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# DFYnorm: this label has the manifesto to topple fast-fashion

Vikki Knowles (https://collectively.org/en/contributor/vikki-knowles/)

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**this-label-has-the-manifesto-to-defy-fast-fashion%2F)**

What if fashion could be inspirational? - what if fashion could be inspirational?

That's exactly what Smrita Kumar and Haseena Latheef are driving with their slow-fashion start-up, DFYnorm (https://www.dfynorm.com), a brand that kicks the ass of pretty much every fashion norm. These ladies aren't interested in chasing fads, clogging-up landfill with polyester or buying into non-representational imagery. So, how does one stick a middle finger up to orthodox fashion and simultaneously slow things down to the speed of an '80s ballad? Kumar told us.

## 1. Women, holler!

"We asked friends, connections and inspiring women to model our clothes and tell a little bit of their story to the audience. A woman has a lot more to talk about than her looks. There's got to be more meaning to how we present fashion.

"We [also] want to translate women's journeys - let's say in science and engineering - into fashion. And let's say somebody is into art and poetry - [she could] create a specific garment that has her art on it. We want to create a story collection which breathes all the stories that the women have come in with into very rounded collections for people to preorder, and we produce the favourites. This year, that's one of the projects that we want to do."

Bonnie Chiu, co-founder of Lensational, wearing DFYnorm's Ikat Stacy top

## 2. Swot up on fabrics

"As a policy, we decided that we are not going to use polyester. We are not going to use leather until it's vegan. We are not going to use things that aren't biodegradable. We learn as we go. We realised that cotton has negative aspects as well. Cotton is usually grown in developing countries to serve the needs of fast-fashion. They don't follow the usual crop cycle. Ideally, when you grow cotton you should rotate it with some other crop so that the soil remains naturally balanced. But what happens is, people keep growing cotton and it makes the soil very bad.

"We thought, 'okay, we should move to entirely organic cotton'. We should understand where it's grown and what kind of pesticides and fertilisers are used. We're want to understand recycled polyester and are looking at those kinds of fabrics. We don't use carcinogenic dyes, we make sure that everything we use is lab-tested, so we know that it hasn't got any toxins."

## 3. Know your workers personally

"We pay our workers very ethically - we're a team. So it's not a typical structure where you give an order to a manufacturing house and you don't really know how they're getting it done. Here, I work with them very closely. I know about their family, their personal trials and tribulations. I never thought I would actually get to interact with people. And we work with artisans. We source some of our art fabrics from these villages, which have community-building programs."

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#### 4. Less is more

"Most of our products are designed and sampled in London and created in India. So we call ourselves 'affordable luxury'. Not mass-manufactured, but very limited editions. Our pieces are timeless. Apart from a beautiful cape that was created for the spring and winter, everything else can be worn across seasons."

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#### 5. Gather your girls and your bros

"We're working with a lot of brand partners who are creating amazing products from recycling material, or creating artisanal jewellery. We make our [web]site a collective of ethical fashion. Let's create this space where people can shop right."

Minna Salami from the MsAfropolitan blog wearing DFYnorm's Shibori Kimono.

"People are coming together to create movements like the HeForShe (<http://www.heforshe.org/en>) campaign Emma Watson is involved with. We want to create a space where we can collaborate with these movements, and create fashion that stems from stories. It's like a celebration, and that's basically defying all norms in fashion."

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#### 6. Male/female = whatever

"We wanted to have a very fluid blend of beauty, to represent [being] powerful as well as feminine. Some of our items are very sharp and bold; some are very fluid, luxurious and elegant. We want to marry the two of them, because we feel we have traits that go either way, right? People like to segregate [things] as masculine and feminine, but I think we all have a myriad of traits."

"In time, we'd like to have things that can be agender, some pieces for [both] men and women. Like something that is very functional, very beautiful, but works for both."

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#### 7. Appeal to ANY-body

"Most of our tops should fit multiple body types, so they're not tailored to be very fitting. They have a more flexible and breathable silhouette, so they can cater to more sizes than just a small, already served population of sizes."

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#### 8. Democratise fashion (so your pals can wear it)

"I'm toying with how I can actually create a payment system where you can buy over time. That's something I'm still experimenting with, with my co-founder. I know a lot of my friends have said the same thing to me, and I would love my friends also to wear what we create. So that's how the idea came about."

"In the future as we grow, our economy of scale is bound to improve, and with ideas like pay-over-a-period, diffusion lines and partnerships with emerging sustainable rockstars will help us be more accessible."

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