# Fast fashion’s environmental toll accelerates as consumers grapple with sustainability



Having just observed Earth Day, it is an opportune moment to reconsider our approach to fashion consumption. While the allure of affordable clothing is undeniable, the pressing question remains: is the trade-off between price and environmental integrity worth it?

Websites such as Shein and Temu have surged in popularity, offering clothing at prices so low that they are difficult to resist. However, this rapid rise of fast fashion goes beyond mere convenience; it signals a deeper challenge to our environment. Fast fashion is characterised by its swift production cycles and a business model that encourages overconsumption, prioritising profits at the expense of sustainability. As consumer habits shift with constantly changing trends—often influenced by celebrity endorsements—both high-end and low-end brands find themselves navigating unpredictable waters.

The environmental repercussions of this model are grave. Manufacturing inexpensive clothing demands extensive resource use, contributing to issues like climate change and microplastic pollution. A staggering statistic reveals that 87% of textiles and fibres used in garments ultimately become waste, whether through incineration or landfill disposal. Furthermore, global consumption of clothing has skyrocketed to around 80 billion new items annually, which is an alarming 400% increase in the past two decades. The implications are profound, as the lifespan of clothing items has plummeted; the average wear of a garment has decreased by a worrying 36%, leading to an accelerated cycle of wear, discard, and replacement.

Consumers are increasingly caught in a whirlpool of trends, where items are often discarded just as quickly as they are acquired. This cycle perpetuates a reliance on synthetic fabrics derived from fossil fuels, which emit greenhouse gases during production and are largely non-biodegradable. Even post-consumption, the environmental toll remains. As highlighted by an expert from The Plastic Collective, the presence of synthetic fibres in our clothing poses a significant risk, as they contribute to plastic pollution—a crisis that requires immediate attention.

While the statistics regarding fast fashion are undeniably alarming, the pathway to a solution is clear. Sustainable fashion presents itself as a viable alternative, advocating for items that are designed to last longer and made from environmentally sound materials. While sustainable pieces often carry a higher price tag, they are crafted to mitigate environmental damage significantly. Initiatives promoting secondhand clothing are gaining traction and offer an accessible method for consumers to reduce their contribution to the fast fashion crisis.

There's a growing recognition that responsibility lies not only with consumers but also with corporations. Holding companies accountable for their production practices is essential in tackling the pervasive issue of fast fashion. As consumers become more conscientious about their choices, shifting towards eco-friendly and ethically made garments is imperative.

Thrift stores and sustainable brands serve as excellent options for those looking to break free from the fast fashion cycle, bringing us one step closer to a culture that values quality over quantity. Taking this proactive stance not only contributes to individual sustainability but also supports a broader movement towards environmental stewardship. As we reflect on Earth Day, embracing these practices could encourage a significant shift in the way we view and engage with fashion, ultimately leading to a greener future.

**Reference Map**Paragraph 1: 1
Paragraph 2: 2
Paragraph 3: 3, 4
Paragraph 4: 5
Paragraph 5: 6
Paragraph 6: 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://theticker.org/16408/arts/arts-amp-style/fits-with-flower-fast-fashion-made-too-fast/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/how-fast-fashion-is-disrupting-the-apparel-industry/> - This article investigates how fast fashion brands like Shein and Temu are revolutionizing the apparel industry with rapid production cycles and ultra-low pricing. It highlights the environmental implications of this business model, such as the excessive waste generated from short-lived garments. Additionally, it discusses consumer behavior, emphasizing that the demand for on-trend items has led to a culture of overconsumption that significantly impacts the environment.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/apr/06/fast-fashion-is-a-global-crisis-and-we-can-fix-it> - The Guardian outlines the environmental crisis caused by fast fashion, emphasizing that a staggering 87% of clothing fibers eventually become waste. The piece supports urgent actions to mitigate the impact of fast fashion, including the promotion of sustainable alternatives and improved consumer practices. It calls for a societal shift to embrace longevity in fashion choices, highlighting that every year, the world consumes 80 billion new fashion items, illustrating the serious environmental consequences of this trend.
4. <https://earth.org/the-environmental-impact-of-fast-fashion/> - This article from Earth.Org covers the pressing environmental issues linked to the fast fashion industry, underscoring the doubling of clothing sales over the past years while the average garment wear has decreased significantly. The impact on landfills and the neglect of sustainable practices in the industry are discussed, alongside alarming statistics about consumption trends that drive home the urgency for change towards sustainable fashion.
5. <https://www.theplasticcollective.com.au/blogs/news/the-hidden-impact-of-our-fast-fashion-habits> - The Plastic Collective explores the detrimental effects of fast fashion on the environment, particularly focusing on greenhouse gas emissions from synthetic fabric production. It emphasizes that these practices contribute to climate change and plastic pollution. The article pushes for awareness around the materials used in clothing and advocates for sustainable alternatives, hence promoting a more environmentally conscious approach among consumers.
6. <https://www.vogue.com/article/what-is-sustainable-fashion> - Vogue elaborates on the principles of sustainable fashion, defining it as a practice aimed at reducing environmental harm while enhancing the quality and longevity of clothing. The piece highlights the increasing consumer awareness regarding fast fashion's adverse impacts, advocating for eco-friendly practices and supporting brands that focus on sustainability. It reflects a shift in consumer behavior towards valuing quality over quantity in fashion choices.
7. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/julieweed/2021/04/27/the-truth-about-thrifting-and-sustainability-what-to-know-before-abandoning-fast-fashion/> - Forbes investigates the sustainability of thrift shopping and its role as an alternative to fast fashion. The article argues that purchasing secondhand clothing can significantly reduce environmental impact by extending the lifecycle of garments. It discusses the current trends in thrift shopping and how it offers consumers a way to lessen their contributions to waste generated by fast fashion, while also promoting responsible consumerism as an essential part of tackling the fashion crisis.