with the Bangladesh government (Alliance, 2017).

The main difference between the two agreements is the presence of legal restraints. Unlike Accord, an independent worker representative does not participate in any decision in the Alliance. It allows companies to retain strong control of the

inspection process. Therefore, it can be said that the alliance has lower legal binding force than Accord.

Are Accord and Alliance could improve the three factors that contributed to the collapse of Rana Plaza building? Firstly, a weak building management system. The 175 factories which join in Alliance, “47% have major, uncorrected structural problems, 62% lack viable fire exits and 62% do not have a properly functioning fire alarm system” (International Labor Rights Forum, Worker Rights Consortium, Clean Clothes Campaign, & Maquila Solidarity Network, 2016, p4). This report also classifies factories by brand and shows what kind of defects exist in each factory. There are 37 gap factories. Among these 37 Gap factories, 22 (60%) lack adequate vigilance system, 17 (46%) do not have adequate extinguishing facilities are not fixed structurally. 11 (50%) of the 22 target factories are short of appropriate fire alert systems, 16 (73%) who do not correspond to fire extinguisher defects, structural defects that have not been corrected 8 (36%). 96% of the defects in each of the five factories including Gap and Target remained despite being inspected more than two years ago (International Labor Rights Forum, Worker Rights Consortium, Clean Clothes Campaign, & Maquila Solidarity Network, 2016, pp5-6). Also, the only information the Alliance provides on the progress of safety renovations is a general status update for each factory. Alliance

defines that those factories that are following requirements and progressing adequately are designated On Track. “Those factories that are falling behind or refusing to follow requirements for safety renovations receive the designation needs intervention. Factories performing even more poorly are labeled critical” (International Labor Rights Forum, Worker Rights Consortium, Clean Clothes Campaign, & Maquila Solidarity Network, 2016, p7). With only the data released by the Alliance, there is a mechanism that does not know in detail the amount of equipment shortage at the factory and the progress of the repair of the factory. It is clear that the safety of the building has not been secured sufficiently even if Accord and Alliance are established.

Secondly is an unequal relationship between workers and factory owner. The unequal power exercise of the factory owner to the workers is mainly done at the time of factory auditing and labor union formation. The fast case is audit. The factory owner should not hide or conceal information so that the auditor can conduct an appropriate factory audit according to the rules prescribed by Accord and Alliance. However, the testimony of workers engaged in the Bangladesh clothing industry indicate that the audit seems not to be functioning adequately. Many workers feel that they are not protected from abuse or violence in the workplace. Worker testified as follows:

The day the buyer comes, they announce it over the speakers. “Today the buyer will come from that place.” Then they announce, “If they talk about Friday duty, you will say that we don’t work on Fridays. If they ask about working after 7 pm, tell them that we don’t work after 7 pm. ... We were getting a low salary but the company showed the auditor that we were getting a high salary. We weren’t getting many advantages but the company showed them that we were getting lots of advantages. The management got workers to tell the buyers that we are okay that we are getting a high salary. (International Labor Rights Forum, 2015, pp45-46)

The factory owner does not allow workers to report to the auditor that they are working in an environment deviating from the Accord and Alliance provisions. This is because if problems of the factories or of the working environment are detected, the contract with the factory would be broken off or be discontinued until the defects are repaired. Both situations would be a huge loss to the factory owners, so they ignore worker’s opinions and try to tell the auditors that the factory complies with the Accord and Alliance provisions. The second case is labor union information. In Accord, it is stipulated that there is the right to refuse labor when workers forced labor under dangerous circumstances, and that should be kept. The Alliance stipulates that establishing a helpline promotes the protection of worker rights. However, there is no provision about the right to be able to negotiate labor in groups, not individuals. Because, Bangladesh government have set strict restrictions on labor union formation. The labor law was amended in 2013 after the collapse of Rana Plaza Building. However, “since the law

still holds 30% of the workers' support for the formation of labor unions, it is difficult to form due to harassment or intimidation of employers. Especially it is quite difficult in factories with thousands of people” (Human Rights Watch, 2014). For that reason, “only about 10 % of Bangladesh’s more than 4,500 garment factories have registered unions in 2016” (Human Rights Watch, 2016). In Bangladesh, the garment industry has been growing steadily for more than 30 years, but the labor law has not kept up with international standards despite the amendments in 2013. So, the effectiveness of Accord and Alliance is weakening. Factory managers employ every method to intimidate and threaten workers who become leaders or seek to unionize. Whoever wants to build up a labor union becomes a target of criticism. Worker testified as follows:

