

SUSTAINABLE FASHION'S RESPONSE TO FAST FASHION:
INNOVATIVE PRACTICES OF YOUNG SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING COMPANIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Fashion's Response to Fast Fashion: Innovative Practices of Young Sustainable Clothing Companies

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“Fast Fashion” is a trend in the Conventional Clothing Industry characterized by decreased cost of production and price of product and increased turnaround time and production. This has caused numerous environmental and social problems including land degradation, pollution, unsustainable water and resource use, slavery, child labor, and unfair “legal” working conditions. Young small businesses can do a better job at innovating sustainability practices than most large corporations because they are not already entrenched in conventional systems. They offer alternative Sustainable Business Management (SBM) and Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) practices that address the impacts of “Fast Fashion.” Through informational interviews with an employee from each company (including founders, owners, designers, production managers, operations managers, and sourcing managers) and information gathered on company websites, this research explores the innovations that young clothing companies employ to remain disengaged from the conventional system and to incorporate sustainability in their organizational and sourcing practices. This research identifies seven different themes of innovative practices including Intentional Design, Intentional Fabric and Materials, Transparency in Supply Chains, Increased Producer Responsibility, Nimble Operations and Business Model, Value Consistency, and Stakeholder Engagement. Each theme has multiple sub-themes, and these can be useful for a small clothing company wishing to replicate holistic sustainability practices. More than the sub-themes, this research finds that personal values of the owners/founders affect the sustainability practices of these small clothing companies. It also highlights the need for collaboration and adaptability in sustainable business and adds to the discussion on what innovative scaling looks like in a sustainable context. Ultimately, the pursuit of holistic sustainable business—as opposed to a business that incorporates some sustainable practices—can cause a fundamental shift in how businesses act, operate, and produce instead of merely rebranding the conventional model.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	0
Introduction.....	1
Fast Fashion.....	2
More vs. Better.....	5
A Changing Sustainability Model.....	7
Overview of Social Issues.....	8
Overview of Environmental Issues.....	12
A New Paradigm.....	16
Literature Review.....	20
Setting the Scene.....	20
Systems Thinking.....	22
Sustainable Business Management (SBM)	24
Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM)	28
Corporate Social Responsibility and Certifications.....	31
Greenwashing.....	34
Circular Economy.....	35
Consumer Behavior.....	37
Instagram as a Business Tool.....	40
Best Practices.....	41
Gaps in the Literature.....	43
Methods.....	45
Interviews.....	45

Identifying and Contacting Research Participants.....	46
Identifying Questions to Ask.....	47
Gathering Data.....	48
Data Analysis Procedures.....	49
Results	51
Part 1: The Businesses.....	52
Brass Clothing.....	52
Devinto.....	56
Dorsu.....	60
Elizabeth Suzann.....	65
Hackwith Design House.....	71
Harly Jae.....	76
Hope Made in the World.....	81
House of Gina Marie.....	87
Iconable.....	92
Known Supply.....	96
Lady Farmer.....	101
Matter Prints.....	107
Orgotton.....	111
Prairie Underground.....	116
Pyne and Smith Clothiers.....	121
Study NY.....	126
Tabii Just	132
The Fabric Social.....	137
Thread Harvest.....	143

Uniform Handmade.....	148
Part 2: Categorizing Themes.....	153
Intentional Design.....	155
Intentional Fabric and Materials.....	158
Transparency in Supply Chains.....	160
Nimble Business Operations.....	162
Increased Producer Responsibility.....	164
Value Consistency.....	166
Stakeholder Engagement.....	169
Discussion of Results.....	171
Innovation Highlights.....	171
Personal Values.....	176
Sustainability Trade-offs.....	177
High standards & rigidity vs. Compromise & flexibility.....	179
Durability vs. Compostable.....	180
Utility vs. Art.....	180
“Sustainable Synthetic” vs. Natural Fibers vs. Biodegradable Fibers...	181
Consumer Demand vs. Business Values.....	184
MTO vs. Using Excess for Another Purpose.....	185
Local vs. Global	185
Short-term Issues vs. Long-term Issues.....	186
Trends vs. Mindful Consumption.....	187
Stay Small vs. Grow.....	188
Collaboration.....	189

Adaptability.....	193
Scaling.....	195
Moving Forward.....	199
Change the Dominant Social Paradigm of “More is Better”.....	200
Shared Responsibility.....	201
Recommendations for the Clothing Company.....	202
Recommendations for the Consumer.....	203
Further Research.....	205
My Final Take-a-way: Hope.....	208
Bibliography.....	209
Appendices.....	232
Appendix A.....	232

List of Figures

Figure 1	Traditional vs. “Fast” Fashion	3
Figure 2	Changes in US Consumption and Production of Apparel (1960-2010).....	6
Figure 3	Redefined “Triple Bottom Line”.....	8
Figure 4	Top 5 Products at Risk of Modern Slavery Imported into the G20.....	10
Figure 5	Fashion Revolution Infographic on Labor Exploitation.....	10
Figure 6	Clothing Lifecycle Infographic on Resource Waste and Pollution.....	13
Figure 7	Types of Pollution in Textile Production.....	14
Figure 8	Projected Global Fashion Consumption by 2030.....	18
Figure 9	Methods Schematic.....	49
Figure 10	Brass emphasizes Capsule Wardrobes.....	53
Figure 11	Brass’s Factory Floor.....	54
Figure 12	Brass’s innovative “Clean Out Bag”.....	55
Figure 13	Devinto’s designs over the years.....	56
Figure 14	Devinto’s Made to Order custom design.....	57
Figure 15	Devinto’s values around Slow Fashion.....	59
Figure 16	Information on Dorsu’s Core Collection on Instagram.....	61
Figure 17	Dorsu highlights its ethical production processes.....	63
Figure 18	Dorsu collaborating in a pop-up.....	64
Figure 19	Elizabeth Suzann’s commitment to transparency.....	67
Figure 20	Elizabeth Suzann’s commitment to biodegradable fabrics.....	69
Figure 21	Elizabeth Suzann’s “The Signature Collection”.....	70
Figure 22	HWDH’s studio production space.....	72
Figure 23	HWDH selects fabric design, beauty, and its natural properties.....	74
Figure 24	HWDH collaborates with Eileen Fisher.....	76

Figure 25	One of Harly Jae’s manufacturing facilities with two seamstresses.....	78
Figure 26	Harly Jae emphasizes all-natural materials.....	80
Figure 27	Harly Jae uses eco-friendly packaging.....	81
Figure 28	Hope Made uses natural fabrics, including alpaca wool.....	83
Figure 29	Child Labor Free is one of Hope Made’s certifications.....	84
Figure 30	Hope Made is dedicated to value consistency.....	86
Figure 31	House of Gina Marie participates in collaborations and forums.....	88
Figure 32	Moorhead works with artisan tailors.....	89
Figure 33	Moorhead works with the organization Fashion Revolution.....	91
Figure 34	Iconable only carries biodegradable natural material clothing.....	93
Figure 35	Colombel uses Iconable’s Instagram to help educate consumers.....	94
Figure 36	The processes of producing the dress is as important as the dress itself..	95
Figure 37	Known Supply’s employees sign the labels of the clothes they make....	97
Figure 38	Known Supply spent the past decade establishing ethical supply chains.	98
Figure 39	Known Supply collaborates with organizations/causes.....	99
Figure 40	Lady Farmer displays Washington DC manufacturing on its tags.....	102
Figure 41	Lady Farmer’s “Guide to Slow Living”.....	105
Figure 42	Lady Farmer emphasized simplifying wardrobes.....	106
Figure 43	Matter Prints uses artisanal printing practices.....	108
Figure 44	A type of artisanal weaving called Ikat.....	109
Figure 45	Matter Prints incorporates Natural Dyes into some of its processes.....	110
Figure 46	Orgotton is a capsule wardrobe label.....	112
Figure 47	Orgotton’s manufacturer is just minutes from its studio.....	113
Figure 48	Orgotton uses left over fabric scraps to make new products.....	115
Figure 49	Prairie Underground emphasizes local production.....	117

Figure 50	Prairie Underground’s warehouse in Seattle.....	118
Figure 51	Prairie Underground collaborates through pop-up events.....	120
Figure 52	McCartney of Pyne and Smith discusses her sustainability practices...	122
Figure 53	Pyne and Smith Hang Tag.....	124
Figure 54	McCartney shares her zero-waste initiatives.....	126
Figure 55	Study NY is committed to reusing its scraps for zero waste design.....	127
Figure 56	Study NY uses recycled buttons.....	130
Figure 57	Study NY is committed to customer engagement.....	132
Figure 58	Tabii Just shares its sustainable design zero waste practices.....	133
Figure 59	St. Bernard collaborates with Livari Clothing, a new line.....	135
Figure 60	Tabii Just seeks to connect the customer with the process of making...	136
Figure 61	Sharna de Lacy visits a silkworm farm.....	139
Figure 62	TFS champions the phrase, “Who made your clothes?”.....	140
Figure 63	TFS partners with Action Aid Australia.....	142
Figure 64	Thread Harvest uses Instagram to connect with its customer base.....	144
Figure 65	Thread Harvest is a certified B Corporation.....	146
Figure 66	Thread Harvest chooses to sell only sustainable brands.....	147
Figure 67	Uniform Handmade contracts with home-based seamstresses.....	149
Figure 68	Hyper-Local is one of Uniform Handmade’s emphasis.....	151
Figure 69	Uniform Handmade educates consumers on its sourcing and design processes.....	152

List of Tables

Table 1	Themes and Sub-themes.....	50
Table 2	7 Theme Comprehensive Table.....	154
Table 3	Intentional Design.....	157
Table 4	Intentional Fabric and Materials.....	159
Table 5	Transparency in Supply Chains.....	161
Table 6	Nimble Business Operations.....	163
Table 7	Increased Producer Responsibility.....	165
Table 8	Value Consistency.....	168
Table 9	Stakeholder Engagement.....	170
Table 10	Sustainability Concerns for Clothing Companies.....	178

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Introduction

"I pity the man who wants a coat so cheap that the man or woman who produces the cloth will starve in the process." – Benjamin Harrison

The clothing industry as we know it started taking shape a little over 30 years ago due to globalization, a changing customer base, and the presence and increase of competitors.¹ When the “developed” world started creating environmental and labor laws, businesses looked for cheaper alternatives of production overseas.² These days, the clothing industry values at over USD \$1.3 trillion and employs more than 300 million people along the value chain.³ In the last 15 years (2005-2015), clothing production has approximately doubled, driven by a growing middle-class across the globe and increased per capita sales in developed economies.⁴ Simply put, the clothing industry is massive and it is driven by consumers who are more than willing to purchase large quantities of clothing more often than in past generations.

When the Savar building collapsed in Rana Plaza, Bangladesh on April 24, 2013, widespread media coverage unearthed a side of the garment industry long ignored by consumers and corporations: the people who make clothes work in dangerous and deplorable conditions.⁵ The aftermath of this tragedy that killed over 400 people resulted in a call for greater corporate social responsibility as well as increased individual consumer knowledge about the supply chains of everyday clothing available for

¹ Duygu Turker and Ceren Altuntas, 2014, “Sustainable Supply Chain Management in the Fast Fashion Industry: An Analysis of Corporate Reports,” *European Management Journal* 32 (5): 837–49, 838.

² Sven Beckert, *Empire of cotton: a global history*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, 381-383.

³ “Circular Fashion - A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion’s Future,” Ellen MacArthur Foundation, (November 28, 2017), 18, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/a-new-textiles-economy-redesigning-fashions-future>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ “Disaster at Rana Plaza,” *The Economist*, May 04, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21577067-gruesome-accident-should-make-all-bosses-think-harder-about-what-behaving-responsibly>.

purchase. Described as a “watershed moment” by Elizabeth Cline, author of fast fashion critique *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion*, this disaster brought to light the previously unseen (or ignored) aspects of clothing production.⁶ As ubiquitous as clothing is, consumers and brand marketers are incredibly disconnected from the processes that create garments people wear every single day. The media attention and mainstream recognition of Rana Plaza forced a greater emphasis on the ethics of clothing manufacturing, not simply limited to labor practices. While some people and companies have been focused on issues in the fashion industry for decades, the collapse at Rana Plaza inspired a deeper look into the impacts of the clothing industry supply chains and management practices. This introduction will include a short discussion on sustainability and what it means in the context of the clothing industry and a brief overview of the social and environmental issues present along clothing industry supply chains.

Fast Fashion

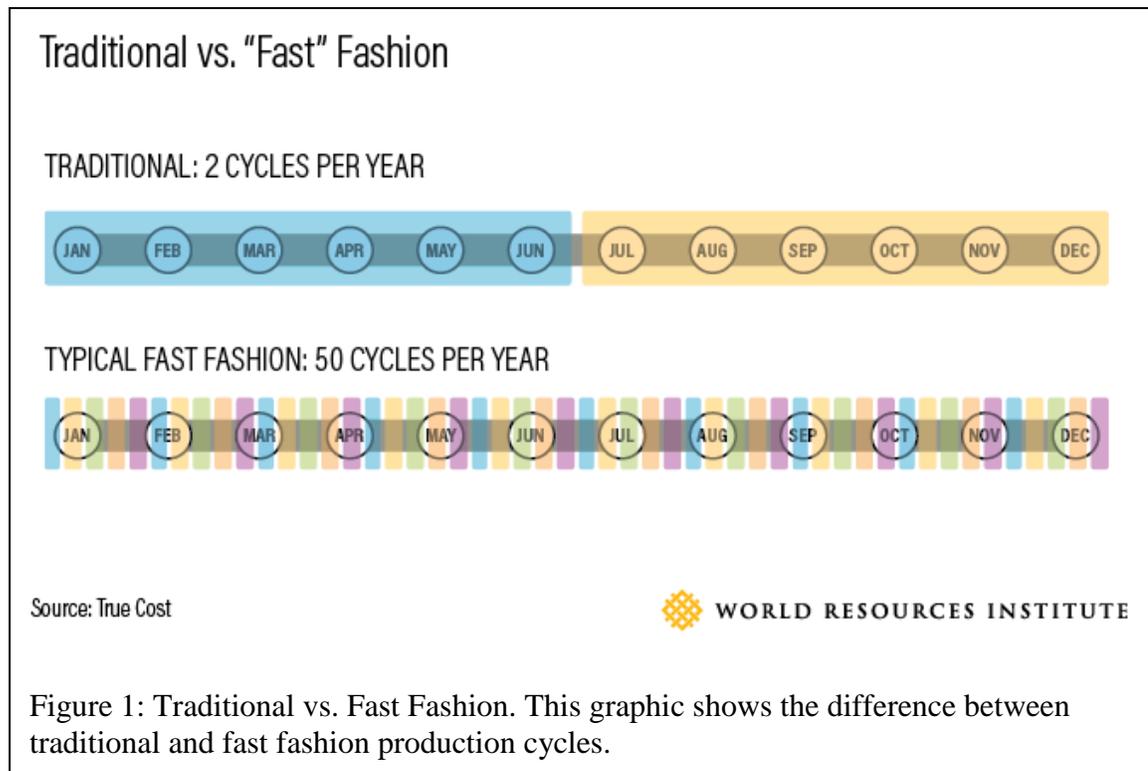
“Fast Fashion is like Fast Food. After the sugar rush, it just leaves a bad taste in your mouth.” – Livia Firth

In response to the Rana Plaza disaster, a documentary, “The True Cost”, was released in 2015. It offers a broad inspection of the negative effects of the existing fashion industry model: the manufacture of large quantities of low priced goods to allow for broader market penetration.⁷ Named “fast fashion,” this trend in the Conventional Clothing Industry (CCI) is characterized by decreased cost of production and price of

⁶ Cline, Elizabeth L. (@elizabethcline), 2018, "It's been 5 years since Rana Plaza and 7 years since my reporting trip to Bangladesh, where I saw the danger brewing with my own eyes," *Instagram*, June 20, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BhzcRcEA3ke/?hl=en&taken-by=elizabethcline>.

⁷ *The True Cost*. Documentary, dir. by Andrew Morgan, (2015, Oley: BullFrog Films.)

product as volumes increase, and faster turnaround time and shorter production schedules.⁸ Figure 1 depicts the fast fashion phenomenon that while fashion previously had two seasons per year, it now has up to 50 cycles per year.⁹ More than that, young consumers are particularly attracted to high volume of low quality and low cost clothing



and these are manufactured via lower-cost manufacturing.¹⁰

⁸Mary Hanbury, "Fast Fashion Is Getting Faster: Zara Is Facing a Massive Threat That Could Jeopardize the Business," Business Insider, May 23, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/fast-fashion-is-getting-faster-2017-5>.

⁹Deborah Drew and Genevieve Yehounme, "The Apparel Industry's Environmental Impact in 6 Graphics," World Resource Institute, July 05, 2017, <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/07/apparel-industrys-environmental-impact-6-graphics>.

¹⁰Cossette M. Joyner Armstrong et al., "Educating for Sustainable Fashion: Using Clothing Acquisition Abstinence to Explore Sustainable Consumption and Life Beyond Growth," Journal of Consumer Policy 39, no. 4 (2016): 418.

In the documentary, director Andrew Morgan reveals that fast fashion is the second most polluting industry on earth, exposes social inequities within the supply chain resulting from labor malpractices, and emphasizes the entrapment of raw material farmers (such as those who farm cotton for clothing production) in debt systems set up by outside corporations. The origin of the phrase “fashion is the second most polluting industry worldwide” is difficult to track down, yet the statement was made common by pioneering-sustainability designer Eileen Fisher, repeated in the True Cost documentary and in online articles and sustainable fashion forums. Data do not support this statistic; however, what I did find from the European Environmental Agency is that the clothing, textiles, and footwear industry ranks 4th for impact on the environment after Housing, Transportation, and Food industries.^{11,12} Perhaps this discrepancy arises because the fashion industry is intricately tied with other industries and depending on how we measure or account for the other industries involvement, the statistics look different. For example, the clothing industry includes aspects of the agricultural industry—the sources of the cotton, hemp, linen, etc. used to produce clothing. Likewise, the oil industry contributes to the clothing industry because the synthetic fibers derive from oil yield polyester fibers. Even the shipping industry moves not only clothing around the globe, but the many stages of clothing production including raw materials, mid-production, trimmings (such as buttons and zippers), and then the discarded product to complete the life-cycle. Each container ship releases as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as

¹¹Rudrajeet Pal and Jonathan Gander, 2018, “Modelling environmental value: An examination of sustainable business models within the fashion industry,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 184 (2018): 252.

¹²European Environmental Agency, 2014, “Environmental Indicator Report: Environmental Impacts of Production and Consumption Systems in Europe,” European Union, 115.

about 50 million cars.¹³ Regardless of the specific statistic, the reach of the CCI is massive and worth studying through environmental and sustainability lenses due to its impact on the environment and society.

More vs. Better

“Infinite growth of material consumption in a finite world is an impossibility.”
– E.F. Schumacher

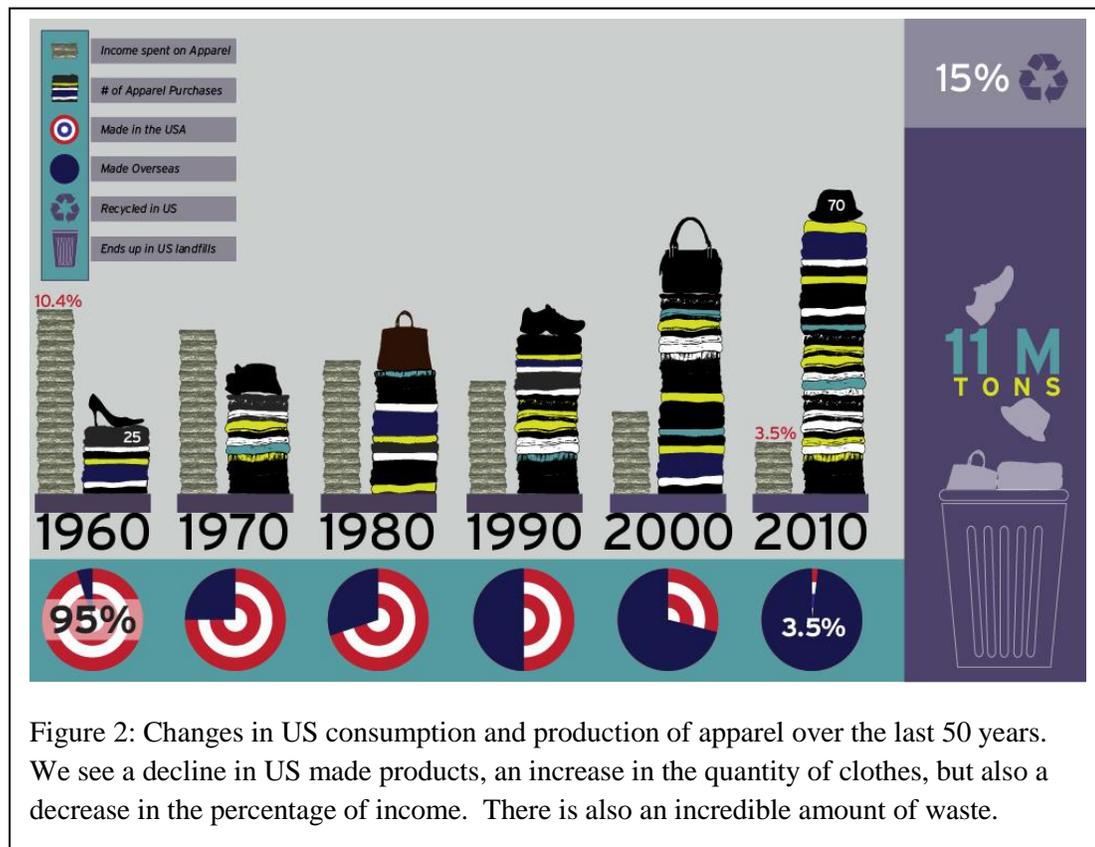
The fashion industry practices have caused numerous environmental and social problems including land degradation, pollution, unsustainable water and resource use, slavery, child labor, and unfair “legal” working conditions. These impacts upon economic, environmental, and social spheres demand that we examine it through the lens of sustainability. Simply put, the fashion industry must become more sustainable because currently it is not.

But what does sustainability mean in the context of the clothing industry? And how can a sustainable clothing industry differ from the CCI and fast fashion? The most logical answer: decrease production by decreasing consumption. Bill McKibben, in *Deep Economy*, discusses the themes of “More” and “Better.”¹⁴ McKibben argues that until the recent recognition of environmental limits and the focus on social concerns, the “two birds” More and Better sat on the same branch. Using the adage about “killing two birds with one stone,” McKibben illustrates how More and Better have become one goal; people pursued both at the same time with the result being that more and better worked in tandem. He argues that all this has changed; Better has flown to another branch and the

¹³Mark Piesing, “Shipping produces more carbon emissions than most countries and pollutes the oceans. Will slowing vessels or making them electric do enough?” iNews The Essential Daily Briefing, January 3, 2018, <https://inews.co.uk/news/long-reads/cargo-container-shipping-carbon-pollution/>

¹⁴McKibben, Bill. *Deep Economy*. New York, NY: Holt Paperbacks, 2008.

pursuit of More is not, in fact, the pursuit of Better. Indeed, when a person pursues More, they undoubtedly sacrifice Better. But it almost seems scandalous to write this. Most Westerners have been socialized to think that More is Better. Just about everything in a consumption-driven world reflects this: homes are bigger, drinks and meals are bigger, cars have increased in size and number in driveways, and clothing consumption has



increased dramatically over the past 60 years. Figure 2 illustrates this change in clothing consumption habits from 1960-2010 in the United States and visually represents fast fashion as it relates to the consumer.¹⁵ While Rana Plaza shocked the world, with the increase in population, increase in consumption, and the outsourcing of manufacturing, it's no wonder we've created the monster of "fast fashion."

¹⁵"Who Pays the Price for Your Clothing? The Cons of Fast Fashion," *Odyssey*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/pays-price-your-clothing-cons-fast-fashion>.

While the idea to decrease consumption is laudable, in reality, people do consume. And even if they consume less, manufacturers and consumers still need to find better, more sustainable ways to produce, distribute, and care for our clothing. Clothing consumption is at an all-time high.¹⁶ While this may be due, in part, to an every-increasing population, this increase is mostly caused by fast fashion's production processes, marketing ploys, and clothing design. Textile and clothing prices have fallen, and yet, consumer buys and owns more and more cheaply made articles of clothing.¹⁷ Similarly, quality of product has decreased, and this has created shorter life-spans of clothes.¹⁸ What can be done to address fast fashion? How can we make the clothing industry more sustainable?

A Changing Sustainability Model

"Sustainability is no longer just a trend, it is a business imperative."

– *Global Fashion Agenda*

The concept of sustainability helps to address the issues of consumerism, production, and the disconnected nature of the clothing industry. In Figure 3, the diagram on the left represents the traditional view of the relationship between the economy, society and the environment, with the three overlapping at a small spot in the middle.¹⁹ In reality, these three aspects never operate alone: "the environment contains human society, which in turn contains the economy."²⁰ Contrast the three separate spheres with the nesting circles of the newer vision of sustainability on the right— the one subscribed

¹⁶Kirsi Niinimäki, "Ethical Foundations in Sustainable Fashion," *Textiles and Clothing Sustainability* 1, no. 1 (2015): 8.

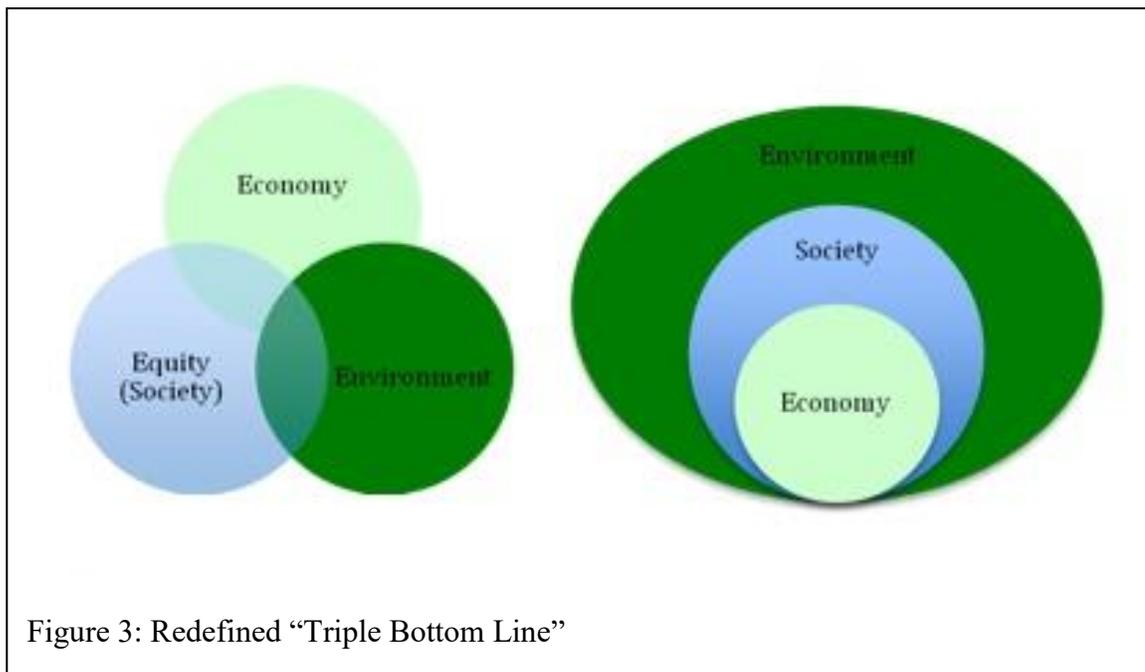
¹⁷ Niinimäki.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mariana Grossman, "Truth in Labeling: Framing the Challenge to Get Results," *Environmental Leader*. November 8, 2011, <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2011/11/14/redefining-the-relationship-between-the-environment-society-and-the-economy/>.

²⁰ Ibid.

to in this research. Everything that happens with the economy happens within society and the environment. The circulation of money powers the economy and people doing jobs creates the money. Doing jobs and making things require resources that we extract from nature, whether agricultural products or coal or oil. These natural resources provide a limit, because resources on earth are finite. A sustainable organization acknowledges and honors the limits imposed by the environment. Moreover, sustainability is



comprehensive. This means that if an organization claims to be sustainable, it must incorporate many sustainability practices, not just a few. To address the lack of sustainability in fast fashion, one must first know the issues needing to be addressed. The following sections will give brief overviews of the social and environmental issues of fast fashion.

Overview of Social Issues

"Fast fashion isn't free. Someone somewhere is paying." –Lucy Siegle

As underscored by the Rana Plaza disaster, labor issues within the clothing industry need to be reexamined. Fashion Revolution, a not-for-profit global movement, seeks to address transparency along supply chain labor practices and connect the makers with the consumers. Their campaign happens in April on the anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse and the organization draws attention to unfair working conditions by using the hashtag, #whomademyclothes to connect consumers with makers and involve the consumer in holding clothing companies accountable for more transparent and better labor practices.²¹

Unsafe working conditions are not the only labor issue associated with the clothing industry. Fashion Revolution, and other organizations, seek to elucidate the realities of child labor, slave labor, human trafficking, indentured servitude, low wages, few benefits, women's issues/rights, and health problems associated with material production. All of which are present along supply chains.

As roughly 40.3 million slaves exist in the world today, many garments are at risk for carrying a slavery footprint.²² Figure 4 shows that the clothing is the second most likely product at risk for modern slavery along the supply chain.²³ More than that, even if a garment worker is not a "slave," she might not be paid well, have a contract, or receive benefits (see Figure 5).²⁴ Child labor is also an issue: there are 152 million victims of child labor in the world.²⁵ This issue appears in the fast fashion industry because much of

²¹ "ABOUT," Fashion Revolution, <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/about/>.

²² "Walk Free Foundation #EndSlavery," Walk Free Foundation, <https://www.walkfreefoundation.org/>.

²³ Global Slavery Index, https://downloads.globalslaveryindex.org/ephemeral/GSI-2018_FNL_180907_Digital-small-p-1537470296.pdf

²⁴ "How to Be a Fashion Revolutionary," Fashion Revolution via Issuu, 2016, https://issuu.com/fashionrevolution/docs/howtobeafashionrevolutionary_single/11?e=25766662/37477571.

²⁵ "Child Labour," International Labour Organization, 2018, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

its supply chain requires low-skilled labor and some tasks are more economically desirable for a child to do than an adult. For example, in cotton picking, children's small fingers do not damage the crop during the picking process.²⁶

²⁶ Josephine Moulds, "Child Labour in the Fashion Supply Chain," The Guardian, <https://labs.theguardian.com/unicef-child-labour/>.

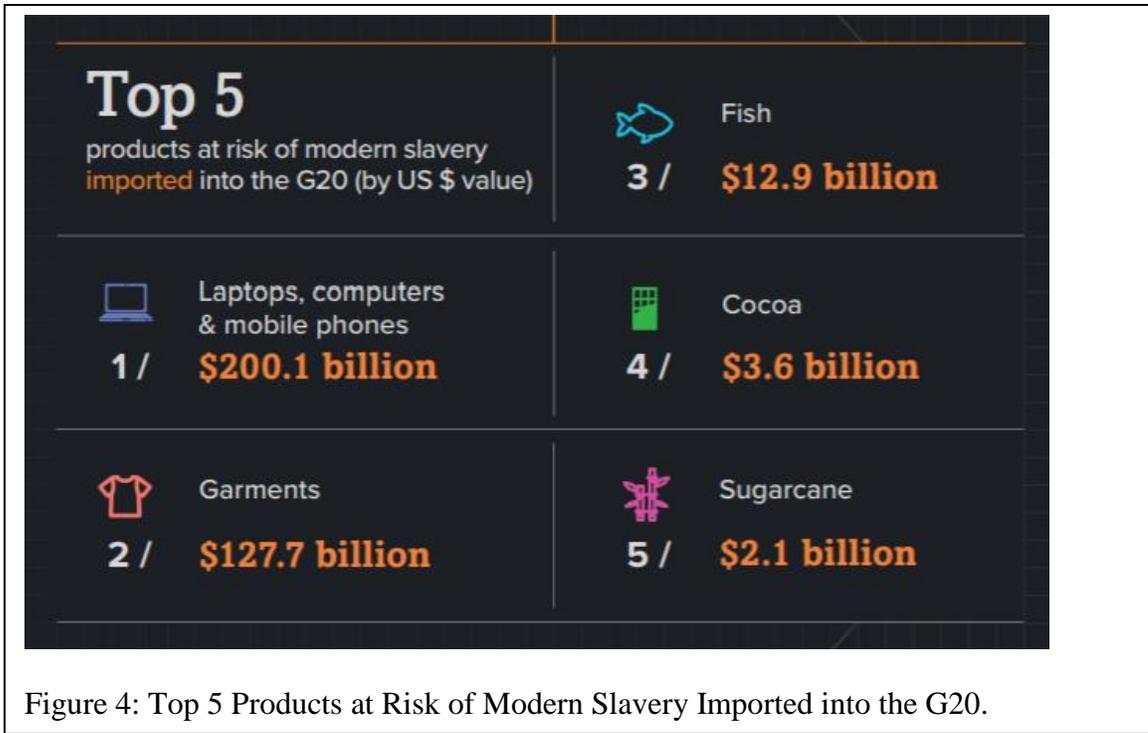


Figure 4: Top 5 Products at Risk of Modern Slavery Imported into the G20.



Figure 5: Fashion Revolution Infographic on labor exploitation. This infographic is an example of Fashion Revolution’s social media educational campaigns. Found in its “How to be a Fashion Revolutionary” publication, this statistic gives an example from Guangdong China of the many forms of labor exploitation.

Additionally, many garment workers face health problems from different processes involved in making clothes. Leather workers face the risk of eye inflammation, skin disease, and cancer due to exposure of the heavy chemicals involved in the processing of the leather.²⁷²⁸ Similarly, garment workers involved in dyeing, printing, and finishing are at increased risk for cancers because of the chemicals associated with the processes.²⁹ Another problem is noise: many garment workers operate in extremely noisy conditions without proper protection for their ears.³⁰

It can be especially difficult to address labor issues along supply chains due to the disconnected steps along the chain. Typically, not all the steps of the supply chain are owned by the same company and, more than likely, they are located cities or countries away from one another. For example, in 2011, Patagonia (a company lauded for its sustainability agenda and practices) conducted an internal audit on some of its fair-trade factories' suppliers' mills.³¹ What they found is that about a quarter of the mills exploited workers.³² Not Patagonia's suppliers, but its second-tier suppliers (those who provide inputs to Patagonia's suppliers) had instances of indentured servitude. According to its website, Patagonia has since dealt with this issue of the secondary suppliers. This example showcases that the nature of the conventional industry is such that even a

²⁷ Roli Srivastava, "Indian Leather Workers Risk Health, Life to Make Shoes for Global Market: Report," Reuters, March 16, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-leather-workers-health-idINKBN16N0TC>

²⁸ Subodhkumar Rastogi et al., "Occupational Health Risks among the Workers Employed in Leather Tanneries at Kanpur," *Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 12, no. 3 (2008): 132-35.

²⁹ "Safety and Health Issues in the Textile Industry," Fiber 2 Fashion, <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/2554/safety-and-health-issues-in-the-textile-industry?>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Sustainability Mission/Vision," Patagonia, <http://www.patagonia.com/sustainability.html>.

³² Gillian B White, "All Your Clothes Are Made with Exploited Labor," The Atlantic, June 03, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/patagonia-labor-clothing-factory-exploitation/394658/>.

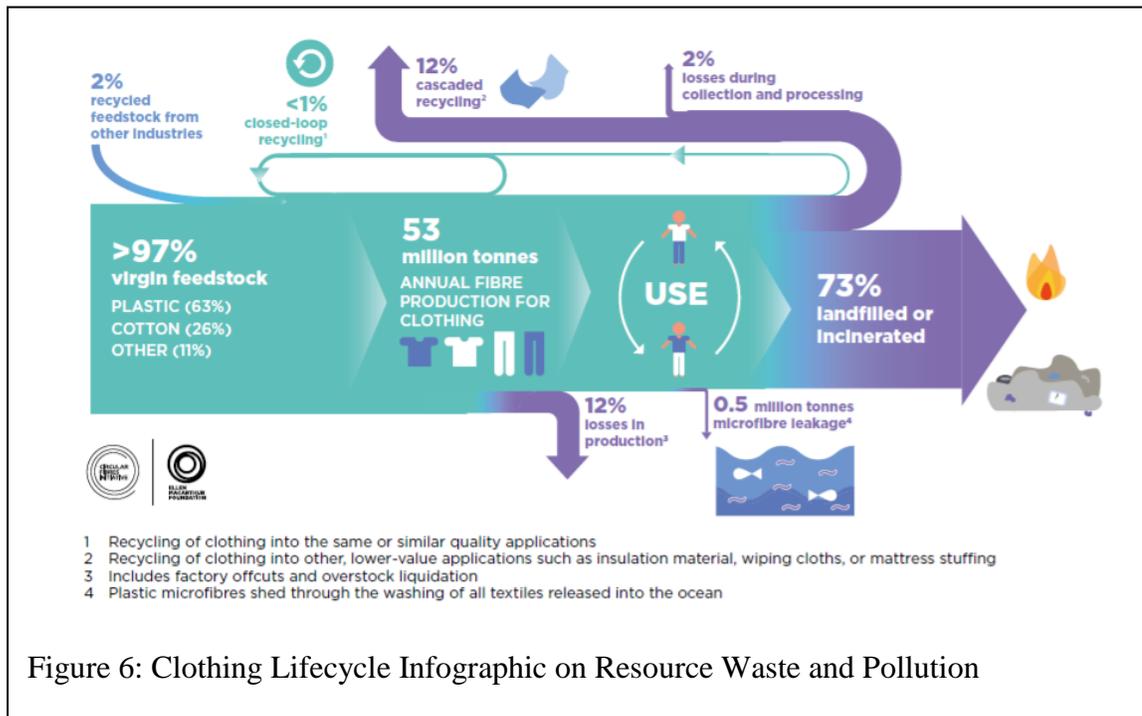
sustainability-minded company like Patagonia—that is diligently conducting internal audits— will find issues along its supply chain even after working for years to eliminate human rights grievances.

Overview of Environmental Issues

“The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.” –Wendell Barry

The clothing industry is resource intensive and polluting throughout garment lifecycles (See Figure 6).³³ This infographic demonstrates both the journey of the clothing from raw material to disposal and the scale of the amount of clothing involved in this lifecycle. From >97% virgin raw material and 2% recycled raw material that is then used to produce garments. It is important to note that in production, losses in production due to mistakes or poor design are at 12%. Additionally, less than 1% of all garments are involved in closed loop recycling, and only 12% of garments are recycled.

³³ "Circular Fashion - A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future," Ellen MacArthur Foundation, (November 28, 2017), 20, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/a-new-textiles-economy-redesigning-fashions-future>.

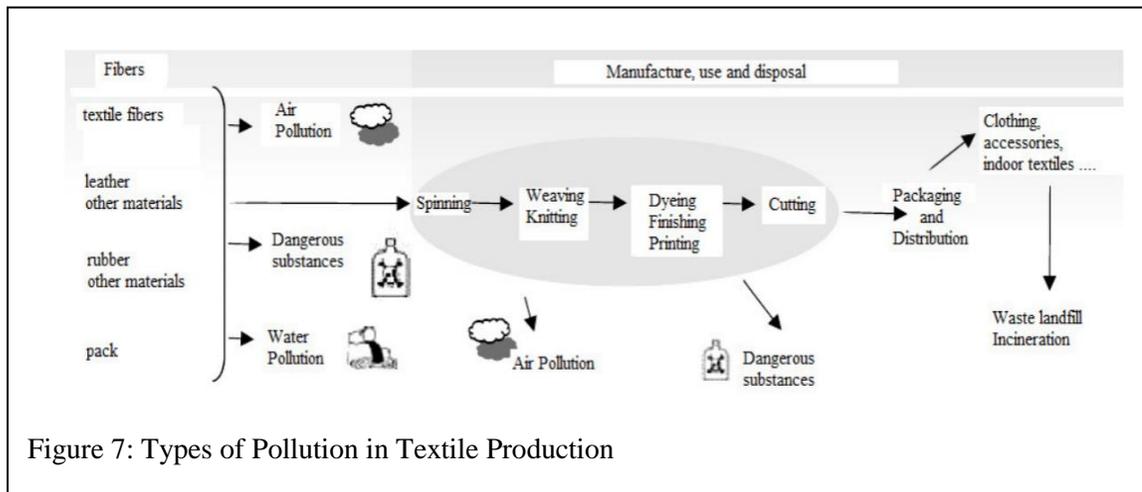


Fiber and clothing production incorporate high water consumption, toxic chemical processing, high energy consumption, emissions, waste production, and waste associated with transportation and packaging.³⁴ Twenty percent of all fresh water pollution results from textile treatment and dyeing.³⁵ Figure 7 demonstrates the multiple processes along the supply chains that have opportunity to pollute with pesticides, with chemical pollution from the growing or extracting raw material, and in processing and refining materials before they become the garments we put on our bodies.³⁶

³⁴ S.B. Moore, and M. Wentz, 2009, "10 - Eco-Labeling for Textiles and Apparel." In Sustainable Textiles, edited by R.S. Blackburn, 214–30, Woodhead Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1533/9781845696948.2.214>.

³⁵ "Various Pollutants Released into Environment by Textile Industry." Fibre2Fashion. <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/6262/various-pollutants-released-into-environment-by-textile-industry>.

³⁶ Simona Tripa, "Impact of the Textile Industry on the Environment in the Context of Sustainable Development, Directory of Open Access Journals, 2013, 171-76.



As emphasized in Figure 6, environmental impacts are not isolated to clothing production: clothes also impact the environment through their use and disposal. One load of washing typically uses 40 gallons of water and one load of drying uses 5 times more energy than washing; 25% of the carbon footprint of clothes comes from the way we care for them including washing and drying.³⁷ Something as simple as choosing not to iron or dry a t-shirt saves a third of its carbon footprint.³⁸ Regarding disposal, the average U.S. citizen throws away 70 pounds of clothing and other textiles annually and these clothes sit and break down—as much as they can—in landfills.³⁹

Not all fabrics are equally environmentally friendly. Of specific concern, synthetic fabrics contain polymers—plastics. First, plastics are made from oil and the effects of the oil industry on the earth are numerous including negative effects from the extraction process and increasing carbon in the atmosphere. Second, the polymer-based or synthetic fabrics take 20-200 years to decompose, so they just sit in the landfills for

³⁷ "2017-impact," Fashion Revolution, <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/2017-impact/>.

³⁸ "The Impact of a Cotton T-Shirt," World Wildlife Fund, January 16, 2013. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/the-impact-of-a-cotton-t-shirt>.

³⁹ *Council for Textile Recycling*, 2018, www.weardonaterecycle.org/.

decades or are burned and emit harmful gasses to the atmosphere.⁴⁰ Third, these synthetic fabrics slough off micro plastics every time they are washed.⁴¹ Microplastics in water discharge can make their way into the ocean and be consumed by marine organisms, making their way up the food chain. What we wear comes back to us in our water supply and the food we eat. And this is not a small-scale problem: synthetic materials are the biggest source of micro plastic pollution in the ocean.⁴² Each cycle of a washing machine could release more than 700,000 microplastic fibers.⁴³

Simply eliminating non-biodegradable fabrics as the solution to fast fashion's problems would be too easy a solution (aside from being unrealistic). Even all-natural fabrics have their issues. Growing and processing cotton—even organic cotton—is extremely water intensive. For example, it takes 2720 liters of water to make a cotton t-shirt, which is roughly how much a person drinks over a three-year period.⁴⁴

Similarly, while bamboo seems like a great alternative to cotton because of its quick-growing and lower-water-use properties, the process of turning bamboo into a bamboo-rayon and textile relies heavily on chemical additives.⁴⁵ Additionally, it would

⁴⁰ "End of Life: Consider every ending as a new beginning," Close the Loop: A Guide towards a Circular Fashion Industry, 2018, <https://www.close-the-loop.be/en/phase/3/end-of-life>.

⁴¹ Edwards, Summer. "The Environmental Impacts of Polyester," Tortoise & Lady Grey, October 17, 2018, <http://www.tortoiseandladygrey.com/2016/08/29/environmental-impacts-polyester/>.

⁴² Julien Boucher and Damien Friot, "IUCN Report Primary Microplastics in the Oceans: A Global Evaluation of Sources," The International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2017, 14, <http://storyofstuff.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/IUCN-report-Primary-microplastics-in-the-oceans.pdf>.

⁴³ Laura Paddison, "Single Clothes Wash May Release 700,000 Microplastic Fibres, Study Finds" The Guardian, September 27, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/sep/27/washing-clothes-releases-water-polluting-fibres-study-finds>.

