

Providing Institution:



Read the text about consumer habits in times of economic weakness, then choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for questions 1-7. Put a cross (☒) in the correct box on the answer sheet. The first one (0) has been done for you.

## Fashion during recession

Current economic trends present an opportunity for many people to look at fashion in a way they haven't before.

Many consumers are looking for fashion that is not only affordable, but stylish as well. According to some fashion experts, this has forced designers and retailers to lose the excess fluff and get back to the meat and potatoes of their lines and offerings. That can mean clothes with a better fit and designs that are more in tune with their target markets, says Amanda Lovell, department chair of Fashion Design at The Art Institute of New York City.

"By making less and offering less, there is a stronger focus on producing items that are known sellers," Lovell says. "Designers and retailers need to get the most out of every purchase a customer makes, due to the fact that customers are thinking twice before buying excess pieces."

Each fashion brand, designer, and retailer has items that are known sellers, Lovell explains. "For example, the Gap most likely sells their short-sleeve Crewneck or V-neck, black fitted T-shirts for both men and women season after season regardless of the economy or forces in the trend cycle," she offers.

Designers also have responded by offering lower-priced bridge lines, adds Mary Hall, who provides money-saving tips on fashion, dining out, and entertainment in her blog *The Recessionista*.

"There are fewer and fewer high-end collections with high prices coming out," says Hall, a Los Angeles marketing manager. "Now we have Norma Kamali at Walmart, Vera Wang and Dana Buchman at Kohl's, and the annual H&M designers. It makes fashion so much more accessible to consumers."

And as fashion focuses on getting more bang for the buck, shoppers are on the hunt for versatile clothing items that have a long shelf life.

"We all just got a little wiser and started exercising the power of the purse," Hall states. "We are shopping smarter. The new differentiator is value along with the best price."

Lovell agrees. "I believe from a consumer point of view, they are looking for pieces to add to their wardrobes that will take them further and have more staying power," she offers. "Classic pieces have been trending well."

To keep them looking up-to-date, many designers just give them a slightly newer spin. "Pieces such as the basic cardigan are receiving a face-lift with added bobbles and trimmings and simple touches in updating the buttons, or the cut," Lovell comments. "This is an example of a classic piece that women can wear and depend on year round. I see customers buying these pieces that they can get more wear out of."

Classic items aren't the only things popular in the down economy. Many thrift stores are seeing a boost in sales. According to a member survey by the National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops, slightly more than 64% of stores had an average increase in sales of 31%.

Lovell also says there's a resurgence of people mending their clothes and accessories before replacing them with new items. "For example, shoe repair shops have noticed an increase in business, as consumers bring in their shoes to be repaired as opposed to purchasing a new pair," she explains.

"Overall, trends in consumer buying behaviors change with what is going on socially, politically, and economically in the world. The fashion industry just needs to ride out this wave and consumers will soon be spending in excess as before," Lovell opines.

However, some say the recession has prompted them to become more responsible in their spending habits – a change that could be permanent for many consumers.

- 0 Economic developments have made fashion professionals
- A look for new consumer groups.
  - B focus on more basic things again.
  - C use only cheap materials.
  - D design more stylish clothes.
- 1 As designers reduce the range of products, they
- A increase the price consumers have to pay.
  - B have to sell double the amount of goods.
  - C have their sales a little earlier than usual.
  - D put more emphasis on what consumers buy.
- 2 As the number of expensive designs is decreasing,
- A fashion is more readily available.
  - B people worry less about the costs.
  - C more people work as designers.
  - D fashion has become more important.
- 3 As consumers think more carefully about what they buy, they
- A limit the number of clothes they own.
  - B spend more time shopping for clothes.
  - C focus more on quality and cost.
  - D prefer cheaper prices over quality.
- 4 It has become a trend to
- A design or change your clothes yourself.
  - B make traditional clothes more fashionable.
  - C combine knitwear with other types of clothes.
  - D stick to the same clothing style for one year.
- 5 Another trend is to
- A fix old clothes rather than get new ones.
  - B spend more on accessories rather than clothes.
  - C sell your old shoes to repair businesses.
  - D exchange broken or damaged things for new ones.
- 6 Lovell believes that after the recession
- A fashion trends will become very different.
  - B shoppers will be buying as much as ever.
  - C the social and political world will improve.
  - D the fashion industry will continue to suffer.
- 7 Experts think that through the economic crisis
- A people care less about their lifestyle.
  - B saving money has become harder.
  - C consumers prefer to shop online.
  - D shopping habits have improved.

**Answer key:** 0-B, 1-D, 2-A, 3-C, 4-B, 5-A, 6-B, 7-D