

## Fast Fashion: The journey from catwalk to closet

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Fast Fashion is a branch of consumerism which is very much a first world problem that heavily impacts third world countries. The fashion industry has grown steadily throughout the years and there are at least 4 different styles of clothing per season, per year. A high demand for new trendy styles fuels supply, and retailers quickly pull styles from fashion week catwalks to replicate in their own stores in order to reflect current trends. Fast fashion refers to this cycle supply and demand which results in many consequences for our environment.

The average American throws away 80 pounds or 36 kg of clothes every year, a number that is only projected to increase in the future. New trends call for new clothes at least every two months, and any clothing pieces that are out of style are discarded. This chain results in a huge impact, clothing alone occupies 5% of all landfill space and the fashion industry is the 2nd largest polluting industry globally. As well, over 20,000 litres of water used to produce just 1kg of cotton, enough product for 5-6 t-shirts! It's mind blowing to think of how wasteful we can be, even if you donate most of your old clothes around 70-80 percent of it isn't used by donation centers and ends up in the landfill.

So, what can we do to help? There are many ways to combat Fast Fashion, one of the best solutions is to be a conscious buyer. Celebrities like Emma Watson live by the 30 wear rule. Which entails that everytime you debate purchasing a clothing piece, ask yourself if you are going to wear it 30 times. Use this rule to decide whether or not to buy the item, results are instant and it's a great way to only keep essential pieces and clear out closet clutter.

Another way is to purchase clothes from secondhand retailers, which is both budget friendly and great for the environment. As you are making sure that the clothes are being worn and won't end up in the landfill.

Also, choosing to buy from publicly eco-conscious stores is another great alternative. Retailers such as Garage, H&M and Forever 21 are notorious for being fast fashion chains that are constantly evolving with trends. Turning to more sustainable brands that may be less well known such as PACT, Everlane and ThredUP proves to be much better in the long run. Lead and other harmful substances have been found in cheap fabrics used to quickly replicate trendy couture designs. Ethical brands use authentic materials which decompose and recycle easily, such as nylon, polyester, cotton and wool and are not laced with any foreign substances.

Lastly, hand-me-downs are especially great. Instead of donating clothes, passing clothing down to close friends and family can raise awareness for the issue as well as divert pieces from the landfill.

There you have it, fast fashion in a nutshell. The most important takeaway from this is to reflect on our consumer lifestyles and how it may impact the environment and others around us in a negative way. 9 out of 10 Bangladeshi employees of the average clothing company are starving and are only paid around 0.33USD per hour! To help put an end to the cycle of consumerism we must become conscious shoppers and purchase items with sustainability in mind. Green is the new black.