⁴⁴ "The Impact of a Cotton T-Shirt," World Wildlife Fund, January 16, 2013. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/the-impact-of-a-cotton-t-shirt>.

⁴⁵ Kate Carter, "The Ethical Wardrobe: Is Bamboo an Ethical Fabric?" The Guardian, August 12, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2008/aug/13/bamboo.fabric>.

require enormous amounts of land to grow the natural fibers needed to supply the entire volume of clothes consumed annually.

Note that the sustainability issues are not simply with the fabric: there are threads, zippers, buttons, clasps, buckles, snaps, etc. in a garment, too. How these “trimmings” are sourced and produced can be just as important as the fabric itself when discussing the sustainability of a product. For example, the natural materials extracted and processed to make trimmings include metals and oil (turned to plastics) and the people and environment associated with these supply chains face similar grievances to fabric. The whole garment needs to be reimagined.

There are wasteful practices not only with water and land use, but also with the materials themselves that can cost the businesses money. For example, clothing is designed in a way that produces a lot of material waste when using standard bolts of fabric and standard design practices.⁴⁶ Much of this waste is deemed unusable and is discarded or burned. What could it look like to design clothing in a way that was less wasteful and somehow recycle or use the leftover scraps?

A New Paradigm

“We can’t just consume our way to a more sustainable world.” – Jennifer Nini of Eco Warrior Princess

When finding solutions for the unsustainability of the fashion industry, we must analyze how and why it has grown to be so harmful. It is important to examine how we have arrived at this point where such environmental and human rights violations not only occur but are spurred on by mostly Western consumerism. There are numerous

⁴⁶ Mark Liu, "For a True War on Waste, the Fashion Industry Must Spend More on Research," The Conversation, September 13, 2018, <http://theconversation.com/for-a-true-war-on-waste-the-fashion-industry-must-spend-more-on-research-78673>.

“sustainable” responses to the problems associated with fast fashion. Moreover, there is rising demand from consumers and governments to operate business in a more sustainable manner and profits to be made from incorporating a sustainability agenda. This has given rise to corporations including social responsibility in their agenda (typically called Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR).⁴⁷ While some of this is good, CSR alone cannot address the egregious human rights and environmental violations that have built up over time. Indeed, the projections from the Global Fashion Agenda’s report show an increase in the clothing industry’s negative environmental impact (albeit also a slight increase in good social practices) from 2015-2030 and this considers the existing sustainability measures that are already in place (See Figure 8).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ron Robins, "Does Corporate Social Responsibility Increase Profits?" Business Ethics, May 05, 2015, <http://business-ethics.com/2015/05/05/does-corporate-social-responsibility-increase-profits/>.

⁴⁸ "Pulse of the Fashion Industry Executive Summary 2017," Global Fashion Agenda and Boston Consulting Group, 2017, 3, http://globalfashionagenda.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Pulse-of-the-Fashion-Industry_Executive-summary.pdf.

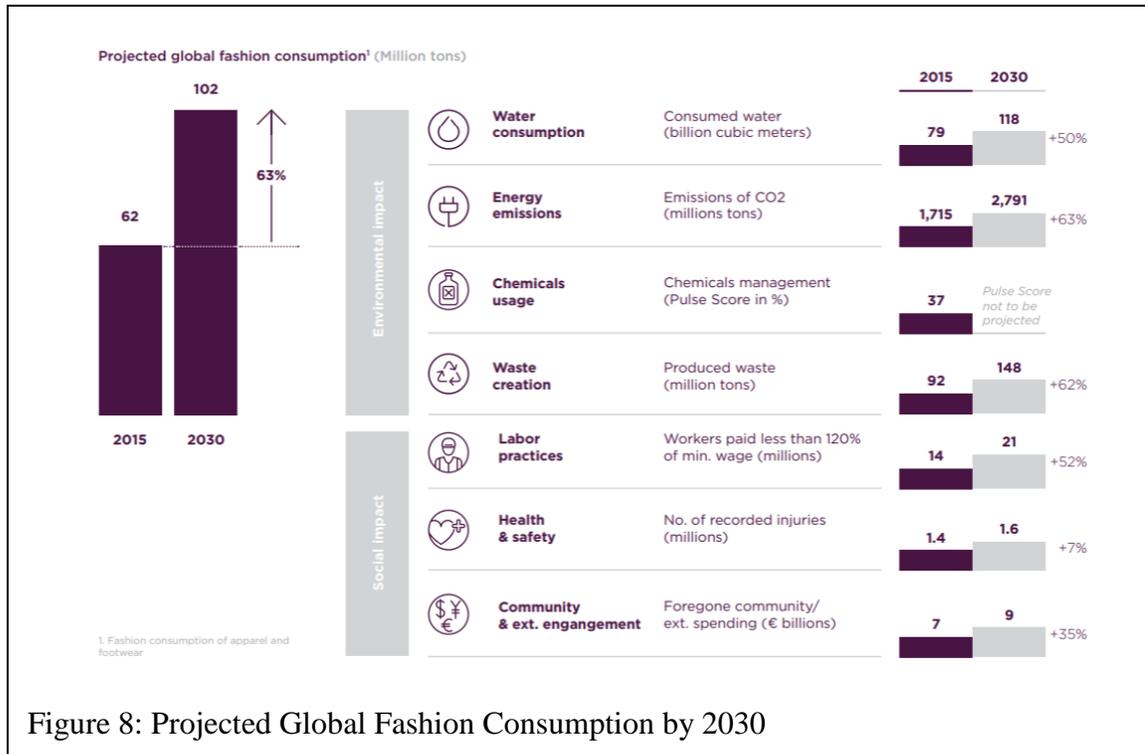


Figure 8: Projected Global Fashion Consumption by 2030

What the world needs is not sustainability being applied to the status quo, conventional clothing industry. It requires a fundamental shift in both production and the consumption mindset.⁴⁹ Increasing demand has spurred on unsustainable industry and it cannot continue if we hope to address the social and environmental issues of fast fashion. Some clothing companies are practicing this fundamental shift through adopting creative and innovative Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and Sustainable Business Management (SBM) practices, described in more detail below.⁵⁰ This research looks at clothing companies that have taken this new approach to fashion. It explores young clothing companies to see how they navigate starting a business and entering the clothing market while staying true to the values of sustainability.

⁴⁹ Karijn Van den Berg, Neoliberal Sustainability? The Biopolitical Dynamics of "Green" Capitalism, International Institute of Social Studies, (February 2016), https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/31-icas_cp_van_der_berg.pdf.

⁵⁰ Niinimäki, p. 8

I hypothesize that young small businesses can do a better job at innovating sustainability practices than most large corporations because they are not already entrenched in conventional systems. They exhibit sustainable business management (SBM) and sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices that address the impacts of “fast fashion”. This research asks, “What innovative practices do young, sustainability-focused clothing businesses engage in to combat the issues of fast fashion and establish more sustainable business models and supply chains?”

Literature Review

My thesis takes a holistic approach as it tries to address sustainability as one concept with many parts. For my research, it was necessary to examine the existing research in the field of sustainable business. Most notably, for creating sustainable practices in the clothing industry, this included Sustainable Business Management (SBM) and Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) practices. However, both the scale of the clothing industry and the breadth of this thesis topic require greater insight into more specific aspects of sustainability within the clothing industry.

So, in addition to SBM and SSCM, I found literature and reports that examine Systems Thinking, Corporate Social Responsibility, Certifications, Greenwashing, Circular Economy, Consumer Behavior, Instagram as a Business Tool, Best Practices in the clothing industry, and the existing gaps in the literature. I incorporated these topics in this literature review to underscore the comprehensive nature of sustainability and to paint a full picture of the opportunities for innovation within the clothing industry. I begin with a historical look at how we have established such a globalized economy with the power belonging to multinational corporations instead of the people and little transparency.

Setting the Stage

In *Empire of Cotton*, Sven Beckert discusses a shift in the balance of power between growers, manufacturers, merchants, and statesmen after the 1970s.⁵¹ Instead of manufacturers or merchants dominating the commodity chains, massive retailers such as Walmart dominate the sector.⁵² Workers became increasingly at the mercy of

⁵¹ Sven Beckert, *Empire of cotton: a global history*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, 433.

⁵² *Ibid*, 433.

corporations because corporations could (and can) easily move production around the globe.⁵³ This has allowed corporations to hold considerable power over local peoples and manufacturers. For example, if workers in an economically developing country demand greater environmental regulation and better wages, a corporation can simply move their operations elsewhere where they can manufacture with low prices and little accountability.⁵⁴ Indeed, this has created a system in which developing countries have effectively been pitted against each other: their industries bargain to their own detriment for the business of the global companies, increasing pollution, and perpetuating unfair labor practices in their own regions. The economic system that allows for the existence of conventional textile industry is one that only succeeds under conditions of political repression, corruption, and/or one that lacks oversight.⁵⁵

De Brito et al. speak to the important point that, to survive and compete in a global market, manufacturers are forced to be creative and innovate in order to provide a competitive product.⁵⁶ But this “innovation” and “creativity” hinges on poor environmental regulation and relaxed/unenforced labor laws to keep costs down—specifically in SE Asia. They call it the “delocalization” of manufacturing to low-cost countries and this delocalization has allowed for low transparency and little accountability for sustainable practices, especially when businesses do not take responsibility for the effects of doing business abroad.

⁵³ Beckert, 438.

⁵⁴ Morgan, *The True Cost*, 2015.

⁵⁵ Beckert, p. 439.

⁵⁶ Marisa P. de Brito et al., "Towards a Sustainable Fashion Retail Supply Chain in Europe: Organisation and Performance," *International Journal of Production Economics* 114, no. 2 (February 14, 2008): 548.

All that to say, how can business address this global monster they created when it is decades old and firmly entrenched? Transitioning towards sustainability is one such solution. But what that looks like varies because there are many definitions of sustainability and difficulty understanding the concept and implementing practices. In Gittell et al.'s book *Sustainable Business Cases*, authors suggest that three of the major barriers that impede decisive corporate action are 1. A lack of understanding what sustainability is and what it means to an enterprise, 2. Difficulty modeling the business case for sustainability, and 3. Flaws in execution even after a plan has been developed.⁵⁷ A Systems Thinking approach can provide an important perspective on sustainability matters that can address these concerns.

Systems Thinking

For sustainable measures to transform the clothing industry, those involved must engage Systems Thinking. Systems Thinking offers a problem-solving lens that focuses on the interconnected nature of the different variables that come into contact with or are comprised of systems.⁵⁸ Specifically, Systems Thinking takes into account unintended consequences. This philosophy is applicable to my research because the clothing industry is a large system comprised of smaller systems that are interconnected even as they might be viewed—or studied—in smaller parts. For example, if a company wants to drive down overhead costs, it could move operations abroad where production is much cheaper. This does indeed achieve the objective to drive down overhead costs, but there are consequences to this action. A systems perspective would consider the potential

⁵⁷ Ross Gittell et al., *Sustainable Business Cases*, Creative Commons, 2012, section 1.3.

⁵⁸ Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, Edited by Diana Wright, White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015.

people affected (both those who lost jobs and those who gained jobs), environmental damage, the political situation in the new country, as well as the effect on the local economy of bringing in a new industry or adding to the existing industry.

In *The Necessary Revolution*, systems scientist Peter Senge digs deep into the systems surrounding and involved in sustainability. He focuses specifically on three challenges: energy and transport, food and water, and material waste and toxicity. Senge urges people to see the deeper patterns behind the problems.⁵⁹ While Senge speaks of sustainability generally, all three of these challenges are found in and interwoven within the clothing industry. He writes, “Bringing about significant changes in larger systems requires building similar networks connecting many different organizations, and even different types of organizations” in order to address large scale issues.⁶⁰ The systems in the fashion industry are widely disconnected: Patagonia’s example of the issues with second-tier suppliers provides just one example of this (p. 11).

Another reason a systems approach is necessary is because of something Meadow’s calls “nonlinearities.” Nonlinearities refers to a relationship in which the cause does not produce a proportional effect.⁶¹ In this sense, we live in a non-linear world and the clothing industry—and sustainability issues associated with it—reflects this.

Much of the research I found about sustainable clothing focuses on one aspect or part of the clothing industry, for example supply chains. While this specified research is

⁵⁹ Peter Senge et al., *The Necessary Revolution: Working Together to Create a Sustainable World*, London: Nicholas Brealey Pub., 2011, 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 225.

⁶¹ Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, Edited by Diana Wright, White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015, 91-92.

incredibly important in understanding these specific aspects of sustainable business, it must also be viewed in light of the other systems at play. The supply chain systems interact with other systems within the clothing industry: they are not isolated. For example, clothing designers, while outside of the supply chain process, determine what fabric to use for which garments and this impacts the sourcing of the fabrics in the supply chain process. In *Thinking in Systems*, Donella Meadows suggests that watching and observing how various elements in a system interact is more important than listening to others' theories of what happens because these theories can arise from careless casual hypotheses.⁶² I kept this in mind when I designed my research methods, and focused on how to think frame my questions to the interviewees about these connected systems.

What we see existing in the clothing industry is a break down in the system: the clothing industry is viewed in parts and not as a whole that includes the environment and the people along the supply chain. The conventional clothing system is so massive and is now comprised of seemingly disconnected systems (or systems only connected for the purpose of finding the cheapest production and selling at the highest price to create the largest profit for the producer). Sustainability needs to be viewed through a Systems Thinking lens if it truly makes an impact. The next two sections, Sustainable Business Management and Sustainable Supply Chain Management try to address this disconnected nature that has aided in the pervading environmental and social issues (those discussed in the Introduction, p. 8-16).

Sustainable Business Management

⁶² Meadows, 171.

In an interview with Harvard Business Review, Senge tries to get businesses to change the way they think about sustainability.⁶³ He said that typically, sustainability in practice gets construed as “being less bad” and he asserts that this approach will not help a business increase its actual sustainability.⁶⁴ Sustainable Business Management (SBM) done well transforms a company through its management styles, strategies, innovations, and product design. The literature highlights the importance of innovation to SBM because innovation helps firms move beyond traditional business models to sustainable models.⁶⁵ However, it is increasingly difficult to implement sustainability within the clothing industry due to the complex nature of sustainability (many definitions and “levels”) and the entrenched systems (the quantities produced are astronomical and the disposal of the product is dubious at best).⁶⁷ Within SBM, specific strategies include Sustainable Supply Chain Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Certifications, and Circular Economy.

In the literature, three themes emerge to organize our understanding of SBM: Value Proposition, Value Creation, and Value Capture.⁶⁸ Value Proposition refers to the engagement of stakeholders beyond the “classic consumer,” a promise of value or special benefit obtained from a good or service. Value Creation is an essential part of business strategy that determines how a company puts the value proposition into practice—what

⁶³ Steven Prokesch, "The Sustainable Supply Chain," Interview with Peter Senge, Harvard Business Review, August 01, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2010/10/the-sustainable-supply-chain>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Han Van Kleef and Nigel J. Roome, "Developing Capabilities and Competence for Sustainable Business Management as Innovation: A Research Agenda," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 15, no. 1 (2007): 38-51.

⁶⁶ Sandra Naomi Morioka et al., "Sustainable Business Model Innovation: Exploring Evidences in Sustainability Reporting," *13th Global Conference on Sustainable Manufacturing – Decoupling Growth from Resource Use* 40, no. Supplement C (January 1, 2016): 659.

⁶⁷ De Brito et al., 550.

⁶⁸ N. M. P. Bocken et al., "A Literature and Practice Review to Develop Sustainable Business Model Archetypes," *Journal of Cleaner Production*, (2013), 43.

helps them sell their product and thus create an economic value for stakeholders. Value Capture refers to how a company turns a value into profit through cost structures and revenue streams.⁶⁹ Bocken et al. suggested that sustainable business typically focuses on Value Proposition, but that business model innovation is much more than simply changing the Value Proposition of the customer. Business model innovation goes further than simply changing the product and services, because it actually means changing the way companies do business.⁷⁰ Morioka et al. arrived at similar conclusions when they found that sustainable business requires achieving all three values and that being clear about how a company engages and implements these three values can help provide a structure for sustainable business.⁷¹

Value Creation goes beyond marketing to include how the Value Proposition can eliminate the risk of greenwashing (see “Greenwashing” section, p. 34). In the sustainable clothing industry this means business needs to include sustainable design strategies and product development. De los Rios and Charnely’s research addressed the questions, “How is the role of design changing with sustainable strategies when compared to business-as-usual? And “Which are the design competences required to effectively perform within sustainable business models.⁷² They examined eight different multi-national companies and analyzed SBM strategies used. Their research determined that the strategies are good tools, but that the implementation depends on people—human capital skills and everyone involved are essential in product creation.⁷³ This paper also

⁶⁹ Morioka et al.

⁷⁰ Bocken et al., 54.

⁷¹ Morioka et al., 662.

⁷² Irel Carolina De Los Rios and Fiona J. Charnley, "Skills and Capabilities for a Sustainable and Circular Economy: The Changing Role of Design," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 160 (October 23, 2016): 109-22.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 115.

pointed out the difficulty of enacting philosophical changes without possessing the necessary skill-sets to apply them.⁷⁴ Patagonia, a company that grew organically with a sustainability product design agenda early on, was able to build the necessary infrastructure and find the right people to produce its products as it went along.⁷⁵ This process is much more difficult for a company that starts out enmeshed in the conventional system and then tries to incorporate sustainability after the fact.

Ultimately, SBM will only succeed if retailers and consumers develop and adopt a new dominant social paradigm that challenges and changes society's habits of consumption.⁷⁶ Armstrong and Lehw focused their research on two aspects of SBM, sustainable design and sustainable product development, and how to establish a new dominant social paradigm within the context of sustainable apparel product development. They found that sustainable design and sustainable product development can be leveraged to transform habits of consumption. One way to do this is to sell apparel products at prices reflective of their ecological value (externalities and resource use) as opposed to the market price.⁷⁷ This would typically mean a much larger markup and an increase in Value Capture for individual items.

Whereas most of the literature surrounding sustainable business management and innovation reports on large companies and corporations, I found two articles focused on smaller businesses. Leslie examined the "slow fashion" phenomenon in Toronto's independent fashion sector and found that locally-focused strategies help the small

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Yvon Chouinard, *Let My People Go Surfing*, Torino: Vivalda, 2009.

⁷⁶ Cosette M. Armstrong and Melody L. A. Lehw, "Sustainable Apparel Product Development: In Search of a New Dominant Social Paradigm for the Field Using Sustainable Approaches," *Fashion Practice* 3, no. 1 (2011): 29-62.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

independent fashion designers remain competitive.⁷⁸ The research drew parallels between the emerging “slow fashion” movement and the existing “slow food” movement and finds a greater emphasis in the small independent firms than the big ones in knowing the manufacturing journey of a product, the quality of a garment, and an emphasis on timeless design.⁷⁹

Todeschini et al. investigated eight case studies of Brazilian and Italian companies, looking only at companies that had a sustainability agenda from the start—those “born sustainable.” The authors suggested that design phase strategy, consumer education, consumer expectation, and aligning values along the supply chain all presented significant challenges for SBM within this sample. The key take-a-way from their research is that the companies they examined leveraged their startup status to be flexible and design innovative business models that incorporated their sustainability agenda from the start. In contrast, already established companies are “characterized by resource rigidity and strong legacy with the established fast fashion paradigms” and thus their sustainability initiatives are less likely to address systems issues and are instead small in scale.⁸⁰

Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM)

The United Nations’ Global Compact *Supply Chain Sustainability Practical Guide for Continuous Improvement* defines Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) as the management of environmental, social, and economic impacts, and the encouragement of good governance practices throughout the lifecycles of goods and

⁷⁸ Deborah Leslie et al., 2014, “Crafting an Antidote to Fast Fashion: The Case of Toronto’s Independent Fashion Design Sector,” *Growth and Change* 45 (2): 222–39

⁷⁹ Leslie et al., *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Todeschini et al., 769.

services.⁸¹ This document underscores how SSCM practices not only positively impact society at large, but also benefit the companies themselves and draws from a multitude of cases of large corporations (such as Hewlett-Packard).⁸²

SCM has become increasingly integral to the sustainability discussion as globalization, outsourcing, and increasingly mobile supply chains have resulted in hidden, and even ignored environmental and social issues. Such issues stem from the involvement of so many external partners and subcontractors in distant locations.⁸³⁸⁴ In the conventional system, SCM exists to maximize return, manage a company's inventory, and manage procurement, logistics, and even customer service.⁸⁵ But SSCM is different. Yes, SSCM still seeks to make a profit and do the same things that SCM does, but it goes a step (or multiple steps) further. Under SSCM, a company must consider the environmental and social impacts of doing business with companies along the supply chain. This often involves increasing transparency of practices and reporting this to the consumer and other businesses, being accountable not only to the first-tier suppliers, but also the second and even third tier suppliers, and being choosy about which other companies the core company chooses to work with, and what materials they use. Changing the way business is done also shifts the focus from developing technologies

⁸¹ "Supply Chain Sustainability - A Practical Guide for Continuous Improvement, Second Edition," Global Corporate Sustainability Report | UN Global Compact, 2015, 5, <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/205>.

⁸² Supply Chain Sustainability - A Practical Guide for Continuous Improvement, Second Edition," Global Corporate Sustainability Report | UN Global Compact, 40.

⁸³ Federico Caniato et al., "Environmental Sustainability in Fashion Supply Chains: An Exploratory Case Based Research," *Green Manufacturing and Distribution in the Fashion and Apparel Industries* 135, no. 2 (February 1, 2012): 659.

⁸⁴ Turker and Altuntas, 847.

⁸⁵ Kenneth M Eades et.al., 156

along the supply chain to creating new systems and it is within these new systems that SSCM thrives.⁸⁶

The business drivers for SSCM include: being able to manage business risks to reduce costs, realizing efficiencies to maximize return, and creating sustainable products to appeal to consumers and expand customer base.⁸⁷ Managing business risks minimizes business disruption and protects companies' reputations. Incorporating sustainability can reduce cost of raw materials and inputs, save on energy expenditure and carbon footprints from transportation, and lead to practices that reduce waste and increase efficiency. Regarding creating sustainable products, not only does sustainability appeal to customers and meet their evolving needs but it also keeps companies nimble and able to innovate for changing markets.⁸⁸ However, while the business case for sustainability is important, it should not be the only motivator for a company to operate ethically.

Seuring and Muller's research led to a list of factors that distinguish SSCM from conventional SCM.⁸⁹ First, SSCM considers a wider range of issues than conventional SCM including the environmental and social issues previously discussed. Incorporating sustainability forces companies to become consistent with practices and improve extended supply chains. Second, SSCM considers a wider set of performance objectives because of the wider parameters encompassed by environmental and social dimensions such as water usage and/or equitable wages. The third and final difference is the increased need under SSCM for cooperation among stakeholders along the supply chain

⁸⁶ Bocken et al., 54.

⁸⁷ Bocken et al., 13.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Stefan Seuring and Martin Müller, "From a Literature Review to a Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Supply Chain Management," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 16, no. 15 (October 2008): 699-710.

to better track and verify practices. This research also suggested that many companies reduce ideas of sustainable development along supply chains to environmental improvements. Improvements have been made since the research was published expanding the definition and implementation of sustainable supply chain development, although, of course, more work is to be done in this area.

Similar to SBM, there is little research about SSCM smaller companies. Still, we can learn from studies like that of Caniato et al. which compared international companies SSCM with the efforts of small firms that have adopted what they call “alternative supply chain models.”⁹⁰ They asserted that intentional supply chain design and management is equally important to sustainable product design and manufacturing.⁹¹ For all companies, large and small, sustainability was a key factor in remaining competitive in the fashion industry. Small companies, in particular, could use a sustainability approach can be used to survive against the strong competition of larger firms.⁹² Especially important, Caniato et al. also found that small and large firms use different sustainability performance measures and that small companies have “radical behavior” with supply chain perspective.⁹³ The authors listed some examples of radical changes implemented by small companies including commercial disintermediation, adoption of local suppliers, and the use of a natural drying process for leather.⁹⁴ This reinforces the idea that small firms are worthy of further study; often, large companies will not incorporate these “radical practices” due to scaling issues.

⁹⁰ Caniato et al.

⁹¹ Ibid, 661.

⁹² Ibid, 668.

⁹³ Ibid, 662.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 668.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Certification

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and certifications are two typical ways large companies try to address the sustainability issues in both business and supply chain management, without necessarily engaging in transformative sustainability measures. Brockhaus et al. addressed this in their research. They analyzed the top strategic priorities of corporate sustainability and the motivations associated with them.⁹⁵ They identified four different motivational types for implementing sustainability ideas, including: The Image Enhancer; the Efficiency Maximizer, the Resource Acquirer; and the True Believer. Only one of the motivation types, the True Believer, actually result in sustainability transforming the business.⁹⁶ This is because the True Believer companies were able to have not only the commitment to sustainability, but also they actually established the capacity to fulfil their objectives. Essentially, CSR is not as effective at implementing transformative sustainability as advertised most of the time. Brockhaus et al. tried to figure out why that is and discovered a disconnect between the commitment and the capacity to build sustainability capability.⁹⁷ Many companies saw that sustainability could be both profitable and better for the earth and the stakeholders engaged in the company.⁹⁸ This caused companies to include a sustainability agenda; however, just because they had the commitment to carry out the sustainability initiative, does not mean they have the capacity to do so, especially if sustainability was not in the company's DNA. If sustainability was not a core value, it would be difficult to execute

⁹⁵ Sebastian Brockhaus et al., "Motivations for Environmental and Social Consciousness: Reevaluating the Sustainability-Based View," *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Business and Sustainable Development: A Global Guide, (n.d.). <https://www.iisd.org/business/>, 933.

⁹⁶ Brockhaus et al., 938, 940.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 942.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 936.

sustainability goals.⁹⁹ While CSR more generally applies to large companies, I have included it here because of its importance to sustainable business and its emergence in the conventional clothing industry.

Another part of the literature focuses on certifications. Certifications, at their best, serve to provide transparency and accountability at various points along the supply chain and levels within a company. They can be implemented at many points of the supply chain and at many levels within the company. Certifications can be product-related (such as Fair Trade and Organic certifications), supply chain process related (such as GOTS global standard cotton), and/or company certified (such as ISO14001 or B-Corp).

Diabat and Govindan emphasized the corporate certification ISO14001 in their research. ISO14001 is the environmental management system standard focused on reducing packaging and waste, assessing environmental performance of suppliers, and reducing emissions. Like with much of the literature, Diabat and Govindan's research mainly focused on corporations that already had a set supply chain and have entrenched business models. The sustainability measures and practices adopted were usually less innovative and more incremental. This type of approach sets the stage for token sustainability as opposed to transformative sustainability.

Certifications can spur more sustainable practices especially when they cover many different aspects of the supply chain, from the products to the businesses themselves. Diabat and Govindan recognized that some drivers of sustainability play off each other and spur on other drivers, for example driver a will help to incentivize driver b

⁹⁹ Ibid, 944.

and so on.¹⁰⁰ Because of the accountability, transparency, and the chain effect of sustainability measures, certifications are an important aspect of SBM and SSCM; however, they are not foolproof and do have problems associated with them.

A significant problem within the realm of certification is that the cost can be prohibitive, especially to young, small businesses. The lack of standards for certification also presents problems; most certifications are carried out by third party verifiers that establish standards themselves. Moreover, different certifications measure different variables to differing degrees. Dahl discussed the limitations associated with this, most notably “greenwashing” as discussed below.¹⁰¹

Greenwashing

Dahl defined greenwashing as “the practice of making unwarranted or overblown claims of sustainability or environmental friendliness in an attempt to gain market share.”¹⁰² Why does greenwashing happen: why do companies claim sustainability practices without (fully) implementing them? According to Testa and Iraldo, because SSCM is an “expensive approach”, companies which want to make a profit off sustainability typically incorporate sustainable practices for the sole purpose of marketing to consumer and increasing profits through this avenue.¹⁰³¹⁰⁴ If a company advertises

¹⁰⁰ Ali Diabat and Kannan Govindan, “An Analysis of the Drivers Affecting the Implementation of Green Supply Chain Management,” *Environmental Supply Chain Management* 55, no. 6 (April 1, 2011): 662.

¹⁰¹ Richard Dahl, “Green Washing: Do You Know What You’re Buying?” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 118, no. 6 (June 2010): 246–52.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Francesco Testa and Fabio Iraldo, “Shadows and Lights of GSCM (Green Supply Chain Management): Determinants and Effects of These Practices Based on a Multi-National Study,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 18 no. 10 (2010): 961.

¹⁰⁴ Diabat & Govindan, 665.

sustainability practices, but did not incorporate them, the company spends less and makes more money.

Dahl recognized that certifications are one way to transparently communicate with customers and be accountable to the certification's standards, but he also argued for tighter regulation of certifications to offset the greenwashing that can occur through them. Markham et al. devised a regulatory instrument under which governments and interested stakeholders worked together to diminish the prevalence of greenwashing because they recognize that businesses can greenwash without any certifications.¹⁰⁵ Regulation is important, but businesses have a responsibility to their customers to be honest with advertising and their practices, and one of the ways to do this is through transparency. Sharing candidly the processes and ingredients involved in every step of the process of producing clothing offers everyone a means to substantiate the claim of "green," "eco-friendly," or "sustainable" and minimizes the risk of greenwashing.

Another solution to the problem of greenwashing could place the responsibility on multiple stakeholders: the company, consumer, and regulators. It would require extreme transparency from the company (reporting their practices and keeping detailed information available to the public), discerning consumers (who know what to look for in labeling), and government/stakeholder regulatory measures (more than what currently exists). Moreover, a "watchdog" to hold companies accountable to their actions vs. what companies advertise and present to the public as "green." Perhaps one way a firm can avoid greenwashing is by incorporating business practices outside of the conventional model. One example of such a practice is circular economy design and production.

¹⁰⁵ David Markham et al., Greenwashing: A Proposal to Restrict Its Spread, *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy & Management*, 16 no. 4 (2014).

Circular Economy

A 'Circular Economy' seeks to design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate natural systems¹⁰⁶ The Ellen MacArthur Foundation's mission is to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. Because of the scope, magnitude, and ecological impact of the clothing industry, this organization has focused its efforts on establishing cradle to cradle textile production. Cradle to cradle production simply means that products are designed so the lifecycle is infinitely recyclable/repurposable to eliminate the wasteful current model. The current mode of production operates in a cradle to grave model, where things made are designed so that they will have an end of life: they end up in a "grave" or landfill as opposed to being reused. In its publication *A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning fashion's future*, the foundation establishes its vision for a system that works, delivering long-term benefits.¹⁰⁷ Within this report, the foundation discusses its vision using four criteria to best address circular economy: 1. phase out substances of concern and microfiber release; 2. transform the way clothes are designed, sold, and used to break free from their increasingly disposable nature; 3. radically improve recycling by transforming clothing design, collection, and reprocessing; and 4. make effective use of resources and move to renewable inputs.¹⁰⁸

Braungart and McDonough's *Cradle to Cradle* pointed to design flaws/failures in products including cradle to grave life expectancy, the need for regulation, hybrid

¹⁰⁶ "Circular Fashion - A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future," Ellen MacArthur Foundation, (November 28, 2017), 48, <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/a-new-textiles-economy-redesigning-fashions-future>.

¹⁰⁷ "Circular Fashion - A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion's Future," Ellen MacArthur Foundation, (November 28, 2017), 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

materials, etc.¹⁰⁹ Most importantly, they pointed out that we have been trying to optimize the wrong systems.¹¹⁰ Instead of working with what's existing as the only acceptable model, why not try to innovate and reimagine our systems and products? They advocate changing the models that do not work well: just because something has been produced one way for a long time does not mean that we must continue to do so.

A Circular Economy encourages industry to pick a “metabolism,” biological or technical, and then not to mix them. These metabolisms should not be mixed if the aim is to create fully recycled or fully compostable products. When these two metabolisms mix when creating a product, Braungart and McDonough call the result a “Monstrous Hybrid.” The authors use a leather shoe to illustrate what they mean.¹¹¹ Leather shoes used to be compostable because they were formerly made with a biological metabolism. Now, the leather is treated with chromium opposed to the natural vegetable tanning processes; this alters the leather and makes it not biodegradable. Mixing metabolisms is rampant in fabric manufacturing, with its multitude of fabric blends of synthetic and organic materials (for example, a shirt made from a cotton and polyester blend, or cotton denim with spandex added for stretch). Thinking in terms of a Circular Economy practices helps businesses address the lifecycle of the garments it produces and helps create less waste in the process of manufacturing.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior lends insight into the question, “Will people purchase clothing if it has a higher price point due to sustainability initiatives?” In reality, we live

¹⁰⁹ Michael Braungart and William McDonough, *Cradle to Cradle*, New York, NY: North Point Press, 2002.

¹¹⁰ Braungart and McDonough, 142.

¹¹¹ Braungart and McDonough, 97-99.

in a society where people purchase large quantities of garments and expect to pay very little for each garment.¹¹² Because of this, some may argue that sustainable fashion and sustainable clothing cannot succeed because it costs more to produce each item than using the conventional system. Nonetheless, high fashion thrives and people pay exorbitant prices for luxury items. Of course, not everyone can afford to purchase clothing and accessories from brands such as Gucci and Prada. Regardless, the existence and profitability of those brands shows that a market could exist for somewhat higher price but sustainably produced goods. Sustainable clothing companies do often charge more for their garments because the cost of doing business with high standards and ethics costs more; however, there are plenty of sustainable clothing companies that are thriving.

What a consumer is willing to pay and different demographics—not just income—also influence how a consumer behaves.¹¹³ The clothing industry relies on supplying what the customer wants, or it focuses marketing efforts in a way to get the consumer to want what a company produces. Indeed, demand can be created through marketing or even word of mouth.

Chan and Wong conducted an in-depth analysis of Consumer Decision Making Process Theory in the context of eco-friendly products.¹¹⁴ Under the premise that consumers would not be willing to pay more solely for eco-friendly products, Chan and Wong argued that product related attributes, store-related attributes, and eco-fashion

¹¹² "2/3 of All Retail Shoppers Shop Off-Price," NPD Group, July 14, 2016, <https://www.npd.com/wps/portal/npd/us/news/press-releases/2016/two-thirds-of-all-retail-shoppers-shop-off-price-reports-npd-group/>.

¹¹³ "Green Generation: Millennials Say Sustainability Is a Shopping Priority," What People Watch, Listen To and Buy, November 5, 2015, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2015/green-generation-millennials-say-sustainability-is-a-shopping-priority.html>.

¹¹⁴ Ting-Yan Chan and Christina Wong, "The Consumption Side of Sustainable Fashion Supply Chain," *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal* 16, no. 2 (May 04, 2012): 193-215.

consumption decisions are subject to the price premiums of eco-fashion.¹¹⁵ They found that purchasing behavior was not necessarily related solely to the eco-friendly nature of the product itself; other factors play a large part, most notably price and customer service: store related attributes (such as signage) positively influenced eco-fashion consumption.¹¹⁶ That implies that eco-fashion consumption decision is more apt at guessing customer behavior than customer attitude (customers may say they want to purchase eco-friendly products, but in reality do not due to price).¹¹⁷ This means that stores have a large responsibility to promote ethical products because the stores can influence consumers purchasing decisions.

To entice buyers, fashion companies must devise marketing plans to promote sustainable clothing and product consumption, in turn driving the demand for sustainable products and the demand for more sustainable supply chains and processes.¹¹⁸ It is important to note that, even though Chan and Wong found that product-related attributes did not impact eco-fashion consumption decisions, other studies have found that the opposite is true, even at a higher price point.¹¹⁹ And, more to the point, sustainable companies are making money so they have found a niche market of people who will pay more. It is worth looking into what those companies are doing to thrive when they have a higher price point than a comparable non-sustainable company.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 194.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 195.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 205.

¹¹⁸ Chan and Wong, 206.

¹¹⁹ Jessica Lyons Hardcastle, "Consumers Will Pay More Money for 'Sustainable' Products," Environmental Leader, January 17, 2017. <https://www.environmentalleader.com/2017/01/consumers-will-pay-more-money-for-sustainable-products/>.

Would it be a bad thing if sustainability initiatives drove up prices slightly and this, in turn, caused people to consume less and care for the clothes they have? Reducing clothing acquisition may appear counterproductive to our concepts of changing seasonal fashion and growth economics, but a shift from the conventional system to a more sustainable one demands a challenge to preconceived notions of “more is better.”¹²⁰

Instagram as a Business Tool

My hypothesis that small companies can innovate sustainability better than large corporations has one major flaw: small companies lack the main advantage of large corporations. Simply, they lack money. Money to spend on marketing to existing and new customers; money to invest in new technology, designs, and infrastructure; and money to promote brand name recognition. However, in this increasingly global and technology-driven world, young small companies have been innovating ways to reach their audiences and create a customer base without spending a ton of money. One successful strategy utilizes social media as a means to connect with customers. More connect via social media than ever before; it is changing not just the way we socialize, but also how we consume.

Instagram, out of all the social media sites, had emerged as a key focus of business strategy in recent years. This platform has over 800 million monthly active users and 500 million daily active users.¹²¹ Additionally, an estimated 71% of US

¹²⁰ Joyner Armstrong et al., 36.

¹²¹ Anita Balakrishnan and Julia Boorstin, "Instagram Says It Now Has 800 Million Users, up 100 Million since April," CNBC, September 25, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/25/how-many-users-does-instagram-have-now-800-million.html>.

businesses use Instagram and at least 30% of Instagram users have purchased a product they first discovered on Instagram.¹²² Due to the sheer numbers and how actively engaged people are, Instagram provides ample and effective opportunity for free marketing. Not only that, but it is possible to buy directly from Instagram through links on pictures and in stories. At the tap of a thumb, a customer can link to a company's website to purchase the tagged item.

More than using Instagram as a means to sell, many brands use Instagram as a way to spread their messages. Before the internet and the rise of social media, brands relied on brand recognition, catalogues, and being local to a place where the product is needed. Now, young sustainable clothing companies are able to succeed because they are able to connect more easily with their market and establish communities of likeminded people with whom not only products, but ideas are shared. The sustainable fashion community on Instagram promotes collaboration.

Using Instagram as a business tool presents a business innovation that allows young sustainable clothing companies to market for free (or at lower prices than through conventional channels) and to connect with and create community in new ways. One example of this is that many sustainable clothing businesses partner with the organization, Fashion Revolution, to leverage the "Who Made My Clothes" campaign through the use of social media. For this reason, I used Instagram to gather information on young sustainable clothing companies and create a comprehensive list of businesses I would contact for my research that were young and claimed sustainability (see p. 45 in Methods section).

¹²² Maddy Osman, "18 Instagram Stats Every Marketer Should Know for 2018," Sprout Social, July 10, 2018, <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/instagram-stats/>.

Best Practices

I am dissatisfied with the literature's efforts at "Best Practices" in sustainability. First, there does not exist one comprehensive list of "Best Practices for the clothing industry. Additionally, there is a marked difference between a sustainable business and a business that only incorporates sustainable practices. Niinimaki defined "Best Practice" as designers and companies that choose the best environmental and social solution that exists.¹²³ This definition leaves room for companies to simply adopt one or two sustainable practices without transforming their basic business models. Best Practices for sustainability in the clothing industry are still being developed and they should reflect solutions to change the conventional system.

Niinimaki also said that what entrepreneurs can do is limited and defined by resources available and the current knowledge base. While this is true to some extent, I think this is a mindset that is based in the conventional system. Knowledge bases can be expanded and resources available can be procured or created. Entrepreneurs need to be innovative and creative, and I suggest that they must be innovative and creative and go beyond accepted "Best Practices" and the marginal CSR efforts.

What happens when "Best Practices" fall far short of true sustainability? Not much, because businesses adopting them still operate in the conventional system that has caused the environmental and social issues. As a result, Best Practices should not be viewed as something to be achieved, but rather as something to be developed, worked on, refined, reimagined, and adapted over time. A true sustainability agenda would reflect this.

¹²³ Niinimaki, 2.

For sustainable best practices to take hold in clothing companies, two main things need to happen. First, there is a need for deep reorganization within the company and a revision of the different stakeholder relationships to reflect a holistic sustainability.¹²⁴ The deep restructuring of companies to truly sustainable practices includes engaging a different ethic than the current profit-driven motive, business as usual mindset. Consumption of clothes needs to decrease. To decrease quantity, companies must invest in high quality materials and designs that are aesthetically pleasing throughout their life cycle. Clothes must last and be deemed wearable for years and years.¹²⁵ Second, sustainability needs to be viewed as an essential component of business models and supply chains as opposed to a luxury agenda item. As long as sustainability is viewed as “extra” and not as an integral part of business, sustainable practices will be viewed as ancillary and susceptible to the whims of customers’ discretionary “extra” income.¹²⁶ Even if incomes and spending decline, those practices must prevail. Yes, it might be more expensive to implement sustainability at every component of the business, but fast fashion giant Zara’s parent company, Inditex, profited \$4.17 billion in 2017’s fiscal year.¹²⁷ Even though Inditex and companies like them are pursuing some sustainability initiatives, they can afford to do more, even at the expense of repaying loans and providing slightly less back to investors. Additionally, in order to be considered a sustainable company (instead of one that simply incorporates sustainable measures), these fast fashion giants would have to change their entire business model to reflect an

¹²⁴ De Brito et al., 550.

¹²⁵ Niinimaki, 8.

¹²⁶ Brockhaus, 944.

¹²⁷ Katya Foreman, "Zara Owner Inditex Reports Increase in Profits, Thanks to Rapid Digital Growth," Footwear News, August 04, 2018, <https://footwearnews.com/2018/business/earnings/inditex-full-year-profits-report-zara-518395/>.

ethic of decreasing consumption. But this sounds daunting: how on earth would large established companies do this? Perhaps looking to what successful small sustainable companies are doing could shed some light on different practices.

Gaps in Literature

Most of the published research focuses on large, already established companies and their marginal efforts at sustainability through CSR. The reports from independent organizations such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Global Fashion Agenda and The Boston Consulting Group, and Baptist World, also focus on large established companies. These companies do have enormous impact on the market by the numbers of products offered and customers served. However, the 2018 *Pulse of the Fashion Industry* underscores that if the clothing industry continues on as is, even with the sustainability initiatives in place, issues stemming from unsustainable practices will continue to rise (see Figure 8, p. 18).¹²⁸ Current efforts are not enough to decrease consumption, diminish the environmental impacts, and promote equity for the people working along the clothing industry's supply chains. So, the question becomes, who IS "doing it right" and addressing these issues? As Todeschini et al. suggests, the literature lacks representation from small young companies.¹²⁹

Simply looking at the size of a company does not necessarily take into consideration capacity building and how small innovations can inspire and be adapted and scaled by other larger companies. Small young companies adopt, innovate, and incorporate into their business plans, organizational practices, and supply chain

¹²⁸ "Pulse of the Fashion Industry Executive Summary," Global Fashion Agenda and Boston Consulting Group, 2018, 3, <http://www.globalfashionagenda.com/pulse/>.

¹²⁹ Todeschini et al.

management strategies because they offer another important narrative in the sustainable business discussion. From the existing literature and the belief that young small clothing companies have much to offer, I designed my research. I discuss my methods in the next section.

Methods

Small, new businesses develop truly innovative practices because they need to be clever and creative if they intend to survive in our world of big-business dominance. As a result, I chose to focus on young clothing companies of a small/medium size which call themselves sustainable in order to uncover innovative sustainability practices that address the issues of fast fashion. Three specific assumptions underlie this research: First, supply chain management and organizational practices are essential in addressing sustainability issues. Second, the already established and engrained supply chains and management systems in the conventional clothing industry can make it difficult for companies to make truly transformative sustainability decisions and practices. And finally, companies can be innovative in a variety of ways including—but not limited to—establishing new technology, creating different organizational systems, changing product design, and using strategic marketing techniques.

I also focused on new businesses instead of the already established sustainable companies. I wanted to know if young clothing companies can develop innovative ways to implement sustainable organizational practices, sustainably source their products, connect with consumers through education and marketing, afford certifications, and/or establish new ways to address issues without certification. During this process, I remained open to hearing about other innovations not explained in the literature that I may not have anticipated.

Interviews

I conducted a qualitative analysis by collecting data via company interviews, documents found online on company websites, other documents such as magazine articles about a company, and information available on company social media accounts.

I included interviews because I wanted to hear firsthand how the businesses had been set up and how they established transparent supply chains. For that purpose, I selected key informants—those who knew the most about the supply chain management and organizational practices of the company.

Semi-structured interviews gave me the flexibility to ask many questions and have a conversation to get informants to think about the innovative practices of their companies. While I let the individuals define sustainability on their own, I wanted the flexibility to use my definitions of innovation from the literature and from my findings. Because of such nuances, qualitative coding seemed the best option for data analysis.

Identifying and Contacting Research Participants

I identified businesses through a Google search of sustainable clothing companies and through business Instagram pages. On Google, I found websites dedicated to sustainable or ethical fashion run by entrepreneurs. Many of these websites had a directory of sustainable clothing companies. After finding these companies on Instagram, I used Instagram's application to find similar/relevant companies to add to my list. From this process, my list of sustainable clothing companies grew.

