

Fast Fashion or Fast Destruction



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Sweden is known to be a highly developed country striving toward a better life with education and healthcare for all and minimised poverty. However, like any other part of the world, our country has its share of problems as well, such as our excessive consumption of materials like clothing.

On OED fast fashion is defined as “Inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends.” It is cheap, and easy to find, and so many people end up purchasing a lot of these products. It may seem as though you are striking a great bargain, but the truth is, fast fashion takes a great toll on our home, Earth. In fact 10% of our global emissions are the product of the production of textiles and clothing. Yet

instead of reducing our intake, the average Swede today buys 40% more than the average Swede in 2000. (The Nordic fashion paradox) The type of textile plays an important role in the effect it has on the environment as well. These days synthetic fibres make up 62% of global fibre production, according to Nordregio videos. All synthetic fabrics need nonrenewable resources, such as polyester and nylon. They are both originally a type of plastic, and creating fabrics out of them takes a lot of chemicals, and much more energy than for cotton fabrics. On top of this, both materials can emit harmful substances, and each time synthetic clothes are washed, microplastic are released, and finds its way out of our homes, and into the ocean. (How Green Is It) Though other types of fabrics may

be relatively better for the environment, they are not without their problems either. For example, the production of just one cotton T-shirt uses on average 2700L of water, and according to Decathlon sustainability, globally, the textile industry uses up 93 trillion litres each year.

H&M, Zara, Kappahl, Lindex... There are so many fast fashion brands wherever you go, and it is hard not to buy from them. Of course, there isn't really a problem with buying from certain brands, it is just important to remember to look for quality, and not quantity. According to Malmström, every other Swede uses only half of the clothes in their wardrobes. Money, energy, and resources are wasted on a piece of cloth that just lies at the back of one's cupboard. In order to make enough clothes for this excessive consumption, textile factories are often quite unethical. Often underpaid labourers must work long and hard in unsafe conditions due to exposure to harmful chemicals. Children are also employed, and basic human rights are violated, says DiLonardo. These factories are usually built in poor countries, and the products made by these poor labourers are transported - which also creates a great deal of pollution - to countries like Sweden, where we can purchase these riches without a thought.

It is not just our over consumption that is the problem, but

the way we dispose of our clothes as well. Castillo states that globally, only 15% of the clothes we throw, are recycled or donated, and usually, the rest ends up in a landfill. As the average Swede throws away 11 kg of clothing every year, this is an incredible amount of wasted fabrics, especially when a lot of these clothes are still in condition to be used by someone else. It's not all bad though. Recently, new trends have started to appear that encourage people to buy or send to second hand. However, it is not enough. Especially when there are clothes made of materials like synthetic fibres, that cannot biodegrade, meaning if they are not reused or recycled, they will most definitely become an addition to a rapidly growing landfill, and sit there for possibly 200 years before they finally decompose. (What happens to...)

In order to minimise the toll fashion has on the environment, we must all work together. As Pernilla Rasmusen explains, "Fashion and clothes mean a lot to us, and it is important to keep the joy of fashion, but we can do that in a more rational and creative way." (Translated, Rasmussen) We can all plan before we go shopping instead of buying impulsively. We can also buy 2nd hand. Nowadays it is becoming increasingly easier to find a 2nd hand store in a mall or out in town in Sweden. We can also try to improve our knowledge on textiles, to help us pick something of

better quality. Finally, it is also important to understand your preference, to minimise 'wrong' purchases that you don't use, and so that we can, as Rasmussen says we should, "Love clothes more." We can not continue throwing them away without thought. If you have grown out of something, or don't like it, maybe someone else will, you can always sell your clothes in order to gain profit if nothing else, or donate them to lend a helping hand. If your clothes are ripped, you can try sewing it back together, or give the fabric another purpose.

There are so many things we can do in order to have a more positive

effect on our home, and our future. One of the most simple, yet effective, things we can do is to remember SDG 12 and consume things with care.



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