

# Collision of Fast and Slow

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**Abstract.** In the rapid development of the national economy, the pace of life of people is just like riding on a high-speed train, it is too fast to appreciate the scene. Fashion is become the perfect manifestation of the state of this consumption. On the one side, more and more people chase the “fast fashion” without taking into account any environmental resources or economic costs. On the opposite side some people advocate the return of the “slow fashion”, to wash our weary soul on a slow way. This may seem a contradiction, nevertheless in today's society it is with an ingenious way to be fusion .How to grasp the ever-changing fashion have become a problem people have to face. The thesis for this phenomenon showing series of methods to deal with this in-depth analysis of the dialectical relationship between “fast” and “slow” with the dialectical relationship between the economic, environment and society. Above all the thesis concluded that “life may just need to slow down a bit”.

**Keywords:** Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion, Life Quality, Low-Carbon

## 1. Impact of Fast Fashion

### 1.1. “Fast” Fashion Delights People

In recent years, numerous brand clothes hold the banner of “fast fashion” to sweep through the most part of China. Initiator of such phenomenon is the famous brand ZARA from Spain, with H&M, MANGO, UNIQLO and the domestic brand vanshare etc. on its heels [1].

The so-called “fast fashion” mainly includes implication from three aspects, which are short loading time, low price and closely following fashion trend. The clothes style produced by “fast fashion” is 3 to 4 times as many as that produced by general enterprises, with one product replaced by another every week. The goods will not be put on shelf repeatedly, and it takes only 12 days for the products from design to production and eventually being put on shelf. While price is the second superiority, for you can enjoy the latest trend via one-tenth of the luxury brand price, which is enough to attract a large number of consumers who run after fashion. Such scene can always be seen in the market: when the store of “fast fashion” brand is crowded in every part, the scene in other exclusive shops including many first-class brands is totally different. It can only be described as “many visitors” and “few visitors”.

### 1.2. More Haste and Less Speed

Many consumers are blindly chasing trend, and when they scramble for fast fashion brand, it's difficult for them to discover the heavy crisis under the prosperity surface of these brands. Firstly, it is the weakness of exchanging poor quality for low price. Bad shell fabric and rough craft are their inevitable awkwardness. These dresses that seem to be full of graphic sense but actually whose shell fabric is bad and craft is rough has been criticized by consumers. At the beginning of 2012, ZARA was criticized for ignoring consumers' rights and interests by Beijing Consumers' Association in public because many non-standard clothes have been detected in many quality inspections [2].

In such an era which regards “fast” as trend, the design originality has been left far behind by our “fashion” train that advances rapidly, and few passengers will look back. More and more consumers have been “kidnapped” by merchants and media and lost themselves. Blind plagiarism makes quite a few brands lose the design theory as well as style. There is no any other thing which deserves aftertaste except “fast”.

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Lucy Siegel published a new book called “To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing out the World” recently, and she points out that: Fashion is wearing out the world. Too fast fashion is contradictory with low-carbon lifestyle advocated today in many aspects, which can be illustrated by some appalling data [3].

Among 80,000,000,000 articles of clothing produced every year in the world, about 2,000,000 articles have been thrown into the dump just in the UK; on average, every woman buys as many clothes as more than half of her body weight every year, and quite a few people have dozens of clothes that have never been dressed; people today buy clothes several times more than that in the past, and every western woman often spends hundreds of thousands of US dollars on garment accessories during her whole life. Today, over 3 pairs of jeans can be sold out every second on the globe, though the average price of a single pair decreases by 14%. With rapid development of China’s economy, Chinese women’s demand for clothes has been increased gradually, and the rise of online shopping in recent years has quickened such phenomenon. According to data from Taobao, the total transaction amount of clothes on Taobao approaches RMB 10,000,000,000 Yuan, and about 500 articles of clothes can be sold every minute on average [4]. The first thing for some aficionados when they turn on the computer every day is to search whether there are updated clothes they like. Due to low price, the clothes are bought without any consideration, and some of them fall into disuse even without being dressed. And the quality needs no consideration, because they won’t be dressed for many times. Easy come easy go.

The behaviors of a lot of media and merchants that only value commercial profits, cater to most people’s pleasure and pay no attention to consequences also make more and more consumers lose self-control ability and could not help but sink into it. Immoderate greediness has gradually become the symptom of a “fast” era.