This approach led to a total of 120 businesses for potential interviews. To address the ambiguity of “what is sustainable?” I focused on businesses that claimed—themselves—to be sustainable. Many companies publish their sustainability initiatives as part of their websites and use this as marketing material or consumer education. I chose to reach out to businesses that included organizational and supply chain management practices in their sustainability agenda. I specifically did not contact any companies that only listed “donating a portion of their proceeds” as their sustainability agenda.

I defined “young” as 10 years old or younger. I chose 10 to allow for a range of business ages in my interviews. I wanted to incorporate businesses that had just started out as well as businesses that have been around long enough to establish profits, relationships in the sustainable clothing community, and a solid business plan.

I specifically focused on young companies because they might establish innovative practices outside of conventional models of supply chain management and organizational practices. Additionally, the companies on my list were quite small in comparison to the large giants of corporate fashion and can maneuver outside of the traditional business models. In the end, my list of 120 potential businesses included young companies with a claim to sustainability.

While some information about each of the companies included in my sample came from online sources, much more came from the interviews. Each company included in my sample is privately owned; they are not required by law to provide detailed information online on the company site—it is all voluntary.

Identifying Questions to Ask

Interview questions resulted from my research and literature review process. (See Appendix A). I divided my 18 questions into five general sections that mirrored my research objectives. Specifically, I chose to investigate organizational practices and supply chain management strategies, and certifications. I also wanted to know what was on the horizon for the companies because a company’s goal or vision for the future can drive their innovation strategies.

My interview strategy was semi-structured and I asked many open ended questions. I framed the interviews as a conversation because I wanted the interviewees to

answer based on their perspective of what was important to the company; I did not want to steer them in any specific direction. In this way, I sought to reduce bias. I found that interviewees often answered the questions naturally over the course of the conversation without having to be prompted.

Some company representatives preferred email correspondence to a face-to-face interview. For those who did an email interview, I asked them to emphasize and elaborate on the questions that applied and resonated with them the most.

Gathering Data

Once I established the company list and the questions I wanted to explore, I contacted the companies using email, via their website, or on the phone. Out of the 100 inquiries, I conducted 20 interviews: one interview in person, two via phone call, four via Skype, two via email, and 11 via Zoom video conferencing.

Because I wanted to speak with the person who would have the most knowledge of the day-to-day supply chain and management operations, I helped the businesses identify interview candidates. I interviewed people in a variety of roles including founders, owners, designers, production managers, operations managers, and sourcing managers. During each interview, I discussed the person's role and how they came to that position in the company to understand more about their role and their background in sustainability.

I recorded each interview and I also took copious notes. After each interview, I typed up my notes and added more information from the interview to further document my data. Additionally, I asked follow-up questions via email as needed. While I chose to do this sparingly, this aided me in coding data because some new questions emerged over time. In addition to the interviews, I gathered information from company websites and other sources about the companies. Figure 9 depicts this process.

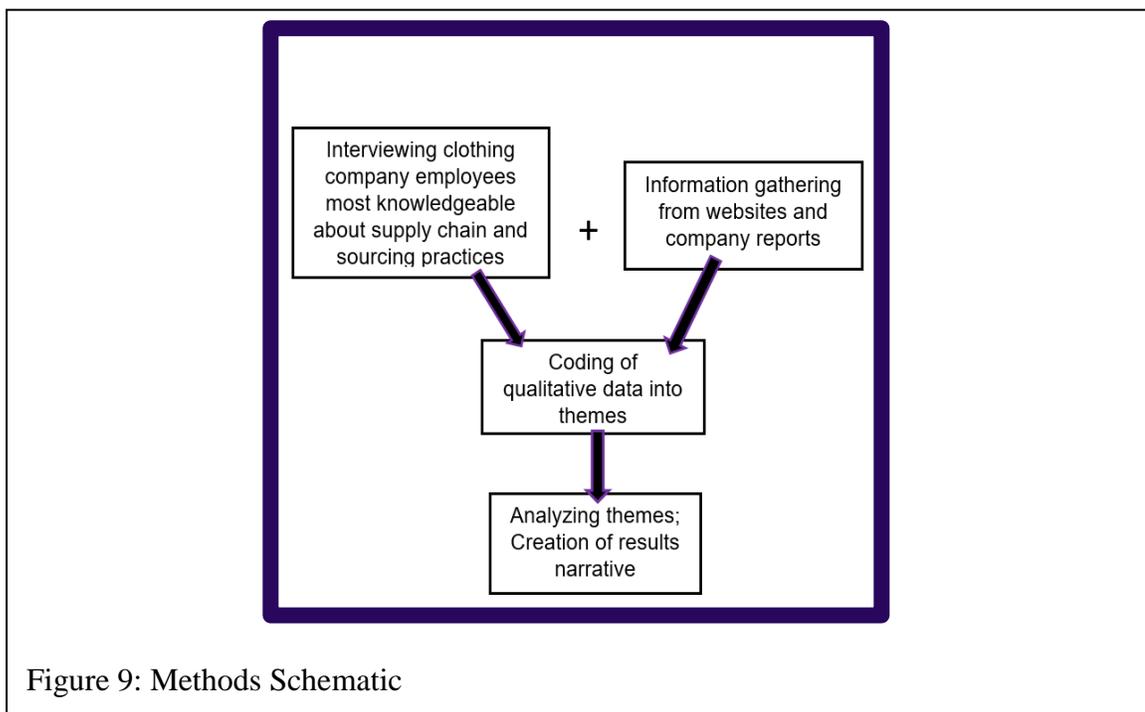


Figure 9: Methods Schematic

Data Analysis Procedures

After conducting the interviews and gathering ancillary information, I coded the information into seven different themes that revolved around the type of innovative practice employed by the businesses. The themes fall under the categories of Intentional Design, Intentional Fabric and Materials, Transparency in Supply Chains, Increased Producer Responsibility, Nimble Operations and Business Model, Value Consistency, and Stakeholder Engagement. Within the seven themes, I developed sub-themes to

specify innovative practices (see Table 1). These themes and sub-themes appear in the results section in the individual company summaries, the subsequent charts and graphs, and the explanations of each sub-theme.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes

Intentional Design	Intentional Fabric and Materials	Transparency in Supply Chains (SC)	Increased Producer Responsibility	Nimble Operations and Business Models	Value Consistency	Stakeholder Engagement
quality and durability	Dead Stock Fabric (DSF)	tracking and verification of SC	extended producer responsibility	Direct-to-consumer (DTC)	labor issues	consumer education
beauty and art	organic	business reports on SC	zero waste	Made-to-order (MTO)	resource waste	social media/blog
non-seasonal	biodegradable	vertical integration	biodegradable materials	short supply chain	pollution	collaborations
versatile	natural fibers	relationships		adaptable business model	organic	pop-ups
timeless	recyclable trimmings	certifications		scaling	women's rights	
fabric	thread				political involvement	
trimmings					local emphasis	
					carbon footprint	
					decreased consumption	

Results

This results section has two parts. The first part will include relevant information gathered from each of the 20 business. This information includes background on how the company was founded, the person (or people) I interviewed and their role(s), the type of business and business model, a description of the supply chain, and different innovation “highlights.” The clothing companies are listed in alphabetical order. I also included three screenshots of Instagram posts from each company to highlight their sustainability practices and show the ways these companies engage their customers and audience via social media.

The second part of the results section explains the categorization of the data into themes that emerged through the data collection process. A chart provides details about which businesses fit into which qualifying theme. I discuss each and the related sub-themes.

Given that the intricacies of business are born out of human creativity, innovations can present themselves in many ways. I looked specifically for business practices that directly countered fast fashion and called these “innovations”. Within the parameters of sustainability, I compiled those innovations that documented or described by multiple companies or those I deemed significant in a creativity or unique aspect. The information I have gathered, while comprehensive, is not exhaustive. Rather, I have assembled a “highlight reel” of what the interviewees shared and what businesses chose to portray on their websites and social media at the time I collected data.

Part 1: The Businesses

Brass Clothing

Founders Katie Demo and Jay Adams launched Brass Clothing (“Brass”) in 2015 with a Kickstarter campaign.¹³⁰¹³¹ I spoke with Katie Demo.¹³² In her current role, Demo wears many hats. She works on the customer-facing side of the business including marketing, e-commerce operations, sales, and customer service, as well as Human Resources. Before starting Brass, both Demo and Adams were increasingly dissatisfied with their wardrobes. Demo said that she was at a point in her career where she had outgrown fast fashion. She wanted better quality and more classic looking clothes but could not—and did not want to—pay the expensive designer price tags. And with her background in online fashion retail and Adams’ expertise, the idea of Brass turned into the reality as it is known today. The brand, born out of the personal needs of the founders for quality professional clothes, offers better quality clothing at a better price and also adhered to better sustainability standards than present in fast fashion.

In general, Brass markets to the professional woman. The founders see Brass filling a niche that is business casual and made of quality materials with quality craftsmanship. The brand also champions the idea of a “capsule wardrobe” that includes a limited number of pieces that all go together, are timeless—will not go out of style, and are made of quality materials that will last (see Figure 10).¹³³ Brass calls its categories for the capsule foundations “editions and layers.” The editions and layers help women

¹³⁰ “Brass: Beautiful Basics,” Kickstarter, April 28, 2015, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/kickinbrass/brass-high-quality-without-high-markup>.

¹³¹ “Build a Better Wardrobe,” Brass, <https://brassclothing.com/>.

¹³² Katie Demo, Zoom conference call with author, February 8, 2018.

¹³³ Brass (@brassclothing) 2018, “Interested in creating a capsule wardrobe?” *Instagram*, January 17, 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BAq6iu5xG0C/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

simplify their wardrobes by incorporating a few items they love so they worry less about appearance and have more time and energy for things that really matter.¹³⁴ Brass started with a small number of designs: only 5 dress styles. The brand continues to maintain a small inventory and pared down selections while simultaneously growing to meet the demand for their products. In the future, the founders want Brass to be more inclusive with sizing and they want to produce clothes for more body types and styles.

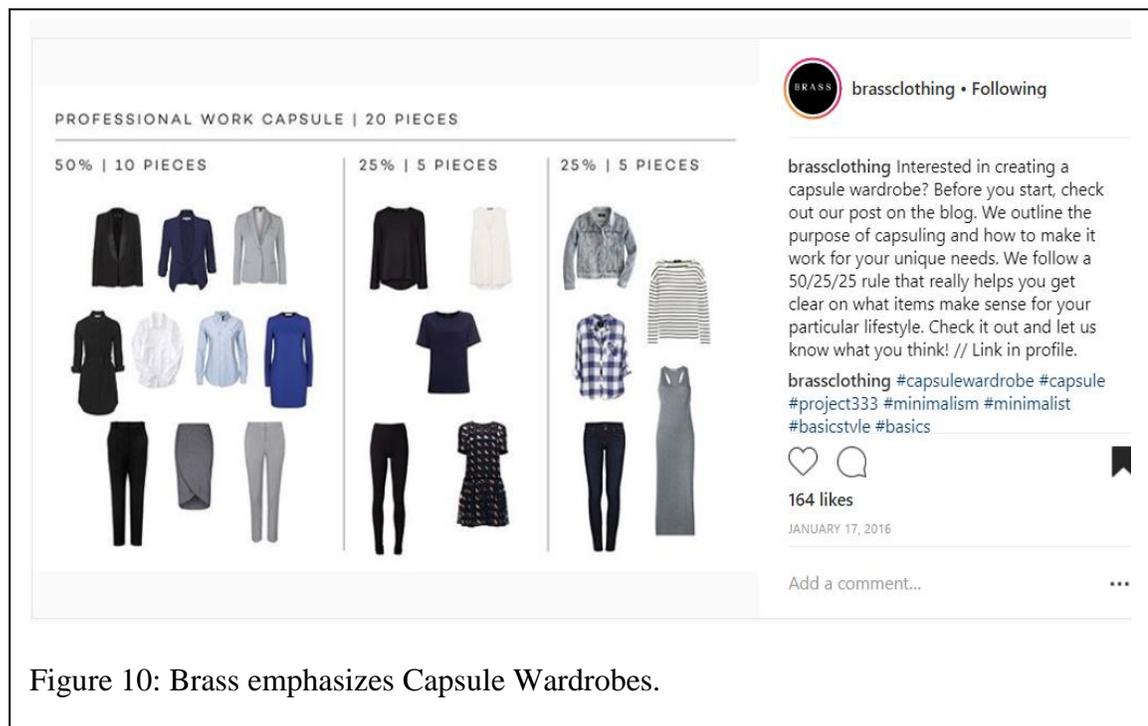


Figure 10: Brass emphasizes Capsule Wardrobes.

The company operates as an online retailer selling Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) with a warehouse space to house inventory. Additionally, Brass's studio space functions as a "pop-up" setting for special occasions. Its short supply chain is a priority for the founders. As a result, Brass has a business partnership with two factories in China. One factory produces cut and sew garments, and the other factory produces the knit-fabric garments. Regarding materials, Brass uses mostly Dead Stock Fabric (DSF)—leftover

¹³⁴ "Why Brass," Brass, <https://brassclothing.com/pages/about>.

fabric from other companies production—as well as some fabric sourced by the factories (see Figure 11).¹³⁵ The founders seek high quality and durable materials because they want their clothes to last the wearer a long time, especially because they have designed clothes that will not go out of style. Brass has developed a great relationship with the factories. At least one of the founders visit the factories 2-3 times per year; their partner in Shanghai typically visits them in Boston once a year.

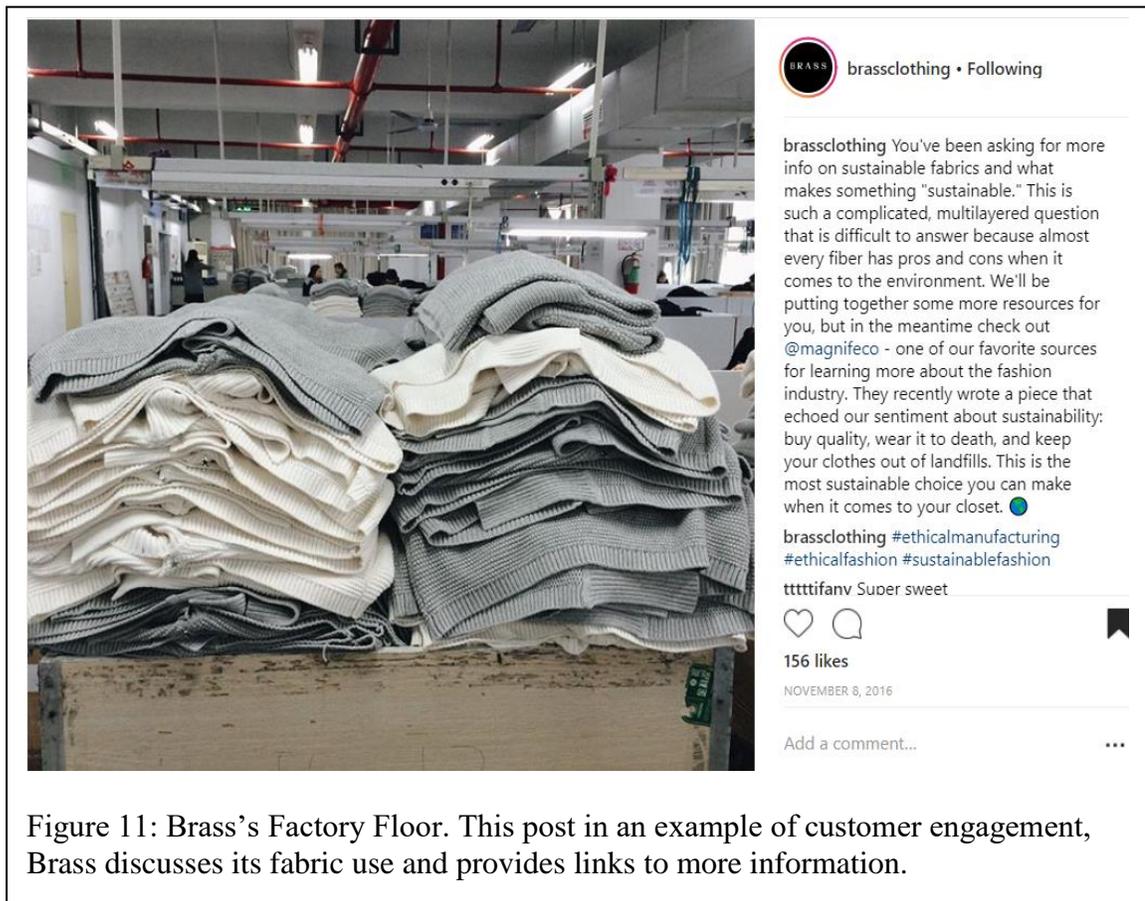


Figure 11: Brass’s Factory Floor. This post in an example of customer engagement, Brass discusses its fabric use and provides links to more information.

Worth mentioning, Brass is involved with its customers. Brass engages with customers for feedback on what the customer wants regarding products and how the

¹³⁵ Brass (@brassclothing) 2018, “You’ve been asking for more info on sustainable fabrics and what makes something ‘sustainable’,” *Instagram*, November 8, 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BMkGQKXjBWm/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

clothes fit through its blog and social media outlets. They also use these platforms to demonstrate transparency and communicate upcoming business decisions and initiatives. Brass came up with a “Clean Out Bag” for its customers that started through a marketing campaign for Holiday 2016 called “The Edit” (see Figure 12).¹³⁶ As part of this unique and innovative initiative, Brass provided its customers with discounts on several items and sent them a bag. The customers then filled the bag with their excess articles of clothing and sent the bag back to Brass. When Brass received this bag, they sent the contents to a textile recycling factory in North Carolina. This holiday initiative turned

¹³⁶ Brass (@brassclothing) 2018, “The average American throws out 82lbs of clothing every year,” *Instagram*, January 6, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bdn4D5uDX3J/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

into one of Brass’s regular customer offerings: Brass continues to provide customers with a way to recycle textiles responsibly.

Devinto

I interviewed Aiste Zitnikaite, founder and designer at Devinto, an Eco-and ethically-conscious clothing line.¹³⁷ Zitnikaite has a background in fashion design and while working for large Montreal-based companies, she learned about incredibly wasteful and harmful fast-fashion practices, including the burning of clothes if they did not sell and the detrimental effects of leather production in Pakistan on the human body and surrounding ecological communities. Zitnikaite believed there must be another way to

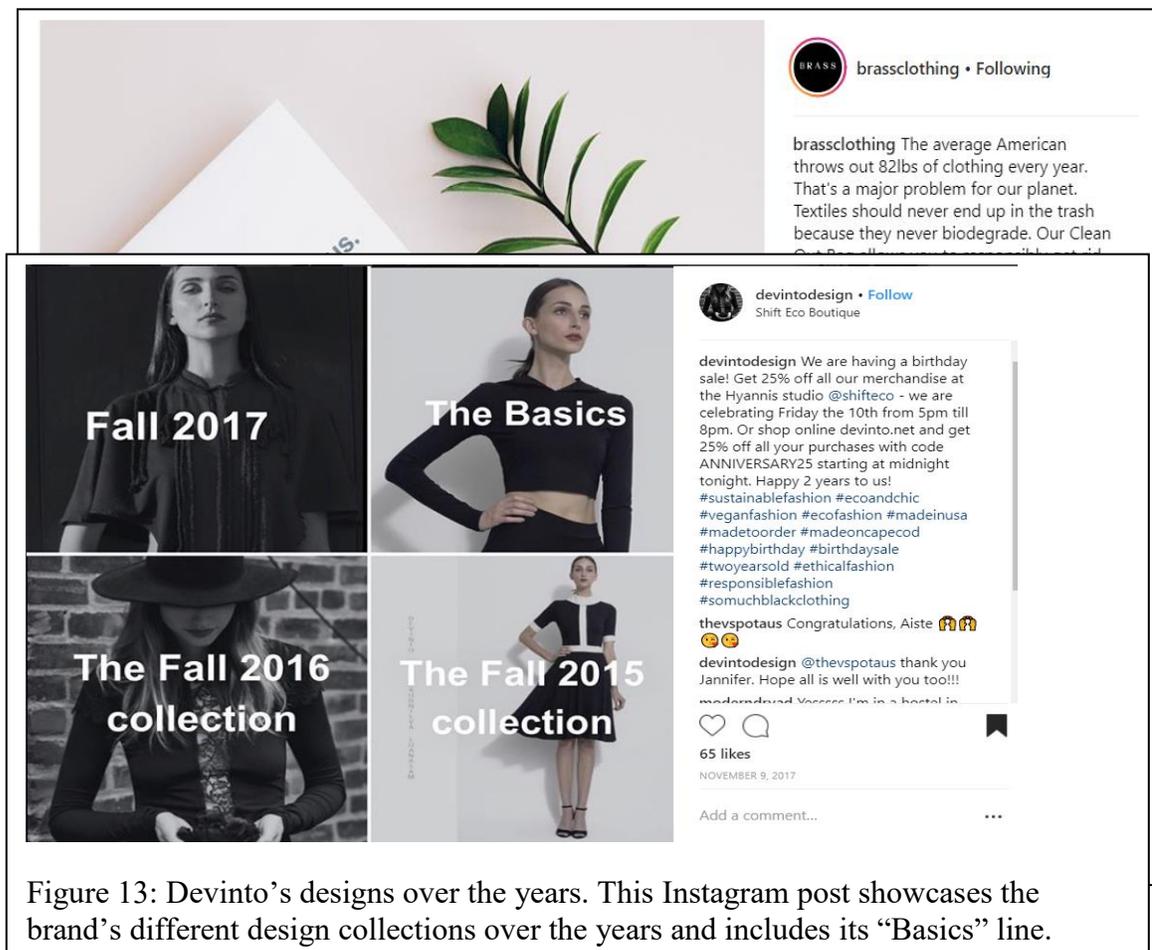


Figure 13: Devinto’s designs over the years. This Instagram post showcases the brand’s different design collections over the years and includes its “Basics” line.

¹³⁷ Aiste Zitnikaite, Skype conference call with author, March 9, 2018.

produce clothing without the harmful effects. Her solution: “go small” in production and make clothing to order (MTO). She founded Devinto with an official launch of a women’s clothing line for Fall of 2016 (see Figure 13).¹³⁸ The business sells to some boutiques, but also sells direct-to-consumer via its online store.

During our interview, Zitnikaite spoke specifically of the importance of her designs in the context of sustainability. First, she designs something that she herself would wear. When she first started creating her business model, not many brands offered clothing that fit her aesthetic as well as her ethic. She seeks a beautiful and fashionable aesthetic different from what she has found in other sustainable brands. She designs and makes clothing that fits both values. She chooses to make clothes in black, white, and gray because she believes there is longevity and beauty in neutrals. This way, her designs

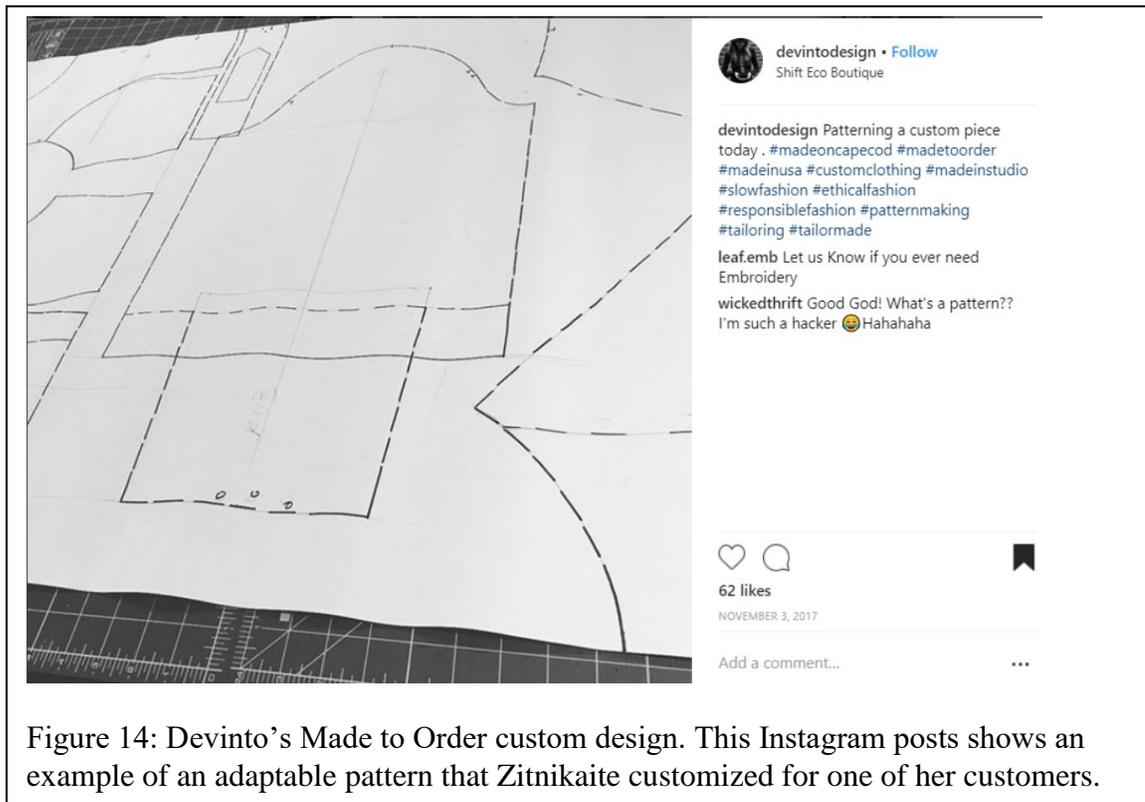


Figure 14: Devinto’s Made to Order custom design. This Instagram posts shows an example of an adaptable pattern that Zitnikaite customized for one of her customers.

¹³⁸ Devinto Design (@devintodesign), 2018, "We are having a birthday sale!" *Instagram*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbSP56Gjv5Z/?taken-by=devintodesign>.

can be worn for year to come as they are timeless, not dependent on trends. Moreover, because Zitnikaite produces made to order, she can customize any of her designs per request of a customer (see Figure 14).¹³⁹ For example, if a customer wants sleeves on a sleeveless dress, Zitnikaite can modify her design to satisfy the customer's wish.

Zitnikaite sews many of the garments herself and contracts with local seamstresses in her community for the rest. Organic and certified fabrics are a priority. Organic cloth is a value because of the impact of dyes and pollution associated with processing fabric. Certifications, too, are valued because they provide accountability to the company claim of organic.

Zitnikaite works with fabric suppliers in San Francisco, British Columbia, and Pennsylvania. Initially, she identified what fabrics she wanted to use and did research to find suppliers. These companies offer certified organic fabric sourced from China. She currently uses a bamboo/organic cotton blend because of the feel and drape. In the future, Zitnikaite can see herself sourcing cotton produced and made in the United States, but for now, she is happy with her production line and growing the business. Even so, she has been looking into hemp as a fabric to use because of its sustainable properties such as low ecological impact compared to other agricultural-based-fabrics.

Consumer education and building community are emphasized by Devinto. Zitnikaite said, "People don't realize how dirty the fashion industry is and how many people are exploited." She uses social media, Instagram, Pop-up shops, participates in panels and interviews, and hosts screenings of *The True Cost*, all in an effort to educate consumers on the issues of fast fashion. Although she enjoys a global customer base,

¹³⁹ Devinto Design (@devintodesign) 2018, "Patterning a custom piece today." *Instagram*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbCvb7dg4rW/?taken-by=devintodesign>.

Zitnikaite emphasizes the importance of her community in Cape Cod. She has a local network, a collective of businesses that share space. Through this collective, she collaborates with other local artists and makers on projects and community education.

Zitnikaite grapples with the question of “how to expand as a slow fashion business” and her answer is simple: in the future, she wants to take her business model she developed in Cape Cod to other locations. She will keep operations as they are: Make to order; direct to consumer with some wholesaling; and maintain supply chains but send materials to the other locations in different parts of the country. Figure 15 underscores the values Devinto wishes to maintain, calling it “slow fashion.”¹⁴⁰ As the owner of her business, Zitnikaite says that she must “find the happy place with what the consumer is willing to pay” and that this does limit some of her goals for incorporating more sustainable fabrics and expanding. Her next goal—as far as expansion goes—is to

¹⁴⁰ Devinto Design (@devintodesign), 2018, "It's Sunday – slow down!" *Instagram*, November 5, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbHayVMAo89/?taken-by=devintodesign>.

open something similar in Montreal, with a partner to keep a finger on the pulse on operations there. Time will tell as she continues to design and make through her brand.

Dorsu

Dorsu began in Cambodia in 2008 and has since grown to “25 employees strong”.

¹⁴¹ Having passed through three different iterations of the business—starting out as a charity then moving into a true business and growing it from there—Dorsu demonstrates that changing to meet consumer demand, improving best practices, and finding out what works is a process, especially for a pioneering company focused on producing ethically. I talked with one of the founders and co-owners, Hannah Guy, to find out more about

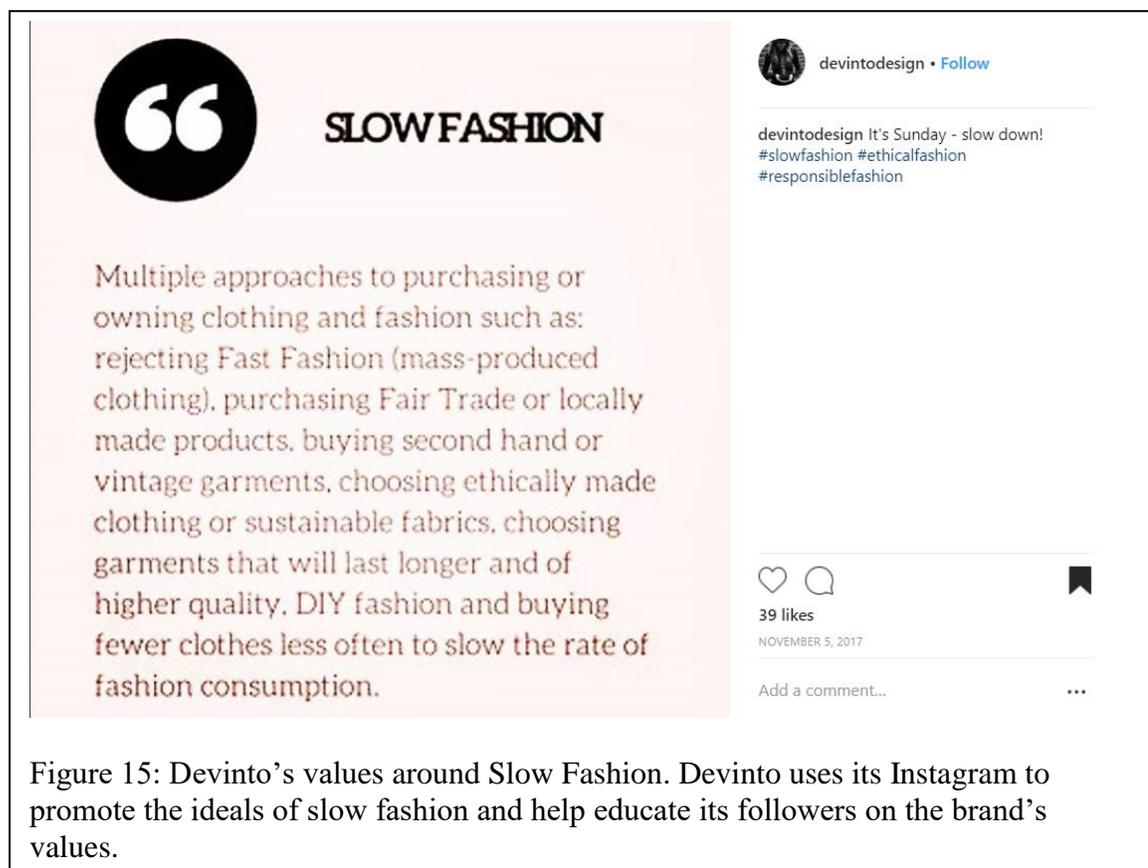


Figure 15: Devinto’s values around Slow Fashion. Devinto uses its Instagram to promote the ideals of slow fashion and help educate its followers on the brand’s values.

Dorsu’s innovative practices.

¹⁴¹ Hannah Guy, Skype conference call with author, March 26, 2018.

Being located in Cambodia, Dorus's market is mostly Cambodia and the geographically-close Australia. Dorsu also makes some revenue from online sales to the customers in the United States and Canada. Dorsu produces women's and men's clothing and offers screen printing onto its own tees as part of its business model. Central to the brand, the Dorsu team chooses to care how its clothes are made (see Figure 16).¹⁴² Being conscious that the sustainable clothing industry can be exclusive due to high price, especially in Australia, Guy said that the company intentionally seeks to offer clothing that costs between luxury clothing and H&M. The clothing itself is simple with few trimmings and has the purpose of being added to small capsule wardrobes that include many basic pieces— what Dorsu calls "Core" and "Purpose" collections. When asked about the screen printing business, Guy said that “Dorsu responds to what pays the bills” and they make quite a bit of their profit from this aspect of the business.

¹⁴² (Dorsu (@dorsu_cambodia), 2018, "Choosing to care how things are made is at the core of who we are and what we do at Dorsu." *Instagram*, July 5, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bk3h7r_hENT/?saved-by=hannah_baldus).

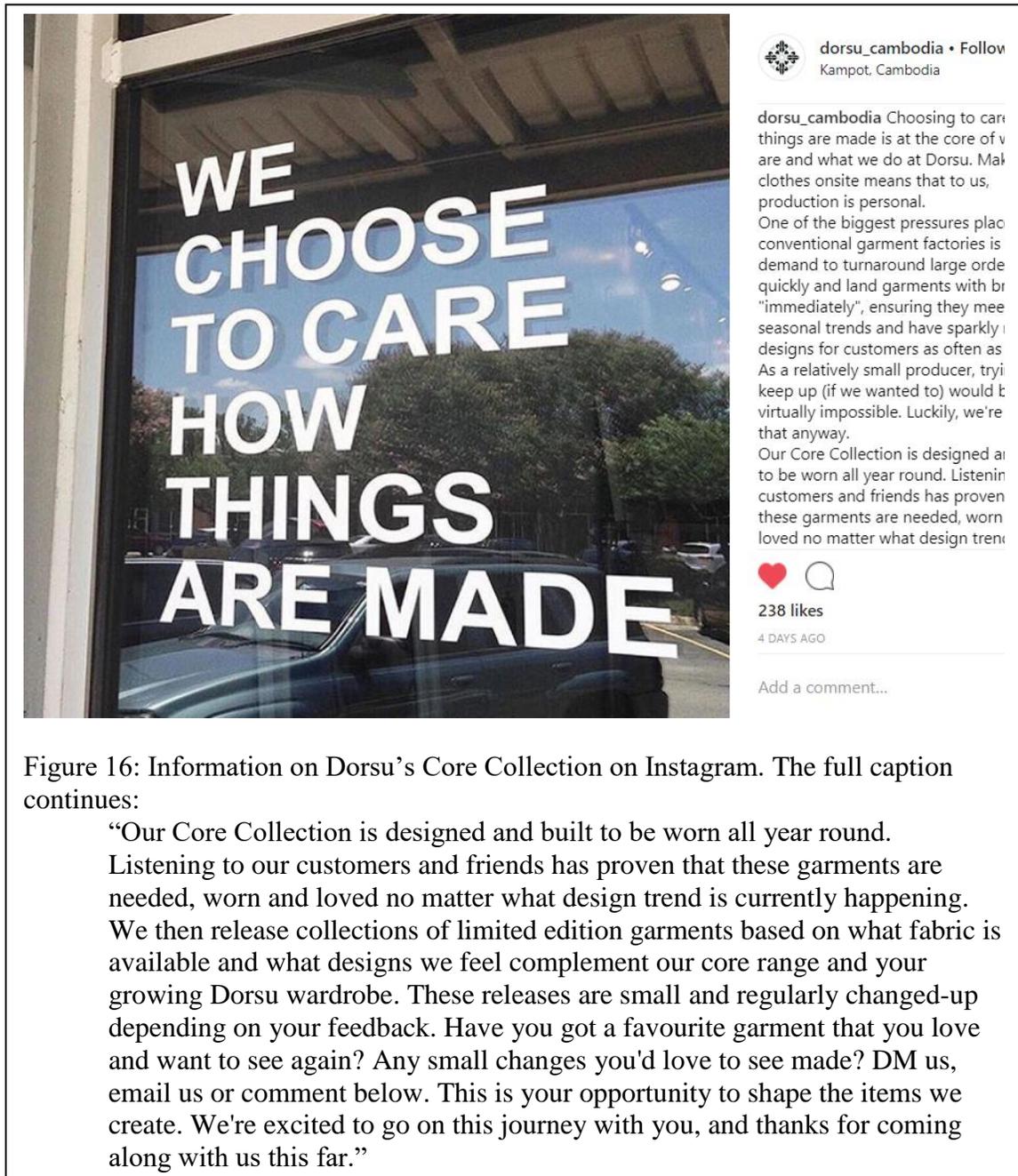


Figure 16: Information on Dorsu’s Core Collection on Instagram. The full caption continues:

“Our Core Collection is designed and built to be worn all year round. Listening to our customers and friends has proven that these garments are needed, worn and loved no matter what design trend is currently happening. We then release collections of limited edition garments based on what fabric is available and what designs we feel complement our core range and your growing Dorsu wardrobe. These releases are small and regularly changed-up depending on your feedback. Have you got a favourite garment that you love and want to see again? Any small changes you'd love to see made? DM us, email us or comment below. This is your opportunity to shape the items we create. We're excited to go on this journey with you, and thanks for coming along with us this far.”

Dorsu has a unique setup in that design, production, and sales occur in one place: on the factory floor (see Figure 17).¹⁴³ In this way, Dorsu keeps the supply chain small, it

¹⁴³ Dorsu (@dorsu_cambodia), 2018, "Throughout the next few weeks, we are going to introduce you further into the values and practices that make Dorsu what it is." *Instagram*, June 23, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkYc6KvAFhX/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

can respond quickly to demands, and it has the unique situation of not being dictated by seasonal calendars. Moreover, Guy and team choose to source their fabric locally; however, because Cambodia does not produce fabric, they purchase DSF. Guy said that she has had some issues with fabric sourcing this way, since DSF fabric rarely has a code associate with it telling the exact contents of the fabric. The production manager uses a burn-test on all fabrics before purchasing them because Dorsu is committed to having cotton-only garments.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, Guy continues to try to figure out how to source fabric in the most sustainable way.



Figure 17: Dorsu highlights its ethical production processes.

Regarding transparency, Guy takes a holistic view with an emphasis on the laborers. She said that while some brands to break down the cost of their products for

¹⁴⁴ Hanna Guy, "From the Floor Series: Fabric," Dorsu, December 13, 2017, <https://dorsu.org/blogs/news/from-the-floor-series-fabric>.

consumers, there is so much more that goes into the cost of a garment. Guy connected this to the importance of consumer education, informing the consumer of why clothing is priced the way it is. In fact, A large part of Dorsu's sustainability efforts include how it interacts with its customer: collaborations and customer education both on social media and through events such as pop-ups are a key focus because these provide ways not only to sell clothes, but to also educate customers on Dorsu's processes and sustainability initiatives (see Figure 18).¹⁴⁵ Education can lead to purchase.

¹⁴⁵Dorsu (@dorsu_cambodia), 2018, "Mark your calendars!" *Instagram*, April 22, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh3cjbLgkYO/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

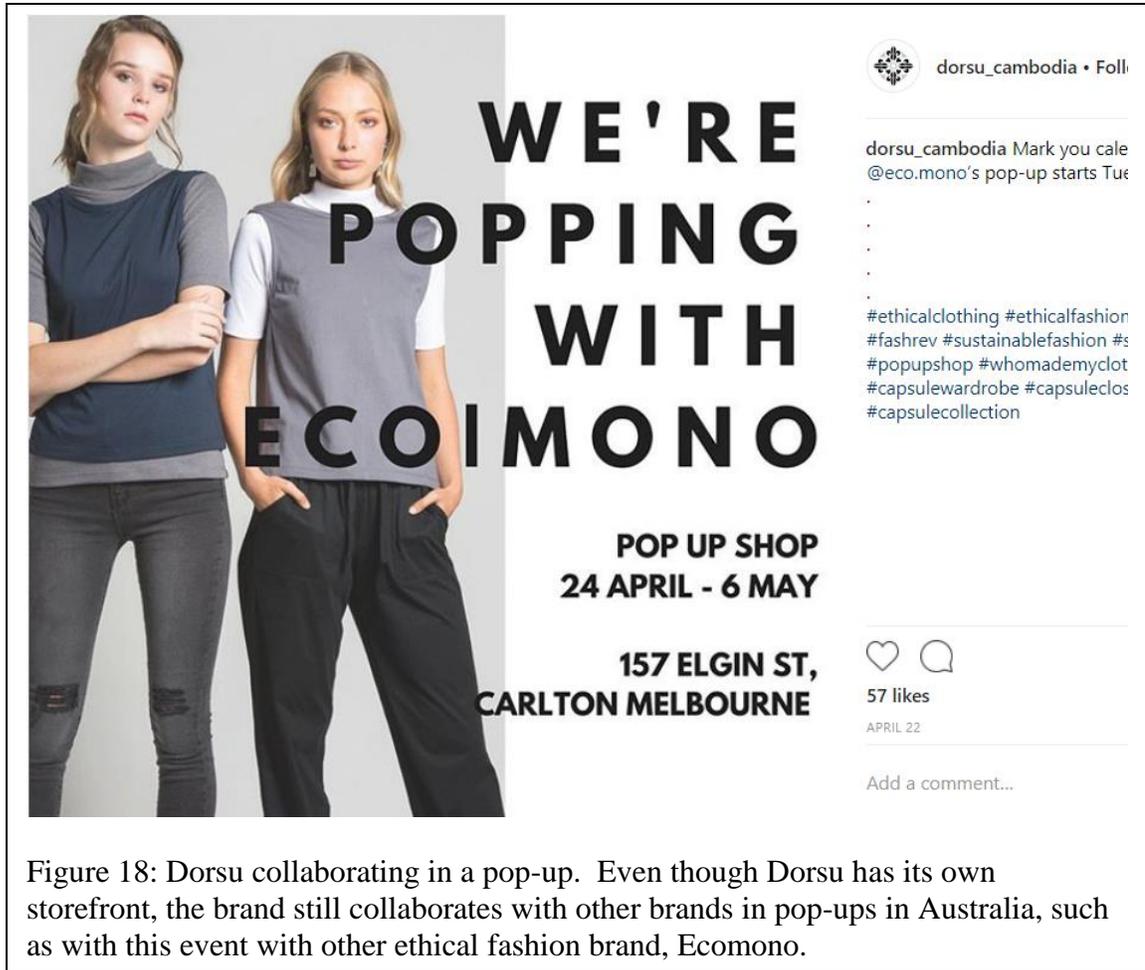


Figure 18: Dorsu collaborating in a pop-up. Even though Dorsu has its own storefront, the brand still collaborates with other brands in pop-ups in Australia, such as with this event with other ethical fashion brand, Ecomono.

When I asked if Dorsu has certifications, Guy said that she is jaded against the Cambodian government and the systems that would certify the company. She said that the team is not interested in paying for a fair-trade certification that “doesn’t mean anything.” Guy explained that the system in place lacks accountability and self-reporting can be problematic. She shared that, eventually, she would like Dorsu to be B-Corp certified to build transparency and credibility, but that this will occur in the future.

Additionally, Guy said that Cambodia is saturated with humanitarian and financial aid, but that the aid is not doing much good to revive businesses in the country. Guy emphasized the importance of Dorsu being run as a business rather than a charity. While her business started out as a charity, she has seen firsthand the positive impact that

business can make by giving people employment and Dorsu changed its structure. Now, empowering others through business is Dorsu's method of effecting change.

Guy's parting comments broached the topic of consumption. She said, "The biggest thing anyone can do is buy less." Guy shared the example of Europe's decreased clothing consumption and asserted that "we need to follow this model." Overall, she said the ethical clothing community is making strides and that "a year ago, I would have said that it's enough to know where and who made the clothes. But now, many consumers are going further than this. This is exciting!"¹⁴⁶

Elizabeth Suzann

Elizabeth Suzann is a Nashville-based clothing brand that emphasizes local production and natural fabrics. While we did not meet face to face, Liz Pape, founder and designer, answered my list of questions via email.¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth Suzann has 33 employees and produces on their Nashville factory floor—every item in-house—and the entire company exists under one roof. The employees design, create prototypes, sample, photograph, market, support, manufacture, and ship the products from the Nashville headquarters. A self-proclaimed "gateway into slow fashion", the brand has developed a loyal following of customers since its start in 2013.¹⁴⁸ It makes its product-to-order, selling exclusively direct to consumer through the brand's website.