It wasn't easy to form the union. After the management learned we were forming a union, we faced many difficulties. There were many types of harassment: workload increase and verbal abuse and other punishment. My job was to join sleeves. My regular quota was 60 jackets an hour; that's 120 sleeves an hour. They doubled that quota for me and the other trade unionists after they learned about our union. When we made mistakes in our sewing, they slapped us, or made us stand at our desk, holding our ears. ...Under the threat of being killed, three of the union leaders were forced to sign a paper saying that they don't want the union and that they want to resign...they were forced to leave the factory. Then the union activities ended because union leaders were not present and workers weren't organized. (International Labor Rights Forum, 2015, pp23-26)

It can be said that merely establishment of Accord and Alliance is not enough to mitigate unequal relations between workers and factory owners, but revision of government labor laws is necessary.

Thirdly is high demand for the clothes. Currently, according to Primark's homepage, a pair of jeans are sold for \$ 10, handbags are from \$ 3 to \$ 12. (Primark, 2017) On the other hand, the selling price that Primark had ordered in the factory that was in the Rana Plaza Building are “a pair of jeans sold at 5 pounds (750 yen) and a handbag at 8 pounds (1,200 yen)” (Kimura, 2013). Comparing the two, it is clear that price fluctuation has hardly occurred before and after the collapse of Rana Plaza Building. However, despite the price being almost unchanged, the production volume is sharply intensifying. One of the workers who worked in the Bangladesh sewing factory testified as follows:

Two years ago, they gave us a 900 to 1,300-piece production target. ...However, now they gave us a target of 1,800 to 2,000 pieces. It's not possible for anyone to do it. (International Labor Rights Forum, 2015, p61)

The fact that the current production volume exceeds the time of the collapse of Rana Plaza Building can be said that Accord and Alliance are not effective against high clothing demand which is one cause of the accident.

To summarize the above results, first, restoration of the building is not carried out

on time limits, and defects in some buildings are being left. Therefore, a weak building management system has not been improved sufficiently. Second, some factory owners hide the auditor that the working environment does not meet the standards set by Accord and Alliance. Also, the Bangladesh government does not tolerate the formation of labor unions seeking to improve the working environment. Therefore, the unequal relationship between workers and factory owner continues. Third, the price of clothes is the same as before Accord and Alliance set up, but the production volume is rapidly increasing. Therefore, the high demand of fast fashion remains unchanged. For these reasons it can be said that Accord and Alliance are not sufficiently effective against the three factors that caused the collapse of Rana Plaza. Then, why did Accord and Alliance fail to eradicate sweat shops? To investigate the cause, it seems necessary to return to the structure of consumption and consumption society.

Part 3: The reasons that sweat shops keep running

Before the Industrial revolution, originally consumption was “what is done for the function of goods” and “what is done for the ostentation of social status.” In the era when rarity decides the value of goods, the act of consumption itself was an act permitted only to a few privilege classes. Only small elite class of people had enjoyed higher consumption standards and habitually bought luxury goods. So those who possess things are in the upper class and those who have less were judged as the lower middle class. The increase in production caused by the industrial revolution and the introduction of a work dividing system in the production process have transformed the relationship between people and consumption to be much more intimate than before.

Material profusion meant that we gradually withdraw from the form of simply consuming things for the function of things and caused the “reversal of control over things and humans.” Fast fashion is a symbol of a consuming society, filter into daily life so much that no one knows where they should buy clothes without them. But, how many of us are purchasing clothes only for reasonable reasons, such as our old ones being torn or dirty? We will be controlled by psychological forces like “I want to be considered as a fashionable person wearing stylish clothes”, “If the seasons change, I have to buy new clothes” and “I do not want to wear out-of-fashion clothes.” Even if

such feeling demand unexpected expenses, we cannot stop wearing fast fashion. Is it, then, the clothing or the consumer who is the ruler? Even if we are consumers of fast fashion, it is actually that our consumption behavior is dominated by fast fashion.