## **2. Recovery of Slow Fashion**

The consumers have been immersed in the colorful world themed by “fast” for a long time, and aesthetic fatigue starts to occur. The consumers gradually become tired of “fast fashion” clothes that just rest on the superficial level of rapid replacement and fashion chasing. At this time, “slow fashion” that is classic, durable and unique returns to the public. Some consumers have had more mature consumption view, and they begin to pay attention to their value when purchasing commodities, rather than be controlled by the transient fashion.

The designer Diane von Fu Tenberg said that “fast fashion” expanded too rapidly, and Suzy Menkes, editor of International Herald agreed that it is the time for fashion to be slow now. Donatella Versace said, “I think fast fashion is done”. At this time when global economy is in depression, “fast fashion” shall be slow now[5].

### **2.1. Taste the Life “Slowly”**

“Slow fashion” can be interpreted as a more rational way. “Slow fashion” has a more durable style. With unique individuality and exquisite shell fabric, it is hard to be swallowed by the trend of fashion compared with transient “fast fashion” brands. In other words, due to its unique style, exquisite craft and classic pattern, it can accompany you longer, and perhaps is the evergreen tree in your wardrobe. People gradually start to taste life, and taste the fashion of quality life. Rational consumption starts to be recognized by people, and it can better improve people’s life quality to buy a long-standing commodity than to purchase many commodities without sustainable value.

### **2.2. Patterns of “Slow”**

- Expensive “slow”:

The most obvious characteristic of “slow fashion” is non-rapidity of its process, and such brands are achieved by exquisite shell fabric, delicate craft and top-level service. “Persistence and durability” is one of the features of “slow fashion” brands, and exquisite craft is the essential distinction between it and “fast fashion” brands. The most typical “slow fashion” shall be private customization, with peculiarity as its biggest advantage, and it will not be controlled by the so-called fashion trend. Only complete leather is adopted for leather goods of these brands, with its bits and pieces left behind as rubbish. It often takes an incredibly long time for a product from design, manufacture and eventually being put on shelf. This is undoubtedly a striking contrast against “fast fashion” brands which only need 2 weeks for these steps. This means that when enjoying “slow fashion”, consumers have to pay high price and luxury. In China’s current

market, the client base who can afford such fashion is not big, so there are few privately customized brands. Only people with superior economic base can afford privately customized garment accessories. For people at this level, “private customization” is regarded as a consumption habit. So even the outside environment changes, their demand for private customization will still remain unchanged.

- low-carbon “slow”:

The Fifteenth Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework *Convention on Climate Change*, Kyoto Protocol and the Fifth Conference of the Parties (commonly known as Copenhagen conference) were once praised as conferences of “the last chance to save human kind”. When people realized the greenhouse crisis they would be faced with, “low-carbon life” has gradually become a life attitude that people are happy to pursue and follow. But some people just hold the banner of “low carbon”, but actually have not achieved energy saving and emission reduction in real sense, and “low carbon” is nothing but a popular slogan. Rapid increase of people’s consumption towards garment accessories in recent years is enough to illustrate this.

Environmental protection and sustainability make slow fashion more ethical than fast fashion. On one side, as Garland(2009) reported which was about the environmental problem of fast fashion “This is contributing to a range of environmental problems, including a growth in chemical waste output and the UK’s carbon footprint, and yet more rubbish heading for landfill.” [6] This appears a powerful evidence that fast fashion has already pollute our environment. On the other side, Fletcher(2008) commented slow fashion is aware and responsible to the sustainability and environment. Slow fashion brands prefer to put attention on regeneration cycle of material and try to use natural fabrics such as cotton and flax. Furthermore because the products have high quality [7]. It would draw a conclusion both the regeneration cycle system and the serviceable and natural materials make slow fashion environmental friendly. Thus slow fashion is more beneficial to environment and sustainable.

Perhaps such garment accessories are 4 times more expensive than “fast fashion” brands. This also illustrates that these designers do not only consider the influence power of economic price on consumers, but environmental protection is their first consideration to a great extent, so clothes which will benefit environmental protection and earth resources can be designed and produced. Such clothes are more classic and longer timeliness, less waste, and more environmental protection.