Elizabeth Suzann owns and operates much of its supply chain. This vertical integration allows the brand control over the working environment and wages of its

¹⁴⁶ Hannah Guy, Skype conference call with author, March 26, 2018.

¹⁴⁷ Interview. Liz Pape, email message to author, March 22, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ "Our Team." Elizabeth Suzann. <https://elizabethsuzann.com/pages/team>.

employees, the quality of the product, and the agility of its business strategy. The company purchases and sources material from suppliers located around the world through sales representatives of various fabric mills and manufacturers. Additionally, through trade shows, the brand has built relationships with sales representatives in order to source the desired materials. In the instance of their wool supply chain, representatives from the company flew to the ranch where the sheep were raised, spent several days with the owner, met the animals, and learned about the entire raw materials process. The wool was then woven into fabric in Nashville, Tennessee at a small mill that representatives from the brand visited in person and had previously established relationships with the owner and staff. Pape said, “Our ultimate goal is to verify our supply chain in person as often and as thoroughly as possible” by traveling directly to the source to verify quality, conditions, and practices.¹⁴⁹

Elizabeth Suzann has been intentional in developing and perfecting their operations practices so that they are efficient, scalable, and profitable. Additionally, the brand is committed to transparency and communicating with its customers (see Figure 19).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Interview. Liz Pape, email message to author, March 22, 2018.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Suzann (@elizsuzann), 2018, "Part 1: About this time last year, I published a blog post called Money Talk that dug deep into some important topics." *Instagram*, December 26, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BdLA-uXgWJS/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

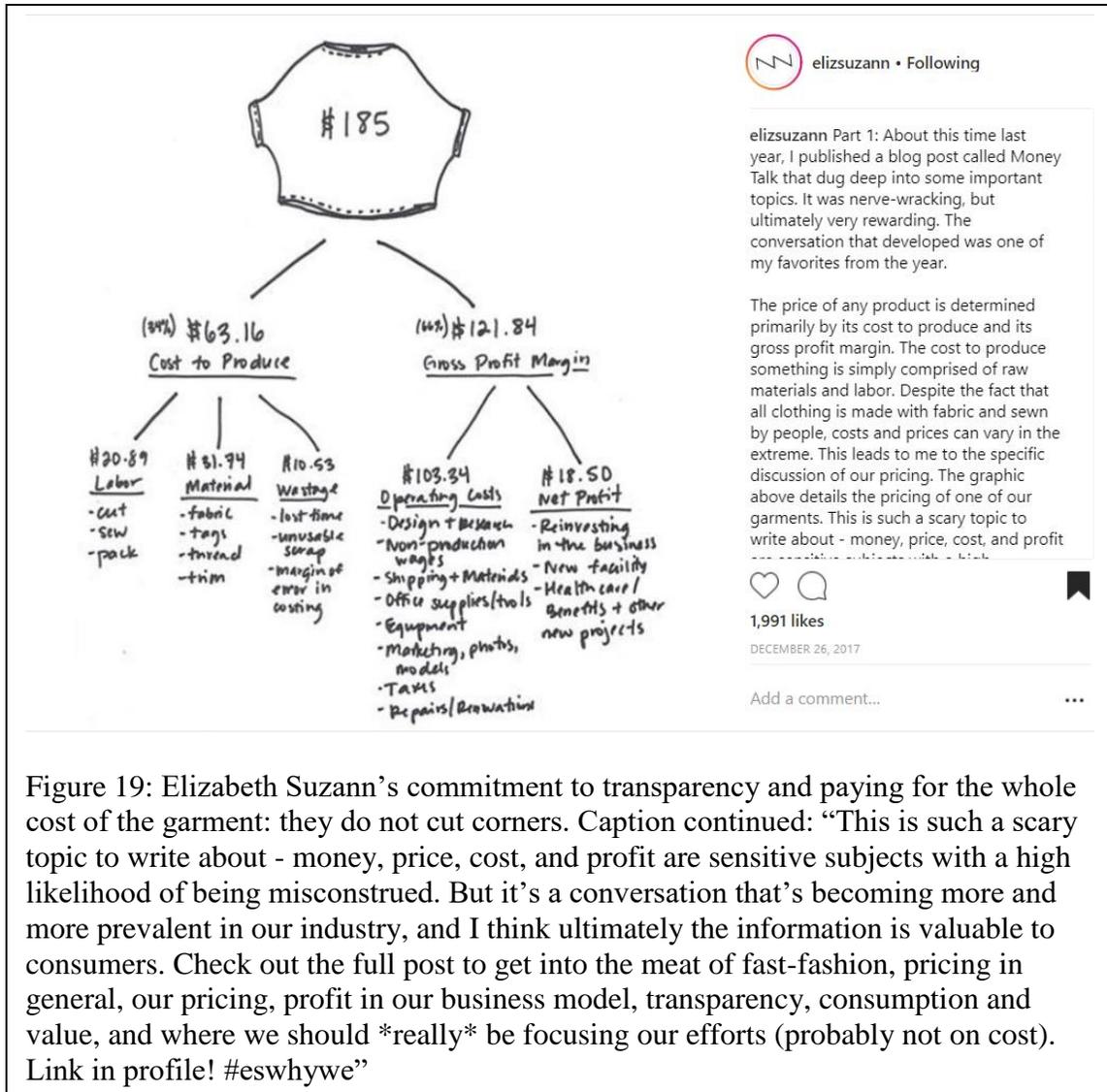


Figure 19: Elizabeth Suzann’s commitment to transparency and paying for the whole cost of the garment: they do not cut corners. Caption continued: “This is such a scary topic to write about - money, price, cost, and profit are sensitive subjects with a high likelihood of being misconstrued. But it’s a conversation that’s becoming more and more prevalent in our industry, and I think ultimately the information is valuable to consumers. Check out the full post to get into the meat of fast-fashion, pricing in general, our pricing, profit in our business model, transparency, consumption and value, and where we should *really* be focusing our efforts (probably not on cost). Link in profile! #eswhywe”

Pape said, “We’re still improving, but it’s been our primary objective since the beginning of the company.”¹⁵¹ Pape described two areas of emphasis for business operations. First, the brand always focuses on ethical labor practices, part of why they choose to be vertically integrated and do things in a “radically different way” than conventional production. Everything is produced in-house in one 10,000 square foot open building, under one roof, by an incredible team of well-paid, well-taken care of craftsmen

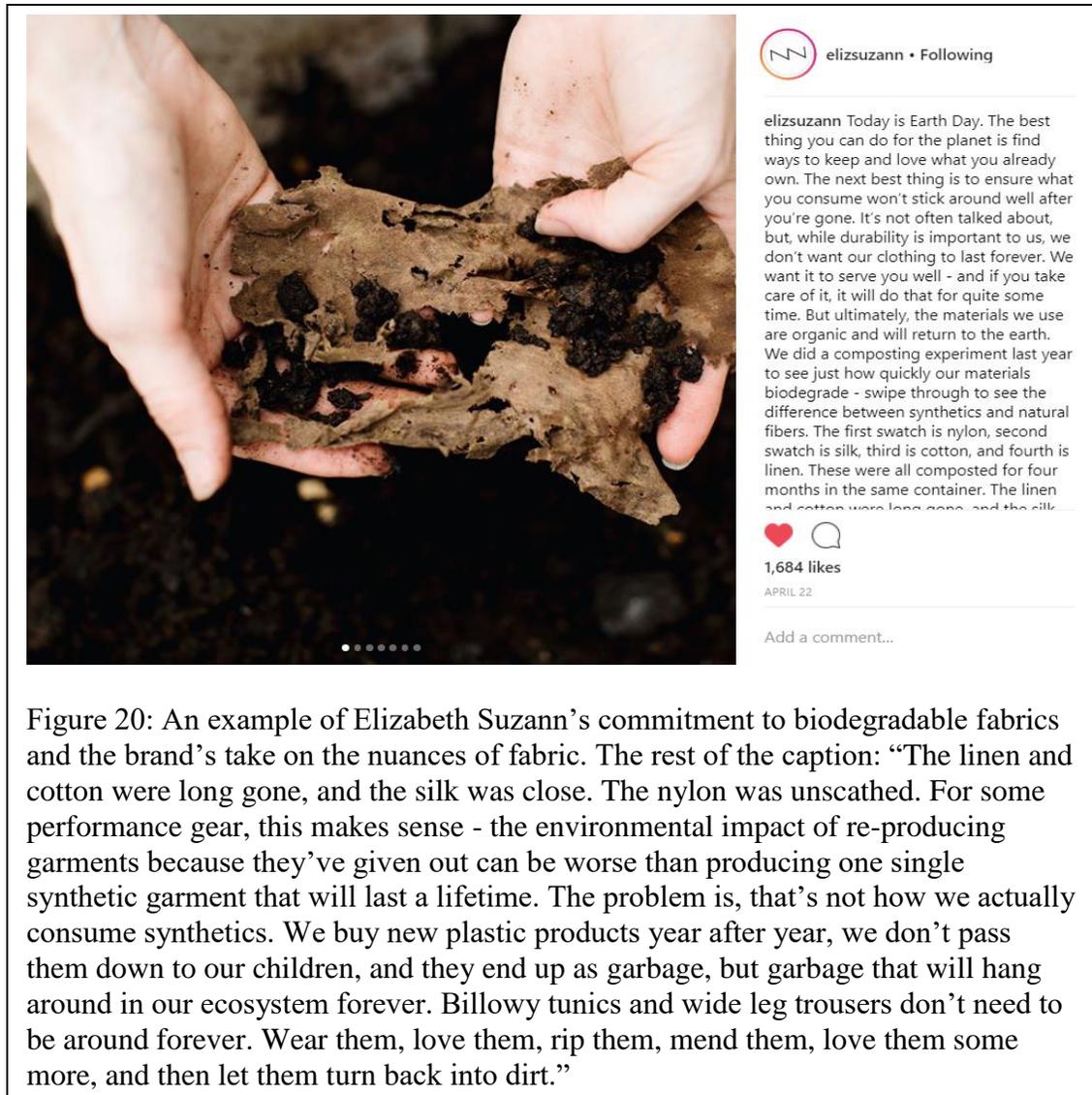
¹⁵¹ Interview. Liz Pape, email message to author, March 22, 2018.

and women. The sewers producing garments are five feet from the support team answering customers' questions. Every problem can be solved within the building. The company treats manufacturing employees the exact same way it treats the knowledge workers. Elizabeth Suzann works hard to operate as one team.

Aligning with labor practices, the second area of emphasis is the brand's use of natural materials through its supply chain (see Figure 20).¹⁵² "Making sure the fibers we use are renewable, sustainable, and biodegradable is critical; we have no interest in producing products that are harmful to the environment or the body."¹⁵³

¹⁵² Elizabeth Suzann (@elizsuzann), 2018, "Today is Earth Day." *Instagram*, April 22, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh481XWg7Ud/?taken-by=elizsuzann>.

¹⁵³ Interview. Liz Pape, email message to author, March 22, 2018.



Not only does Elizabeth Suzann sell only natural fiber garments, the nature of the design is innovative in that they do not release seasonal collections. They instead opt to improve the same designs over time and slowly add to permanent collections. Moreover, all the garments are highly versatile, well designed, and multi-functional (see Figure 21).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth Suzann (@elizsuzann), 2018, "The Signature Collection is the core of what we do." *Instagram*, October 7, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BZwX80FAUWg/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

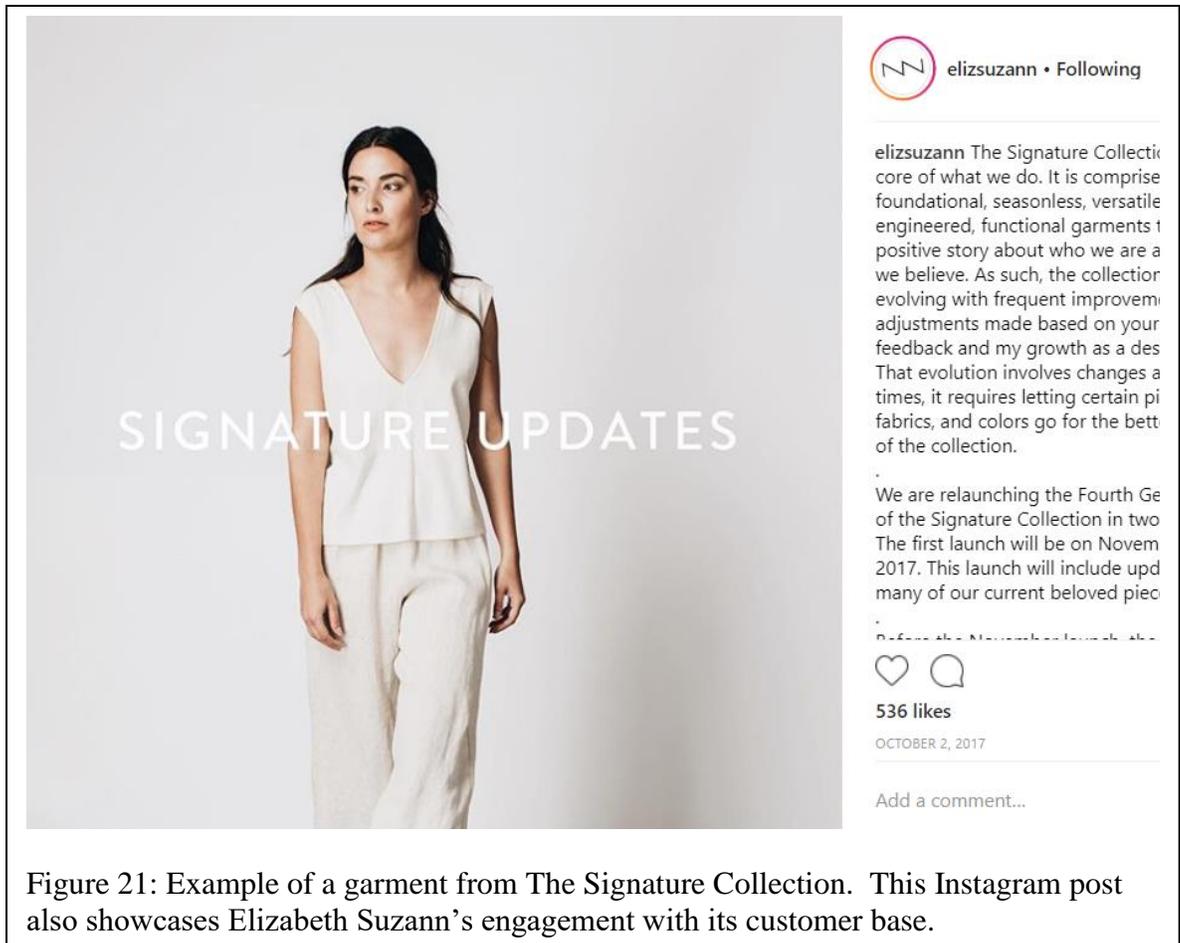


Figure 21: Example of a garment from The Signature Collection. This Instagram post also showcases Elizabeth Suzann’s engagement with its customer base.

Elizabeth Suzann has established a loyal customer base. Relying on word-of-mouth marketing and social media allows for a direct line of communication with our customers. The company works very hard to educate its customers on its efforts towards sustainability. Pape said, “We try not to be preachy or pushy, but we explain our choices in clear, high-level terms and our customers respond incredibly well to it. They expect transparency and honesty from us and often look to us for inspiration and guidance.”

One of the most exciting innovations at Elizabeth Suzann deals with scaling its business model. Recently, in June 2018, Pape shared the brand’s new strategy via a blog-post and recorded conversation for the benefit of her customers,

Most importantly, as a made-to-order company (meaning we cut, sew, and ship each garment after you’ve placed an order for it), we cannot limit our

growth through selling out of inventory like most businesses do. In order to control and manage our growth, we will be limiting the number of orders we accept during a given week to match our production capacity. In the past, we've taken orders in an unlimited fashion and adjusted our team size/hours/lead time accordingly. With our ever-increasing growth, this is no longer possible or desirable (listen below to hear us dig into all of this). This means we are going to "open up for orders" every Wednesday at 11am, and we will take as many orders as we are capable of producing in the promised lead time. We will then make products unavailable for purchase until the next Wednesday, at which point we'll open up again. This will ensure that our lead time remains consistent (we're working it steadily back down to 2-3 weeks) and will allow us to grow our team and capacity in a way that is healthy, manageable, and feasible in our current warehouse space.¹⁵⁵

This order-taking process is revolutionary in that this brand has creatively found a way to grow and expand and their process without compromising their values. It will be interesting to see how this process works for them and what it could mean for other small (or smaller than the conventional fast fashion)-batch producers in the future if this model succeeds.

Hackwith Design House

Minnesota-based Hackwith Design House (HDH) emphasizes made-in-USA production, high-quality fabrics, and great attention to detail.¹⁵⁶ The employees cut, sew, and finish the garments in their production studio in St. Paul (see Figure 22).¹⁵⁷ I interviewed Erin Husted, HDH's Director of Operations. Husted has a background as a lawyer and remains licensed and because of this, she offered a unique perspective on

¹⁵⁵ Liz Pape, "Times they are A'Changing: a Conversation about Growth and Adaption," Elizabeth Suzann, May 16, 2018, <https://elizabethsuzann.com/blogs/stories/times-they-are-achanging-a-conversation-about-growth-and-adaptation>.

¹⁵⁶ "Our Mission," Hackwith Design House, <https://hackwithdesignhouse.com/about/our-mission/>.

¹⁵⁷ Hackwith, Lisa (@hackwithdesign), 2018, "We're working real hard in the studio to finish up all the orders before our Christmas break:)." *Instagram*, December 20, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bc72Z7uHMyJ/?taken-by=hackwithdesign>.

HDH's business operations.¹⁵⁸ HDH started in September 2013 by Lisa Hackwith, a studio artist who loved to sew, and Husted was brought on in January of 2014 to address issues of scaling up the business without adding debt or investors. Having no one on the management team with a background in fashion and with this emphasis on no debt and no investors, the HDH team created their own business outside of the conventional model of an apparel label. According to Husted, for that reason, HDH does things differently.

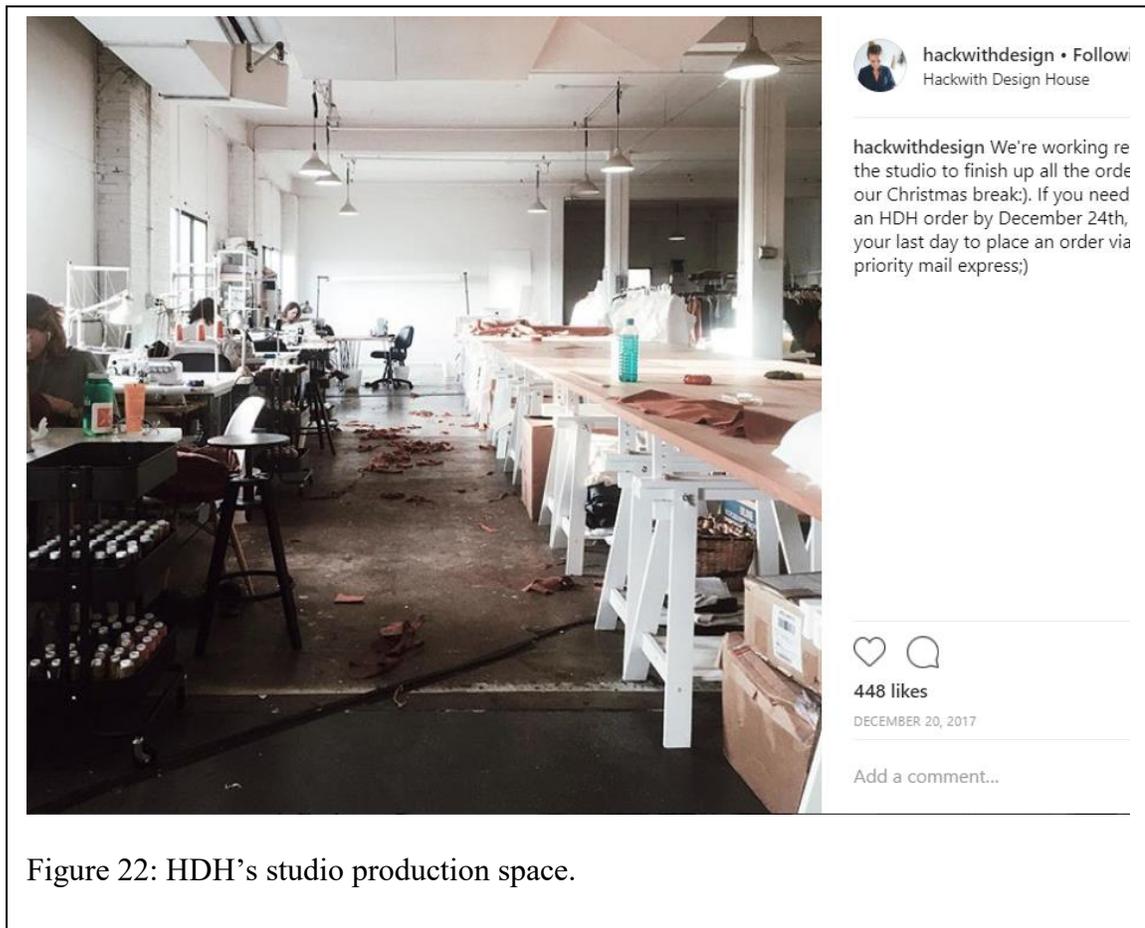


Figure 22: HDH's studio production space.

HDH sells through an online store and through boutique wholesale accounts. Its business model is an LLC, intentionally not a corporation. During her schooling, Husted took a corporate law class, learning about corporate structures. She said, "I think

¹⁵⁸ Erin Husted, phone conversation with author, March 28, 2018.

corporations are a very dangerous business model because they have a responsibility to shareholders. Corporations can get in legal trouble for not making money for shareholders.”¹⁵⁹ Because of this, companies have to do what’s best—money-wise—for shareholders even if this conflicts with values of the founders or employees. Husted shared that HDH likes “being a smaller, more nimble operation” and wants to stay true to their values; so the LLC structure gives them the flexibility and autonomy to do so. Husted shared that she is curious to see how B-corporations are going to grow and change as they become more popular because it could be a great way for a company to have investors and also be responsible. However, because the social corporations are relatively new, they are untested in legal terms, and HDH has chosen not to pursue that track yet because the LLC model works well for the company.

While HDH does not directly source products, the owners identified a salesperson in Chicago who understands their vision. They trust this person to vet their suppliers and source natural fibers. They primarily buy from a Canadian company and the person who owns that company is also shares their vision. Right now, HDH does not source organic fabrics because of the cost. Husted also talked about the importance of overseas manufacturing because they have the technology and the machines. While HDH chooses to make its clothes in the United States because it allows them to be flexible and nimble in design and production, Husted remained realistic in the brand’s reliance on other countries’ skills in fabric production. While the HDH team is proud to make its clothing in the United States, Husted said that “it’s hubris to say only the USA can do it” regarding the making of quality goods.

¹⁵⁹ Erin Husted, phone conversation with author, March 28, 2018.

HDH's production model is Made-to-Order for the most part, and this helps them eliminate waste. HDH has multiple design collections including the Core Collection, Limited Edition, HDH Basics, HDH Swim, HDH Intimates, and HDH Plus and produces each collection to be season-less.¹⁶⁰ Preferred fibers are made from natural materials (see Figure 23).¹⁶¹ For example, lately, the brand has incorporated the lyocell fabric (branded Tencel) into its designs because of both its design and sustainability properties.

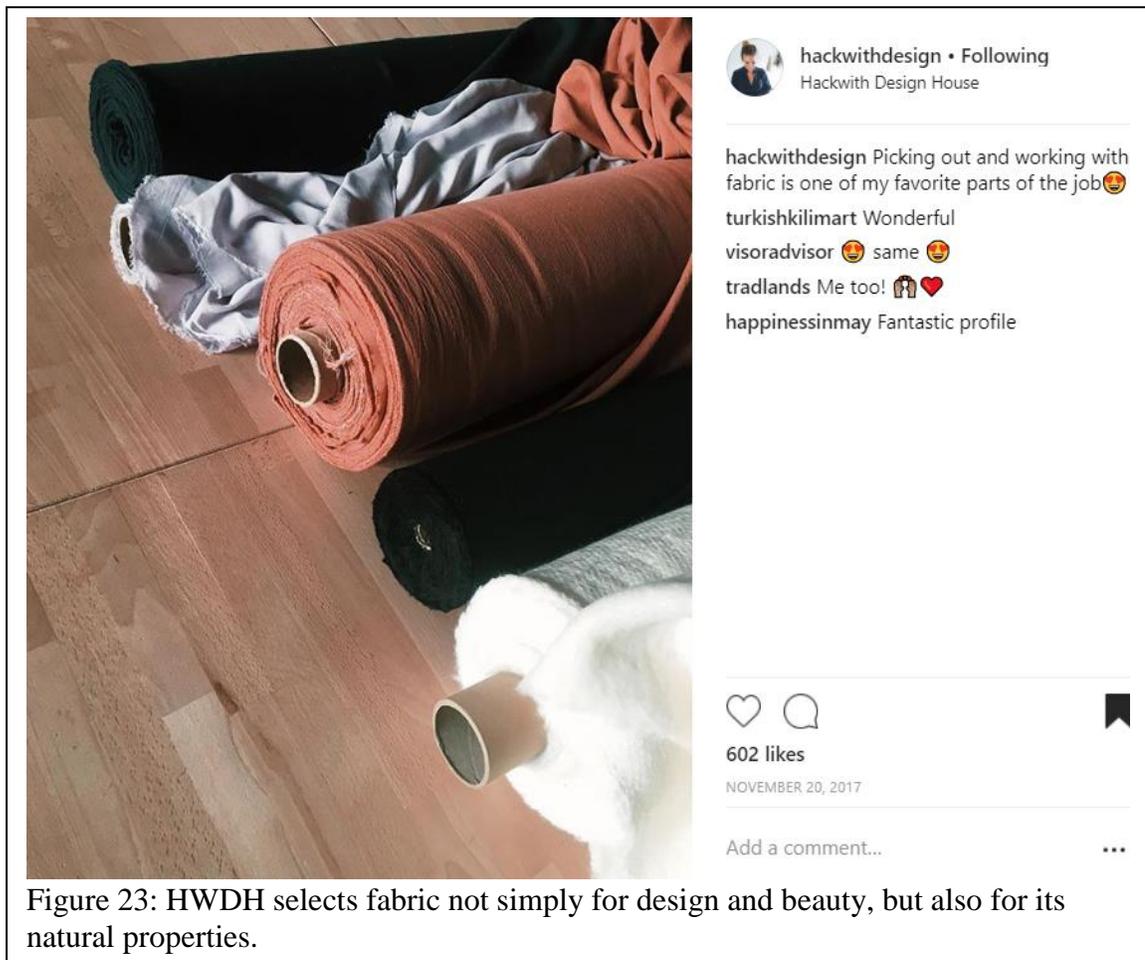


Figure 23: HWDH selects fabric not simply for design and beauty, but also for its natural properties.

¹⁶⁰ "Our Lines," Hackwith Design House, <https://hackwithdesignhouse.com/about/our-lines/>.

¹⁶¹ (Hackwith, Lisa (@hackwithdesign), 2018, "Picking out and working with fabric is one of my favorite parts of the job." *Instagram*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bbu1oHtH1sP/?taken-by=hackwithdesign>).

While consumer education is important, HDH’s goal is to educate but not be preachy, so they focus on what they are doing in day to day operations and long-term vision, talk about waste, and discuss why their clothes are priced the way they are. In reference to manufacturing in the United States and establishing transparent and equitable supply chains, Husted said, “Big companies have no excuse. If small companies like ours can do it, big companies can, too.”¹⁶²

Perhaps the most exciting “next step” shared during the interview and then put into practice is a branch of the business called “The Sustain Shop”. The Sustain Shop opened in June and sells lightly worn Hackwith Design House pieces and sample items. This is an innovative project for many reasons, but two main points stand out. First, through “The Sustain Shop,” HDH helps reduce waste and draws attention to the issues of clothing in landfills, and second, the second-hand shop clothes are less expensive than new HDH pieces allowing more people to afford the products. Whereas someone might not be able to afford new HDH garments, they might be able to afford items in The Sustain Shop. While this idea is not original to sustainable fashion— HDH collaborated with people from Eileen Fischer’s similar Renew program— it is still important to see other businesses tailoring the innovation to meet their brand and customer needs (see Figure 24).¹⁶³ The ability to resell clothes also incentivizes the customers to take great care of their garments in the instance that they no longer require the garment and send it back to receive store credit for each piece sent in.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Erin Husted, phone conversation with author, March 28, 2018.

¹⁶³ Hackwith, Lisa (@hackwithdesign), 2018, “We’re so excited for our upcoming event with @eileenfisherrenew on 4/28 from 11 am- 3pm at our studio!” *Instagram*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BhmExyInEx6/?taken-by=hackwithdesign>.

¹⁶⁴ “Sustain Shop,” Hackwith Design House, <https://hackwithdesignhouse.com/product-category/sustain-shop/>.



Figure 24: HDH collaborates with Eileen Fisher in preparation for their new “Sustain Shop” second-hand business venture.

Harly Jae

Harly Jae is a Vancouver-based slow fashion brand founded by Laila Bédard-Potvin in June of 2017.¹⁶⁵ She’s learned through trial and error within her first year of business. She was supposed to launch a full wardrobe set, but timing among her designers, pattern makers, and factory was off and she ended up launching with just three pieces for sale. In our interview, Bédard-Potvin emphasized the journey it has taken her

¹⁶⁵ Laila Bédard-Potvin, Skype conference call with author, February 28, 2018

to find her current manufacturer and the difficulties of the relationship building process of starting a new brand.

Bédard-Potvin holds a degree in Fashion Merchandizing. When she graduated, she became disenchanted with the fashion industry and this, coupled with a growing environmental awareness, motivated her to sign up with Factory 45, a company that supports small fashion startups, to help her walk through the steps of starting the business. She said that it can be difficult to establish relationships as a small business, because the smaller the business, the less money the business makes for the factory and the less likely a factory will want to partner with the small business. Therefore, working with Factory 45 provided the bridge for Bédard-Potvin to launch Harly Jae by helping her “get her foot in the door” with the manufacturing facilities.

Harly Jae emphasizes its local production in Canada. Vancouver is the “LA of Canada” as it is a popular place for manufacturing (see Figure 25).¹⁶⁶ Bédard-Potvin connected with her manufacturer via a student at her old school. This student worked for the manufacturer; Bédard-Potvin was impressed that they would be able to do both pattern making and production all in one. The owners were not nice people, however, and they had over-priced their production and over-promised. They were not able to launch the variety of designs that Bédard-Potvin wanted. Undeterred, she set out to find another local manufacturer. Much of the manufacturing is new in Vancouver and they are still building the infrastructure to be able to operate at the level they promise. Many factories also contract work out to seamstresses. Bédard-Potvin cited the Asian immigrant population who are trained seamstresses as the typical contract workers. She wanted to

¹⁶⁶ Harly Jae (@harlyjae), 2018, “Fashion Revolution.” *Instagram Stories*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/harlyjae/>.

work with a factory that not only had good practices inside the factory but treated the contract workers well too.



Figure 25: One of Harly Jae’s manufacturing facilities with two seamstresses. This photo from one of Harly Jae’s Instagram Stories titled “Fashion Revolution” April 25, 2018.

When she searched for another manufacturing company, Bédard-Potvin relied on a Facebook group, Vancouver Sustainable Fashion designers as well as her Instagram community to help her find her new manufacturer once the previous contracts expired. The companies that she now contracts with do most everything. Her role is to connect

them. She loves meeting face to face with people and has clothing in boutiques in Vancouver. She said that she loves that her clothes provide opportunity to her business through her suppliers, seamstresses, and the wholesaler coordinator, and connect her customers with a beautiful and well-made product.

Bédard-Potvin is transparent about the fabric she uses including a linen/organic cotton blend, hemp/org cotton blend, cotton/polyester blend, her focus on only natural fibers or DSF (see Figure 26).¹⁶⁷ She emphasizes that fabric sourcing has been a process of finding fabric and incorporating best practices. For example, because of her own continuing learning about sustainability and customer demand, Bédard-Potvin has chosen to stop using polyester fabrics unless it is a DSF blend. Bédard-Potvin also works with two fabric wholesalers to source her fabric. One fabric wholesaler has a sustainability sales representative well versed in sustainable fabrics. Their warehouse is in Vancouver and Bédard-Potvin trusts their practices and has built a good working relationship with them. The other supplier is based in Montreal, but they have an office in Vancouver. They now offer eco-friendly fabric. In the future, she would love to make her zipper and button sourcing more sustainable.

¹⁶⁷ Harly Jae (@harlyjae), 2018, "Fashion Revolution." *Instagram Stories*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/harlyjae/>.



Figure 26: The brand emphasizes all-natural materials. This is from one of Harly Jae’s Instagram Stories titled “Fashion Revolution” April 25, 2018.

Another important aspect of sustainability at Harly Jae is its eco-friendly packaging from a company called Eco-Enclose (See Figure 27).¹⁶⁸ Eco-Enclose provides

¹⁶⁸ Harly Jae (@harlyjae), 2018, “Sooooo looking forward to bringing you new ethical clothing this Spring!” *Instagram*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BeXYIjRHrUj/?taken-by=harlyjae>.

recyclable plastic-free packaging. It is evident that, although Harly Jae is new to the sustainable fashion scene, the founder is determined to listen to consumer demand and incorporate sustainable “best practices” into her business management.

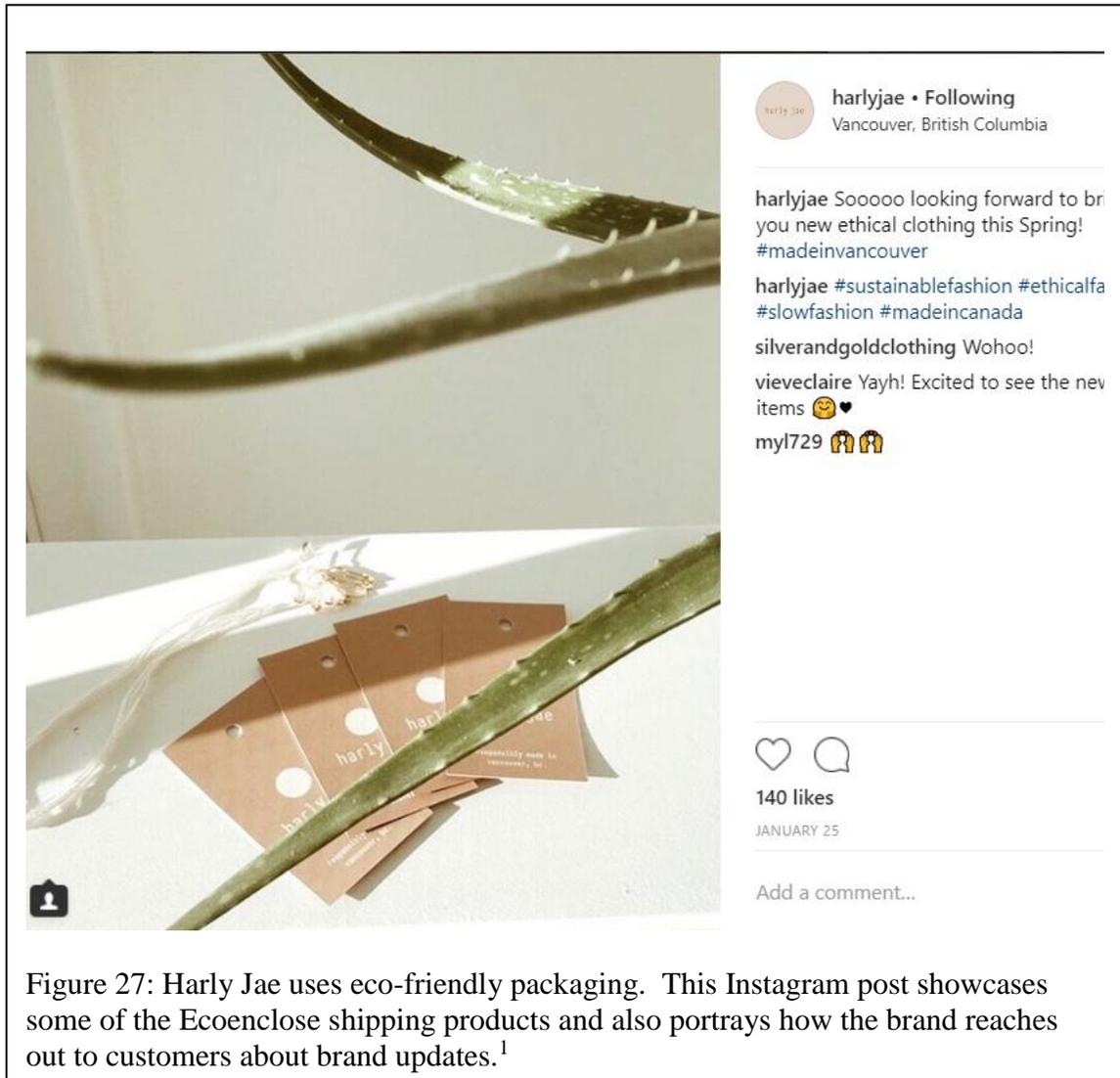


Figure 27: Harly Jae uses eco-friendly packaging. This Instagram post showcases some of the Ecoenclose shipping products and also portrays how the brand reaches out to customers about brand updates.¹

Hope Made in the World

For this interview, I spoke with founder Sara Milanes.¹⁶⁹ She started Hope Made in the World, or Hope Made for short, in Bogota, Colombia in 2015 with support from

¹⁶⁹ Sara Milanes, Skype interview with author, February 22, 2018.

angel investors. With degrees from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, Milanes' professional background is in international trade and marketing, as well as merchandizing and management, and these aided her in drawing up a business plan. She designed Hope Made to be an online retailer operating with a DTC model. The company conducts some wholesaling and the business hosts occasional pop-up shops in a studio space in Colombia. On the retail side, Hope Made's market remains mostly in the United States, but they do ship worldwide.

Hope Made's mission is to transform how people view clothing and help others, specifically local communities in Colombia. The company follows through with this on multiple levels, starting with their brand promise that includes providing assurance that they are committed to operating ethically through transparency and certifications, guaranteeing the best quality and the most durable knitwear, and doing business the "right way" meaning transparently.¹⁷⁰

Hope Made emphasizes natural fabrics, especially alpaca sourced from a 21 employee family-owned factory in the Andean region (see Figure 28).¹⁷¹ Hope Made's Peruvian factory partner powers its infrastructure with solar panels and has developed a circular system for the water in the washing process of the raw alpaca wool.

Additionally, the farmers who raise the alpacas incorporate pesticide-free grazing and use less water in production than conventional methods. Milanes stated that high standards require a collaborative effort with the communities housing the factories and she visits

¹⁷⁰ "Our Story," Hope Made in the World, <https://hopemade.world/pages/our-story>.

¹⁷¹ HOPE MADE IN THE WORLD (@hopemade.world), 2018, "Silk & alpaca sweater tees make another great case for spring." *Instagram*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgB7p6rnhNw/?taken-by=hopemade.world>.

the factories at least once a year to continue relationship building and check in on ethical practices.

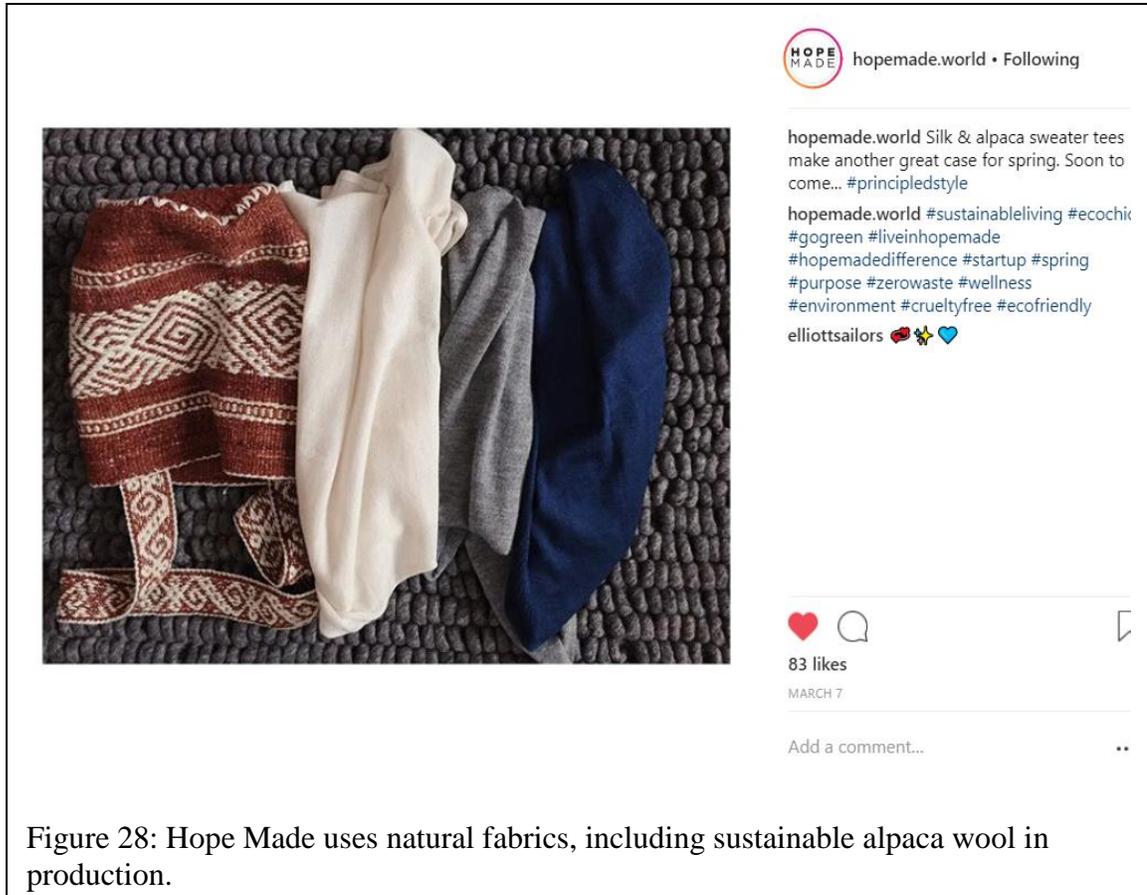


Figure 28: Hope Made uses natural fabrics, including sustainable alpaca wool in production.

While relationships are important, Milanes does not merely rely on the relationships she has built to sustain ethical practices. Certifications are a priority for Hope Made. When the company first started out, Milanes pursued the Child Labor Free certification through a third-party auditor in London (see Figure 29).¹⁷² Currently, the

¹⁷² (HOPE MADE IN THE WORLD (@hopemade.world), 2018, "Since 2016, we have been taking on one of the world's toughest challenges, work towards a world free of child labor." *Instagram*, April 4, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BhJ3i3WA7-e/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.)

brand also uses GOTS-certified organic cotton and REACH-certified dyes to lower the environmental impact of clothing production.¹⁷³

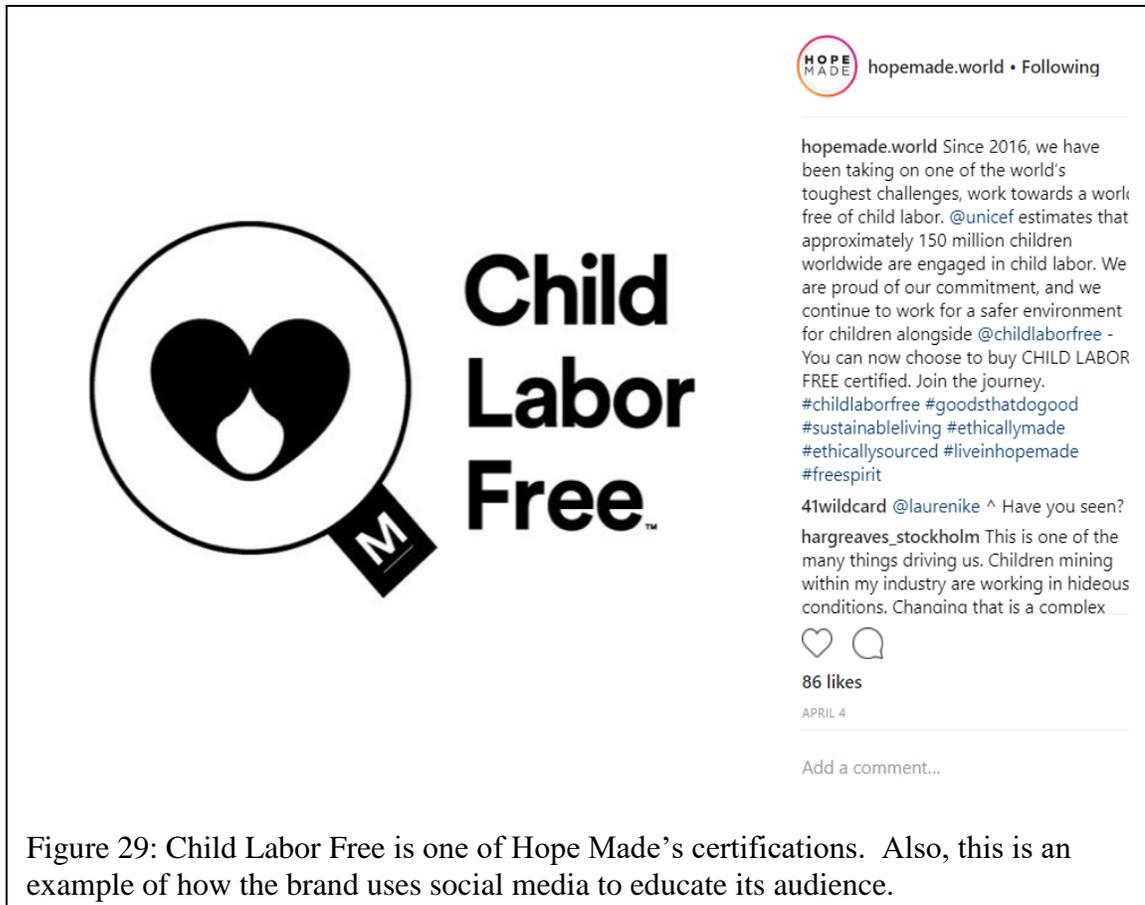


Figure 29: Child Labor Free is one of Hope Made’s certifications. Also, this is an example of how the brand uses social media to educate its audience.

