

3 creative ways to fix fashion's waste problem

1. *Listen to the TED talk and fill in the blanks.*

A few years ago, I ..... myself looking for the most cost-effective way to be ..... So naturally, I wound up at my local thrift store, a wonderland of other people's trash that was ripe to be plucked to become my treasure. Now, I wasn't just looking for your average off-the-secondhand-rack vintage T-shirt to wear. For me, real style lives at the intersection of .... So, to make sure that I was getting the most out of the things I was finding, I bought a sewing machine so I could tailor the 90's-style garments that I was finding, to fit a more ..... aesthetic. I've been tailoring and making my own clothes from ..... ever since, so everything in my ..... is uniquely my own.

But as I was sorting through the endless racks of clothes at these thrift stores, I started to ask myself, what happens .... that I don't buy? The stuff that isn't really cool or trendy but kind of just sits there and rots away at these ..... stores. I work in the fashion industry on the wholesale side, and I started to see some of the products that we sell end up on the racks of these thrift stores. So the question started to work its way into my work life, as well.

I .... and I pretty quickly found a very scary supply chain that led me to some pretty troubling realities.

It .... that the clothes I was sorting though at these thrift stores represented only a small fraction of the total amount of ..... that we dispose of each year. In the US, only 15 percent of the total textile and garment waste that's generated each year ends up being ..... or ..... in some way, which means that the other 85 percent of textile and garment waste end up in landfills every year. Now, I want to put this into perspective, because I don't quite think that the 85 percent does the problem justice. This means that almost .... of clothing and textile waste end up in landfills every year in just the United States alone. This averages out to be roughly .... per person ending up in the garbage.

In Canada, we throw away enough clothing to fill the largest stadium in my home town of Toronto, one that seats ..... people, with a mountain of clothes .... of that stadium. Now, even with this, I still think that Canadians are the more polite North Americans, so don't hold it against us.

What was even more surprising was seeing that the fashion industry is the second-largest polluter in the world behind the oil and gas industry. This is an important comparison to make. I don't want to defend the oil and gas industry but I'd be lying if I said I was surprised to hear they were the number one polluter. I just assumed, fairly or not, that that's an industry that doesn't really mind sticking to the .... One where the

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technology doesn't really change and the focus is more so on driving profitability at the expense of a .... But I was really surprised to see that the fashion industry was number two. Because maintaining that status quo is the opposite of what the fashion industry stands for.

The unfortunate reality is, not only do we waste a lot of the things we do consume, but we also use a lot to ..... the clothes that we buy each year. On average, a household's purchase of clothing per year requires 1,000 bathtubs of water to produce. A thousand bathtubs of water per household, per year. That's .... It seems that the industry that always has been and probably always will be on the forefront of design, creates products that are designed to be ....., designed to be ..... and designed to be ..... but aren't really designed to be ..... or ..... for that matter. But I think that can change. I think the fashion industry's aptitude for change is the exact thing that should make it patient zero for sustainable business practices. And I think to get started, all we have to do is start to design clothes to be recyclable at the end of their life.

Now, designing recyclable clothing is definitely something to leave to the professionals. But as a 24-year-old thrift store aficionado armed with a ...., if I were to very humbly posit one perspective, it would be to approach clothing design kind of like building with Lego. When we put together a brick of Lego, it's very strong but very easily manipulated. It's modular in its nature. Clothing design as it stands today is very rarely modular.

Take this motorcycle jacket as an example. It's a pretty standard jacket with its ....., ... and ..... But in order for us to efficiently recycle a jacket like this, we need to be able to easily remove these items and quickly get down to just the fabric. Once we have just the fabric, we're able to break it down by shredding it and getting back to thread level, make new thread that then gets made into new fabric and ultimately new clothing, whether it be a new jacket or new T-shirts, for example. But the complexity lies with all of these extra items, the buttons, the zippers and the trim. Because in reality, these items are actually quite .... So, in many cases it requires more time or more money to disassemble a jacket like this. In some cases, it's just more cost-effective to throw it away rather than recycle it. But I think this can change if we design clothes in a modular way to be easily disassembled at the end of their lives.

