



# Social Actions Fostering the Slow Fashion Movement in Europe: The Role of Social Entrepreneurs

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## Background

The fashion industry is one of the world's most polluting industries. In response, the slow fashion movement was brought to life in 2007 by Kate Fletcher. By focusing mainly on ecological improvements, the social issues applying to the concept of slow fashion were neglected. Therefore, the research question of this study is: How can European social entrepreneurs in the fashion industry contribute to the slow fashion movement in Europe?

## Objective

To find out what role social entrepreneurs play for the slow fashion movement in Europe and what social actions they make use of to do so. Moreover, the goal was to create a table of social actions that social entrepreneurs can incorporate in their business model to foster the SFM.

## Introduction

Seven to ten times. This is how often a piece of clothing is worn globally before it is discarded (Morlet et al., 2017). Simultaneously, consumers are buying more new clothes than ever. In fact, the production of clothes has doubled over the last 15 years (Souchet, 2019). The concept behind this is called fast fashion. As an answer to this challenge, the concept of "slow fashion", in analogy of the slow culture movement came to life. Slow fashion is focusing on changing the status quo of the fashion industry e.g., through selling less clothes but at a higher quality and price. I argued that social entrepreneurs can utilize the early stage of the slow fashion movement to increase their social impact on the fashion industry by fostering the movement with their social actions. (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Considering the obstacles the fashion industry must overcome, (e.g., untransparent supply-chains, modern slavery, and environmental pollution) social entrepreneurship appears to be a potential solution through its focus on social dimensions.

## Results

- Social entrepreneurs are also supporting the SFM without actively being part of it
- Social entrepreneurs play the role of the agitator in the SFM with the goal to show consumers and fashion brands that being socially and financially sustainable is possible
- The support of the SFM seems to be rather a by-product than a main concern of the social entrepreneurs

## Results

### Social Actions Fostering the Slow Fashion Movement

- Education
  - Disclose and share information with people
  - Give sustainability workshops
  - Involve people into the dressmaking process
- Inclusivity
  - Custom made clothing
  - Enable others to wear your clothing through renting
  - Keep prices as low as possible
- Political Support
  - Social statement clothes
  - Become a Touchpoint for Protests
- Supply Chain
  - Do not put pressure on suppliers
  - Get to know your suppliers personally
  - Pay people fairly
  - Social certificates
  - Use folklore designs made by grandmothers
  - Work with independent tailors and dressmakers

### Contributions of this Master Thesis

1. Investigating how SEs in Europe's fashion industry are conducting business and identifying SFM related social actions that social entrepreneurs can use to foster the SFM.
2. Setting the SFM into the context of social entrepreneurship in the fashion industry in Europe by providing information regarding the perceived status quo of the SFM and the lacking awareness of broad customers and fashion brands that the SFM exists at all.
3. By setting the SFM into the context of social entrepreneurship this research shows how these two separate fields intersect and it implicates that SEs can profit from the SFM and vice versa.

### Limitations

- Social entrepreneurship in the fashion industry is difficult to separate from ecological entrepreneurship because the mentioned social actions are indirectly affecting the ecological sustainability of a fashion brand.
- Only a small part of Europe is reflected. It would have been important to also include countries from northern Europe and the Balkan region