In the near future, Hope Made is looking to expand on its transparency and certifications. Milanes is currently working on a publicly available report that will be available in 2019 discussing business and supply chain management practices. She would love to incorporate a Fair Trade certification as well as a B-Corp Certification. As Hope Made grows, it will be more feasible to pursue those certifications due to cost. Milanes addressed the costly reality of certifications, but argued that because of the company

¹⁷³ “We are in the Business of Making Life Simpler,” Hope Made in the World, <https://hopemade.world/pages/our-story-new>.

values, the cost of the certifications needs to be included in the budget. She agreed that certifications can be a great marketing tool, but more than that, she emphasized that they help keep Hope Made on track with its sustainability goals. Certification provides a clear path of the steps to make the company more transparent, more sustainable, and accountable to its promises.

Interestingly, Hope Made partners with Verde Fulfillment Services for its shipping needs.¹⁷⁴ Verde is an eco-friendly third-party logistics center in the United States that specializes in eCommerce fulfillment, direct to store fulfillment, and product returns management.¹⁷⁵ The company warehouse in Boise hosts some Hope Made product. Milanes said that even though the company ships all over the world, she wants to make sure the carbon footprint is as low as possible. She is committed to doing things “the best way possible” and this includes the logistics of shipping.

Regarding consumer education, Milanes suggests that Hope Made needs to “elevate content in a way that is more embracing of people outside of the sustainable fashion community.”¹⁷⁶ Milanes stated that while a market exists for sustainably produced clothing in the United States, Colombia has yet to engage in this niche market in a meaningful way. Milanes wants to change this and is trying to “ride the organic food wave” and as that becomes more meaningful, she is hoping to draw parallels between what is wrong with our food systems and what is wrong with our fiber and production of

¹⁷⁴ “We are in the Business of Making Life Simpler,” Hope Made in the World, <https://hopemade.world/pages/our-story-new>.

¹⁷⁵ “The Most Trusted Name in Order Fulfillment Services,” Verde Fulfillment Services, <http://www.verdefulfillmentusa.com/>.

¹⁷⁶ Sara Milanes, Skype interview with author, February 22, 2018.

clothing systems.¹⁷⁷ In Colombia, Milanes participates in panels that educate students, those in the clothing industry, and her potential consumers.

One of the most salient points of this interview was that Milanes had clear visions for how to become more sustainable as a company and is dedicated to value consistency (see Figure 30).¹⁷⁸ As Milanes steers Hope Made in its next years, the company has clear goals set and a plan to achieve said visions. In the future, Milanes wants to reach more Colombian people and increase the positive impact on the brand's supply chain communities. Additionally, Milanes wishes to obtain more certifications, support the

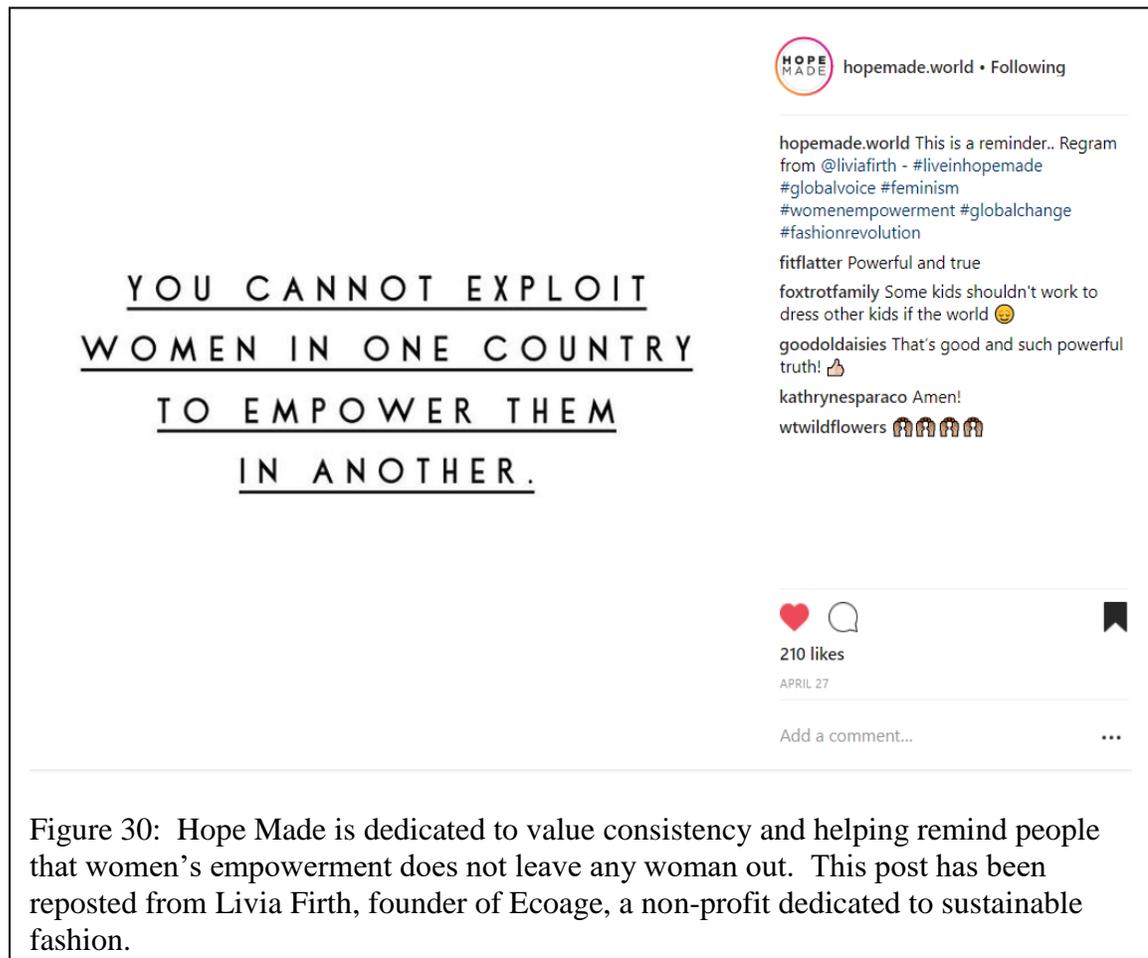


Figure 30: Hope Made is dedicated to value consistency and helping remind people that women's empowerment does not leave any woman out. This post has been reposted from Livia Firth, founder of Ecoage, a non-profit dedicated to sustainable fashion.

¹⁷⁷ Sara Milanes, Skype interview with author, February 22, 2018.

¹⁷⁸ HOPE MADE IN THE WORLD (@hopemade.world), 2018, "This is a reminder.. Regram from @liviafirth." *Instagram*, April 27, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BiE3Kf8ABN7/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

existing factories to incorporate even better environmental and equitable practices, and do more consumer engagement work on her website and in Colombia.

House of Gina Marie

While most of the company representatives I interviewed on this list produce every-day or work wear, House of Gina Marie is a true high fashion label. I interviewed Gina Moorhead, founder and creative director of the Gina Marie label.¹⁷⁹ Gina Moorhead started the company in 2007 after she graduated from design school, but the current business model evolved 4.5 years ago when she started working with the artisanal tailors in Vietnam. Her brand has a women's line under "Gina Marie" and a men's line under the name Gras Mark. Moorhead has a personal environmental ethic to care for the earth as well as a passion for beautiful well-made clothing. She aims to produce clothing that upholds both of these values with the understanding that they are not mutually exclusive. On a "big picture" scale, she has partnered with Fashion Revolution and is the co-producer in Minneapolis while also engaging in collaborations (see Figure 31).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Gina Moorhead, Zoom conference call with author, March 29, 2018.

¹⁸⁰ House of Gina Marie (@houseofginamarie), 2018, "At the textile center tomorrow!" *Instagram*, October 11, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BalrTiyBGq-/?taken-by=houseofginamarie>.



Figure 31: Collaborations and forums are a part of consumer education and Moorhead enjoys engaging consumers through panels, such as this example from when she moderated a Twin Cities Startup Week talk on “clothing for a cause.”

Moorhead sources her materials through a variety of channels including jobbers (also known as Dead Stock Fabric suppliers) based in New York and Los Angeles, as well as wholesale material companies with small minimum purchase quantities. She also sources from Bemidji Woolen Mills and through peers who travel to various countries and shop for specialty materials for her. The specialty materials include African Waxed cotton and Indian cotton prints. Everything else comes from her tailors’ inventories in Vietnam. Working with artisan tailors in Vietnam supports the tailoring industry (as opposed to sweatshops); her value for “Global Makers” inspires her to continue

partnering with these artisans (see Figure 32).^{181,182} Moorhead visits the tailors in Vietnam at least twice per year to continue to maintain the relationship and check in with the production process. Additionally, aware of her company's carbon footprint, Moorhead tries to ship as little as possible even though her production is in Vietnam and her operations are in Minnesota and Seattle.



Figure 32: Artisan tailors, such as these women depicted in this Instagram post, are an integral part of Moorhead's supply chain.

While Moorhead understands that the financial aspects of her business are important, they are not the entire focus of her business. The goal of Gina Marie is not to

¹⁸¹ House of Gina Marie (@houseofginamarie), 2018, "Ladies with whom we lunch." *Instagram*, May 12, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BFVXxqhuWXJ/?taken-by=houseofginamarie>.

¹⁸² "Global Makers," House of Gina Marie, <http://www.houseofginamarie.com/our-tailors/>.

be H&M or a fast fashion retailer; she is not trying to produce as much quantity for as cheap as possible. Rather, Moorhead steers Gina Marie more towards the craft and art of fashion: clothing that lasts, is durable and beautiful, and with specific emphasis on the design. Regarding design, she seeks to create something that people will wear and love and take great care of for years. This is "slow fashion" and Moorhead believes that slow fashion is exactly what we need to start addressing rampant consumerism and changing the paradigm that "more is better". Additionally, she does not stock fabric for the sake of having inventory at her disposal. Moorhead simply buys fabric when she needs it and has less waste this way.

Moorhead established her brand in Minneapolis where she was also involved in the organization Fashion Revolution (see Figure 33).¹⁸³ Moorhead now lives in Sweden and has been looking to expand her brand there. She shared that as of February 2018, businesses are required to deliver a sustainability report to the Swedish government. She has been working on this report and the process of the mandated sustainability assessment has aided her in defining her brand's commitments and identify areas for improvement. As she looks to establish her brand in European markets, the experience in crafting the report will be invaluable.

¹⁸³ House of Gina Marie (@houseofginamarie), 2018, "Fashion Revolution is more than just a weekend of celebration." *Instagram*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaF1WbRBtc9/?taken-by=houseofginamarie>.

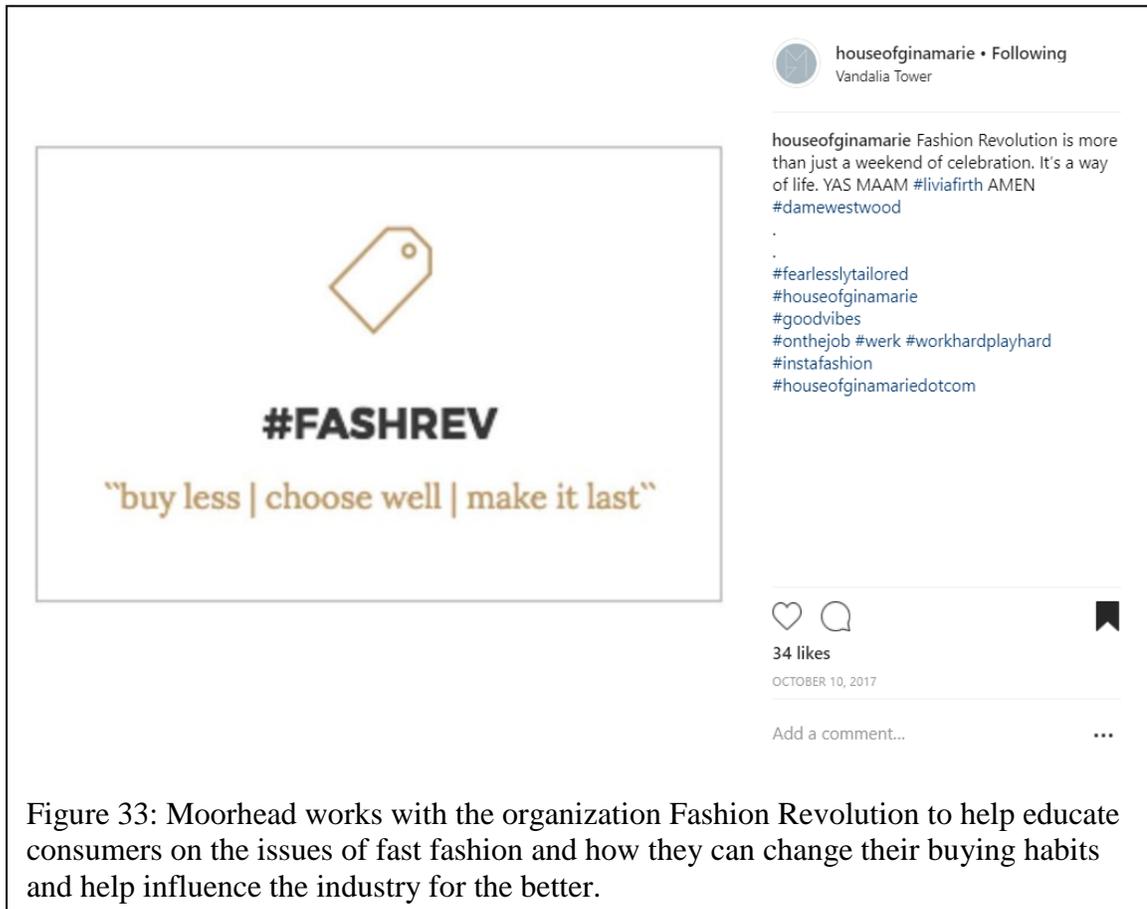


Figure 33: Moorhead works with the organization Fashion Revolution to help educate consumers on the issues of fast fashion and how they can change their buying habits and help influence the industry for the better.

One innovation highlight that Moorhead shared is her video look-book instead of a catalogue. She said that the catalogue can be expensive, and it can be incredibly wasteful. She did not know how to go about doing this but found a couple with a production company and editing skills in Minneapolis. Her audience included wholesalers, marketing and research and development representatives, fashion show organizers, and magazine editors. She sent this video look-book to these venues instead of paper catalogues.

Another innovation is Moorhead’s pricing. She wonders if the clothing cost the same—or more—if women make less money than men?” Moorhead argues that pricing should reflect the salary disparity. Therefore, women pay 23% less for their clothes than the men. Moorhead views this as her business taking a stance for women’s equity. (Note:

This price difference is purely philosophical as it typically does not cost different amounts to produce her two lines.)

Iconable

In December of 2017, Clara Colombel, opened Iconable's doors in New York City.¹⁸⁴ With a background in law and human rights, Colombel started changing the way she consumed clothing about two and a half years ago. Originally from France, Colombel knew of some clothing brands that were doing great sustainability work in Europe that were not available for the U.S. market. She launched Iconable as an online direct to consumer shop with a capsule wardrobe, small inventory, and a business model intent on growing the business organically.

The two sustainability elements that Colombel will never compromise on are human rights and fabric made from biodegradable materials ("absolutely no synthetic materials," only materials like organic cotton, see Figure 34).¹⁸⁵ Because Iconable is a retailer only, it does not have its own supply chains because it does not design or produce the clothing. Regardless, Colombel stated that Iconable still emphasizes and vets the supply chains of the brands it carries. According to the website, the brands Iconable partners with are vetted based on four criteria: 1. Transparency: How the brand is communicating about its practices, traceability over the entire supply chain, its social and environmental impact, and the material used; 2. Labor Conditions: How the brand treats the people in their supply chain; 3. Environment: How the brand minimizes its

¹⁸⁴ Clara Colombel, Skype conference call with author, February 23, 2018.

¹⁸⁵ Iconable (@theiconable), 2018, "On the #journal of Iconable this week, we are talking about #organiccotton." *Instagram*, July 9, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BIA_SiVAs8T/?taken-by=theiconable.

environmental impact, the material used, its policy in terms of waste, and its production process; and 4. Community: The brand's efforts to uphold Corporate Social Responsibility and commitments to improve the social and environmental aspects of their supply chain.¹⁸⁶ Colombel often checks certifications to confirm company supply chains, but certifications are not the last say. For example, one of the companies Iconable carries in its store does not have certifications with its factory, but it owns the factory and is transparent in its practices, so Colombel is comfortable sourcing clothing from the company.

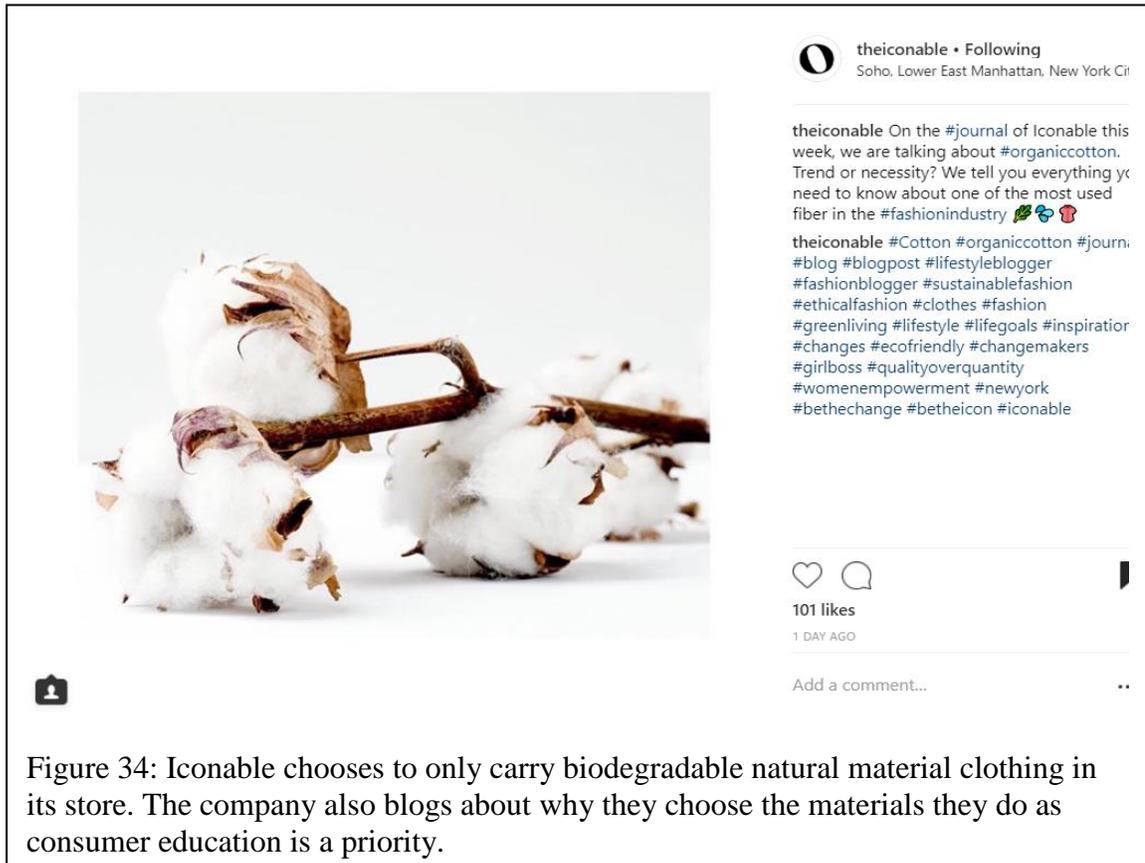


Figure 34: Iconable chooses to only carry biodegradable natural material clothing in its store. The company also blogs about why they choose the materials they do as consumer education is a priority.

Regarding consumer engagement, Iconable representatives are active on social media, specifically Instagram, and through the journal (like a blog) on its website (see

¹⁸⁶ "Our Vision," Iconable, <https://theiconable.com/pages/about-us>.

Figure 35).¹⁸⁷ There, Iconable staff provide education on slow fashion and why Iconable chooses to do business sustainably. Colombel also engages in panels and talks about the “gray” areas of sustainable fashion. For example, Colombel discussed that some people think that a consumer should only purchase “Made in the USA” garments. Colombel understands the more complex systems issues at play because “Made in India” or “Made in China” does not necessarily mean “Made in a sweatshop.” Nor does it mean every trimming on the garment comes from that country. Indeed, Colombel points out that there are even some sweatshops in New York. Colombel wishes to educate more people on the complexities of fashion supply chains.

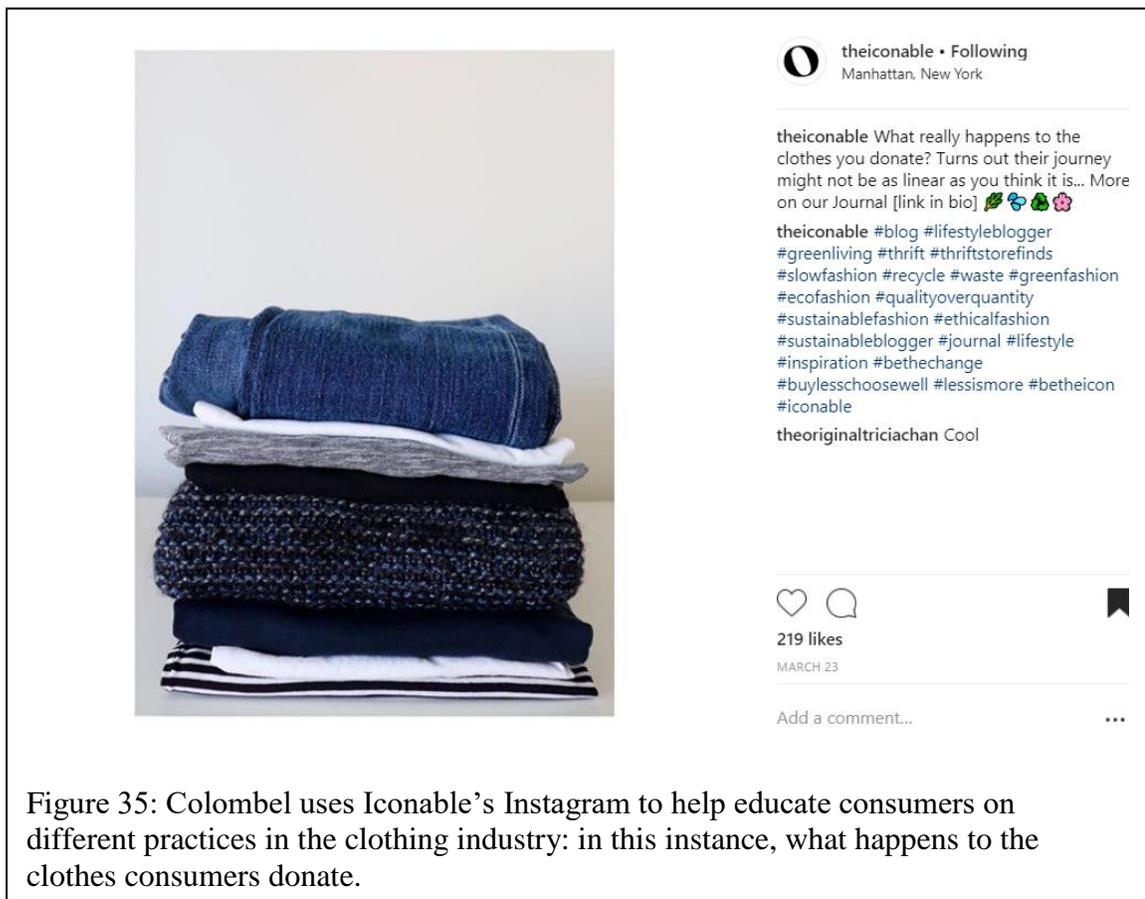


Figure 35: Colombel uses Iconable’s Instagram to help educate consumers on different practices in the clothing industry: in this instance, what happens to the clothes consumers donate.

¹⁸⁷ Iconable (@theiconable), 2018, “What really happens to the clothes you donate?” *Instagram*, March 23, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgqsQdOB5bU/?taken-by=theiconable>.

At the end of the interview, Colombel was quick to point out that the solution to our fast fashion addiction is to buy less and buy better. Entire business models also need to change. At the same time, she understood and emphasized that achieving sustainability in fashion is a process; business models cannot change overnight. She suggested that a great place to start is by reconnecting the people buying the clothes with the people making the clothes, not only on an individual level, but on a community level. Colombel incorporates this type of consumer education into her social media engagement (see Figure 36).¹⁸⁸

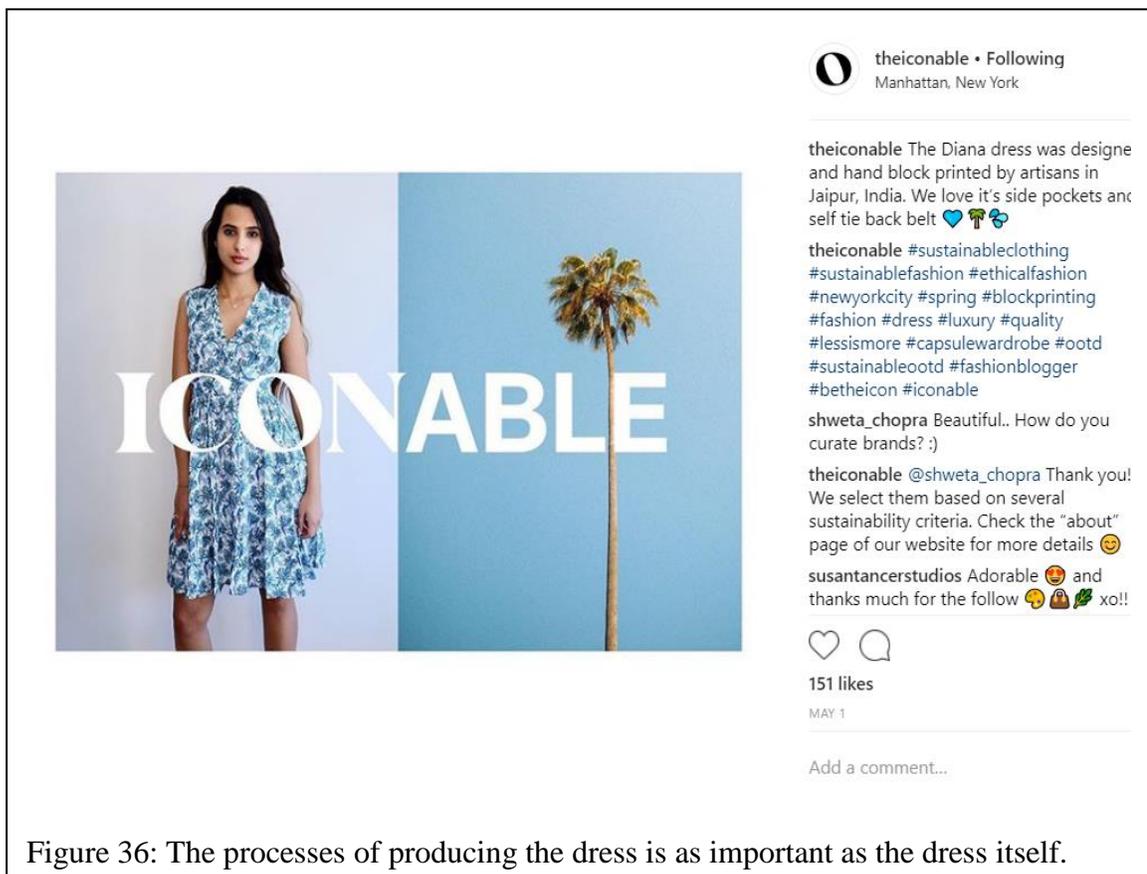


Figure 36: The processes of producing the dress is as important as the dress itself.

¹⁸⁸ Iconable (@theiconable), 2018, "The Diana dress was designed and hand block printed by artisans in Jaipur, India." *Instagram*, May 1, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BiPUovFg4Vj/?taken-by=theiconable>.

Known Supply

I interviewed Kohl Crecelius, the founder and CEO of Krochet Kids International (KK Int'l) and Known Supply.¹⁸⁹ Known Supply launched in November of 2017. Even though it is a newer company, Known Supply is considered the “sister” or “parent company” to pioneering social enterprise KK Int'l that was founded in 2007, so it has a meaningful and established history of social enterprise and sustainability. Known Supply emphasizes the human aspect of producing clothing, including labor issues such as equitable anti-poverty wages and providing social and educational services.¹⁹⁰

Known Supply considers itself the “most human brand.” Crecelius said that how clothes are made has been “out of sight and out of mind.” This has changed with internet and access to information and Known Supply wants to be on the forefront of helping reestablish the connection of how things are made and by whom.

The company invests in its clothing makers and finds creative ways to connect the maker with the consumer, educating the consumer in the process. One way is through a tag on the shirt bearing the maker's name (see Figure 37).¹⁹¹ Additionally, on its website, there is a tab to “meet the makers” where customers can enter the name of who made their article of clothing and find that person's profile with a picture, a bit about who they are and answers to questions such as, “What do you like to do when you're not at work?”

¹⁸⁹ Kohl Crecelius, phone conversation with author, March 1, 2018.

¹⁹⁰ "Our Story," Known Supply, <https://knownsupply.com/pages/our-story>.

¹⁹¹ Known Supply (@knownsupply), 2018, “What would the world look like if we knew the names and stories behind every item of clothing we own?” *Instagram*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bip9tA7FR5N/>.

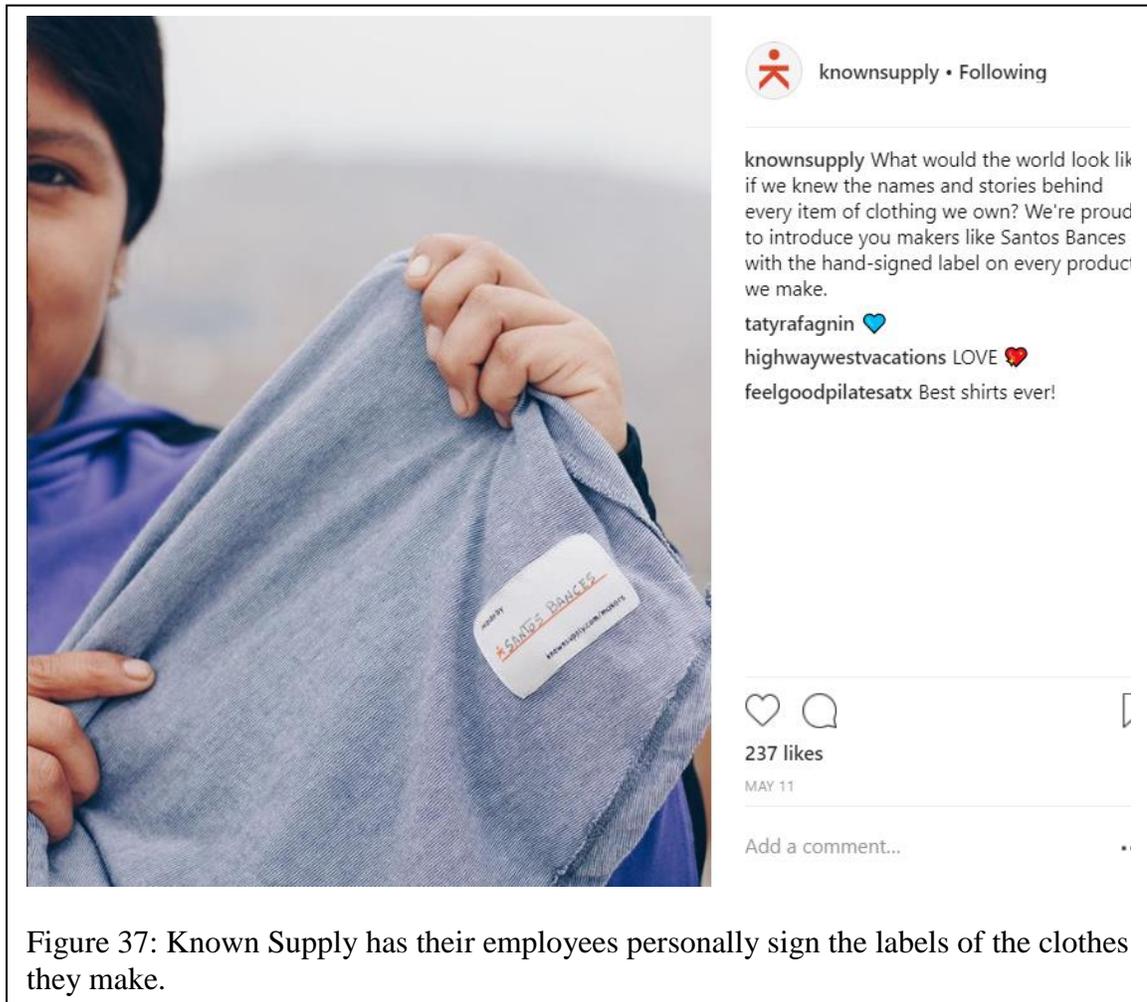


Figure 37: Known Supply has their employees personally sign the labels of the clothes they make.

While the brand sells DTC online, one of the goals of Known Supply as it grows is to connect with other brands that would order from them in bulk and customize what they order for their company, brand, or cause. The other brands would utilize Known Supply's factories and then Known Supply would have a gray label associated with the garment, while the other business could attach their label, too.

Known Supply utilizes the factories in Uganda and Peru that have been established via KK Int'l. Crecelius emphasized the difficulty for KK Int'l to establish their factories and supply chains. But that, over time, they established relationships and built capacity of the factories to produce what they needed to be competitive in a global

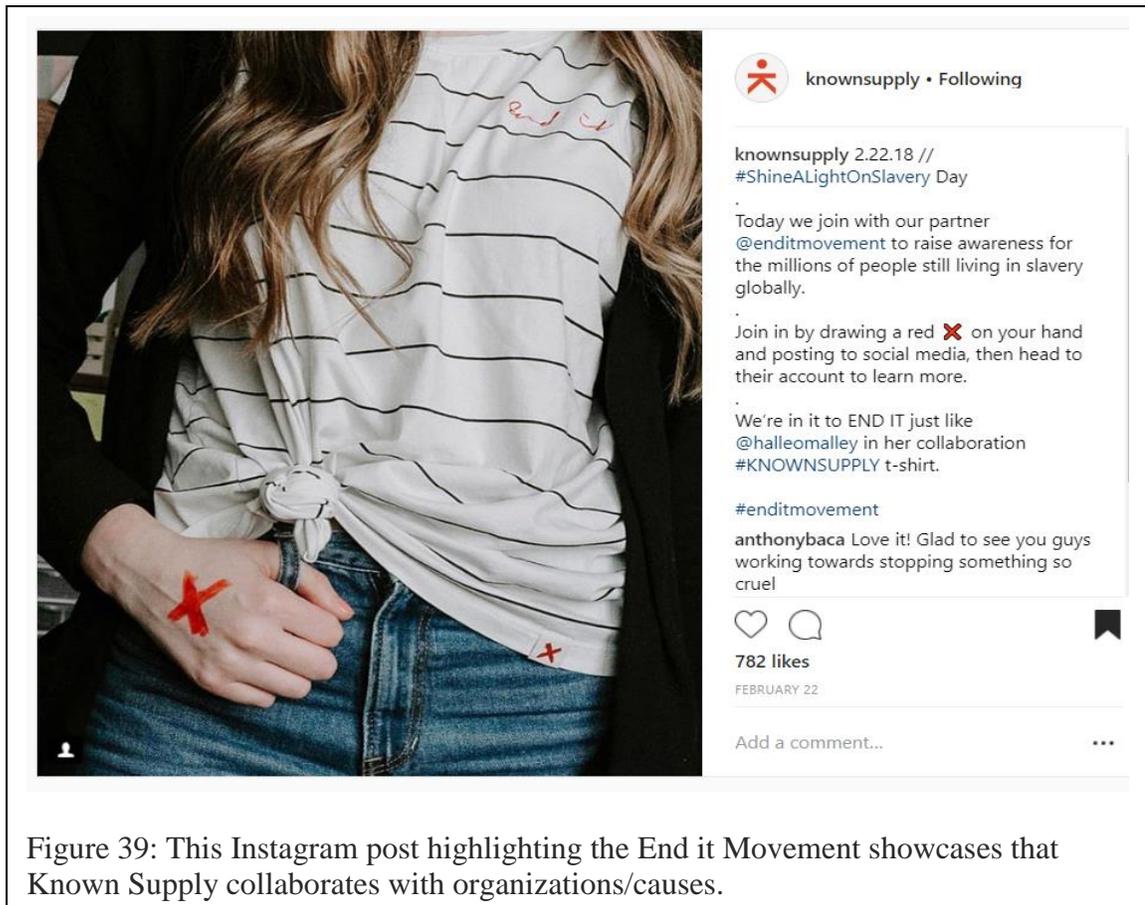
market. Crecelius would advise brands that are starting out or brands who want to clean up their supply chains to partner with Known Supply because through KK Int'l, the brand has already done the difficult work of establishing ethical supply chains (see Figure 38).¹⁹²



Figure 38: Known Supply has spent the past decade establishing ethical supply chains. This post highlights Known Supply’s commitment to its makers and to using social media as a platform to engage consumers. As the company partnered with Fashion Revolution to showcase its labor practices and challenge more people to question who made their clothes.

¹⁹²Known Supply (@knownsupply), 2018, “As Fashion Revolution week comes to a close, it’s important to remember that what you wear is about more than just how it looks.” *Instagram*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BiFwjTQFJ01/>.

The entire structure of Known Supply is innovative. According to its website, the brand was born out of a desire to help other brands achieve the ethical production and connection to makers that KK Int'l has established. The nature of the business is to connect other brands with pre-established ethical production and “be inclusive to all those who wanted to have social good woven into their operations but didn’t have the knowledge or resources to do so”.¹⁹³ It is the definition of collaborative and it is creating this collaboration into a business opportunity to further benefit the makers. More than that, Known Supply partners with organizations that do similar work, such as the End it Movement (see Figure 39).¹⁹⁴



¹⁹³ "Our Story," Known Supply, <https://knownsupply.com/pages/our-story>.

¹⁹⁴ Known Supply (@knownsupply), 2018, "2.22.18 // #ShineALightOnSlavery Day Today we join with our partner @enditmovement to raise awareness for the millions of people still living in slavery globally." *Instagram*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BfhTcUMjJ2Y/>.

For sourcing and where the Ugandan and Peruvian factories get their materials, KK Int'l established teams on the ground at each factory and they rely on the established relationships with their suppliers. While Known Supply is not itself certified, it does source certified GOTS organic fabric in Peru. The biggest advantage that Known Supply has regarding its supply chain is that it is simple: it is not convoluted or messy and this helps keep flexibility and nimble business operations.

For ten years, KK Int'l was established as a non-profit, but recently it restructured as a for-profit benefit corporation in California. This is an innovation in that benefit corporations and social purpose corporations are relatively new as a business structure. This business structure allows a company to make a profit and have shareholders, but still be held accountable to having high standards regarding sustainability concerns.

As Known Supply is brand new, the goal moving forward is to simply grow and partner with as many people as possible. Crecelius shared that "Known Supply wants to be the brand that is known for celebrating the makers behind the clothes." It is not enough to know the clothes were made ethically: Known Supply seeks to build the connection between the maker and the consumer that has been lost. As he has been a part of the social enterprise world for over a decade, Crecelius shared some hopeful information: he has seen an increased demand for sustainable products and views the consumers as better informed these days than they were a decade ago.

Lady Farmer

I interviewed both Emma and Mary Kingsley, the mother-daughter duo and founders and creatives at Lady Farmer¹⁹⁵. The Kingsley's launched a Kickstarter late September of 2017 to fund Lady Farmer's first production batches with its high standards. Emma Kingsley recalls that she used to enjoy fast fashion buys. But when she started learning about conventional clothing systems, she knew something had to change with her own consumption. At this point, she tried to find clothing that fit both her values and lifestyle and could not find what she wanted. The mother-daughter team started the clothing line because they wanted clothes that fit their lifestyle that they felt good about buying: specifically, clothes that rejected fast fashion and prioritized biodegradable fabrics, organic agricultural practices, and USA manufacturing. Lady Farmer sells DTC via the company website and does not plan to have a store front in the near future.

Because the clothing line is so new, the Kingsley's talked with me about their process of defining their business model, troubleshooting supply chain processes, and what they are willing to compromise on vs. the non-negotiables. When they started discussing what materials to use, they wanted to source domestic linen at first. But, after researching to find a supplier, they realized that domestic linen does not exist. As the Lady Farmer team continued to pursue different fabric options, they became more excited about hemp. But hemp is illegal in their state of Virginia. Because of this, they have been involved in the local hemp lobby. Eventually, they want to produce their own materials and have the Lady Farmer processes be vertically integrated. The Kingsley's realize this will take time and before this happens, a shorter-term goal is to have their materials

¹⁹⁵ Emma Kingsley and Mary Kingsley, Zoom conference call with author, February 15, 2018.

grown and/or made domestically. However, they feel limited, because there are few real options to help them realize their extremely high standards in the production process.

Right now, there is small-scale industry in Lady Farmer's locale. But the Kingsley's described that what exists is more a cottage industry rather than full-fledged industry. Currently, they work with a small-scale manufacturer in DC and can drive there to do business (see Figure 40).¹⁹⁶ They feel lucky to have this resource so close.



¹⁹⁶ (Lady Farmer (@weareladyfarmer), 2018, "{Pre-Order Essential Collection Garments until 6/30*Link in bio*}," Instagram, June 22, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BkVz2k2gU5u/?taken-by=weareladyfarmer>.

