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US Tariffs: The Potential Issues for Fast Fashion When Tariffs Kick In

Published in *Home of Direct Commerce*

August 14, 2025

Intellectual Property Partner and National Co-Chair of Katten's Trademark/Copyright/Privacy Group Karen Artz Ash authored an article in *Home of Direct Commerce* about potential consequences for the fast fashion industry once President Donald Trump's imposed tariffs kick in.

Among the Trump administration's executive orders is one that imposes "reciprocal" tariffs on dozens of foreign trade countries and eliminates the duty-free de minimis exemption for imports. Karen explained that, as a result, packages sent from China valued at or under $800 that would otherwise have qualified for the de minimis exemption are now subject to a duty rate of 30 percent of their value or $50 per item, depending on which cost is greater. She stated that these higher costs may affect the affordability of fast fashion and reduce consumer demand, potentially curbing the industry's environmental consequences at the same time.

However, Karen emphasized that the actual impact of these tariffs may be limited. While higher prices could deter some younger consumers and slightly reduce overall consumption, she noted that many shoppers remain attracted to fast fashion for reasons beyond price, such as style and variety. In response to the tariffs, some companies have also shifted production to countries with lower tariffs or have absorbed the extra costs themselves, while others have turned to cost-cutting measures that may further compromise labor standards. Ultimately, Karen suggested that tariffs alone are unlikely to significantly diminish the fast fashion industry or drive meaningful progress toward sustainability, since businesses and consumers will continue to find ways around these barriers. Therefore, environmentalists may need to look beyond tariffs to achieve lasting change.

"US Tariffs: The potential issues for fast fashion when tariffs kick in," Home of Direct Commerce, August 14, 2025

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