

Sustainable fashion is the future for the fashion industry



Image sourced via @retroecostore on Instagram

Many fashion lovers are becoming increasingly aware of the impact that the fast fashion industry has on the environment. Alyssa Forato reports.

Amanda Burelli has always been aware of the "absolute abomination" that is the fast fashion industry. After going on a yoga retreat to Bali and meeting Teddi Emerald, owner of vintage store Trash Byron Bay, Amanda was inspired to create her own vintage recycled clothing store. Thus, in May 2019, Retro Eco Store was born.

There was only one issue. Amanda did not have a plan for the store or what direction she would take her second-hand clothing store.

However, after owning the second-hand store for one year, Amanda has established a successful business, with an online store and Instagram page with almost two-thousand followers.

According to Sustain Your Style, the fast fashion industry is the "second largest polluter in the world", right after the oil industry. Sustain Your Style said that 22,000 litres of toxic waste are deposited into rivers by Bangladesh tanneries every day.

In the journal 'Nature Reviews Earth & Environment,' Kirsi Niinimäki, a design professor at Aalto University in Finland, argues that fundamental changes are needed in the fashion business model. This includes the introducing sustainable practices and a shift in consumer

behaviour — such as decreasing our number of clothing purchases and increasing the lifetimes of our garments rather than throwing them away when there is a minor problem with them or we decide we do not like them anymore.

The fast fashion industry grows larger every single year as consumerism grows. Consumers are enticed into buying the latest fashion and newest releases from their favourite brands. The enormous amounts of advertising through social media, emailing lists and banners that appear on third-party websites do not help reduce the unnecessary amounts of garments that people are buying.

However, people are beginning to become more aware of the negative effects that the fast fashion industry has on the environment and our planet. Teenagers are a particular group who are becoming increasingly conscious of sustainable fashion through an array of social media applications and platforms. These include platforms such as Depop, wherein people can sell their preloved clothing, Facebook marketplace and groups on Facebook such as Melbourne Girls Trade, wherein girls who live in the Melbourne suburbs can buy and swap clothing.

Upcycling clothing has become more popular recently as videos of people recycling their old clothes and turning them into something new have appeared on the social media platform TikTok. Upcycling clothes means using old, discarded or recycled clothing and either modifying them to look better or transforming them into something entirely new. This could be through sewing, embroidery or even using fabric paint to enhance old garments.

Mia Marquez, a 21-year-old from El Paso, Texas, has become popular on TikTok for her videos of upcycling her old clothing that she no longer wears. She has over 11,000 followers on the social media platform and regularly posts content on how to transform unwanted clothing into an entirely different outfit.

“I started making my own clothes in August of 2019,” Mia said.

She said that her and her roommate began turning old jackets into two-piece sets in 2017, and she “always wanted to take that notion to the next level”. Hence, she began shopping for second-hand clothes instead of contributing to the fast fashion industry, buying clothes that no one wanted and creating fashionable garments out of them.

“Not only do I shop second hand for clothes I plan to upcycle but also because I enjoy finding one-of-a-kind items, especially vintage pieces,” she said.

Mia not only upcycles clothes for herself but is beginning her own small business of through Instagram. Her handmade pieces are advertised on her Instagram page, ‘recovered.rcvrd.’

She said that she “loves that up-cycling is a trend right now”.

“The problem is that is the people selling their upcycled pieces use the money they earn to shop for fast fashion pieces it defeats the whole purpose.” Mia said.

Amanda also believes “we need to reduce, reuse and recycle our clothes”, and said that the fashion industry needs to be changed so it is no longer harming the planet.

“I want to see everyone buying second hand,” Amanda said.

In order to do her part in the growing world of sustainable fashion, Amanda said she is no longer buying new clothes as of 2020 unless the clothing is ethically made and is from a small business.

“If I need anything, I always check Savers, Op Shops or Facebook Marketplace before I even think about buying new, and ninety-nine percent of the time I find what I need,” Amanda said.

“The best thing we can do for our planet is source our clothes sustainably and make sure we aren’t supporting fast fashion industries that do more harm than good.”