In addition, the increase in material wealth also caused the disappearance of the “role to show off the differences in social status” which consumption had been playing so far. Large quantities of goods produced by replication technology are no longer original; in other words, they are not genuine objects. Originally, value is created by the Aura concept of “now being here.” However, at the stage of mass production of the same thing, the concept of Aura disappeared and the relationship between things was no longer the relation between the original and the imitation, but it was replaced by equivalence. In other words, the disappearance of the uniqueness which is scattered all over the modern age is a thing that can be replaced with the thing others have. For example, before the industrial revolution, cars were a symbol of wealthy hierarchy. However, when cars became popular in the general public, cars alone did not become a symbol of wealthy hierarchy. That is because, cars are easily get to among any social class people, compared to before. Therefore, the necessity to give the car new “wealthy symbol” was caused.

Therefore, the logo, which is a symbol that is not originally originated, has gained

an important value for its role. The original absent logo is a pure symbol that is released from correspondence with reality and no longer needs to reflect the reality. Because of its characteristics, no matter how much the product to which the logo is attached is produced, the value of the product itself will not be reduced. Because the logo itself is different from other durable consumer goods, there is no connection with the reality, so to speak, it exists without the Aura from the original (Shiraishi, 2011, p9).

The logo is divided into two elements “signifier (the sign)” and “signified (meaningful).” The signifier is the form of the sign, and the signified is the meaning of the sign and the conceptual content. And there are also two types of signified: “denotation” (externally significant meaning and explicit meaning) and “connotation (implicit meaning and companion meaning)” (Aoki, 1995, p27).

There are clothes with a crocodile logo, if its form itself is a signifier, its logo is of Lacoste and it is a product of that brand, it is a signified. And if it is recognized as a famous brand with expensive value, it will be the connotation of the sign. In other words, the meaning of the surface layer of is the Lacoste brand of clothes as denotation, the meaning of the deep layer is a symbol of an expensive and wealthy hierarchy, which is the connotation.

In contemporary consumption, symbols and logos play an important role in the

display of such connotation as lifestyle and social status, and they are consumed as a “distinctive symbol” that differentiates itself from others. what is actually being sold and bought in the modern consumer society which pure physical assets play a secondary role is the logo itself and the ideas that make consumers buy the products are attached to the logo. Most modern enterprises do not own physical assets as pure assets, but they regard it as borrowing to convey ideas and images to consumers.

As shown above modern economic system can be seen in the structure of the strategies that luxury brands use to increase their brand value. According to Cline, for most luxury brands, the apparel sector is regarded as a substantial loss sector. However, luxury brands companies request famous designers to design clothing and get a Hollywood actor or a famous model to wear the clothes made in their companies to hold a fashion show every year. This is because the purpose is to raise the brand value rather than selling the clothes. In other words, they are trying to plant the idea that brand items set at high prices are for some of the privileged classes. The fashion show will raise the reputation of designers, stimulate people's willingness to purchase, and eventually contribute to the sales of bags, shoes and accessories producing higher profits. Hosting a fashion show is one of the ideas that makes consumer wish to obtain products with a logo. Meanwhile, the existence of luxury brands creates consumer's desire to get clothes

handled by famous designers at a cheap price, and encourages the growth of fast fashion.

One example is the phenomenon out of order the Target website, which is a fast fashion brand, happened on September 13, 2011. Missoni, an Italian luxury brand, served as a Target designer, and many consumers tried to purchase the clothes at the same time.

This phenomenon remarkably reflects the fact that consumers have increased their desire to make conspicuous consumption as well as wealthy classes. Following its success, the fast-fashion brands such as H & M, UNIQLO, GAP and others have contracted with famous designers one after the other and have continued to sell collaborated clothes (Cline, 2012, pp69-71).

In fact, luxury brand products and luxury brand products for fast fashion do not have much in common in terms of fabrics, dyes, materials and so on. If the former is a cashmere wool of good quality, the latter uses synthetic threads. The only thing is common is the “brand name.” Despite, the fact that the quality of fast fashion goods is significantly inferior to those of luxury brands, consumers do not mind that. Consumers are using money for poor quality products without any doubt about their consumption behavior.

Rifkin clarify that if the characteristics of industrialized markets is to find value in the exchange of goods, the characteristic of contemporary consumer society is that the

transaction of concepts before the materialization has value (Rifkin, 2000, p47).