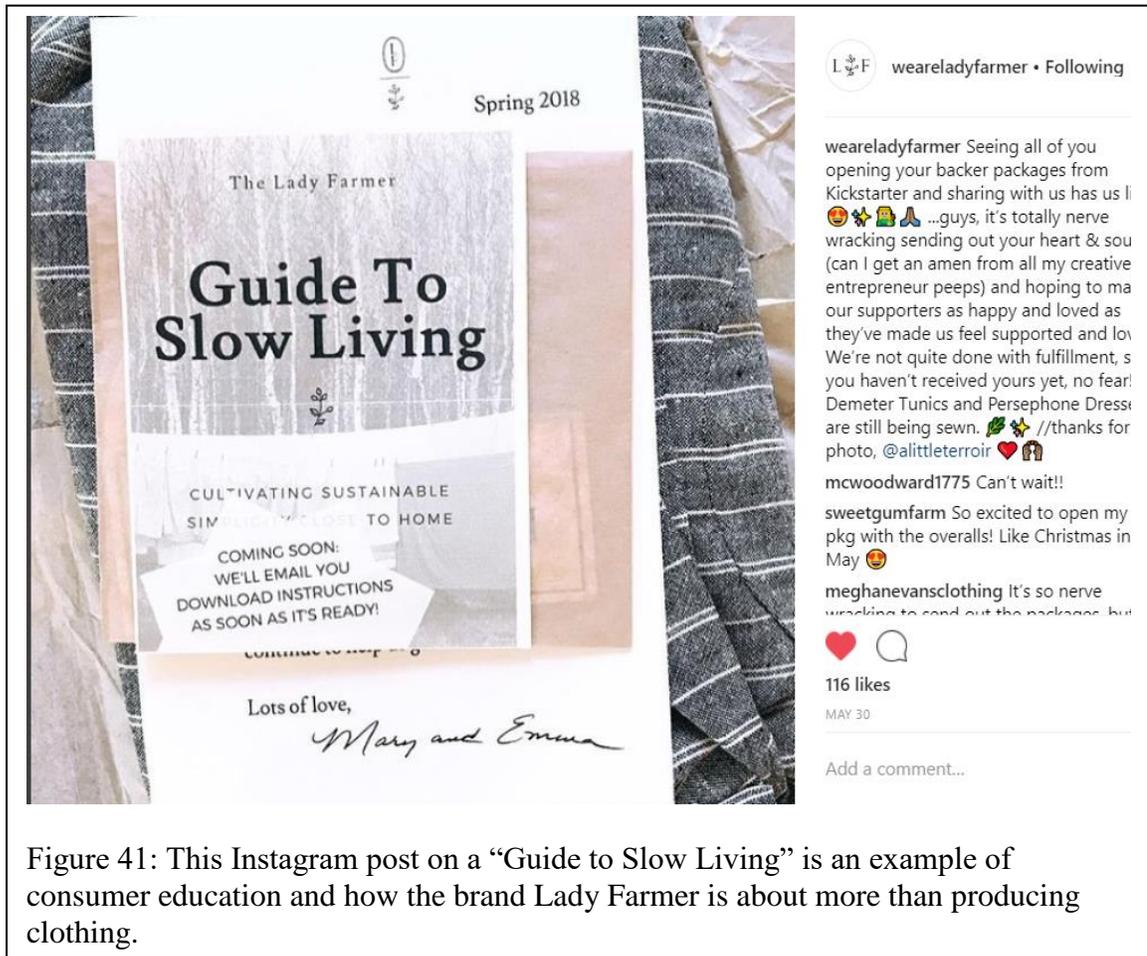
Because of the lack of local infrastructure, the Kingsley's goal is to come as close to their ideal as possible. This is difficult because right now, these processes are extremely expensive and borderline cost-prohibitive. Their manufacturer that is local can produce 5 garments at a time. The labor for each garment is between \$75-120 for production alone. The Lady Farmer team wants to be continually doing better, but right now they lack the infrastructure for USA made and locally grown, produced, manufactured. So, while they manufacture in the USA, Lady Farmer has compromised with using material that is produced overseas. For example, the hemp blend comes imported from China right now.

The Kingsley's have two values they will not compromise on. The first "no compromise" is biodegradability. The Kingsley's have adopted a circular mindset and want to make sure that this philosophy is reflected in practice. They are very much against plastics and recycled plastics because this does not fit into their model of a circular economy. They specifically design clothing without many trimmings and when they do use trimmings, they opt to use metal hardware that can be recycled. Mary Kingsley commented that this has been difficult to do, especially with designing pants. For Lady Farmer's Pomona pant, they went back and forth about using an elastic waist band and tried to justify it by getting the consumer to, after finished with the pant, cut the elastic out to use again. This didn't seem realistic to them. Moreover, their focus group said, "No. We want clothes that are completely biodegradable." So, they listened. Both mom and daughter are excited for the potential invention of a natural elastic, but until that happens, they choose not to use elastic. The second "no compromise" is using organic

materials. Lady Farmer is committed to using absolutely no conventional cotton and using cotton with high organic standards.

The Kingsley's feel that the work they're doing is about so much more than clothing. They want to encourage a consumer paradigm shift. Both mom and daughter talked about how our systems feed the mass production, waste, and toxic machines of industry. They advocate the philosophies of slow living and support "back[ing] up from the monsters of the industrial age." Underscoring their clothing line is the need to decrease consumption. For the Kingsley's, they use consumer engagement to address why the cost of their clothing is so high and combat the idea that a "better buy is a cheaper buy." Investing in education is key to their business model. Informing people about their practices is a direct contrast to the conventional system (see Figure 41).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ (Lady Farmer (@weareladyfarmer), 2018, "Seeing all of you opening your backer packages from Kickstarter and sharing with us has us like [emojis]." Instagram, May 30, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BjbFx8pg0jk/?taken-by=weareladyfarmer>).



The Kingsley’s are aware of and have discussed the issues of the high price point of sustainably produced clothing. Right from the start, during their Kickstarter campaign, they consider consumer education and transparency a priority to explain their sticker price. On their Kickstarter campaign, the Kingsley’s write:

“Why it’s so expensive: ‘We know that there may be some sticker shock as most of us are used to paying close to nothing for our clothes. The truth is that responsible, ethical manufacturing simply costs more as it requires more thought, fair pay, higher quality, and more careful development on all fronts. It also always costs more to produce things at lower quantities, so as Lady Farmer develops processes there is the possibility that we’ll be able to produce at a lower cost due to increased interest! We’ll see. For now though, we’ve gotten our prices down as low as possible so as to

cover our costs and ensure that we can continue in the work of forging healthier supply and manufacturing chains.”¹⁹⁸

Lady Farmer is such a young company that it has time to grow and continue to improve its processes through trial and error and increase its audience via social media and consumer education. Because of the great response from their Kickstarter campaign, the Kingsley’s know there is a niche market for hyper-local and sustainably produced clothing. Now, the founders are focused on continuing to grow and scale their operation while looking into and creating new sourcing and manufacturing options that are up to their standards. They also continue to operate as “more than a clothing label” as they encourage their customers to buy less and choose well (see Figure 42).¹⁹⁹

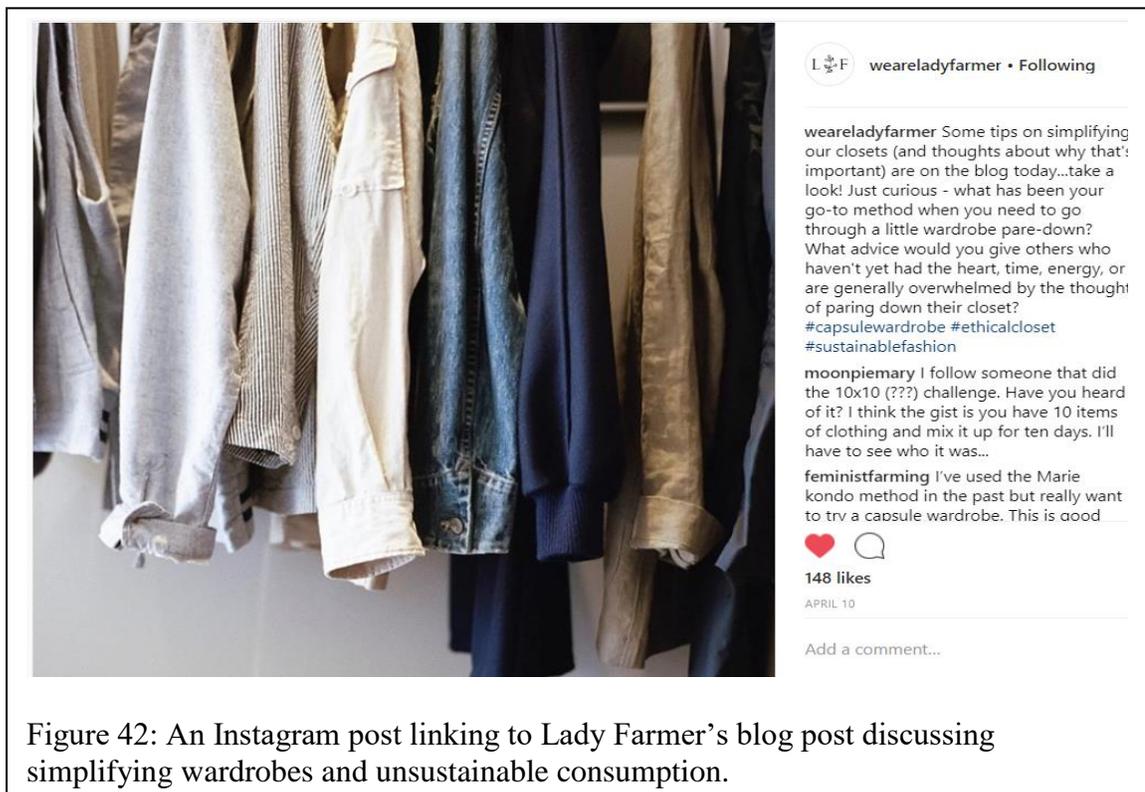


Figure 42: An Instagram post linking to Lady Farmer’s blog post discussing simplifying wardrobes and unsustainable consumption.

¹⁹⁸ “Lady Farmer Sustainable Apparel,” Kickstarter, September 28, 2017, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/ladyfarmer/lady-farmer-sustainable-apparel>.

¹⁹⁹ Lady Farmer (@weareladyfarmer), 2018, “{Some tips on simplifying our closets (and thoughts about why that’s important) are on the blog today... take a look!” Instagram, April 10, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BhZviYehFZY/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

Matter Prints

For my interview with Matter Prints, I spoke with May Ee Fong, the Creative Production Manager.²⁰⁰ She has a background in conventional apparel and worked for a brand with a production house that included everything and did everything for the brand right on site. But she was bothered by the waste and environmental impacts and decided to seek out a position at Matter Prints because of the company's emphasis on ethical clothing.

Founded in 2014 by two friends, Matter Print's focused on a business over charity model. The managing director went on a charity bike trip and met artisan textile workers and decided to form a coop of sorts. Yes, the company focuses on empowerment, but they do so through business, not aid. The brand's goal is to make available artisan products that are sustainable and produce ethically with higher standards than market benchmarks. At the time of the interview, May Ee Fong had just joined the company 8 months prior and she dove right in. She handles everything about the product and helps the creative director with the design, textile sourcing, merchandising, inventory, alliance with India productions. Recently, her job required her to go to India to check on the productions lines because Matter Prints values visiting every factory it does business with.

Matter Prints is especially concerned with the social aspect of sustainability, specifically related to artisanal and crafter art (see Figure 43)²⁰¹ Fast fashion has been taking and commodifying the look of artisanal and crafted woven and printed fabrics, but

²⁰⁰ May Ee Fong, Skype conference call with author, February 24, 2018.

²⁰¹ M A T T E R (@matterprints), 2018, "Mid-printing with the Koa motif on The Chenelle Jacket." *Instagram*, January 13, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bd6SUdNHQx-/?taken-by=matterprints>.

they don't go through the process of honoring the craft. Matter Prints believes it's important to focus on the social impact of others and this includes artisanal practices, culture, and honoring skill. Inherent in the brand's name, it produces clothing with artisanal prints that matter to the people making them and should matter to the consumer.

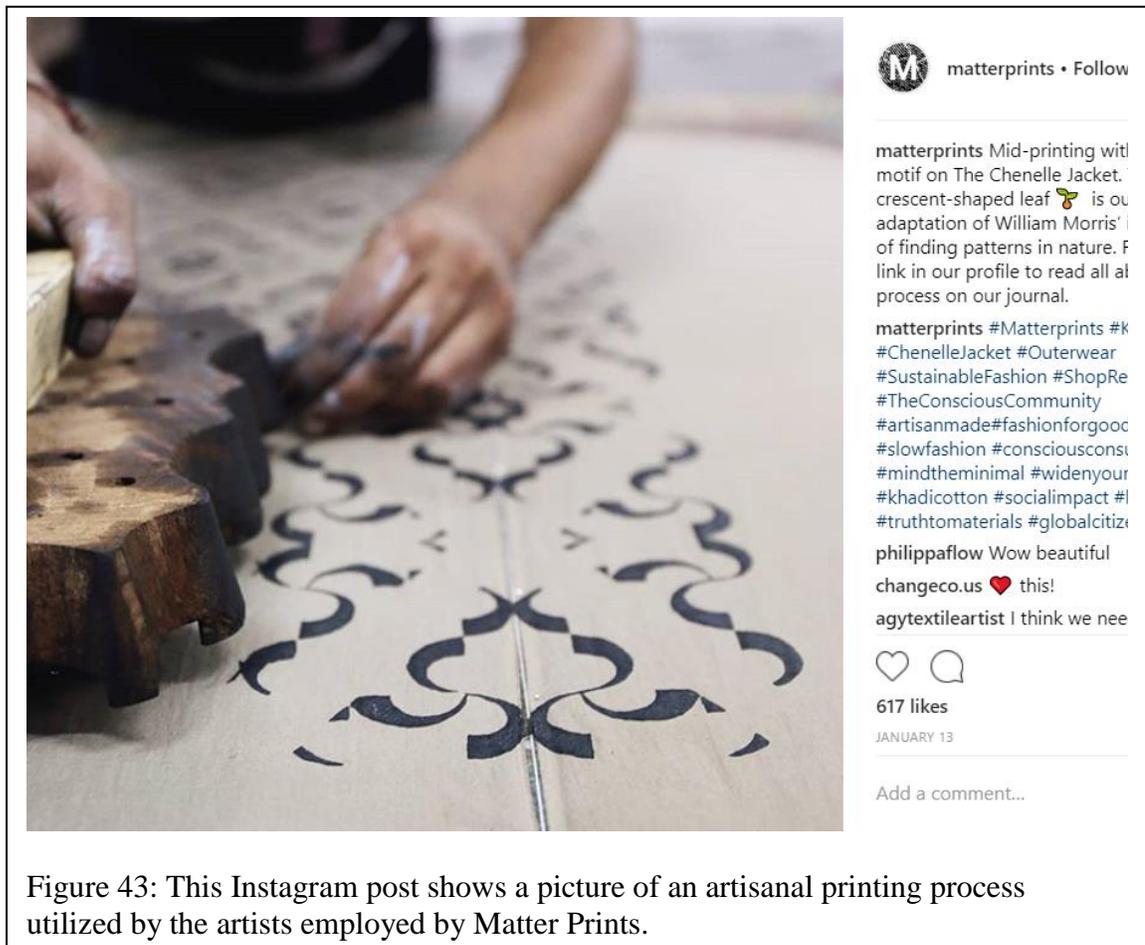
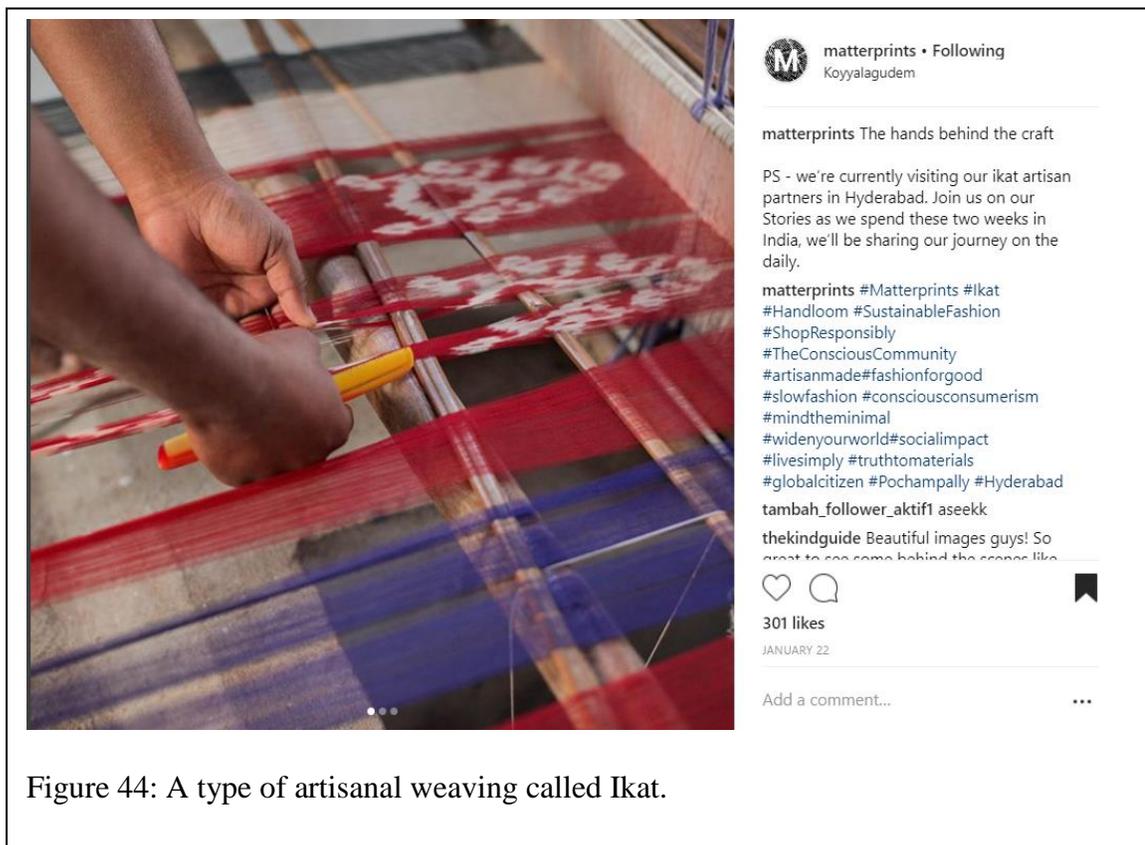


Figure 43: This Instagram post shows a picture of an artisanal printing process utilized by the artists employed by Matter Prints.

The brand's market is about 60% Singapore and 40% outside (including the US, then Europe, Australia, Hong Kong, and China. Matter Prints offers DTC online retailing. However, a large part of how they connect with consumers is through pop-up shops and collaborations with other brands, for example Harly Jae. Matter Prints loves to get to know customers. More than the pop-ups, Matter Prints values consumer education

and reaches out to customers through its online Journal (the blog on its website) as well as offline events.

For Matter Print's production, 95% of product is made in India. The goal is to keep the craft alive with the full processes of printing, dyeing, drying, and weaving (see Figures 44 and 45).^{202, 203} These processes require a lot of knowledge and skill. One man in Jaipur is a 5th generation printer; his craft has been passed down and Matter Prints exists to keep craftsmen like him working and creating. The brand is expanding slowly with targeted pieces outside of India. For example, as a part of a new collaboration, the



²⁰² M A T T E R (@matterprints), 2018, "The hands behind the craft." *Instagram*, January 22, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BeRrGCrnYoS/?taken-by=matterprints>.

²⁰³ M A T T E R (@matterprints), 2018, "Something we learned recently: less than two hundred years ago, the whole world still wore natural dyes everyday." *Instagram*, February 12, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BfH6RejHyOd/?taken-by=matterprints>.

Batik scarf is made in Indonesia. Also, Matter has considered pursuing production in Thailand.

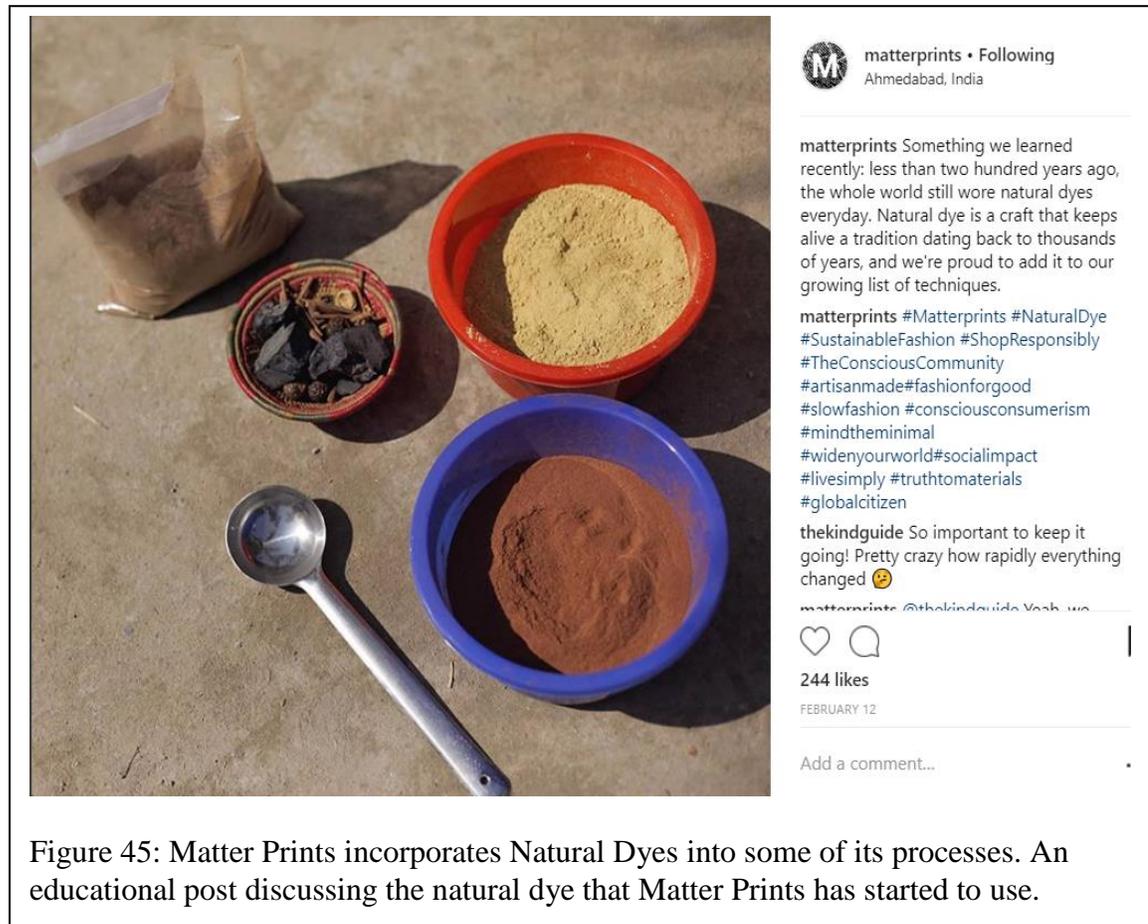


Figure 45: Matter Prints incorporates Natural Dyes into some of its processes. An educational post discussing the natural dye that Matter Prints has started to use.

For sourcing, the Matter Prints team has formed a working relationship with a sourcing manager in Delhi. One of the founders met her in India on her trip and has worked with her since the founding of the brand. Due to the nature of the business relationship, Matter Print's supply chain depends on her because she is experienced in ethical production and artisanal made goods. The sourcing manager does the vetting process by considering safety policies, certifications, and other labor practices. She works with other brands, too, as a consultant.

While Matter Prints does not have certifications at this moment, the brand has a strategic plan to use 100% GOTS Certified organic cotton by 2019. Now, the brand uses about 50% organic and 50% regular cotton because the high cost of organic cotton has been cost prohibitive. The Matter Prints team wants the company to be B-corporation certified, so that is on the radar. They have also thought about pursuing a fair-trade certification, but it's such a long process and the brand's sourcing manager suggested for Matter Prints to wait and maybe pursue the fair-trade certification in 3-5 years.

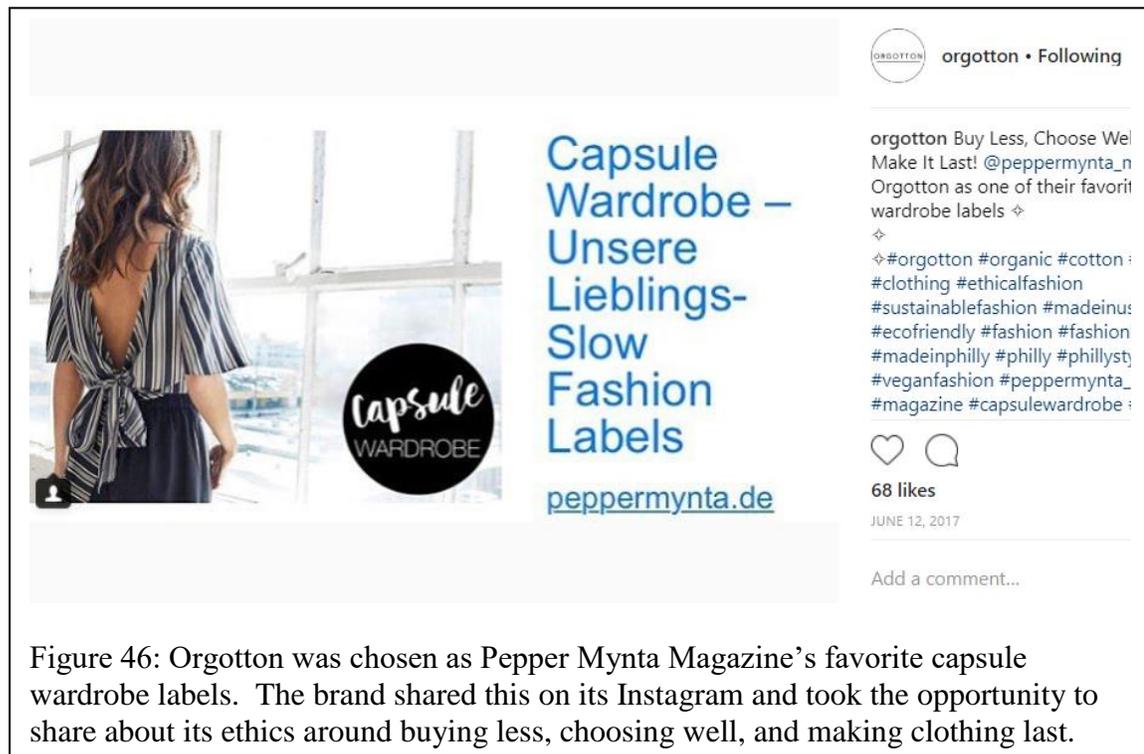
One of the projects that May Ee Fong is working on at the moment is changing direction with design. Moving forward, Matter Prints wants their new styles to be seasonal. Because production is small, the team has been working on design development focused more on function as well as asking how new designs are different from other designs. In this way, the brand more firmly separates itself from the fast fashion systems.

Orgotton

Located in Fishtown in Philadelphia (considered by the locals to be like a new Brooklyn), Orgotton was founded in 2009 by two sisters, Kristy Carabello and Stef Emery. I interviewed both about the evolution of their brand.²⁰⁴ When they went into business together, the sisters knew they wanted to do something that was both organic and sustainable. At first, they thought to do retail website with other brands, but, they taught themselves how to screen-print and started printing on blank shirts from Alternative Apparel. Orgotton operated with this business model for four to five years. The sisters made a goal to get their line in Whole Foods, but they found out they needed

²⁰⁴ Kristy Carabello and Stef Emery, Zoom conference call with author, March 5, 2018.

their own label (at this point, their clothes had the Alt. Apparel tag in it). When they looked into finding a pattern maker and finding fabric they wanted to use, they decided to branch out from t-shirts and produce their own line featuring basics such as the infinity

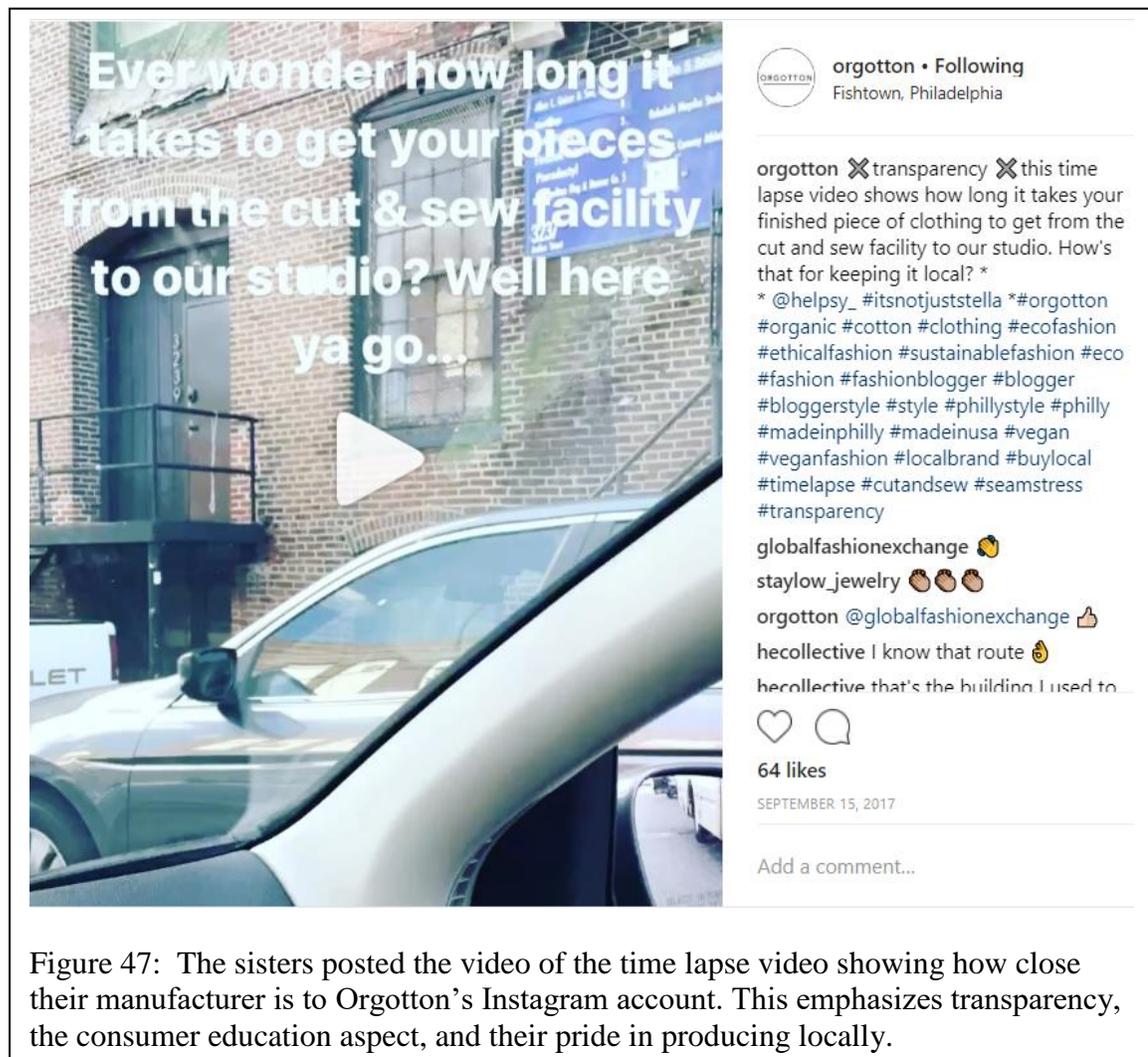


dress, body suit, straight leg jumpsuit, and romper. The Infinity dress is especially popular because it can be worn five different ways. Orgotton’s emphasis is on clothing that is high-end (well-made), versatile, and multi-functional (see Figure 46).²⁰⁵

Both sisters stressed the importance of working with local people: local manufacturers, seamstresses, other businesses for collaborations. For example, once the sisters established a relationship with a pattern maker, this person helped them make contacts for them in Philly. Through this, they were able to “meet the right people.” Over the course of their learning experience, the sisters became passionate about

²⁰⁵ Orgotton (@orgotton), 2018, “Buy Less.” *Instagram*, June 12, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BVQHlWVH8kE/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

manufacturing in Philly and keeping their processes local. Now, they work with two different seamstresses located about five miles from Orgotton's studio. One day, to show



customers, Kristy took a video of her walking from the studio to the manufacturer to highlight how close they are. She posted this on her blog and on Instagram (See Figure 47).²⁰⁶ Working locally and working small has allowed the company to produce most of its product Made to Order (MTO).

²⁰⁶Orgotton (@orgotton), 2018, "X Transparency X this time lapse video shows how long it takes your finished piece of clothing to get from the cut and sew facility to our studio." *Instagram*, September 15, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BZEYXM4ncds/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

Carabello and Emery source fabrics through a fabric house in China and they vet the factories and specifically ensure that factory workers are paid fairly and the production process uses low-impact dyes. The brand specifically uses OEKO-TEX® certified fabric that is always a blend of organic cotton, bamboo, and spandex. When informed, customers respond well to the certification and fabric choice. Carabello and Emery said that it was really challenging to find fabric that met their standards and worked for what they were producing. More than that, once they identified OEKO-TEX® fabric, sourcing it was difficult because factories have minimums that some small companies have difficulty meeting.

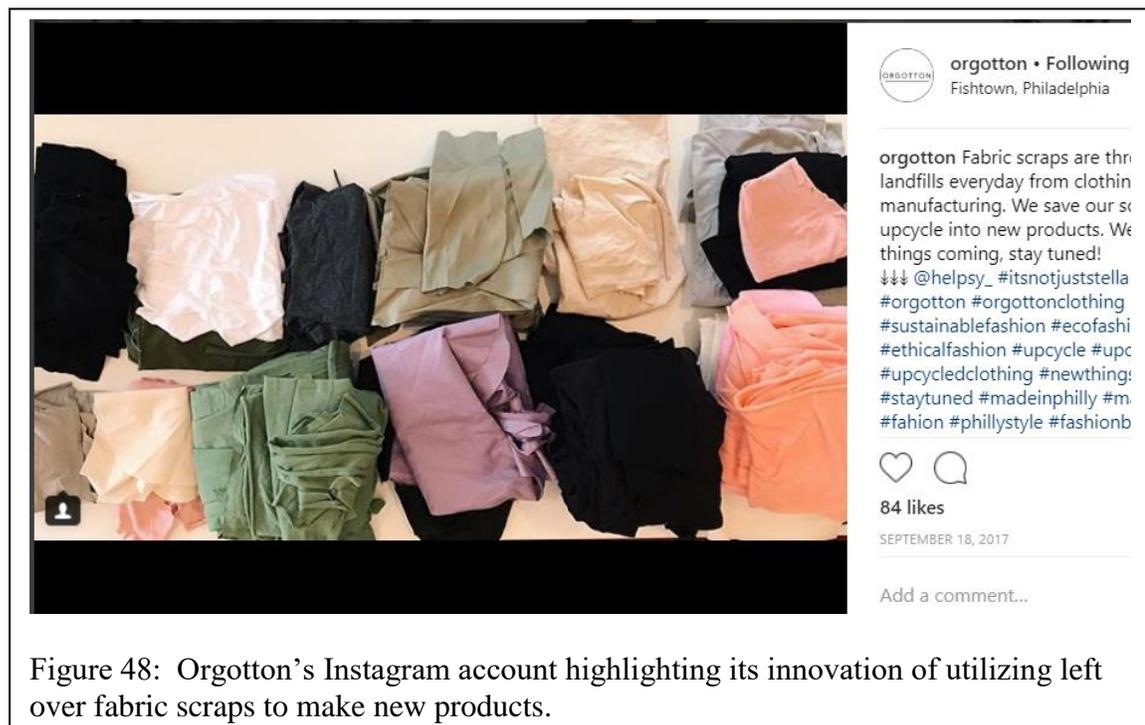
Regarding sourcing fabric overseas, both sisters would love to source Philly-made fabric, not only to support local manufacturing, but also because they are aware of their carbon footprint. But USA made organic cotton was cost prohibitive and it did not have the same properties as the OEKO-TEX® fabric that the customers respond well to. Emery was especially in tune to this aspect of the supply chain. “It’s all about balance. You are in business, so you absolutely have to focus on profit.” She continued, saying that this doesn’t mean you ignore social and environmental issues: you can do both.

Consumer education is hugely important to Orgotton. Both sisters emphasized that people need to be educated, but not made to feel bad. The sisters try to inform their customers and social media followers on what they are doing and showcase their beautiful fabrics. Additionally, the sisters advocate for “Made in Philly.” Even their labels and hangtags are made in a suburb of Philly. Regarding the interplay between customer education and marketing, they said that marketing is a strange dynamic, because it has been tricky learning how to market to the different groups their clothing

appeals to. They have started asking “does the customer care [if the product is certified organic and made locally]?” Before, they would advocate organic first and everything else about their product second. However, they recently shifted their thinking because they have seen that what motivates purchase for the customer is the quality and design. Having the “organic” and “local” aspects are a bonus, but not the focus for sales. The bottom line as far as selling clothing is that the product must be fashion-forward.

When asked what is next for the business, Carabello and Emery shared that they are working on underwear line using their scrap fabric. While their old seamstresses did not, their current seamstress conserves fabric. Since the time of the interview, Orgotton has launched the underwear line and made it available online (see Figure 48).^{207, 208}

Additionally, at the time of the interview, Carabello had just launched a podcast and had



²⁰⁷ “Intimates,” Orgotton, <http://www.orgotton.com/intimates-1/>.

²⁰⁸ Orgotton (@orgotton), 2018, “Fabric scraps are thrown in landfills everyday from clothing manufacturing.” *Instagram*, September 18, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BZMP_Zxn2uW/?taken-by=orgotton.

already interviewed three people local to community. Both sisters feel that it is time to showcase Philly's local movers, shakers, and makers and because they are entrenched in this community, they want to be the ones to do so.

Prairie Underground

Prairie Underground is a self-described populist apparel manufacturer that is committed to designing modern uniforms that evoke sensuality in daily self-expression.²⁰⁹ Founded in 2005 in Seattle Washington, the brand is committed to local and US manufacturing and to serve as a counter to fast fashion. The company was not started as a "sustainable" brand, but rather as a fashion brand. However, the designers are both ethically and socially conscious people and they believe that "creation itself should be a sustainable practice."²¹⁰ The background that informed their sustainability was less of a focus on "sustainability" per say, and more a manifestation of the desire to produce and manufacture locally, establish relationships along the supply chain, and be as ethical as possible in their entire operation (see Figure 49).²¹¹

²⁰⁹ "Sustainability," Prairie Underground, <https://www.prairieunderground.com/sustainability/>.

²¹⁰ Lisa Gray, in-person interview with author, February 21, 2018.

²¹¹ Prairie Underground (@prairieunderground), 2018, "Cheers to Rosin @seattlemet for this amazing article on our incredible founders Camilla and Davora, and the history of Prairie Underground!" *Instagram*, November 21, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BbyF6MhFs_l/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

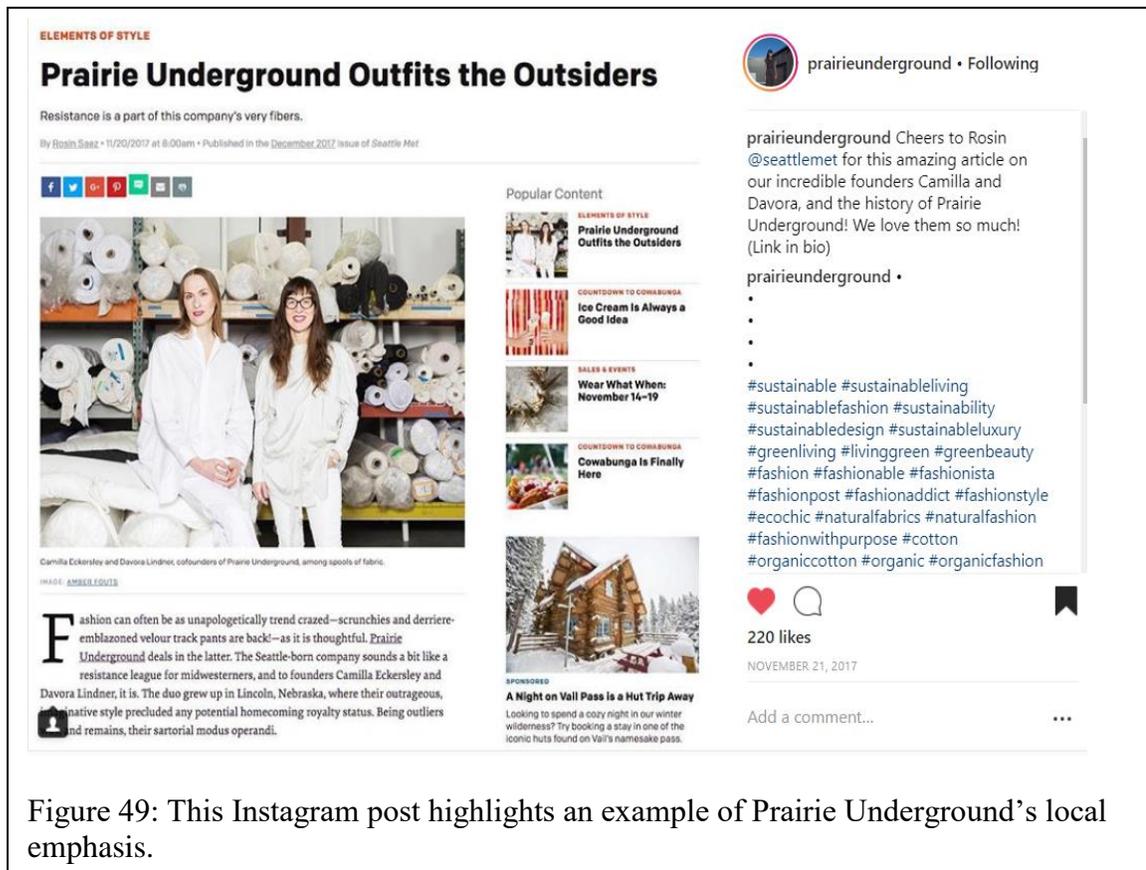


Figure 49: This Instagram post highlights an example of Prairie Underground’s local emphasis.

I interviewed Lisa Gray, the Production Manager at Prairie Underground.²¹² Gray has a background in Apparel Design and Development and her role at Prairie Underground is to take the samples and extrapolate how much material is needed (cloth, zippers, and other trimmings) for each garment and then order the raw materials, send them on their way to the different factory processes, and bring them back for quality control. Gray’s specific job as Production Manager is highly technical and detail oriented. Gray works with five subcontractors to order raw materials for production.

Prairie Underground started out as wholesalers, but then 2-3 years ago, the brand started e-commerce. Then, one year ago, they started direct retailing. They produce garments made to order with limited production runs and the sewing machines and

²¹² Lisa Gray, in-person interview with author, February 21, 2018.

production house is on site in a warehouse-style Prairie Underground's focus is on local (or as local as possible) production done in an ethical manner (see Figure 50).²¹³ Even the brand's hangtags are made locally. Prairie Underground chooses to use sustainable fibers, including hemp, organic cotton, Tencel, and a recycled fiber. They've chosen to use polyester thread in their pants because it's stronger and lasts longer, so the pants are more durable.



Figure 50: Prairie Underground's warehouse in Seattle. This is a photograph from its warehouse where material is stored before turning it into clothing. Small batch production is at the heart of Prairie Underground.

²¹³Prairie Underground (@prairieunderground), 2018, "Tgif: we were starting to feel a bit like this roll." *Instagram*, June 23, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BVr4qSFHyYS/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

Regarding sourcing and supply chain, Prairie Underground is located in a neighborhood that also houses its manufacturer. The dye factory used to be in Tukwila, but it closed. So, after trial and error with other dye factories, they settled on one in Los Angeles. Prairie Underground also has 2 shows/season for the 4 seasons at PU that helps them establish wholesale clients. The brand sources its French terry and fleece from South Carolina, its baby rib and t-shirt jersey from California Enviro company, and denim and muslin from India.

The brand's customers like being connected to the process of how their clothing is made. Gray shared that Prairie's fan base is "really loyal to the brand." This is an important aspect of the business. The Prairie team puts on a sample sale twice a year and women will line the block standing in line for the deals. An interesting aspect about Prairie is the team does not necessarily market to its fan base. They maintain customer loyalty, a core group, who own pieces from Prairie Underground and they wear them for years and years. This durability and fashionable quality have created repeat customers and spreads via word of mouth and collaborations and pop-ups (see Figure 51).²¹⁴ Additionally, Prairie Underground values art and being a part of the art community. Prairie Underground has been collaborating with local artists lately. In their studio space, the brand has hosted artist series.

²¹⁴ Prairie Underground (@prairieunderground), 2018, "Tonight! We're having an incredible pop-up event before our sale this weekend with one of our favorite people and musicians in Seattle, Moni of JusMoni." *Instagram*, December 8, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bcc7R6wFviU/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.



Figure 51: An example of both a collaboration and pop-up event.

At the end of the interview, Gray underscored the importance of doing work in America and collaborating with people in Prairie Underground’s neighborhood, both literally in the surrounding neighborhood and locally as Seattle. “I find it remarkable that we’re able to do something unique [at Prairie Underground regarding manufacturing and producing locally] and not have to play that game [referring to profit being the sole focus of the business]. I’m proud of this.”²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Lisa Gray, in-person interview with author, February 21, 2018.

