

Why 'slow fashion' should be the new 'haute couture'

It doesn't matter if you're a fashion fundie or someone who throws on whatever is at hand. There's a growing global movement to promote 'slow fashion' and more sustainable textile practices, and what's green is very definitely in. Here's what you need to know to help align your fashion choices with your budget, taste and the future of the planet, and remain stylish too.

What on earth is 'fast fashion' and 'slow fashion', anyway?

'Fast fashion' is a term that has been coined to cover modern clothing practices. Ever notice that styles seem to change as fast as you blink? Yet every piece you buy seems to wear out more quickly, look dingy quicker, and simply not last?

The objectives of 'fast fashion' weren't bad at all- the intent was to open up the world of fashion to those of us on a budget, enabling us to stay trendy at low cost. However, whether you're a trend-chaser or not, fast fashion has a lot of downsides.

What problems has 'fast fashion' caused in the industry?

Despite the well-meaning intent, 'fast fashion' practices have caused some notable issues in the fashion industry:

- **Quality decline:** In order to pump-out clothing fast and cheap, poorer quality fabrics are used, and you'll note construction issues too. From misaligned prints to hemming issues and loose threads, you don't get a quality buy, and it won't last for more than a season.
- **Outsourcing fashion jobs:** To cut costs, most of the fashion work has been outsourced to poorer countries, taking jobs away from home.
- **Low wages and safety standards:** These workers often work long hours, are not allowed breaks, and work in unsanitary, unsafe conditions. Even worse, they are not well-paid for their expertise!
- **Fabric wastage gluts:** This 'wear once and throw away' mentality has also led to a ton of fabric wastage. These either end up clogging up landfills, or 'donated'.
- **The donation problem:** While donation sounds good on paper, it actually causes a lot of problems. The sheer number of 'donated' clothes means they are off-loaded on other poor countries that don't need anything like it, simply to become waste there. There's another problem, too...
- **The industry issue:** This glut of 'donated' clothing puts local clothes-makers out of business in these poorer countries, leading to more poverty and less work over time as well as killing local industry. Nor are we protected from the same- many fantastic local fashion lines are forced out of business as they simply can't compete with the slave-labor wages and low costs.

The solution? Sustainable, 'slow' fashion

Fortunately, with the rise of 'green consumerism' worldwide, and growing knowledge of these issues, a solution is at hand. As we become more aware of the ethical and environmental issues at hand, we can take steps to address these issues. Here's a few key

things you can do to help promote 'slow fashion', all while getting better clothes and more bang for your bucks!

Buy quality pieces: Knowing how to shop for high-quality pieces is key to promoting slow fashion. With thrift shops and local entrepreneurs eager for your money, this needn't be expensive, either! You get the benefit of great-looking, long-lasting clothing that supports local industry and helps the planet. It's a win-win.

Spend a little more on less: No need to sacrifice your inner trendsetter, but rather than buying low-quality pieces every month, save for a few months and splurge on a piece that's timeless, classic and will last and look fab. Your budget will thank you too, and you'll develop a reputation for timeless beauty.

Shop local: Chances are there are many great local clothing makers around you can support. Why not snag a unique piece that everyone will be talking about and be a true trendsetter?

Don't donate: Rather than contributing to the donation glut globally, find other ways to dispose of pieces that have seen the end of their life. Use as rags around the home, or sell peer-to-peer and put a little more cash in your pocket too.

Be a diva: Your voice matters! Choose to support ethical clothing lines that pay living wages to manufacture their product. Hold retailers responsible for the conditions in which their workers work. And put your money towards ethical industries instead.

With just a few small tweaks to our own behavior, you can receive quality clothes that last and look great, while still helping to drive a global change towards green consumerism, better wages for all, and a happier planet. There's nothing to lose!