We could redesign this jacket to have a hidden wireframe, kind of like the ...., that holds all important items together. This invisible fish-bone structure can have all of these extra items, the zippers and the buttons and the trim, sewn into it and then attached to the fabric. So, at the end of the jacket's life, all you have to do is remove its fish bone and the fabric comes with it a lot ..... and a lot ..... than before.

Now, recycling clothing is definitely one piece of the puzzle. But if we want to take fixing the environmental impact that the fashion industry has more seriously, then we need to take this to the next step and start to design clothes to also be compostable at the end of their lives.

For most of the types of clothes we have in our closet the average lifespan is about .... Now, I'm sure there's many of us that have gems in our drawers that are much older than that, which is great. Because being able to extend the life of a garment by even only nine months reduces the .... that that garment has by 20 to 30 percent. But fashion is fashion. Which means that styles are always going to change and you're probably going to be wearing something different than you wear today eight seasons from now, no matter how .... you want to be.

But lucky for us, there are some items that never go out of style. I'm talking about your .....– stuff like your socks, underwear, even your pajamas. We're all guilty of wearing these items right down to the bone, and in many cases throwing them in the garbage because it's really difficult to ..... your old ratty socks that have holes in them to your local thrift store. But what if we were able to compost these items rather than throw them in the trash bin? The environmental savings could be ....., and all we would have to do is start to shift more of our resources to start to produce more of these items using more natural fibers, like ....

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Now, recycling and composting are two critical priorities. But one other thing that we have to rethink is the way that we ..... our clothes. Currently, 10 to 20 percent of the harsh chemical dye that we use end up in water bodies that neighbor production hubs in developing nations. The tricky thing is that these .... are really effective at keeping a garment a specific color for a long period of time. It's these harsh chemicals that keep that bright red dress bright red for so many years.

But what if we were able to use something different? What if we were able to use something that we all have in our kitchen cabinets at home to dye our clothes? What if we were able to use spices and herbs to dye our clothes? There's countless .... that would allow for us to stain material, but these stains change color over time. This would be pretty different than the clothes that were dyed harshly with chemicals that we're used to. But dyeing clothes naturally this way would allow for us to make sure they're .... Let's think about it.

Fashion today is all about ..... Fashion today is about managing your own personal appearance to be just unique enough to be cool. These days, everybody has the ability to showcase their brand - their personal style, across the world, through social media. The pocket-sized billboards that we flick through on our Instagram feeds are chock-full of models and taste-makers that are showcasing their individuality through their personal microbrands. But what could be more personalized, more unique, than clothes that change color over time? Clothes that with each wash and with each wear become more and more .... People have been buying and wearing ripped jeans for years. So, this would just be another example of clothes that exist in our wardrobe that evolve with us over our lives.

This shirt, for example, is one that, much to the dismay of my mother and the state of her kitchen, I dyed at home, using turmeric, before coming here today. This shirt is something that no one else or none of my friends are going to have on their Instagram feed. So, it's ....., but more importantly, it's ..... dyed. Now, I'm not suggesting that everybody dye their clothes in their kitchen sink at home. But if we were able to apply this or a similar process on a ...., then our need to rely on these harsh chemical dyes for our clothes could be easily reduced.

The 2.4-trillion-dollar fashion industry is .... So, the business that can provide a product at scale while also promising its customers that each and every garment will become more and more unique over time will have a serious competitive advantage.

Brands have been playing with customization for years. The rise of e-commerce services, like Indochino, a bespoke suiting platform, and Tinker Tailor, a bespoke dress-making platform, have made customization possible from your couch. Nike and Adidas have been mastering their online shoe customization platforms for years.

Providing individuality .... is a challenge that most consumer-facing businesses encounter. So, being able to tackle this while also providing an environmentally friendly product could lead to a pretty seismic industry ..... And at that point, it's not just about doing what's best for our environment but also what's best for the bottom line.

There's no fix-all, and there's no .... But we can get started by designing clothes with their death in mind. The fashion industry is the perfect industry to experiment with and embrace change that can one day get us to the sustainable future we so desperately need.

Thank you.

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