A typical example that reflects its characteristics is Nike's marketing system. Nike only does design and marketing. The company contracts with anonymous manufacturers in Southeast Asia to produce various products such as sportswear and sports equipment. However, a new type of business form which is to be materialized for the first time by contracting images and concepts with manufacturers, can lead to the exploitation of labor. This is because the only process that companies can cost down can be limited to “production.” The majority of the cost of production is personnel expenses. For that reason, the production of goods has been entrusted to factories in developing countries where labor costs are lower than in developed countries. According to Cline, the minimum wage of today's sewing clerk in China is 4/1 of the US and 38/1 to Bangladesh which caused the collapse of Rana Plaza Building (Cline, 2014, p43). Therefore, Nike is sometimes under criticism from the international community. Because Nike is letting producers operate at sweat shops. Nike is repeating inhumane acts such as physical, mental and sexual abuse, low wage labor, and forced labor under in hazardous environments as shown below:

Although Nike's revenues in the U.S alone were more than \$4 billion in 1998, workers in its subcontracting plants in Vietnam were making between \$1.60 and

\$2.25 in wages per day, less than it costs to provide three basic meals. In some of the plants, girls as young as thirteen were working more than sixty hours per week, and many were sexually molested. (Rifkin, 2000, p48)

Companies must hide the fact that products consumed by consumers are made in a non-humanitarian environment like sweat shops and to make consumers consume messages and concepts that companies convey, without paying attention to the facts. So, cultural industries such as advertisements and media are used to achieve that purpose. According to Shiraishi, what modern advertisements made with remarkably advanced internet technology gives consumers is fictional not linked to any reality and the duplication of original absent models (Shiraishi, 2010, p12). Things pre-designed by internet technology are shown to consumers as simulation. In deliberately created virtual reality, the sweat shops do not exist. There are only images of sporty and lively life that you can get by wearing Nike's goods as Baudrillard pointed out:

The content of the messages, the signifiers of the signs are largely immaterial. We are not engaged in them, and the media do not have involve us in the world, but offer for our consumption signs as signs, albeit signs accredited with the guarantee of the real...The consumer's relation to the real world, to politics, history, to culture is not a relation of interest, investment, or committed responsibility-nor is it one of total indifference: it is a relation of curiosity. (Baudrillard, 1998, pp56-58)

According to Aoki, in the world we know through the media network, the events themselves, are not the real world itself, but are visualized, medialized, and symbolized

reality (Aoki, 1995, p31). At first glance, consumers are enjoying consumption with the intention by choosing and wanting what they want and what they need. However, Consumers are only choosing what they want from among the few options that companies have prepared. In the process, we risk slowly losing ourselves as Rifkin pointed:

When one is surrounded by commercially mediated cultural experience-some of it in virtual worlds, others in real time and space-the mind has to be everywhere at once, continually negotiating access, evaluating experiential outcomes, opening up new channels of communications, rearranging relationships, and networking new worlds of potential engagement. (Rifkin, 2000, p212)

In contemporary consumer society these networking is positioned as the core of consumption activities. However, if some part of the relationship formed in this way eventually forms our own self, the self that the individual originally had will be replaced by “a sense given to (a person) by the very people he wishes to share it with” (Rifkin, 2000, p215) such as media and advertising. By doing so, the self will change to “a kind of functional, constructed, consensually validated quality” (Rifkin, 2000, p215).

The self newly formed in this way will also have an influence on “lack of empathic ability.” From the perspective of the world, people who can freely perform consumption activities are about one fifth of the world citizens. The other four-fifths of people still cannot get cyberspace access or cannot escape from material imperfections.

There are no TVs, Internet, mobile phones, electronic networks, etc. in the world where those people live. Then the gap between the people living inside cyberspace and the people living outside will be immeasurable. Because some people cannot even communicate with people other than themselves despite living at the same time in the same earth place. The feeling of “sympathy for others” is what can be felt stronger when you are near others in real time. The more we diverge from the living experience of others, the more they will not feel realistic and it will be difficult to sympathize. That's why contemporary consumers cannot realistically realize that the products they take are the ones produced in a nonhumanity environment like a sweat shop. Likewise, it is difficult to sympathize with the cruel current situation that human beings who are no different from themselves are forcibly forced to work and are physically, sexual and mentally abused. People who live inside cyberspace live in the fictitious world controlled by the media and these media do not allow to access facts hidden in the fictional world. Thus, they buy large quantities goods and abandon others without any guilt and without noticing they are living in fictional space. And, as a result, mass-produced mass consumption society is formed as pointed out as Adorno below:

Its millions of participants, they argue, demand reproduction processes which inevitably lead to the use of standard products to meet the same needs at countless locations... For the present the technology of the culture industry confines itself to

standardization and mass production and sacrifices what once distinguished the logic of the work from that of society. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p95)

It is no exaggeration to say that the collapse of Rana Plaza Building is an industrial accident caused by our consumption behavior. Also, it was revealed that sweat shops that workers are suffering from mass-production and abusing are not only in poverty and in developing countries, but in today's consumer society and economic structure. The fact that Accord and Alliance failed to have much effect on the elimination of sweat shops and the fact that the Bangladeshi government and companies failed to eliminate them was due to insufficient provision of restrictions and the way of consuming itself. This shows that the structure of consumer society is fundamentally there. For consumers who consume mass consumption, the collapse of the Rana Plaza Building in Bangladesh is just one example of reviewing our future consumer behavior in a consuming society.

Conclusion

From the era when owning physical assets was the most important in economic

activities, it is becoming a secondary entity in the era of access. Modern enterprises will increasingly be regarded products itself as being “borrowed” rather than being owned. At the same time, the value of non-material existence such as concepts, ideas and images which attract consumer’s mind will increase more and more than before. Capital in contemporary consumer society is no longer a form of things anymore, but is shifting to human imagination and inspiration.

In the earlier days, dominating the exchange marketing of goods themselves led to monopolization of the market, but in modern consumer society, dominating the exchange of non-material concepts is being began to play its role. Highly advanced internet technology enhances the degree of “reality”, consumers try to consume without any doubt the image without any basis in the real. Rifkin explains the phenomenon as follows:

This powerful new communication tool distills the symbolic essence out of cultural experience and transforms it digitally into make-believe images and forms, which, when communicated, seem even more vivid and real than the original phenomena and therefore become the experience. Cyberspace, then, replaces reality with virtual reality-symbolic, electronically mediated environments that people experience as if they were real- and of course, the very act living these experiences in cyber-space make them real. (Rifkin, 2000, p169)

Therefore, the majority of our day-to-day experiences which is repeating simulation of living experiences in cyberspace are occurring in an artificial environment. If so, it is

the necessary marketing by modern global companies to monopolize and control the idea and concept of a certain product.

After the collapse of Rana Plaza Building, some criticism about the current situation of labor exploitation at the sweatshop in the fashion industry happened. In order to calm the movement and to transform this crisis into opportunity to further increase their own brand value, fast fashion companies appeal to consumers as being a humanitarian company by joining Accord and Alliance. At the same time, ethical fashion brand companies that have tried to develop “ethical fashion” in an ethical process and environmentally friendly way also began to draw attention. However, in a market where a small number of global companies strongly dominate non-substance marketing that promotes consumption by using celebrities, advertisements, fashion shows, entry of an ethical fashion company is never easy. It is also necessary to attract consumers' minds using non-material concepts of ethics messages. In other words, these fashion brand companies must create consumer desire like “I want to wear the same ethical dress as a celebrity” or “I want to recognize it as a more intelligent person by consuming ethical products than others.” Because, “contemporary consumers place too much emphasis on social, esteem and self-actualization need than the physiological needs of hunger and thirst, safety needs for safety and protection” (Goodwin et al., 2008,

p3).

If you purchase an ethical fashion, it will support the message that the product has. In other words, when consumers purchase ethical fashion they buy experience expressing an agreement for ethical clothing manufacturing at the same time. Ironically, it may be possible to root new ecological fashion style with the same advertisements and media that have promoted mass consumption that is one of the direct causes of the collapse of Rana Plaza Building. In modern consumer society, we are not only consumers of products, but also consumers of symbols and images.

The most important thing in the era of access where companies have traded concepts and ideas and consumers also have access to them is to think carefully about what they access. There are plenty of things to think about when we purchase a product, such as whether we really want the item, how the item produced, how it was made, who made it, etc. By thinking about these things, we can regain our identities from the marketing of companies that produce hyper-realism. Friction between people who have access and those who do not have access will be increasingly expanding from now on. It is essential to think about our consumption method through the collapse of Rana Plaza.

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