Pyne and Smith Clothiers

Joanna McCartney is the founder and designer of Pyne & Smith Clothiers. I conducted a brief, but meaningful, email interview with her and learned about her business practices.²¹⁶ McCartney initially started her company out of personal need. She became tired of dresses that were not built for “an everyday life, or an average woman,” so she began making the dresses herself and selling them at a market in Los Angeles. McCartney says that she “[believes] in the art of dressmaking”²¹⁷ but more than the art, she says that she “[thinks] that it's very important as a business owner to educate yourself about how a product is made, who is making it, and to be responsible with your choices.”²¹⁸ The website advertises the brand as stylish, quality-made, and transparent²¹⁹ and her social media posts reflects these values (see Figure 52).²²⁰

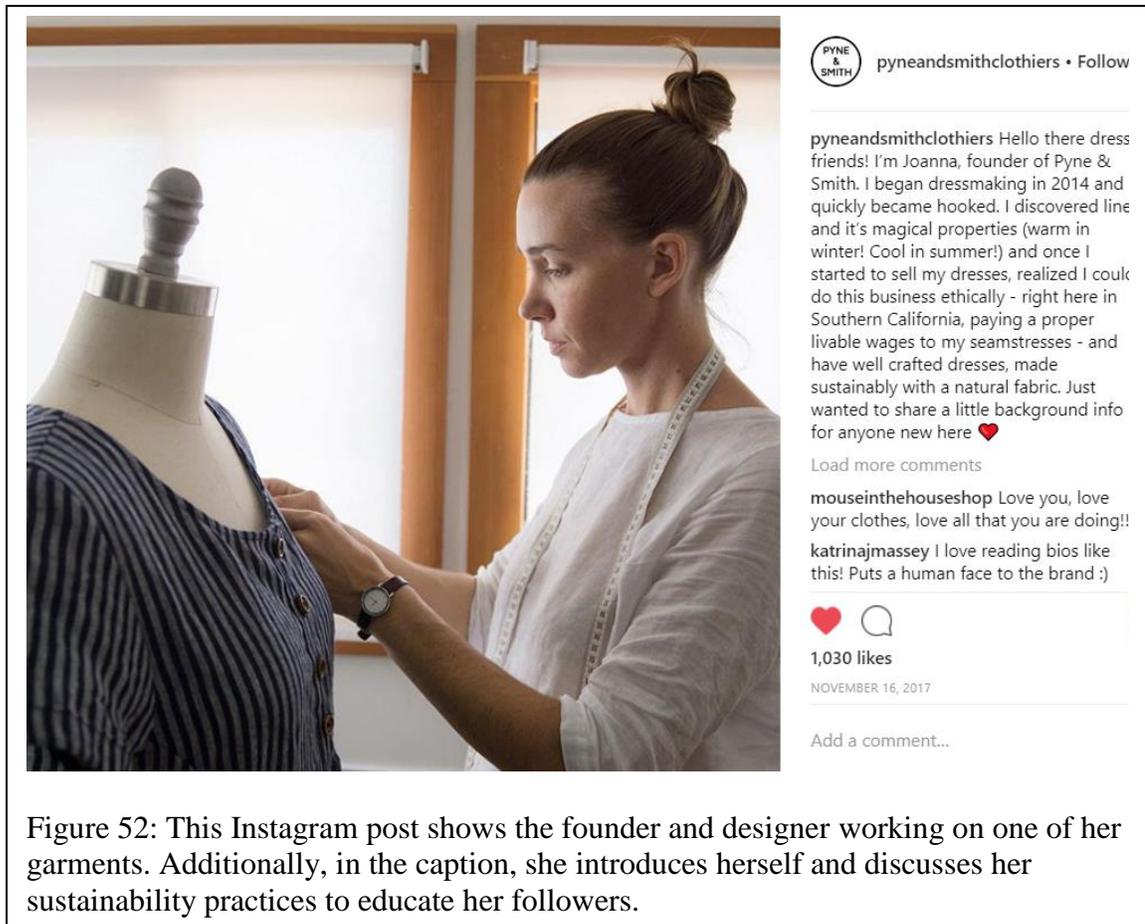
²¹⁶ Joanna McCartney, email message to author, January 23, 2018

²¹⁷ Joanna McCartney, “In my Pyne and Smith Dress,” Pyne and Smith, January 14, 2017, <https://www.pyneandsmith.com/blog/2017/1/14/in-my-pyne-smith-dress>.

²¹⁸ Interview with Maddy Churm of <https://www.heygaley.com/> January 31, 2018

²¹⁹ “Our Story,” Pyne & Smith Clothiers, <https://www.pyneandsmith.com/our-story/>.

²²⁰ Pyne & Smith Clothiers (@pyneandsmithclothiers), 2018, “Hello there dress friends!” *Instagram*, November 16, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbkjcFHIpcs/?taken-by=pyneandsmithclothiers>.



McCartney described Pyne & Smith’s business operations as “pretty basic” because of its small business size. At the time of the interview, it was run as a two-person operation with production on a made to order basis. The structure of the business as small and local allows McCartney to know the process behind every step of her supply chain, such as where the flax is grown, milled and woven, and then the process once it arrives at her facility in California. In many cases, McCartney will still physically handle it as it is being cut, sewn and shipped. She intentionally sources her flax from Europe. In another interview, she referenced why and shared that during her research into sources of natural fiber fabrics, she discovered that not all mills offer the same quality linen.²²¹ She

²²¹Interview with Maddy Churm of <https://www.heygalhey.com/> January 31, 2018

found that while larger mills in Asia offered less expensive linen, these mills treated their products like a commodity and their customers according to their sales volume. Because of this, McCartney chooses to work with the higher quality mills in Europe, not only because of the better-quality linen, but also because of the labor standards for the workers at the mill.

From the mills in Europe, the flax material is then spun into thread and dyed to the colors that McCartney specifically custom designs and then is woven into the finished 100% linen used for the Pyne and Smith dresses.²²² This material is sent to the cutting factory in California, where the dresses are cut and prepared for sewing. The cut pieces are then sewn and finished by the sewing contractor in Los Angeles. McCartney spent two years vetting the factory she now uses today. “I knew I wanted to create a dress that was well made, by people who are paid a fair livable wage, so my dresses are made here, in California.”²²³ She made sure to do her due diligence so that she was creating clothing that met her standards and would live up to the quality (in both product and supply chain) she advertises (see Figure 53).²²⁴

²²² "Our Story," Pyne & Smith Clothiers, <https://www.pyneandsmith.com/our-story/>.

²²³ Interview with Maddy Churm of <https://www.heygalhey.com/> January 31, 2018

²²⁴ Pyne & Smith Clothiers (@pyneandsmithclothiers), 2018, "Who made my clothes?" *Instagram*, April 23, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh7dJTBDq8D/?saved-by=hannah_baldus



Figure 53: Pyne and Smith Hang Tag. As Fashion Revolution asks brands “Who made my clothes?” on the anniversary of the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory, this give brands who are producing sustainably the chance to share about labor practices. Pyne & Smith does just that in this Instagram post. The caption continues: “The fabric in then flown to our cutter in Southern California, where the dresses are cut and bundled ready for sewing (we gather the waste from these cuttings & send them to be recycled into car & airplane seat coverings.) The cut pieces are then sewn and finished by our sewing contractor in Los Angeles. We spent two years looking for the most experienced and ethical production facilities to make sure our dresses were being made by people that pay and treat their employees a fair, living wage in a safe and friendly working environment. While there are many garment manufacturing places around the world that offer MUCH cheaper pricing, very few have the quality and compassion that we demand for our dresses. Top quality sewing, attention to detail, and most importantly, the employees are happy and well compensated!

Image 3 - Marcos is seen sewing up the grey linen dress, and image 4 - Lilia finishes our dresses, trimming, tagging & marking. I pick up our dresses once they are finished, I inspect every single one, then it’s bagged and shipped, right to you.”

Other than sustainable fabric sourcing and product production, Pyne & Smith also incorporates zero waste measures, eco-friendly packaging, and recyclable trimmings in the form of buttons. For the zero-waste initiative, the company uses the waste from the

cuttings and sends them to be recycled into car and airplane seat coverings.²²⁵

McCartney decided to use eco-friendly packaging so she could maintain consistency of her values; it did not make sense to be producing in an eco-friendly manner while maintaining wasteful practices regarding shipping and packaging (see Figure 54).²²⁶

Along this same vein, the buttons used in Pyne and Smith dresses are corozo nut buttons, harvested sustainably and ethically made.²²⁷

McCartney summarizes her ethic regarding dressmaking when she said, “I’m very concerned about the impact of fast fashion and love being a part of a slow, ethical process that hopefully will set the standard for future designers and brands.”²²⁸ McCartney’s brand reflects her intentionality in all aspects of Pyne and Smith’s operations and supply chain.

²²⁵ "Our Story," Pyne & Smith Clothiers, <https://www.pyneandsmith.com/our-story/>.

²²⁶ Pyne & Smith Clothiers (@pyneandsmithclothiers), 2018, "The journey to make a well made dress has resulted in so many additional benefits I hadn't expected when I began making these." *Instagram*, April 18, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bhu71X8D2Tc/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

²²⁷ "Questions," Pyne & Smith Clothiers, <https://www.pyneandsmith.com/faq/>.

²²⁸ Interview with Maddy Churm of <https://www.heygalhey.com/> January 31, 2018



Figure 54: McCartney shares her zero-waste, recyclable trimmings, and eco-friendly packaging initiatives with her Instagram followers.

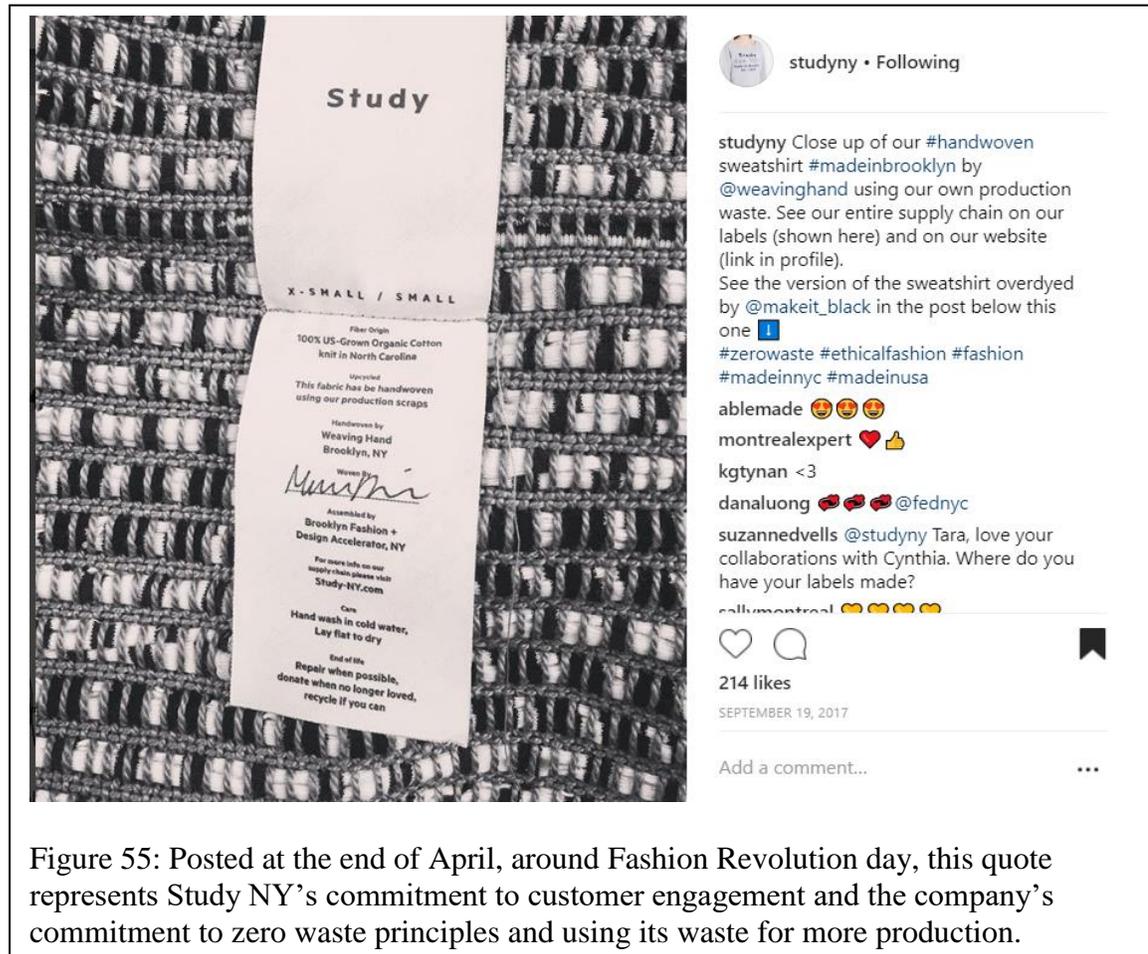
Study NY

I interviewed Tara St. James, the founder and creative director of Study NY.²²⁹ St. James worked in conventional fashion for 12 years working on design, development, and sourcing in S Asia and E Asia. Through this time, she recognized the downsides of the conventional industry. She developed her own collection with another company but had control over production and materials. Then, between 2004 and 2009, she slowly transitioned from conventional to environmentally friendly practices. Now, her focus is

²²⁹ Tara St. James, Zoom conference call with author, March 7, 2018.

on zero waste production, waste recycling, and in-depth transparency (see Figure 55).²³⁰

She founded Study NY with her first Fall/Winter collection in 2011.²³¹



St. James has a unique perspective because even though Study NY is a young company, she has experience in fast fashion and when she started Study, there were fewer companies focused on sustainability and she has seen drastic change regarding sustainable production and consumption over the years. In an interview with Remake's

²³⁰ Study New York (@studyny), 2018, "Close up of our #handwoven sweatshirt #madeinbrooklyn by @weavinghand using our own production waste." *Instagram*, September 19, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZPCi7SBPIV/?taken-by=studyny>.

²³¹ "Collections," Study NY, <http://study-ny.com/collections/>.

Humans of Fashion: Study NY, St. James shared, “I originally named the brand Study because I wanted each season to investigate a different sustainability initiative—my first collection studied zero waste, followed by weaving, knitting, and natural dyes. I got to a point where I had examined every process except the business model and found an inherent conceptual inconsistency between the fashion cycle and sustainability.”²³²

The sustainable fashion community has been hugely important for St. James. She said that the conventional system lacked collaboration and did not want to share resources. She argues that collaboration is not just a benefit in the sustainable fashion community, but that it is necessary because “otherwise, [the sustainable fashion community] would be starting from scratch” and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. She cites Timo Rissanen, a Finnish designer and author of *Zero Waste Fashion Design*, as a large influence of her work. Because of St. James’ personal emphasis on collaboration, she involved her brand with the Brooklyn Fashion Design Accelerator (BFDA). The BFDA is a new mentorship initiative for developing sustainable designers and their businesses. Her studio space is located there. As for how St. James sells her clothing line, she has an online website for DTC sales and has wholesale relationships with boutiques. One exciting development occurred through Selfridge’s “Material World” initiative and educational campaign for its customers. Selfridge in London heard about what St. James does with Study NY and the company approached her to carry her line in its stores.

When asked if Study NY is an innovative company, St. James said that yes, at one point, it was highly innovative. Study NY used to be at the forefront of decreasing waste

²³² Ankur Maniar, “20 Questions with Tara St. James,” *Remake*, May 26, 2018, <http://remake.world/films/20-questions-with-tara-st-james/>.

and changing business models. Now, people have caught up. Which on one hand, is exciting and she said, “I want what I’m doing to be the norm.”²³³ But St. James also “[enjoys] pushing boundaries” and is thinking about new ways to innovate in her sphere.

Regarding Study NY’s supply chain, 90% of the manufacturing takes place in the NYC garment district. She sources her material from Japan, China, and India and looks for organic cotton first, and the bulk of Study’s production is GOTS cotton certified. Whereas most certifications have a lot of opacity, with GOTS, she knows the process because the whole mill needs to be certified. GOTS is rigorous, like “Kosher” is to food. She also works with hemp, linen, and recycled cotton as well as wool. St. James sources her wool from Fiber Shed, a California- based initiative focused on partnering with climate beneficial. But the Twist dress in her collection is different. For this dress specifically, the fiber is grown in Texas, then sent to North Carolina to be turned into fabric. Then, St. James works with a worker owned cooperative in North Carolina called Opportunity Threads to create the garment. St. James even uses recycled buttons sewed on by hand to promote longevity (see Figure 56).²³⁴

²³³ Tara St. James, Zoom conference call with author, March 7, 2018.

²³⁴Study New York (@studyny), 2018, "The buttons on our shirts are made from recycled plastic waste and we sew them on by hand to make sure they stay on for a long time." *Instagram*, September 20, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BZR_VbvhG9T/?taken-by=studyny.



Figure 56: Study NY uses recycled buttons.

St. James feels conflicted about consumer education because she has seen consumer education done in ways that turns people off the sustainable fashion community. St. James shared, “I want to avoid being preachy and I want to avoid focusing on the bad.” In this way, St. James focuses on what she is doing with her extreme transparency. She uses social media and her website to show customers where and how things are made as well as other sustainable processes such as reusing waste. “People don’t want to buy when they feel guilty, [rather, they want to feel positive about the experience].”²³⁵

²³⁵ Tara St. James, Zoom conference call with author, March 7, 2018.

Because St. James has been involved in fashion and sustainable fashion for some time, she has seen many changes over time. First, she shared that the way brands communicate with customers, each other, and their suppliers has changed due to social media and the rise in “sharing stories.” Additionally, a systems thinking approach has been revolutionizing how brands view their supply chains as it encourages a deeper look. Moreover, refining “best practices” is a continuous process. For example, the newest buzzword in sustainability “Circularity” and this concept encourages not only different means of production, but designing in such a way that the disposal of a garment is environmentally friendly.

St. James ended our interview emphasizing that sustainable fashion needs to address the big social questions even as we think about consumption and the importance of engaging consumers in the discussions around sustainable practices (see Figure 57).²³⁶ She said that in her experience, there has been a push to decrease consumption from the point of view of decreasing the raw materials used. And while she does not deny that this is a huge issue, she stressed the need to look at the human factor. With the rise in automated manufacturing, she asked, “What happens to the 80 million people involved in the garment/textile industry worldwide?” The sustainable fashion community needs to be thinking about the big social questions even as they think about consumption. As St. James continues to grow her brand, she wants to reduce the brand to its core essentials: Study NY is an incubator and petri dish for sustainability. It will be interesting to see what initiatives and practices St. James uses next.

²³⁶Study New York (@studyny), 2018, "Words to live by." *Instagram*, April 24, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BTSSdygAw3Q/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.



Figure 57: Posted at the end of April, around Fashion Revolution day, this quote represents Study NY’s commitment to customer engagement and its value that our clothing matters.

Tabii Just

Tabii Just is a zero-waste womenswear clothing label founded in 2012 that is made in USA.²³⁷ I interviewed founder and designer Tabitha St. Bernard to learn more about the brand’s sustainability efforts.²³⁸ After getting her fashion degree, St. Bernard did not know much about the ethical fashion industry, so she pursued a job for a large fashion company. St. Bernard became bothered by the amount of waste and other problems within the large system, so she left her job and reached out to a mentor on zero

²³⁷"About Tabii," Tabii Just, <https://tabiijust.com/pages/new-about-tabii>.

²³⁸ Tabitha St. Bernard, phone conversation with author, March 2, 2018.

waste (see Figure 58).²³⁹ Since then, she has grown her knowledge of sustainable business through her relationships, reaching out to people, and starting Tabii Just. She is both the designer and the manager of her business.

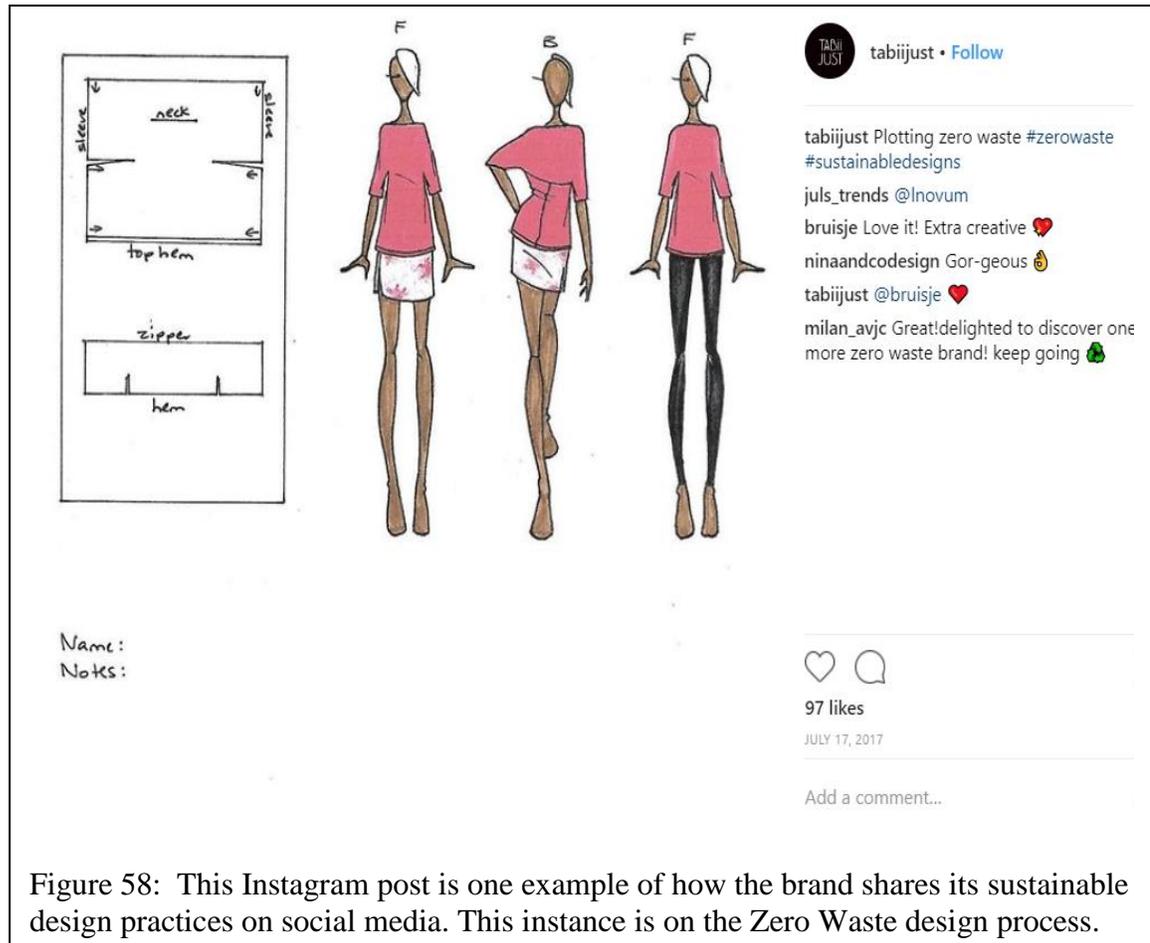


Figure 58: This Instagram post is one example of how the brand shares its sustainable design practices on social media. This instance is on the Zero Waste design process.

St. Bernard found her supply chain by researching, networking, and utilizing her local connections in New York. For her fabric supplier, she works with a company called Preview Textiles. They have Dead Stock Fabric and St. Bernard chooses to use DSF because it is in-line with zero waste ideals. St Bernard has partnered with Preview Textiles since the birth of Tabii Just in 2012. For clothing production, St. Bernard works

²³⁹Tabii Just (@tabiijust), 2018, "Plotting zero waste." *Instagram*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BWqSordj0kn/?taken-by=tabiijust>.

with a New York factory through the BFDA (Brooklyn Fashion + Design Accelerator)²⁴⁰ and its machines and people. She sells DTC online but also offers Personal Style Sessions available only to NYC clients at no additional cost where the client can try on her clothing.²⁴¹

St. Bernard enjoys collaboration as a fashion designer and said that it is her favorite part of the business. She collaborates with designs as well as other brands. Recently, she launched a clothing line, Licari, as well as another collaboration (see Figure 59).²⁴² St. Bernard is involved in different projects (instead of calling them all Tabii Just) because they have different aesthetics and styles. Tabii Just is specifically designed to cater to professional women who are conscious consumers who want something comfortable to wear, but who want to make a statement.

²⁴⁰ See interview with Tara St. James from Study NY for more information on the BFDA.

²⁴¹ "Design Statement," Tabii Just, <https://tabiijust.com/pages/new-design-statement>.

²⁴² Tabii Just (@tabiijust), 2018, "Last week was a blur, so excited to have launched @livariclothing with these two dynamite women." *Instagram*, Septemeber 16, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZMKnr-B34O/?taken-by=tabiijust>.

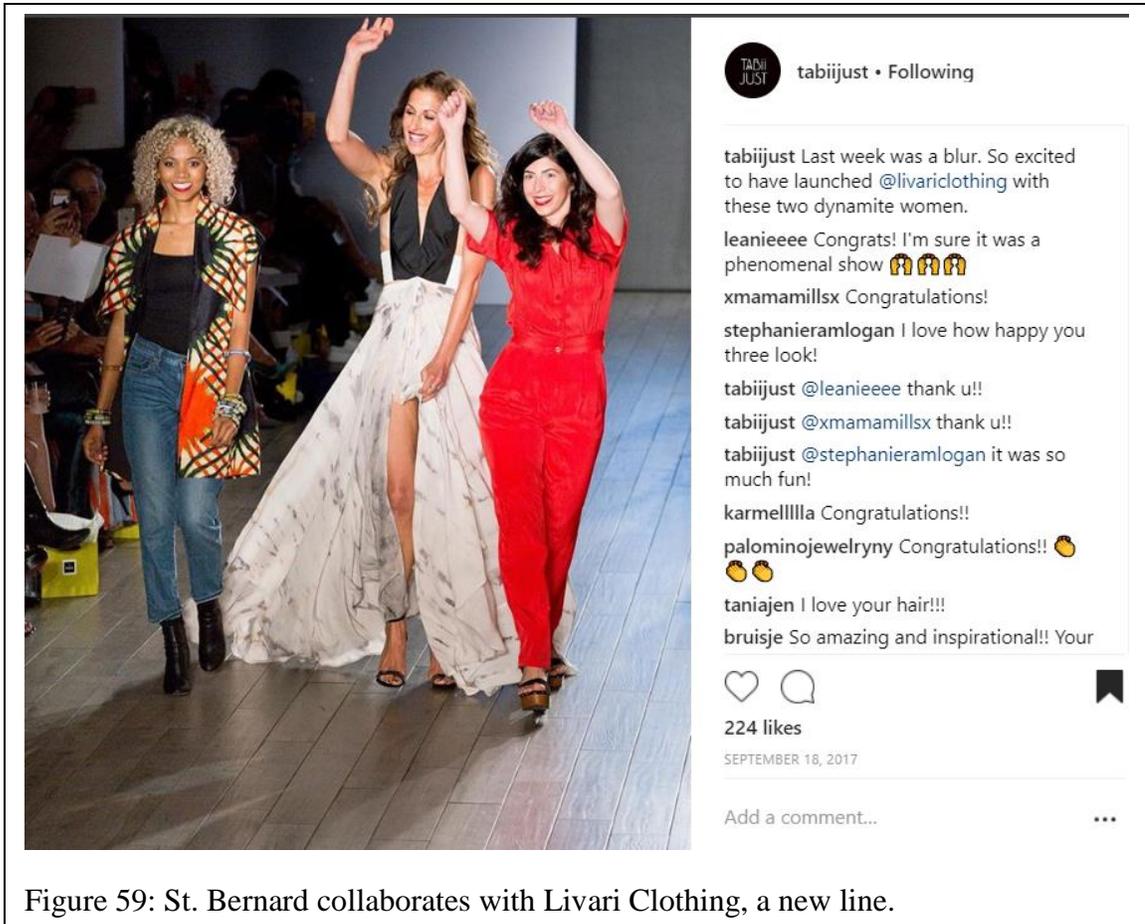
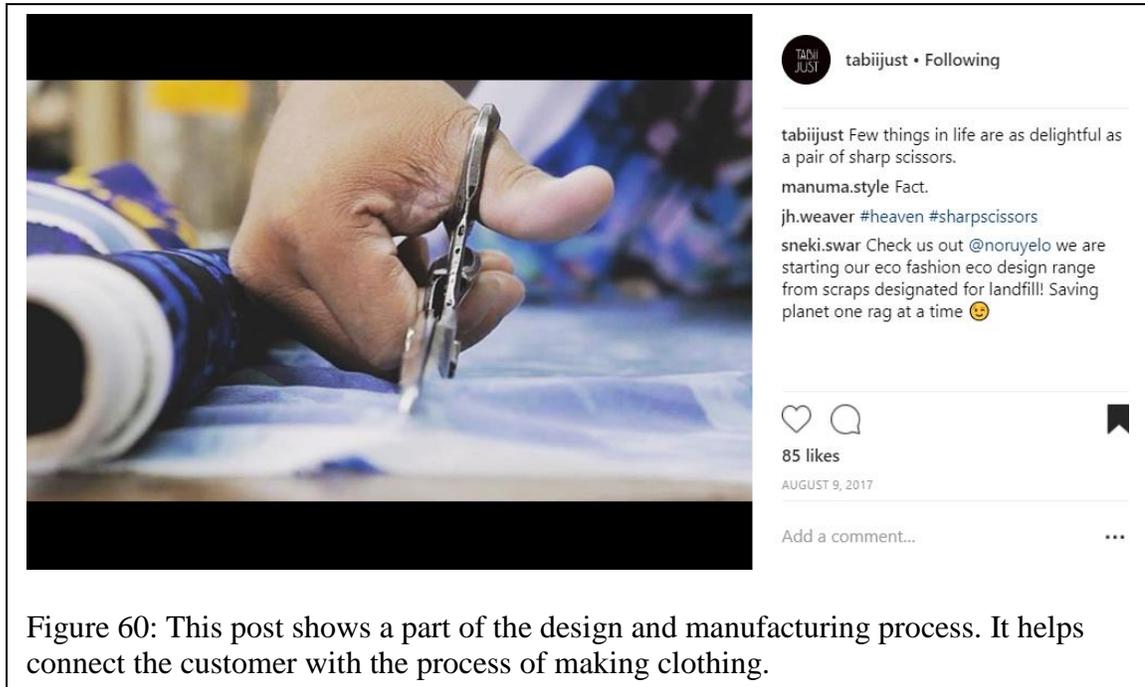


Figure 59: St. Bernard collaborates with Livari Clothing, a new line.

St. Bernard specifically does not pursue certifications because her business model does not need it and it can be expensive. For her, it would not be worth the cost because her customers do not require it as she has already established good rapport with customers on both her designs and commitment to sustainability. St. Bernard said that if the brand had a bigger operation and the budget for it, she might reconsider, but that at this moment, it is unnecessary.

A large part of why Tabii Just does not require certification is because of its emphasis on consumer education. St. Bernard said that is a huge part of Tabii Just's reach. In addition to social media and her website, St. Bernard goes into schools, sits on panels at conventions, and spends a great deal of effort to educate people/consumers about its practices. St. Bernard uses Tabii Just's Instagram to share its design and

manufacturing processes to help connect the customer with the process of making clothes (see Figure 60).²⁴³



Perhaps most exciting regarding big-picture sustainability, St. Bernard said that she has witnessed an increased demand for eco-fashion. When asked if she sees eco-fashion as a trend, she said, “No. I see it becoming the new norm for the industry [because the industry cannot continue on as business per usual].”²⁴⁴ She further thinks that it is just a matter of time before businesses transition over to being more sustainable—especially because of customer demand.

St. Bernard’s goals for the future include reaching out to more people in two ways. First, by expanding her wholesaling into smaller boutiques and increase online DTC and second, by placing greater emphasis on consumer education through

²⁴³Tabii Just (@tabiijust), 2018, "Few things in life are as delightful as a pair of sharp scissors." *Instagram*, August 9, 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BXIJ4a3jaFm/?taken-by=tabiijust>.

²⁴⁴ Tabitha St. Bernard, phone conversation with author, March 2, 2018.

collaborations. Moreover, St. Bernard said that her clothing line has been going through a transition in that she has been focusing more on sustainability as a whole instead of focusing mostly on the Zero Waste aspect of the design.

The Fabric Social

Sharna de Lacy is one of The Fabric Social's founders and her roles are in production and business.²⁴⁵ De Lacy defines The Fabric Social (TFS) as a Social Enterprise because the company is more than a clothing company with an emphasis on being "hardcore feminist and hardcore social impact." The purpose of TFS, beyond producing and selling clothing, is to help create careers for the people who produce the clothing. This training process goes beyond simply teaching a skill. The business is set up in a way to give a "business boot camp" to the people (mostly women) who work on the clothing. This "business boot camp" teaches the producers business skills such as how to manage buyer relationships, technology, and end of production line logistics. Ultimately, the training system TFS came up with supports the women to "build their business, acquire more customers, and make more money."

TFS works in areas with high recognized need due to armed conflict and oil/resource extraction that devastated communities. For example, with the political situation in Myanmar (the ex-dictatorship) many large factories swooped in and monopolized manufacturing there including the clothing industry. A compounding problem is that isolated areas of these countries with high recognized need often do not benefit from aid, typical economic growth and social growth that follows the times of

²⁴⁵ Sharna de Lacy, Zoom conference call with author, February 21, 2018.

conflict. De Lacy and her fellow cofounders saw the need for women to rebuild their entire gendered existence and decided to use TFS to empower women to rebuild their own local economies.

TFS team tries to have a handle on the majority of its supply chain. De Lacy said that responsible businesses need to look at the entire supply chain, but she also acknowledged that it can be challenging to do this. For example, she shared about her own experience trying to find reasonably-priced, local, and traceable cotton and said that TFS's values and specifications have been difficult to fulfil. However, de Lacy shared that TFS's primary goal is to support/promote local industry and the team decided that "local" will be the determining factor of what the company will emphasize over other sustainability values if they must choose. The brand sells DTC without a storefront because maintaining retail is difficult and is an aspect TFS team does not have an interest in managing.

When I asked if TFS had certifications to take some of the supply chain ambiguity away, de Lacy said that TFS does not have certifications, although some of its partners do. Right now, TFS established a high level of trust with their consumers and that coupled with the cost limitations with certifications, means de Lacy and her team will not be pursuing certifications in the near future. Moreover, de Lacy and her team visit the factories and people they work with regularly (see Figure 61).²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶The Fabric Social (@thefabricsocial), 2018, "Watching those silk babies ending their metamorphosis is something pretty special." *Instagram*, January 11, 2017, www.instagram.com/p/BPIKUhZgGNr/?taken-by=thefabricsocial.

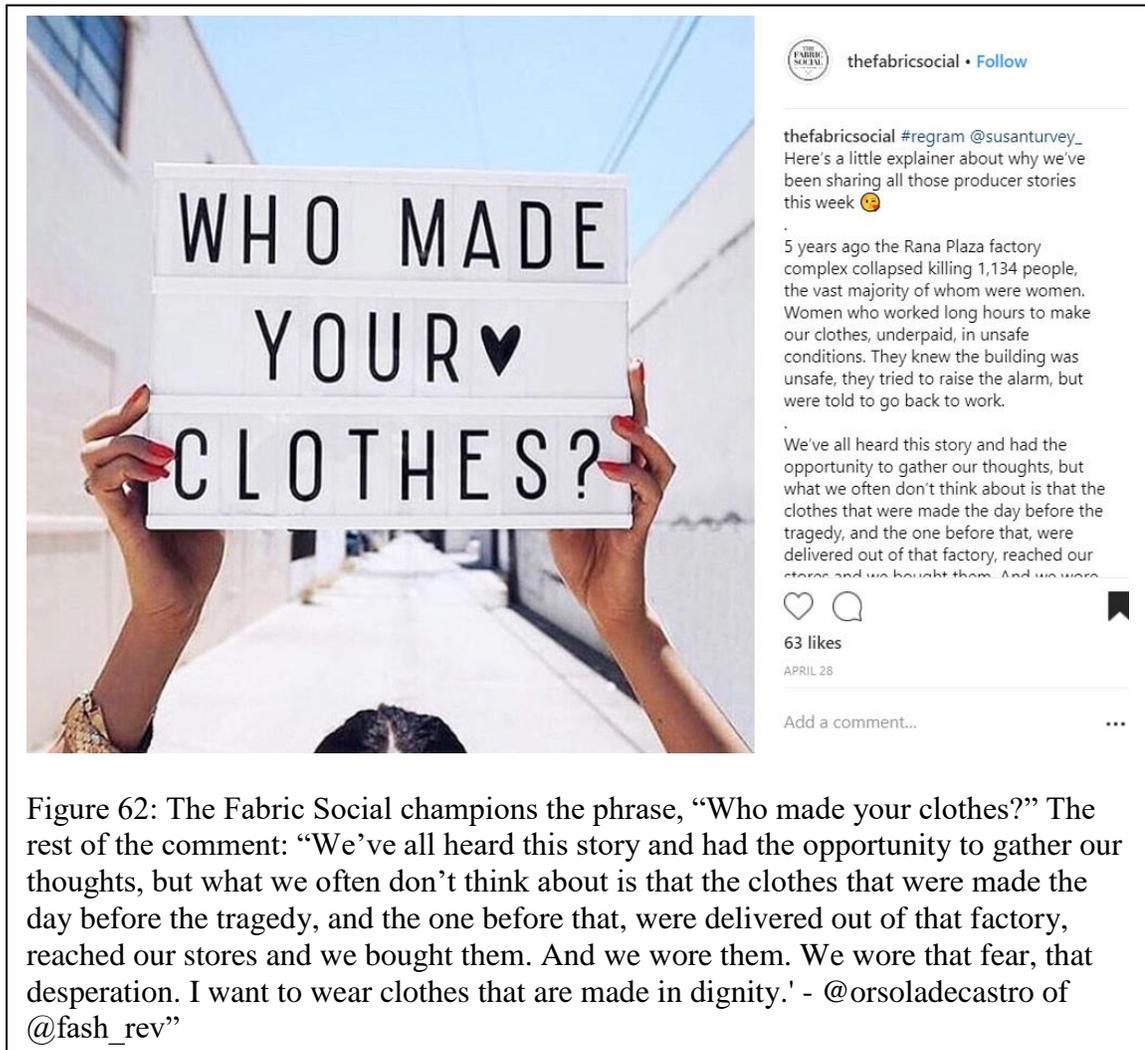
One of de Lacy's biggest critiques of sustainable fashion came through her own



Figure 61: Sharna de Lacy visits a silkworm farm. These silkworm babies will eventually produce silk fiber used in making silk garments.

experience with H&M in Cambodia. De Lacy said that large companies typically have one person focused on the sustainability side of supply chain management. H&M outsources everything and there is no way the one person in the country can manage the entirety of the outsourced supply chains. She said that she has witnessed factories with riots and child labor and being “on the ground” in factory districts in these areas is a much different reality than being in an office making “sustainability” decisions. Issues like this are why she does not trust H&M’s sustainability claims. De Lacy argues that now more than ever, consumer education hugely important because so many brands such as H&M use greenwashing as a marketing ploy. TFS has an explicit political voice

advocacy is a large part of TFS’s marketing (see Figure 62).²⁴⁷ The team participates in Fashion Revolution week and are active on social media feeds & Facebook discussions.



TFS operates a highly innovative business model. Because the business delivers impact through capacity building and empowering women, Action Aid Australia (AAA) reached out to TFS team about a government grant to provide aid via business

²⁴⁷The Fabric Social (@thefabricsocial), 2018, “Here’s a little explainer about why we’ve been sharing all those producer related stories this week.” *Instagram*, April 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BiHkYMch521/?taken-by=thefabricsocial>.

development in Myanmar (see Figure 63).²⁴⁸ De Lacy said that in general, NGO's are skeptical of business, but that she and TFS team have been pushing AAA to think specifically about business role in aid. TFS team has been incredibly excited about this opportunity because they have seen many issues with NGO's operations in the past. De Lacy shared that NGO's have a habit of training thousands of women, provide little to no follow up, and then brag about the number of people served. De Lacy asked, "what does it even mean to train a certain number of people if [the actual impact is nothing]?" De Lacy asserted that "You have to be accountable to the people you're working with" and said that TFS is innovative because it focuses on 5 women at a time and are strategic about how they train and who they train. De Lacy said that TFS the business boot camps for social impact are effective because they "meet people where they're at and look at what they need."

²⁴⁸The Fabric Social (@thefabricsocial), 2018, "We got to do social media training today with this group of utter legends." *Instagram*, December 22, 2016, www.instagram.com/p/BOWJ3F5gZRx/?taken-by=thefabricsocial.



Figure 63: TFS partners with Action Aid Australia while working with women in Myanmar.

De Lacy shared that TFS has lots coming up on the horizon. First and foremost, TFS team is “getting gutsy with design” to create desirable products. When TFS first started, they had enormous limitations with what they could produce, but now that producers are more advanced, they can do harder patterns and more technical work. Other than design, TFS is working to expand its supply chain, incorporate more interesting fabrics, and engage in short term collaborations and projects. Most importantly, de Lacy said that the team is working to scale TFS to create more careers and support more women to build empowering careers.

Thread Harvest

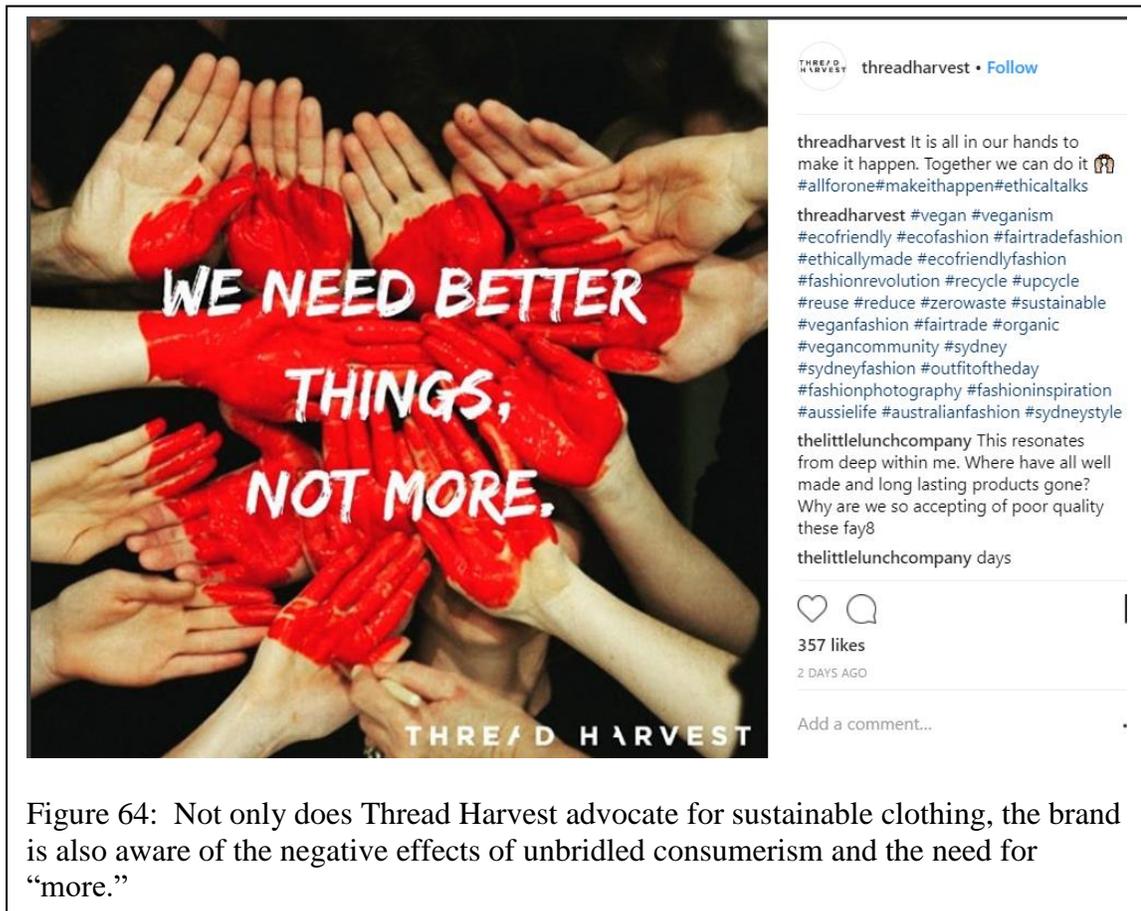
For Thread Harvest, I interviewed Neridah Morris, the company's Director and Chief Marketing Officer.²⁴⁹ The current Thread Harvest team identifies as Christians and their faith motivated them start a business in ethical fashion. Thread Harvest was originally started in 2014 by two impact investors; however, in 2016, Morris and a few of her friends bought the business. Thread Harvest is an online retailer of ethical fashion and offers a variety of styles and brands through its website. The website sells women's, men's, teen's, and kid's clothing from 36 ethical fashion labels.²⁵⁰ It is the brand with the biggest audience potential (from the brands I researched) due to the variety of goods it retails.

From the start, Thread Harvest's mission has been to highlight that clothing can be ethical and stylish; the two are not mutually exclusive. Morris' own journey in the ethical fashion world started about 5 years ago from the time of the interview. She wanted to start a "profits for purpose" fashion label. Morris went to a business workshop and asked where the products would be sourced, and it did not sit well with her when she realized the products came from China. She was interested not just in putting the profit to purpose, but also being accountable to sourcing ethically. Morris said, "We want the industry to grow and we have the power to help them to do that" and one of the best ways for this to happen is through greater accountability along the supply chain. Thread Harvest is committed to selling clothing that are made "better" and these are determined by their Impact Badges (see Figure 64).²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Neridah Morris, Zoom conference call with author, February 27, 2018.

