

Throwaway Fashion and Its Implications on Economy

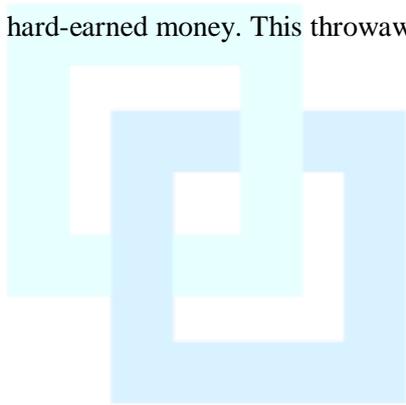
With changing trends come quick, adoptive responses. Rapid production of inexpensive and non-environmental clothing generated by mass-market retailers that rise from Fashion Weeks and catwalk ramps have evolved into this contemporary term referred to as fast fashion. This rapidness is not just seen in adoption of fashion trends but also in heaps of clothing that rise in landfills and burden Mother Earth. Fast fashion - or throwaway fashion, as some call it – comes from the manufacture of clothes made of synthetic fibres that are non-biodegradable and have close to zero durability, which aids to being ‘fast and disposable’.

What we wear is indicative of who we are. Fashion comprises of a major portion of our culture and evolving lifestyle. In America alone, people are estimated to have spent an astonishing 1.1 Trillion USD last Christmas season. From buying 12 pieces of clothing in the 80s to now buying 68 articles - half of which are worn three times or less; we have started thriving on a “see now, buy now” retail environment. This business model has affected the globe, facilitated by major retailers such as H&M, Topshop, Zara and FashionNova, which have dominated over legacy brands since they can cater to this extreme want for variety through replicating high-end ramp walk trends at a lower price in comparison to branded clothing. Fast fashion is the only segment of the fashion industry, which has consistently grown in the past two decades by allowing everyone to “fit in”, and giving them a feeling of luxury without necessarily having them pay for it. Zara’s founder alone, Amancio Ortega, owns 70 billion dollars and is placed in the charts as the 7th wealthiest person in the world by pioneering and perfecting the fast fashion business model.

Usually, legacy brands produce huge amounts of clothing by designing, sourcing, manufacturing and distributing garments that takes around 21 months to complete. However, fast fashion comes from quick response manufacturing (by reducing the process to 4 months through shortcuts), and dynamic assortment (by constantly pumping out new garments to see what sells). This now means that we are drowning in clothes, and is further assisted by social media obsession where an old outfit is unacceptable. This churn is costing us our planet - the factories producing emissions at a higher rate than air or sea travel combined (according to The Guardian in December 2018); natural and synthetic fabrics utilising tens of thousands of litres of water and millions of barrels of oil for production; viscos coming from 33% of ancient or threatened forests (only 30% of said pulp being used, and the other 70% being dumped or incinerated); chemical processing; and misuse of charity organisations resupplying them to developing countries to either be burned or further landfilled. In Britain, more than 300,000 tonnes of clothes end up in landfills every year.

Some brands have now tempted us into buying sustainable and renewed clothes to keep up with the future for tomorrow by “greenwashing” our brains and letting us believe that their material is eco-friendly in an ambiguous way. However, this is countered by then putting such clothes on sale, which just continues the vicious cycle. Such recycled goods are plainly claimed by misleading facts of sustainability and environmental consciousness.

This scenario is compelling people to spend millions on clothing to stay relevant, social and conscious. It is estimated that by 2050, global clothing sales could more than triple. In conclusion, if you wear your clothes for just 9 months longer, it can reduce your garment footprint for that garment by 30%, rent garments through various borrowing services such as ‘Rent the Runway’ which facilitate reduction of purchased clothing, find repairing services to renew your old garments like ‘Petagonia’, or choose to thrift shop by buying second hand garments, you can lend a hand in saving the planet, and also your hard-earned money. This throwaway culture must come to a stop before it leaves us bare.



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