

## **Transparency and togetherness: fashion's formula to sustainable success**

*Even in a year that has wedged divides between people, groups and nations, and one in which uncertainty has been the overriding theme, a luxury retail expert believes togetherness and transparency are the key to fashion's future.*

*Robert Lockyer, CEO and founder of Delta Global, a packaging provider for luxury fashion retail brands, explains that if the industry is to meet its goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, it's going to take collective action and clearer communication.*

The fashion industry is a significant contributor to the climate change crisis. Recent figures show that the industry is responsible for up to [10%](#) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and 20% of the world's industrial wastewater pollution.

That's not to mention the end-of-life impact, whereby customers throw away clothing, accessories and their packaging, and leave them to pile up in landfill. Highlighting just how big of an issue this is, it is estimated that in the UK alone, [350,000 tonnes](#) of used clothing goes to landfill each year.

Of course, the industry has recognised its shortcomings and has set goals that will combat them if achieved. But to get there, it's clear that more action needs to be taken, and in many ways the events of this year have only made this more apparent.

The global pandemic, political climate change agendas and adjusted ways of life due to them both have caused businesses and consumers to rethink production processes and consumption habits.

This has included [less frequent fashion collections](#) and the rise of reselling platforms as a way for brands to reduce overstock issues and consumers to make back lost earnings. [Curated capsule wardrobes](#) have also emerged from the decluttering being done during people's extended periods of free time at home, paired with a more minimal lifestyle and tighter budgets.

Although efforts might've been taken to overcome the current challenges, those that encourage transparency and togetherness are paving the way for a more sustainable future for fashion, too.

### **Supply chain action**

Before a fashion item even enters a customer's wardrobe, it has already caused environmental damage through material sourcing, production processes and clocked up travel miles that connect these various points.

Therefore, action is required from businesses at an industry level to minimise fashion's contribution to climate change. And collaboration is key here, as no single business can create the change that is needed alone.

Rather, businesses need to take a step back to get a complete view of their supply chains and then engage each point to create a streamlined process in which waste is minimised and practices are streamlined.

And it's not only the production and supply of a brand's products that can benefit from this. Their packaging can, too, allowing the business to become more sustainable as a whole.

Streamlined processes like this would have helped many brands overcome the issues they faced earlier in the year when lockdown restrictions across the world meant stock was left sitting on shelves in stores, unable to be sold. And when shops were finally able to reopen, items were out of season and unfavoured.

If processes had been streamlined, both clothing production and store deliveries could have been driven by demand, creating less waste and impact on cash flow.

Going forward then, a reactive process that is informed by consumer and market patterns will not only help brands to avoid similar challenges, but also allow them to become more sustainable.

And doing this doesn't need to be an admin burden for businesses, either. Instead, supply chain points can be aligned and monitored through a digital management system that provides them with an up to date and complete view of their processes from a single, centralised dashboard.

Leveraging a digital system in this way provides benefits such as automation, whereby orders can be placed when stock is low, and data collection, which can then be analysed to create accurate trend predictions to inform future activity.

This can also help brands to become more transparent. If information is shared with others in the chain and even customers, they can be held accountable for any shortcomings, which can create constructive pressure and cause them to take swifter action.

### **Collaborate, don't compete**

Sustainability should no longer be about brands looking for a one up on competitors. In fact, I'd go as far as saying this approach is counterintuitive as being sustainable is only beneficial if the world we live in is able to benefit from it. Which it won't be if we keep going in the damaging direction that we are.

Collaboration between brands operating in the same field is the best way to create effective change. And like a domino effect, as soon as just a few brands begin to work together for the greater good, others will follow.

This is exactly what we've seen with initiatives such as [The Fashion Pact](#) and the [UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion](#) whereby signatory members have all accepted responsibility and committed to change for the benefit of the industry and not just their profits.

And as public facing documents, consumers are not only able to hold brands accountable, but they are also being provided with a more transparent view of the industry, including issues that businesses have typically kept hidden in the past.

This way, customers can make better and more informed choices when shopping and our guess is those doing their bit to combat the climate crisis will be much more favoured.

While the uncertainty and difficulties experienced this year have created divides, whether that's differing political views or physical gaps due to travel restrictions, for example, the strength in numbers always come out on top. And fashion's future is no different.