

Fast Fashion

Trends. Styles. Fads

Is it truly worth it?

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There are various environmental issues. Plastic, pollution, litter, waste, air pollution, deforestation. You have probably heard of these. But have you heard of fast fashion before? Do you consider it a problem? This article explains the serious threat and the huge impact fast fashion has on the environment.



Photo courtesy: the pretty planeteer

Fast fashion. It produces about 10% of the carbon emissions humans use, pollutes rivers and streams, and dries up water sources. \$500 billion worth of fast fashion clothing is wasted each year. New Zealand sends about 100 million kilograms of fast fashion waste into landfill, and textiles create about three times more carbon dioxide in their weight than landfill; yet people still use it and love it.

Fast fashion is an approach to the design of marketing clothing that emphasizes making fashion trends quickly and cheaply. They appeal to shoppers because they are cheap, stylish and trendy. Fast fashion has an irresistible offer - trendy clothes at astonishingly low prices.

Many people buy fast fashion without knowing the consequences it has on the planet. However, there needs to be raised awareness that the impact of fast fashion on the environment is devastating. Apart from the \$500 billion of wastage, fast fashion also promotes a throwaway culture, excessive consumerism, and many more problems that will be listed in this article.

Now you may be wondering how fast fashion works. Fast fashion is an asset for business, and a regret for us in the future. Why? Fast fashion introduces new products very often and encourages customers to frequent stores more often. But after that, the retailer does not replenish its stock- instead, it replaces items that sold out with new items. How long is there a new stock? The answer is hard to believe. One new weekly 'collection' of clothing is made, and that, obviously, would lead to massive amounts of consumption and waste.

There are many factors of fast fashion clothing going into landfill, but an

important factor is the short life of a piece of fast fashion clothing. A study in Norway found that an average lifespan of a garment was 5.4 years, but in fast fashion clothing, it is constructed so that they typically last no more than 10 wearings. Which is about a month. Unbelievable.

Another massive problem fast fashion poses is, fast fashion garments contain micro plastics. When consumers put fast fashion clothing items in the washing, the micro plastics degrade into wastewater. Because the machine drains excess water, synthetic fibres travel into the ocean, rivers, or streams. They can reach marine ecosystems killing off many marine animals and plants. 35% of the micro plastics in the ocean is caused by the fibres shed from synthetic fabrics.

An example of the magnitude of this fast fashion problem is that it takes 60-120L to make a pair of jeans, and 2700L of water to produce a cotton T-shirt. That's enough water for one person to drink for 900 days! This water could be used for the homeless, for the people without access to clean drinking water. In the global sustainable development goals, goal number six is "clean water and sanitation". Shouldn't we use this water for those in need? Half the world's population is wearing jeans every day, and millions, if not billions, are produced every year. And even using so much of the world's natural resources, the garments and pieces of clothing produced are very low in quality in fast fashion. Furthermore, 85% of the clothing produced is wasted.

Fast fashion is not only a threat to the environment, but also to the people who are employed in producing fast fashion, and working for companies implementing inadequate labour conditions, overworking workers and low wages that detrimentally affect workers' quality of life. These people usually cannot find a job, therefore going for the fast fashion option.

People who can change should change the way they consume, but fast fashion is targeted to people who can't afford to buy slow fashion - which is fashion that lasts for a long time. Sustainable fashion is so expensive because it requires high-quality raw materials that usually cost more. If you can't or can't afford to, try these tips.

1. Cut the cord, meaning ignoring emails or things that could tempt you into buying fast fashion. Unsubscribe to things such as blogs and newsletters.
2. Watch documentaries and research, so you can know the drastic effects of fast fashion on the environment, and possibly, your own wallet. Slow fashion saves money in the long run. Fast fashion brands include Zara, H&M Group, UNIQLO, GAP, Forever 21, SHEIN, boohoo, and many more.
3. Tackle your closet, and throw away things you won't need, and keep the things you need. Throwing away trends will stop tempting you. Only buy things when very necessary, and donate clothes after you have worn them.
4. Focus on your hobbies and the things you enjoy doing, rather than trying on trends. Focusing on hobbies can be a distraction for fast fashion.

5. Buy garments from ethical and sustainable brands, rather than brands that produce fast fashion. If you can't afford to, buy thrifted clothes or use clothes from family members. Thrifted clothing can look good as well, not only fast fashion!

Many children and young people do not know what fast fashion is, or only know about it briefly. Some even think it is good, because it is trendy and cheap. The future generations deserve to live in a clean, beautiful, and thriving environment. If you read this article, please take the initiative to spread the word and take action, to keep New Zealand beautiful!

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