

Overconsumption is a fashion advocate's biggest nemesis

The mindless loyalty we consumers have towards endless amounts of wardrobe and how detrimental our love for it is.

As I am sat writing this article, encompassed by the mountain of clothing I have accumulated over a ridiculously short period of time, I am faced with coming to terms with the insidious enemy beside me. My darkest foe as a fashion lover - overconsumption. In the astounding industry of fashion, a world where trends develop faster than the speed of a runway strut, our arch nemesis lurks in the shadows like a horror movie antagonist. Although with less blood and guts, this silent adversary is however 'killing' the fashion industry and jeopardises the very drive for longevity that we hold dear.

Earlier this year I would shamelessly purchase masses upon masses of clothing just because I *could*, a vicious cycle many find themselves in. I fell victim to this culture of buying more, more often as the possibilities became endless. I found to be in a constant battle with my own morals and ethics as a fashion advocate: conscious choices versus succumbing to the dominance of fast fashion; I will give you one guess as to who was victorious on most occasions. It is probably fair to label me and many others who fall into this trap of excessive buying as relentlessly naïve, although as I am staring at piles of cargo pants and a rainbow assortment of corset tops, I do believe each purchase came with the intent of longevity.

In recent purchases made over the better part of my growingly conscious year, I noticed a shift in my buying patterns as well as other consumers, a shift towards more mindful and intentional consumption. This 180-degree turn wasn't spontaneous for me, though, it stemmed from the Clean Fashion Summit in London, a talk that opened up debate on what companies and consumers alike can be doing to implement sustainability. The discussion, held by research agency Colèchi, opened my thoughts on the prevailing culture of easily disposable fashion and how damaging these consumer mindsets are.

I left the building feeling heavier, in a metaphorical sense, realising that I was a contributor to this ongoing problem. Upon discovering my newfound desire to shop responsibly, the Fashion Transparency Index became my new best friend.

Research headed by the Fashion Revolution revealed a series of shocking statistics, including the fact that 99% of brands do not disclose a commitment to reduce the number of new items they produce. This means that most brands do not have sustainability and diminishing overconsumption on their agendas, or at least have not disclosed otherwise. This could be because they simply aren't doing enough yet, although this revelation doesn't come as a surprise as brand transparency has only just begun in the fashion world. 'Degrowth' is a new concept that has only just been planted into the industry, with 30% of brands offering new business models that slow down heavy consumption. The endless disappointing figures in this research pose the question, are we really to blame for our desire to overconsume if brands aren't willing to change themselves?

Although, I've grown to realise as consumers we have partial responsibility to change these figures, as change starts on a localised scale -something I quickly began to understand during the aforementioned talk. In order to implement change, it is essential for us to make deliberate decisions when making purchases to break the vicious cycle. Although from my experience, this is easier said than done as it is within human nature to want something new, and have a lot of it, it is unfortunately engraved in us.

A committed, collective effort is needed to drive change, change that perhaps won't be seen for a long time. Moving forward, changing the narrative is important as we consumers learn to fight our desire to over-consume, and brands learn to support this change simultaneously. As I glance over the result of my voracious appetite for clothing for the last time, I wonder, was it worth it? I come to the realisation that maybe overconsumption isn't our biggest enemy, but *we* are.

