UK shoppers own £10 billion worth of clothing they don’t wear

Submitted by: Kin Communications2
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•Every 10 kilos of cotton manufactured requires 10,000 litres of water[1].
•Micro fibres released into oceans by washing synthetic materials are contributing to ocean plastic pollution.
•Luxury brands destroying £28.6 billion of product; contributing to more CO2 emissions than maritime shipping.

The average text message is replied to in 90 seconds[2], over half (51%) of retailers now offer a same-day delivery service[3] and our transport is at its fastest, with two high-speed train services set to be operational by 2026, we have become accustomed to living in an impatient world. Everything is on our doorstep and at the tap of a finger making the temptation to divulge into a disposable lifestyle unavoidable but are we really aware of the environmental implications of this flippant and disposable way of life?

In 2018, a survey uncovered that shoppers in the UK hoard over 10 billion pounds worth of unworn clothes[4]. Women were also found to be the largest culprits in unworn clothes, splurging the most money on garments (£1042 per year) while only wearing a measly 55% of their wardrobe[5]. The main reason for excessive shopping sprees is confidence, with 79% of women saying that they are happier when they are wearing something new[6].

While excessive shopping sprees have negative repercussions for the environment, the maintenance of clothes such as washing, drying and dry cleaning have similar consequences. It is estimated that the annual footprint of a households total newly bought clothing and clothing maintenance equates to the same amount of carbon emissions required to drive the average car 6,000 miles[7], almost the same distance as driving from the UK to Peru.

Unbeknown to most, the implications of the fast fashion industry are extremely detrimental to the environment. Polyester, nylon, acrylic and other synthetic plastic fibres are very popular within the fashion industry, especially in the manufacturing of fast-fashion garments due to their inexpensive cost and versatility. As of 2019, around 60% of the material used to manufacture garments are comprised of synthetic fibres[8]. For every single clothing item washed, tiny microfibers no longer than 5mm are leached into waterways inevitably residing in oceans and contributing to the pressing problem of micro plastic pollution. These tiny harmful fibres are then easily ingested by marine wildlife inflicting painful physical damage such as inflammation of the intestines.

60% of women’s clothing contains cotton fibres but despite it being a naturally derived material, cotton growth requires an abundance of water and the largest quantity of chemical pesticides compared with any other crop in the world.

Astoundingly, the manufacturing of one single pair of denim jeans requires 35,000 litres of water[9]. In countries such as Uzbekistan whose main revenue comes from cotton production, the excessive farming and water consumption has caused the whole Aral Sea to shrivel and dry up.

Disgusted by the extreme efforts, brands such as Nike, Urban Outfitters, Michael Kors and Victoria Secret have taken to preserve their brands prestige and disappointed in luxury fashion brand Burberry for scandalously destroying £28.6 million worth of stock last year[10].

Fashion expert Cyrine Allani Joaristi who has worked for the likes of Christian Dior Couture, Jacques Fath and has founded clothing rental service Nothing-to-Wear gives her top tips on how we can shop sustainably while being ecologically conscious.

Avoid One Hit Wonders

It can be tempting when attending a special occasion to indulge on a new outfit, which is often only worn once for that special occasion and afterwards thrown to the back of the cupboard never to see daylight again.
Save money and preserve the environment by opting to use a clothing rental service such as Nothing-to-Wear allowing shoppers to rent designer handbags, dresses and accessories at a fraction of the cost of buying an outfit from new.

Think 30

If you see a garment that catches your eye, the invitation to make a spontaneous purchase is almost obligatory. By giving yourself 48 hours to think about whether you really like the item will help you to decide if you really want/need the item. All too often we are blinded by clothing sales and discounts, persuaded to buy just because of the significant price reduction.
48 hours is the perfect time to deliberate the 30 Wears Test created by Livia Firth, founder of Eco Age, a company that certifies a clothing brands sustainability. If you cannot pledge to wear a pending item at least 30 times then you should leave the item hanging on the rack - Giving yourself time to think allows you to evaluate if the pending item is a valuable and durable edition to your wardrobe.

Steer to Sustainable

Steer your shopping trips towards brands that promote sustainability. Outlets such as H&M have an exclusive collection called Conscious, which boasts clothing materials such as ECONYL, 100% regenerated nylon and accessories made from discarded candle sticks. Or browse in vintage shops or online sites such as EBAY offering used clothing to reduce your fashion carbon footprint.

Stitch, Switch and Surrender

Avoid sending clothes to the landfill and increase the longevity of your wardrobe by mending broken zips, sewing on buttons or re- heeling shoes. Donate unwanted clothes to charity shops or host a clothes swap party, catch up with friends and shop for an entirely free new wardrobe by switching your unwanted clothing items with your friends.

Cyrine added that shoppers should: “Invest in a good quality timeless capsule wardrobe and rent the trendy and exceptional items. After all, we all suffer from the same Fashion paradigm: no matter the size of our closet, we always have Nothing-to-Wear.”

-Ends-

For any additional comment to accompany this release please contact Amy on amy@kincomms.com or call 020 3958 7085
For information please visit: https://www.nothing-to-wear.com

1 https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/mar/20/cost-cotton-water-challenged-india-world-water-day
2 https://www.viber.com/blog/2017-11-06/text-message-response-times/
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