

Three Reasons Why Fast Fashion Is Becoming A Problem (And What To Do About It)



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Over the past 10 years, as I have gone from owning multiple retail fashion stores to a more tech-based fashion business, I have seen significant changes in the ways that clothes are being manufactured, shipped, sold and used. In fact, the way I do business has fundamentally changed in response to the new landscape of “fast fashion.” Fast fashion is a result of mass-market retailers increasing the production of inexpensive fashion lines to meet the demands of quickly changing trends.

In the past, production followed the four main fashion seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter. These traditional seasons have all but disappeared in the face of faster production driven by emerging trends. [According to Investopedia](#), it is not uncommon for retailers to introduce new products multiple times in a single week to stay on trend.

This type of mass production may seem like a good thing at first glance, but I believe it is causing more problems than it is solving. It is crucial that existing companies and startups become aware of the negative impacts that fast-fashion overproduction is causing because it can and will impact your fashion business.

Here are three fast-fashion downsides of which you need to be aware, as well as some insight into how to make sure you are not part of the growing problem.

1. Low Wages And Terrible Conditions For Workers

According to research by Global Labor Justice, female garment workers in [H&M](#) and [Gap](#) supplier factories in Asia have faced exploitation and mistreatment that includes abuse, poor work conditions, low wages and forced overtime.

I have made not only a strategic decision but a moral one to pledge that my company will not support terrible work conditions. We are not creating new fashion and adding to the waste, but instead are using existing styles. If you are working with a manufacturer of new clothes, ensure that you are not supporting work conditions that are harming front-line workers.

Don't be afraid to ask your vendors and suppliers important questions about where products are made and what the turnaround time is for orders. Ask for details such as how many people work there and if there are multiple companies working out of the same location. Do your due diligence when deciding which vendors and manufacturers to work with. Watch for warning signs and use your best judgment and intuition if something doesn't feel right.

2. Polyester Pollution

Highlighted in an article in [The Guardian](#), one of the reasons to radically rethink the way we manufacture has to do with the impact on our rivers, lakes and oceans. According to the article, microfibers from synthetic fabrics are released into our waterways — and, from there, into our rivers, lakes and oceans — every time they are washed in domestic washing machines. The small size of the microfibers means they are easily consumed by fish and other wildlife.

If you want to support sustainable fashion, it could be as simple as buying from designers and manufacturers that are known for their environmental awareness and preference for using sustainable fabrics. There is a new movement in the fashion industry toward creating products from sustainable materials, such as hemp soil, organic cotton, organic linen and bamboo — these are known as vegan fabrics.

When brands highlight what they are doing to support sustainable fashion, it shows customers that they are not adding to the waste. It could be as simple as being transparent about where your products come from and what materials you use.

3. More Clothing Produced Equals More Waste

The reality is that people don't keep their clothes as long as they used to, and the rate of production to keep up has resulted in (literal) tons of excess inventory and waste. When I was making a site visit to a warehouse in the fashion district of Los Angeles, I will never forget seeing the massive bundles that were stacked high and covered almost the entire facility. When I asked about them, someone said, in a matter-of-fact tone, "That's our excess inventory."

I knew that it was important for my company to not add to this proverbial pile, but instead to help make sure that more clothing items see their way to

customers. My business model revolves around supporting sustainable fashion by leveraging excess inventory so customers know that our outfits are not adding to the waste.

Consider holding a giant excess inventory sale or rewarding customers for bringing in second-hand clothes. For example, [H&M launched a program](#) to accept and recycle its branded clothes at return stands. But inventory sales aren't the answer alone. The solution is a long-term one that requires a cultural shift. There are many in the industry that don't want to see change happen. But with enough of us who are willing to support sustainable fashion, we can work toward a better future.

If you want to get started today, action steps include doing your research on current and future manufacturers, being more aware of the environmental impacts of the products you sell, and being proud to share with your customers that you care about sustainable fashion.

What are some ways that your company is trying to combat the negative impacts of fast fashion?



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