



Are traditional indent orders relevant in a fast moving market?

Assia Benmedjdoub asks members of the industry about the logistics of a new fashion economy.

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Indent orders have been a vital part of the textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industry production schedules for over 50 years. This was in the era when the buyer was taking the risk of committing to a legally signed order which would be honoured; not cancelled three months later or even worse, accept an order delivery but be unable to pay for the goods received. Due to the pressures of poor retail trading conditions and profitability, risk is now shifting to designers producing range collections on low indent orders, carrying the back-up stock in season, going vertical or online themselves and/or placing commission stock in retail stores to ensure volumes are still met to develop a viable business turnover and secure manufacturing space whether on or off shore. With online consumer sales now able to be placed direct from fashion showings, the entire supply chain of designer – agent – retailer needs urgent strategic assessment to survive. This changed cycle of 'fast-moving' fashion will also lead to cost pressures of labels looking to offload produced, unsold stock onto the fewer declining retailers remaining. These retailers are struggling to compete against global fashion retailers that have opened doors down under, who can afford to clear dead stock quickly. Designers, agents and retailers need to re-educate their client to value 'slow-fashion', to have a more strategic approach to their buying patterns and encourage consumer purchases to increase by better trained and informed sales staff with responsibility of shared promotion and education shared by all the key players. There will be an increase in artisan, bespoke and customisation on offer but these volumes will not sustain business turnovers.

The TCF Industry is one of the major environmental polluting industries in the world with textile production using 25 per cent of the world's chemicals and thousands of litres of water to produce just one t-shirt. When the socially aware consumer is more alert of these damaging industry statistics and unethical TCF labour practices in some countries, there will be a global shift to reduce 'fast fashion' buying habits and consumers are reducing their expenditure. Sustainable Fashion requires the entire industry to be flexible to a combination of fast and slow fashion, ensure indent orders are supported where possible, develop new business strategies and brand alliances, innovative range collections and cash flow management to survive in the TCF business of today with the minimum of risk. ■