### **3. “Fast” era**

#### **3.1. Economy under the “Fast” Era**

We live in a background of great era that pursues “fast”; especially the rapid development of current economy is shocking. We believe that many Chinese people are still immersed in the buoyant spirits for China defeated Japan in GDP in 2010. This almost gives decisive status to China’s economy, which is of course a great event for Chinese people who are eager for rise of the great nation and national revival. With the rapid increase of GDP by over 9% in many continuous years, China seems to have entered a flourishing age.

When we celebrate for such a flourishing age, we have to accept the following fact: per capita GDP of China is only 3,800 dollars, and “is almost ranked at the 105th position in the world”. What’s more important is that there exists a gap difficult to cross between China and developed countries in terms of many systems like medical treatment, education, environmental protection. Maybe this era is too fast for us to think and reflect, and thus we have neglected many details. There goes a saying that “consumption is the biggest contribution to a nation”. Under the background of currency inflation and soaring prices, we are still consuming and squandering mechanically, which leads to the foam of stock market and falsely high housing price. Nobody knows whether the “white-collar men” who seem to be glamorous belong to the “group of spending all monthly salary”, and whether they owe high credit card loan. Everything comes too much in a hurry, and people have lost time to accumulate and ruminate. Perhaps from another perspective, this “fast” era can be interpreted as a buckish era.

#### **3.2. We, under the “Fast” Era**

It has become a habit for us to update the wardrobe at a fixed time and chase the latest fashion element of every season at a fixed time. We change our dresses just like a trotting horse lamp. We have almost ignored our fashion opinions under such a “fast” era background where information changes rapidly, and we have

forgotten that fashion shall be chased slowly. Quite a few fashion-chasing people will experience such a scene: when they open the wardrobe, they find clothes bought last year have been out of fashion, and it may take less than a year. We will receive promotional information from the market every few days, and this makes us shuttle in each big market and website to consume and enjoy ourselves. We are immersed in the endless loop of satisfaction, discard, and repeating consumption. Today's people are leading a life as if they were sitting in a quickly running car to enjoy scenery out of the window, but they could see nothing.

This also changes the emotional relations between men and clothes. People in the past cherished clothes, mended clothes, and hope to wear them longer, as if clothes were their good friends and lovers that have accompanied them long, and they have the common time and memory; today, we are just like frequent hunters who only pursue sensory stimulus and vanity, so numbness and oblivion are coming, and we are just waiting for a new round of stimulus, without long emotional association. Many consumers are easy to be controlled under advertising media propaganda, and thus lose the consumption subjectivity. In another word, in this "fast" era, more and more consumers have lost individuality and been dominated by fashion blindly.

#### 4. "Slow" Makes Life Wonderful

How can we make life "slow" and wonderful under the background of "fast" era? The well-known cartoonist Mr. ZHU Deyong thinks that everybody is sick, and he said, "There are too many traps in this era, and you shall always keep sober. You shall keep in mind that 'what you think is the most important' " [8]. The era goes so fast, and if the process is compressed, you will get nothing useful from it. So I advocate a "slow fashion", to make your pace of life slow. I don't mean a slow behavior, but a slow mood. "Slow fashion" does not simply cover the aspects of consumption on garment accessories, but an outlook on life that advocates nature and has the courage to reflect.

The Miao girls who live in the impoverished mountainous areas are different from us, and they cannot get the fashion information soon, and wear the latest items. During most of the time in a year, they just wear dull coarse clothes, but when these beautiful girls wear Chinese clothes and wonderful silver ornaments, they will far surpass us all who are covered with "fast fashion" clothes which can only be popular for one season. Beauty needs precipitation, and there is no need to desperately win identification from others and blindly chase the fashion opinion imposed by merchants and media. Fashion is the expression of one's own state.

#### 5. Conclusion

The current environment and economy are changing constantly, and we seem to be quite small in this era. A bit of carelessness will make us swallowed by the surge of era. Nowadays, people pursue "fast" fashion, which will make both men and environment pay a price that cannot be neglected.

As Lao Tse's Tao Teh King goes, Less is more and more is bewildered [9]. In modern society, the element is more and more colorful and the perception is more and more complicated. In the varicolored world, people have difficulties in knowing who they are. They feel tired and confused. Thus, simple, relaxing and comfortable life has become the new value orientation of the people. Only freedom can lead us to the place where we want to go; only serenity can make us enjoy the leisureliness of slow pace in life, and enjoy the mind sublimation and thought precipitation brought about by quality life.

Life may just need to slow down a bit.

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