²⁵⁰ "Collections," Thread Harvest, <https://threadharvest.com.au/collections>.

²⁵¹ Thread Harvest (@threadharvest), 2018, "It is all in our hands to make it happen." *Instagram*, July 8, 2018, www.instagram.com/p/Bk9vW6UALqP/?taken-by=threadharvest.



One innovative practice that Morris and her team are proud of is the Impact Badges associated with each article of clothing. The Impact Badges were created by Thread Harvest to categorize the sustainability practices associated with each article of clothing. Initially, there were seven Impact Badges. At the time of the interview, the new team added one, to include Fair Trade, Employing the Marginalized, Empowering Women, Organic, Eco-friendly, Upcycling, Cause Supporting, and Living Wage. And within the past couple of months, the brand has done some restructuring and there are six: Living Wage, Empowering Women, Eco-friendly, Fair Trade, Employing the Marginalized, and Charity Supporting. These now six Impact Badges offer the same values but are categorized slightly differently. The goal of the Impact Badges is to help

the consumer shop (they can click through the impact badges on the websites) and to help the Thread Harvest team vet the brands they carry through the website.

As for the vetting process, each brand that Thread Harvest retails must make 2-3 of the Impact Badge requirements, but Morris said that most brands make 4-5 of the stipulations. Initially, the brand vetting process looks like weekly 1-2 emails between Thread Harvest and the brand in question where the teams discuss sustainability themes such as style, transparency, and materials used. Also important, Morris communicates directly with the founder of the business. Additionally, the team takes certifications into account, they view it as better if brands have pursued and achieved certifications. Thread Harvest, itself, is a Certified B Corporation (see Figure 65).²⁵²

²⁵²Thread Harvest (@threadharvest), 2018, "When you see the Certified B Corporation seal, you know that company meets the highest standards of social and environmental impact." *Instagram*, February 8, 2018, www.instagram.com/p/Be93NYqAT2D/?taken-by=threadharvest.

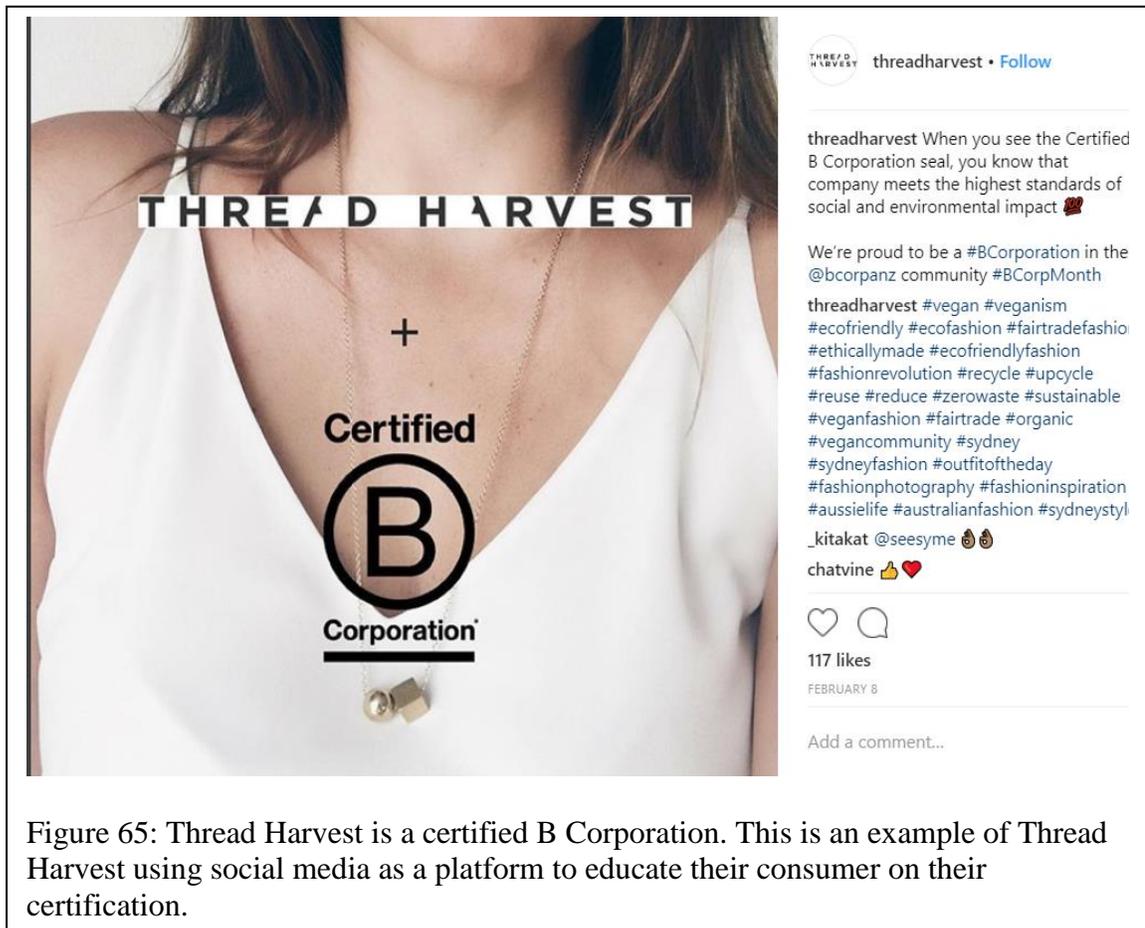


Figure 65: Thread Harvest is a certified B Corporation. This is an example of Thread Harvest using social media as a platform to educate their consumer on their certification.

Morris asserted that “business should exist for the betterment of all, not just a few.” But also talked about the ways that ethical fashion is challenging. Especially, the cost of producing with an ethical standard. The Thread Harvest team wants price to not be an issue, but this is not the reality of ethical production. The team has found that people are comfortable paying \$10-15 more for a shirt, but not necessarily \$50 more. Because of this, a focus of the company has also been on retailing relatively affordable sustainable clothing.

When asked what is next for Thread Harvest, Morris said her team is trying to raise capital to grow their operations and online presence. Morris also shared that the team has a meeting with investors in NYC and Europe as well as Charles Passons, a

textile mill/partner in Australia. Additionally, Thread Harvest wants to create its own label. This is a process and Morris and her team are currently looking into different partnerships and having many conversations to put this into motion. Morris' last point included the team's goal to focus more on consumer education (see Figure 66).²⁵³ Moving forward, the team is asking themselves the question, "Are we an educator or retailer? Or both? And if we are both, are we doing both well?" Ultimately, Thread Harvest tries to promote people to shop ethical because the team knows that the scope of impact could be enormous.

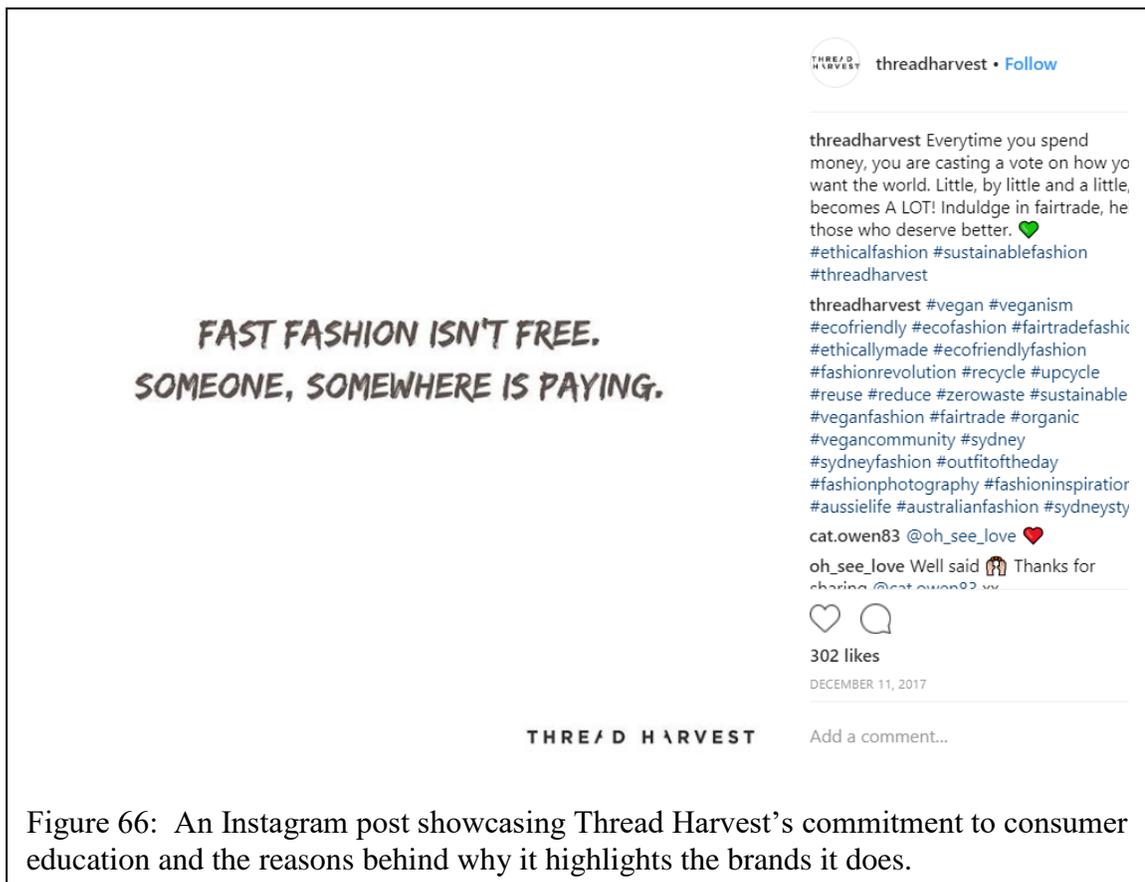


Figure 66: An Instagram post showcasing Thread Harvest's commitment to consumer education and the reasons behind why it highlights the brands it does.

²⁵³Thread Harvest (@threadharvest), 2018, "Everytime you spend money, you are casting a vote on how you want the world." *Instagram*, December 11, 2017, www.instagram.com/p/Bck8ynAFIYO/?taken-by=threadharvest.

Uniform Handmade

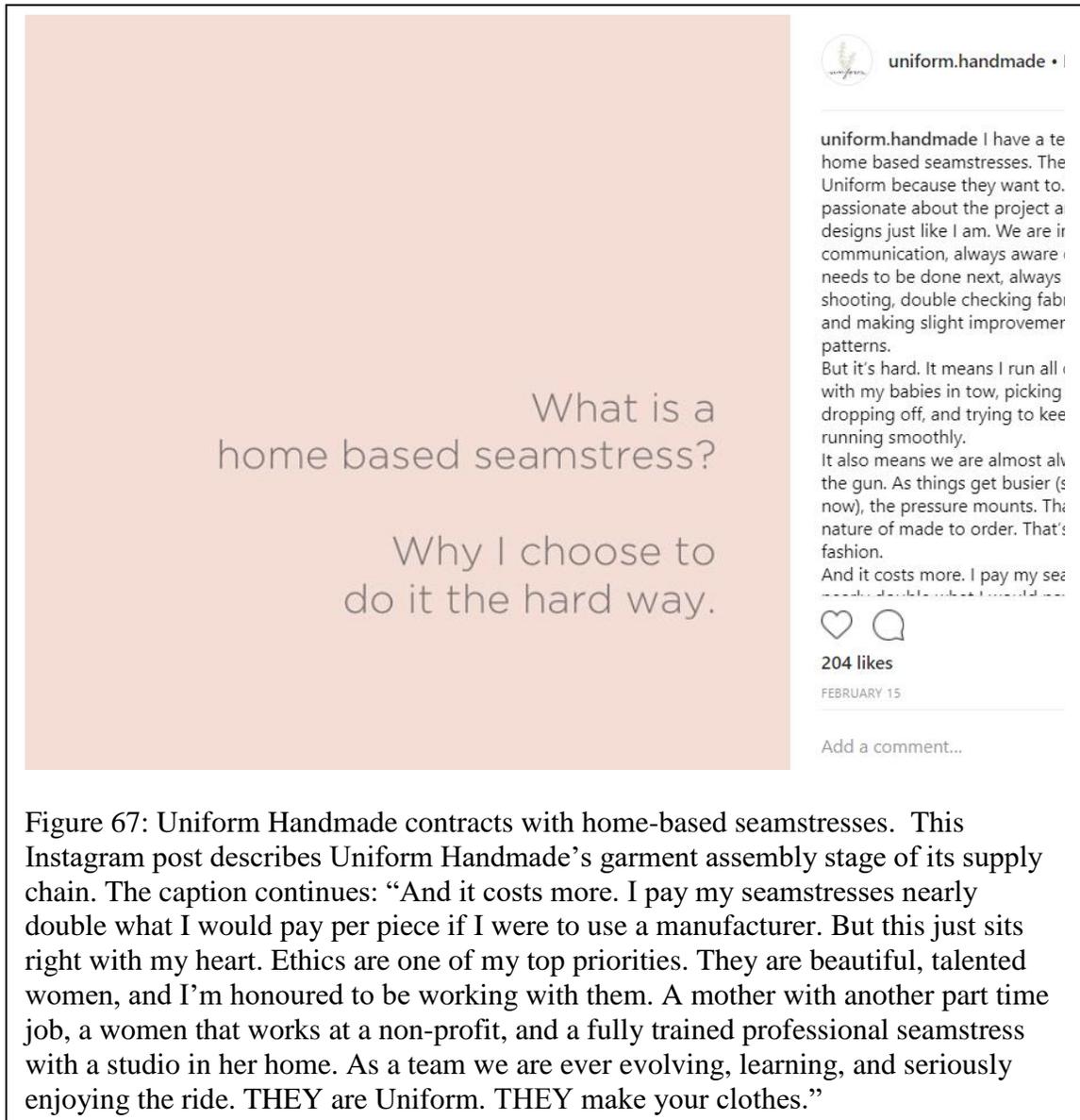
Uniform Handmade is a slow fashion clothing company based out of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. I interviewed Kati Moore, the founder.²⁵⁴ Uniform Handmade is a new company, about 7 months old at the time of the interview. Without a textile or design background, Moore set out to create a business that would fill her own needs as a consumer. From there, her business model was created out of personal necessity. Moore could not find anything she wanted to wear after having two babies and she thought if she could find a seamstress, she could create a t-shirt. She designed the shirt to be loose and drape-y. Being so new, Moore's emphasis is on trial and error with a lot of evolution. The evolution is also due to Moore learning so much about the ill-environmental and social effects of the clothing industry and how she wants to be different than the conventional systems. For example, Moore started producing her first shirt with a material that consisted of a 60/40 linen/polyester blend; however, she has since switched to only all-natural materials due to what she has learned about the harmful nature of synthetic materials.

Moore's business model is characterized by a commitment to learning best practices of slow fashion. Uniform Handmade's production is made to order, typically for individuals, but she completes group orders, too. The articles of clothing available are intentionally season-less, small batch (only 4 items) with the idea that they can easily fit as part of capsule wardrobes. Moore works with home-based seamstresses and one has a background in design (see Figure 67).²⁵⁵ This way, the clothing is produced locally and

²⁵⁴ Kati Moore, Zoom conference call with author, February 27, 2018.

²⁵⁵Uniform (@uniform.handmade), 2018, "I have a team of three home based seamstresses." *Instagram*, February 15, 2018, www.instagram.com/p/BfPCbziFU31/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

allows for the made to order production and flexibility when catering to customers' requests.



Regarding Uniform Handmade's supply chain, three women are involved in the daily process of production from start to finish. Moore said that finding supplier who does their due diligence has been difficult and that it is an ongoing process. For woven linen, organic cotton, and hemp, Moore identified both manufacturers and wholesalers in

Delta and Montreal that met her standards. She stays away from bamboo because she feels that the market is saturated with it and “doesn’t know for sure” how she feels about it—Moore wonders if bamboo fabrics can be considered truly sustainable because of the processes that turn raw bamboo into fiber. Looking into other options for more sustainable fabrics, for example, she has been looking to use an organic cotton blend with stinging nettle, especially since stinging nettle is local to her area. She cited that this type of fabric was used in WW2 uniforms. Its properties are varied, and it can be thick or similar to hemp, thus it is versatile. Moore lamented that the US and Canada generally lack the infrastructure to produce and mill and weave locally, so she would source the fabric from the Himalayas—would be coming from India, hand loomed.

For the alpaca wool she uses, Moore created a “hyper local” supply chain (see Figure 68).²⁵⁶ When Moore decided to design something with wool, she researched wool and decided to use Alpaca wool due to its sustainable properties. Once she decided to use animal products, she wanted to make sure the animal was raised, wool harvested, and raw material turned into fabric an ethical way. Moore identified an Alpaca farm near her home and developed a relationship with the owner. She looked into the shearing process and the overall treatment of animals and determined that she would work with this farm. Not only is the fiber sourced there, but a spinner is brought in and the wool is spun on site, too. Because of the process, the production requires 18-20 hours of labor per cardigan, and this is reflected in the price of the garment. But Moore knows she is producing a quality-made garment that can be worn for years to come and she believes in the value of hyper-local production.

²⁵⁶Uniform (@uniform.handmade), 2018, "It's really the only way to describe the Cardi." *Instagram*, January 4, 2018, www.instagram.com/p/BdiP1ijlaOG/?saved-by=hannah_baldus.

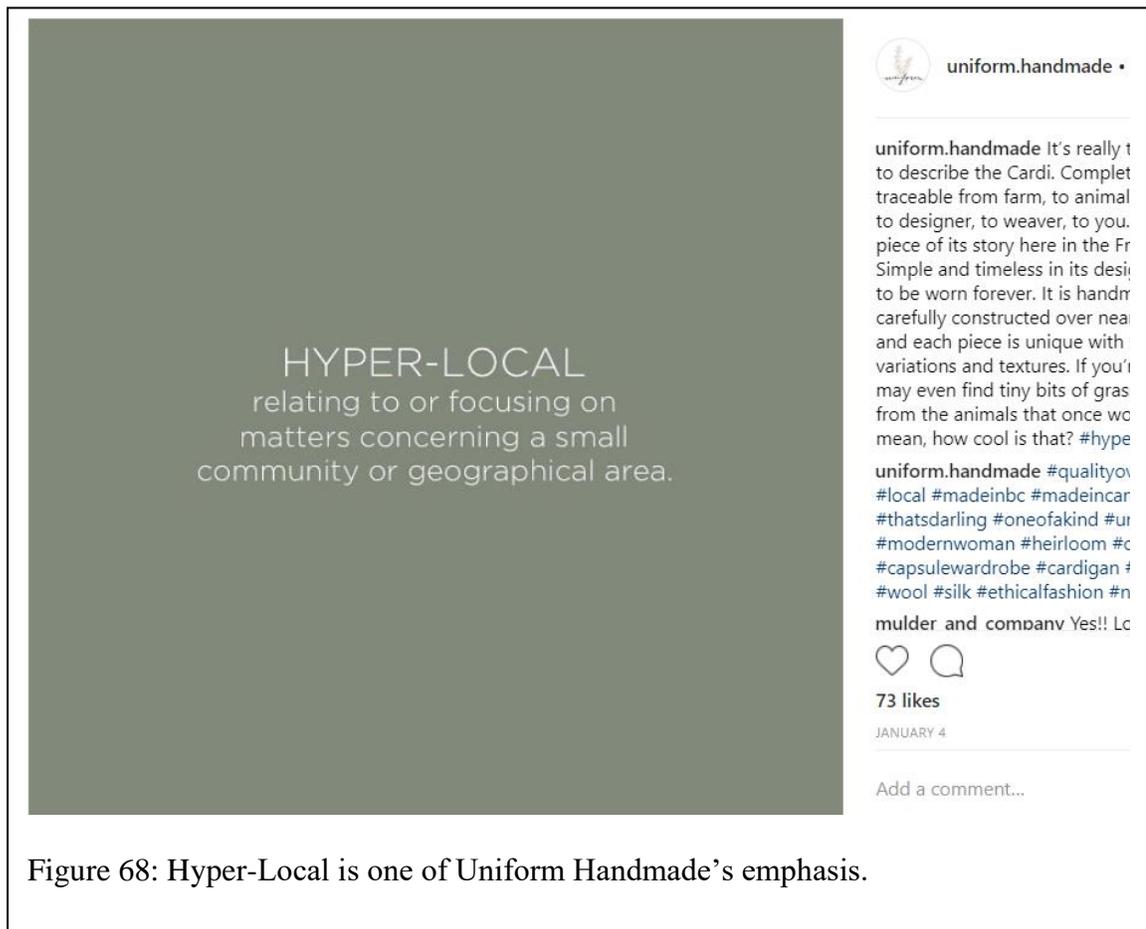


Figure 68: Hyper-Local is one of Uniform Handmade’s emphasis.

Regarding customer education and engagement, Uniform Handmade prioritizes sharing their processes. Even though the company does not have much information on its website about its practices, Moore maintains an active presence on Instagram to connect with customers and like-minded individuals, while promoting the business’s sustainable practices. Instagram has also served as a marketing platform for the company (see Figure 69).²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Uniform (@uniform.handmade), 2018, "I've become just a little obsessed with hemp lately," *Instagram*, March 7, 2018, www.instagram.com/p/BgB6CXOH90U/?taken-by=uniform.handmade.

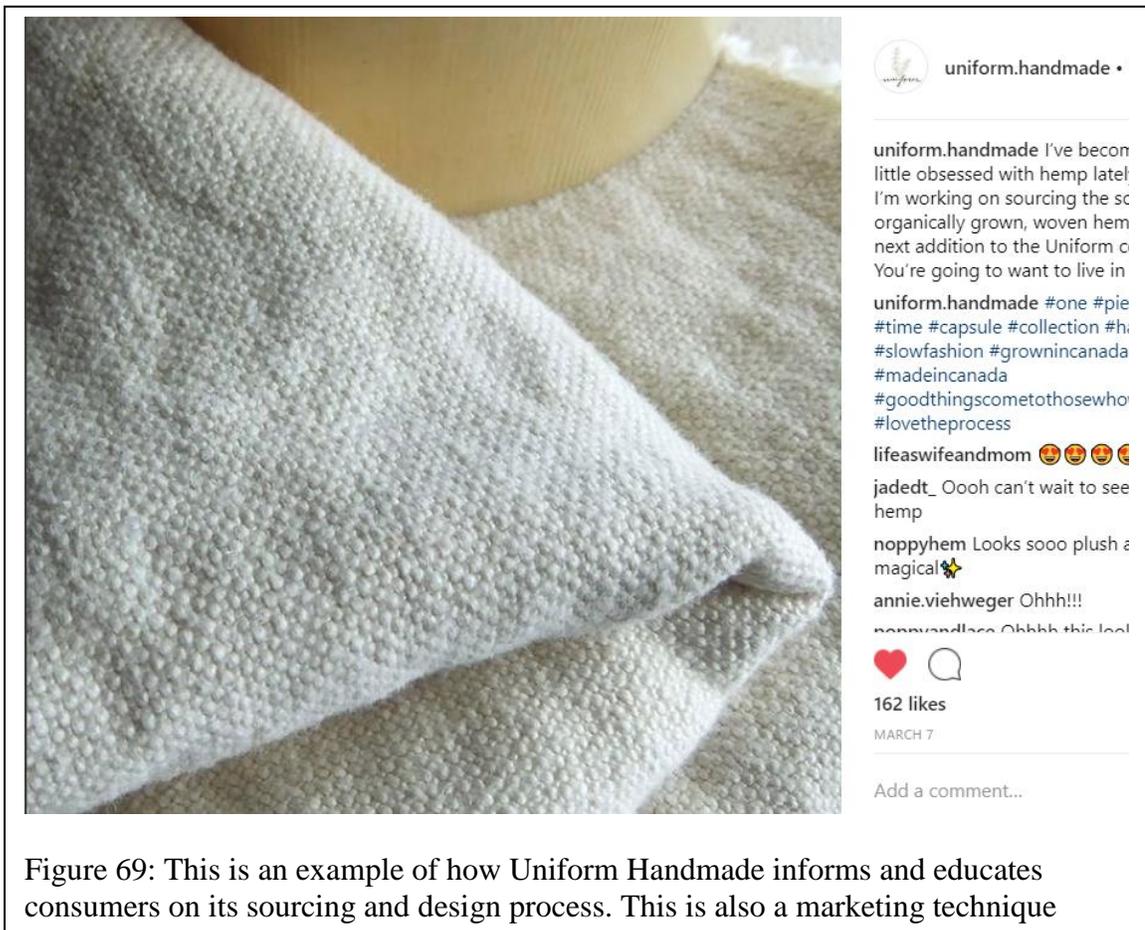


Figure 69: This is an example of how Uniform Handmade informs and educates consumers on its sourcing and design process. This is also a marketing technique

Because Uniform Handmade is so new, and Moore has been on a self-described “major learning curve,” it will be interesting to see what is in store for this company now that it has been open for about a year. Moore shared that she is looking into a studio space that she will share with other fiber artists in her growing community. Her focus will also be on building the brand and expanding the line while still growing organically and maintaining her high standards and emphasis on slow production and slow living.

Part 2: Categorizing Themes

From the interviews and information gathered from media sources (online articles, blogs, social media postings), I identified 7 different themes of innovative practices. These themes are identified with the below chart that lists the themes and if the businesses include innovations within each theme. Then, each theme has its own chart to portray the different aspects each business uses within each theme. As for why these categories are innovative, they simply represent a break from the conventional model of “fast fashion” including efforts to step away from the “profit over everything” model and address environmental and social issues, both large and small.

As made visible by the Comprehensive Themes Chart (see Table 2), just about each brand fits at least some part of each of the designated themes. Because of this, it is important to break down each category into smaller parts to give a better picture of how each company is fulfilling the sustainability theme.

Table 2: Comprehensive Themes Chart

<u>Comprehensive Themes</u>	Intentional Design	Intentional Fabric & Materials	Transparency in Supply Chains	Nimble Operations & Business Model	IPR	Value Consistency	Stakeholder Engagement
Brass Clothing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Devinto	X	X	X	X		X	X
Dorsu	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elizabeth Suzann	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fabric Social	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hackwith Design House	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harly Jae	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hope Made in the World	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
House of Gina Marie	X	X	X	X		X	X
Iconable	n/a	X	X		X	X	X
Known Supply		X	X	X		X	X
Lady Farmer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Matter Prints	X	X	X	X		X	X
Orgotton	X	X	X	X		X	X
Prairie Underground	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Study NY	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tabii Just	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Thread Harvest	n/a	X	X		X	X	X
Uniform Handmade	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

1. Intentional Design (see Table 3)

a. Quality/durability

This refers to a company that specifically focuses on producing garments that will last due to the materials and design used. Many of the people I interviewed are aware of the vast amount of clothing that is diverted to landfills each year simply because the clothing is designed to fall apart.²⁵⁸ Planned obsolescence is not exclusive to technology.

b. Beauty/art

This category refers to the social importance of art and culture. Clothing can be considered art, an artistic statement, or a way for wearers to express themselves.

c. Season-less

When clothing is season-less, it can be worn year-round. This eliminates the need to have different season wardrobes and partially solves the consumption issue. It is important to note that different climates are better suited to this type of sustainability innovation.

d. Versatile

Clothing that can be work for multiple occasions eliminates the need for multiple pieces. For example, a little black dress that can be worn to work, on the weekend, and out to a dinner party has multi-functions and eliminates the need for the consumer to have three different dresses for these three different occasions.

e. Timeless

This category refers to clothing that does not go out of style because it is not a part of a trend. Fast Fashion has 50 season cycles—new clothes being produced for nearly every week of the year.²⁵⁹ This results in an overabundance of clothing. If clothing were produced with more regard for timeless design, there would not be the social pressure to maintain trends and clothing could last

²⁵⁸ Kirsti Niinimäki, "Ethical Foundations in Sustainable Fashion," *Textiles and Clothing Sustainability* 1, no. 1 (2015): 8.

²⁵⁹ Deborah Drew and Genevieve Yehounme, "The Apparel Industry's Environmental Impact in 6 Graphics," World Resource Institute, July 05, 2017, <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/07/apparel-industrys-environmental-impact-6-graphics>.

longer in a person's closet. It must be said that this category can be up to interpretation and there may be some brands that produce timeless clothing, but they only qualified for this category if the brand specifically said that they pursue "Timeless" garments for the purpose of sustainability.

f. Trimmings

Trimmings refer to the "extras" on clothing: everything that is not the fabric. This includes buttons, buckles, thread, designs, elastic waist bands, zippers, snaps, metal fasteners, linings, etc. These items are sourced like fabric. Some companies choose to minimize the amount and number of trimmings they use to minimize the materiality, both for cost purposes and waste purposes: if a dress does not need a zipper, why use one?

g. Fabric

In the conventional clothing industry, fabric is typically considered for the balance between its price and how it sews and lays/looks when the garment is completed. In a sustainable system, there is so much more that it deserves its own sub-theme section (see below).

h. Collections/Capsules

This refers not only to how a singular garment is designed and produced but also accounts for the design of all the garments together in a cohesive collection for the consumer. Brands that value this aid the consumer in creating "capsule wardrobes" that help decrease consumption over time.

Table 3: Intentional Design

Intentional Design	Quality/Durability	Art	Non-seasonal	Versatile	Timeless	Trim-mings	Intentional Fabric	Collections /Capsule
Brass Clothing	x			x	x		x	x
Devinto		x		x			x	x
Dorsu	x		x	x		x	x	x
Elizabeth Suzann	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fabric Social	x	x					x	
Hackwith Design House	x		x	x	x		x	x
Harly Jae	x	x			x	x	x	x
Hope Made in the World	x			x	x		x	
House of Gina Marie	x	x			x		x	
Iconable	x				x		x	
Known Supply	x						x	
Lady Farmer	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Matter Prints	x	x	x				x	
Orgotton	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Prairie Underground	x	x		x	x		x	
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Study NY	x					x	x	
Tabii Just	x	x					x	
Thread Harvest	x			x			x	
Uniform Handmade	x		x	x	x	x	x	x

2. Intentional Fabric and Materials (see Table 4)

a. Dead Stock Fabric (DSF)

DSF is fabric that is left over from another company/project sitting waiting to be burned, placed in a landfill, or diverted by the mill, company, or jobbers—people who work as intermediaries trying to connect other companies with the fabric before it is disposed of.

b. Organic

Organic refers to material, typically cotton, that is grown, processed, and produced without harsh pesticides. There are a variety of certification; for example, GOTS has both ecological and social considerations along the entire supply chain to be certified by them.²⁶⁰

c. Biodegradable/Natural fibers

Falling into the “Circular Economy” category, biodegradability refers to clothing that is made of natural materials that can break down relatively quickly and return to the soil.

d. Recyclable trimmings

The buttons, buckles, thread, designs, elastic waist bands, zippers, snaps, metal fasteners, linings, etc. can be designed in a way that is mendable, reusable, and/or recyclable.

e. Thread

Even if fabric is biodegradable and made from natural fibers, if the thread is not, can the garment be sustainable? There are conflicting views on this and different designers and clothing companies take different stances for different reasons.

f. Recycled Fabric

Some companies opt to purchase material that has been produced from other materials, typically other fabrics.

g. Artisan/Craft

Some businesses employ people who use weaving or printing techniques that take quite a bit of skill. Often, these artisanal

²⁶⁰ “GOTS,” Global Organic Textile Standard: Ecology & Social Responsibility, <https://global-standard.org/>.

practices relate to culture. The emphasis on partnering with these people helps keep the craft and culture alive.

Table 4: Intentional Fabric & Materials

<u>Intentional Fabric & Materials</u>	DSF	Organic	Biodegradable/ Natural Fibers	Thread	Recyclable Trimmings	Recycled Fabric	Artisan/ Craft
Brass Clothing	x						
Devinto							
Dorsu	x		x				
Elizabeth Suzann		x	x	x			
Fabric Social			x				X
Hackwith Design House	x		x				
Harly Jae	x	x	x				
Hope Made in the World		x	x				
House of Gina Marie	x						X
Iconable		x	x				
Known Supply		x					
Lady Farmer		x	x	x	x		
Matter Prints							X
Orgotton		x				x	
Prairie Underground	x	x	x	x		x	
Pyne and Smith Clothiers			x		x		
Study NY		x	x		x	x	
Tabi Just	x						
Thread Harvest	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD
Uniform Handmade		x	x	x			

SD = Supplier Dependent

3. Transparency in Supply Chains (see Table 5)

a. Business tracks and verifies supply chains

This is typically an internal process, not necessarily made available to the consumer through a report.

b. Reports about supply chains

This can be internal or external via a certification and refers to an available document detailing the supply chain.

c. Vertically Integrated

This category refers to businesses who own multiple steps on their supply chains.

d. Relationships

This refers to the businesses who track their supply chains via the trust they have built with the owners and managers along the supply chain.

e. Own Certifications

This category relates to businesses that have achieved or are pursuing certifications to increase transparency along the supply chains.

f. Supplier Certifications

This refers to businesses which source materials from companies that have certifications.

Table 5: Transparency in Supply Chains

<u>Transparency in Supply Chains (SC)</u>	Tracks & Verifies SC	Reports About SC	Vertically Integrated	Relationships	Own Certifications	Supplier Certifications
Brass Clothing	x			x		
Devinto	x					
Dorsu	x		x			x
Elizabeth Suzann	x		x			x
Fabric Social	x			x		x
Hackwith Design House	x		x			x
Harly Jae	x					x
Hope Made in the World	x	x			x	x
House of Gina Marie	x	x		x		x
Iconable	x			x		x
Known Supply	x			x		x
Lady Farmer	x			x		x
Matter Prints	x			x		x
Orgotton	x			x		x
Prairie Underground	x			x		x
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	x			x		
Study NY	x					x
Tabii Just	x			x		
Thread Harvest	x					x
Uniform Handmade	x			x		x

4. Nimble Operations and Business Models (see Table 6)

a. Direct to Consumer (DTC)

This business model means there is no middle man: the clothing company sells directly to the consumer instead of to a wholesaler or a retailer.

b. Made to Order (MTO)

This refers to a production style that clothes are not assembled until there is a demand for them via an order. This model helps to reduce waste as there are no clothes left over that did not sell. In fast fashion, these clothes are disposed of, typically thrown away, sent to disrupt local industries abroad, or burned.²⁶¹

c. Short Supply Chain

Keeping the supply chain short can allow a business to be more flexible and respond well to changes or consumer demand. It also increases transparency because the shorter the supply chain is, the easier it is to track.

d. Adaptable business model

While seemingly self-explanatory, this category refers to aspects of business models that are sustainable in nature and can be replicated by other businesses.

e. Scaling

This is perhaps the most difficult conversation regarding sustainable businesses—especially small business—because there is concern among the business community that many sustainability measures cannot be scaled.

²⁶¹ Lauren Indvik, “What Really Happens to your Clothing Donations?” Fashionista, January 20, 2016, <https://fashionista.com/2016/01/clothing-donation>.

Table 6: Nimble Operations and Business Models

<u>Nimble Operations and Business Models</u>	DTC	MTO	Short SC	Adaptable Business model	Scaling
Brass Clothing	x		x	x	x
Devinto	x	x		x	
Dorsu	x		x	x	x
Elizabeth Suzann	x	x	x	x	x
Fabric Social	x			x	x
Hackwith Design House	x	x		x	x
Harly Jae	x	x		x	x
Hope Made in the World	x			x	x
House of Gina Marie	x		X	x	
Iconable	n/a	n/a		x	
Known Supply	x		x	x	
Lady Farmer	x	x	x	x	x
Matter Prints	x			x	
Orgotton	x	x	x	x	
Prairie Underground	x		x	x	
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	x	x	x	x	
Study NY	x			x	
Tabii Just	x		x	x	
Thread Harvest	n/a	n/a		x	x
Uniform Handmade	x	x	x	x	x

5. Increased Producer Responsibility (see Table 7)

a. Self-imposed Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

EPR refers to a policy that increases the producer's responsibility to dispose of the product they create.²⁶² At the moment, there is no governmental policy in place for the clothing industry; however, some brands self-impose their own policies and practices to better recycle or dispose of their waste and garments.

b. Zero Waste

Zero Waste is a design practice that seeks to create patterns that do not leave any scraps of fabric on the cutting room floor during the production process.

c. Biodegradability/Natural Fiber use

See Theme 2, category c.

²⁶² "Extended Producer Responsibility," OECD: Environmental Policy Tools and Evaluation, 2018, <http://www.oecd.org/env/tools-evaluation/extendedproducerresponsibility.htm>.

Table 7: Increased Producer Responsibility

Increased Producer Responsibility	Self-imposed EPR	Zero Waste	Biodegradable Materials
Brass Clothing	x		
Devinto			x
Dorsu			x
Elizabeth Suzann			x
Fabric Social			x
Hackwith Design House	x		x
Harly Jae			x
Hope Made in the World			x
House of Gina Marie			
Iconable			x
Known Supply			
Lady Farmer			x
Matter Prints			x
Orgotton			
Prairie Underground			x
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	x	x	x
Study NY		x	x
Tabii Just		x	
Thread Harvest			
Uniform Handmade			x

6. Value Consistency regarding Sustainability (see Table 8)

a. Labor issues

This category encompasses labor issues such as child labor free, living wage, fair wages, equitable wages for women, etc.

b. Resource Waste

Producing clothing can be incredibly wasteful due to the scale of the clothing industry and inefficiencies in the processes involved in taking a raw material and turning it into a finished garment. Some examples of waste can include the fabric itself on the cutting floor, unused fabric rolls, water in dye processes, poor land management practices in farming raw materials, and carbon emissions from transportation of materials.

c. Pollution

Many of the processes involved in turning raw material into garments are incredibly polluting. Being aware of the pollution along supply chains and working to minimize it or devise new strategies to eliminate pollution is a helpful sustainability initiative.

d. Organic

Using organic fibers and fabrics is one way to minimize the chemical footprint of clothes.

e. Women's rights

The majority of the workers in the garment industry are women so garment labor issues are women's issues.²⁶³

f. Civic Engagement

This could mean anything from political involvement to participating in Fashion Revolution events, sitting on panels, hosting or leading community events, and engaging with organization or people outside of the company's customer base and traditional stakeholders.

²⁶³ Emilie Schultze, "Exploitation or Emancipation? Women Workers in the Garment Industry," Fashion Revolution, March 26, 2015, <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/exploitation-or-emancipation-women-workers-in-the-garment-industry/>.

g. Local Emphasis

Companies qualified for this category if they have an aspect of their company focused on producing locally. For example, local manufacturing facilities or local sourcing of material. Of course, the definition of “local” might be different from one person to another, because some companies define local as “USA made” and others define it as “right down the street.”

h. Carbon footprint

Carbon emissions is an environmental issue that cannot be ignored in the sustainability conversation. Clothing not only takes emissions to produce, it also has a large carbon footprint due to shipping the raw materials and finished products. More than that, excess or used clothing, if not recycled as second hand or turned into other usable material, is typically burned or sits in a landfill, both release carbon into the atmosphere either immediately through the smoke, or via the slow decomposition of cloth.

i. Decrease consumption

Producing during an era when we need to stop producing so much and decrease our consumption might seem counterproductive. Granted, we not only need to stop producing so much, we also need to start producing what we are better. So, we need businesses who focus on both decreasing consumption and producing in more sustainable ways. They go hand in hand. The companies that qualified for this category explicitly stated the need for decreased consumption.

Table 8: Value Consistency

<u>Value Consistency</u>	Labor Issues	Resource Waste	Pollution	Organic	Women's Rights	Civic Engagement	Local Emphasis	Carbon Footprint	Decrease Consumption
Brass Clothing	x								x
Devinto	x	x	x				x		
Dorsu	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
Elizabeth Suzann	x	x	x	x			x		x
Fabric Social	x	x			x	x	x		
Hackwith Design House	x	x							
Harly Jae	x	x					x		x
Hope Made in the World	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
House of Gina Marie	x					x		x	
Iconable	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Known Supply	x					x			
Lady Farmer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Matter Prints	x	x				x	x		
Orgotton	x								
Prairie Underground	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	x	x				x	x		
Study NY	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Tabii Just	x	x			x	x	x		
Thread Harvest	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Uniform Handmade	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

7. Stakeholder Engagement (see Table 9)

a. Consumer Education as Priority

Many interviewees shared that educating consumers on their practices has been integral to their sustainability agenda and to explaining the higher price point of their garments.

b. Social media

Blogs, Instagram, Facebook, and other social media platforms used to educate about the business and sustainability practices.

c. Collaborations

Collaborations can mean many things, but this is a specific innovation because traditional business is competitive as opposed to collaborative.

d. Pop-ups

Pop-ups are a way for brands without a brick and mortar to hold events and have customers try on their products and see them in person at a host location. They also offer an opportunity to collaborate with other similar-minded brands or companies.

e. Not Pushy/Preachy

Many people I interviewed emphasized that the strategy employed to educate consumers need not be pushy or preachy.

f. Loyal Customer Base

A few of the interviewees suggested that their loyal customer base has allowed the businesses to thrive.

Table 9: Stakeholder Engagement

<u>Stakeholder Engagement</u>	Consumer Education	Social Media/ Blog	Collaborations	Pop-ups	Not Preachy	Loyal Customer Base
Brass Clothing	x	x	x			
Devinto	x	x	x	x		
Dorsu	x	x	x	x		
Elizabeth Suzann	x	x	x		x	x
Fabric Social	x	x	x			x
Hackwith Design House	x	x	x		x	x
Harly Jae	x	x	x	x		
Hope Made in the World	x	x	x		x	
House of Gina Marie	x		x			
Iconable	x	x	x		x	
Known Supply	x	x	x			
Lady Farmer	x	x	x		x	x
Matter Prints	x	x	x		x	x
Orgotton		x	x	x	x	
Prairie Underground	x		x	x	x	x
Pyne and Smith Clothiers	x	x	x	x	x	x
Study NY	x	x	x		x	
Tabii Just	x	x	x		x	
Thread Harvest	x	x	x	x	x	
Uniform Handmade	x	x	x	x	x	x

Discussion of Results

It's time to reimagine the current systems in the clothing industry.

How do we change the conventional clothing industry? How do we transform and/or reimagine the existing systems? The answer lies in thinking more carefully about the way we produce clothing and in changing our business models. But this change looks different for different businesses. It would be great if a “one size fits all” approach to operating a sustainable clothing business existed, but after conducting my research and as evidenced by the incredibly diverse businesses whose employees I interviewed, there is no one way to conduct business in a sustainable manner. With this in mind, I find it incredibly difficult to come up with a list of “Best Practices,” especially given the breadth of issues that the term “sustainability” encompasses. Instead of a list of best business practices, I will describe three “best sustainable business philosophies” from which to build sustainable practices.

This discussion that follows has three parts. First, I discuss the innovation highlights mentioned by almost all companies. Then, I explore the different personal value sets that determine the businesses sustainability values and explain the sustainability “exchanges” derived from the personal values of the company founder/owner. Lastly, I summarize the “best sustainable business philosophies” that emerged from my research: the collaborative nature of sustainable business, the need for adaptability within business, and attitudes toward scaling and growth.

Innovation Highlights

“What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall

Nearly every business incorporated product quality, intentional fabric choices, supply chain tracking, supplier certifications, consumer education, collaborations, attention to labor issues, having at least three values under “value consistency,” and adaptable business models sub-themes. Each of the twenty clothing company representatives I interviewed engages sustainability in many ways. Below I discuss impactful innovation highlights that not every business incorporated, but that other companies could emulate. These sub-themes include types of business models, clothing collections/capsules, loyal customer bases, certifications non-preachy consumer engagement, and Increased Producer Responsibility (IPR).

The variety of business models in my small sampling speaks to the creativity and adaptability of sustainable fashion. These innovative models can be emulated by other clothing companies—by adopting new legal structures, revising the mission statements and goals of a company, owning parts of the supply chain, and/or focusing on local production. Most notably, Known Supply’s registration as a benefit corporation in the state of California allows it to earn a profit and still be socially and environmentally responsible. Its shareholders keep the company accountable not only to profit, but also to social and environmental concerns such as those discussed in the Introduction section of this thesis. Additionally, one aspect of Known Supply’s business is unique: the company exists to connect brands with already vetted supply chain processes. Similarly, The Fabric Social’s is a social enterprise set up to support women establish their own businesses and gain marketable skills.

Hackwith Design House uses a common business licensing structure, the LLC, as a sustainability innovation. This structure can be used by businesses in the United States

that chooses not to register as a Benefit Corporation or do not have that option available to them. By remaining an LLC and not having to answer to stakeholders, Hackwith Design House maintains autonomy over business practices. In addition, vertical integration allows the company to maintain control over supply chain processes and stay nimble and flexible to respond to change. While I had no fully vertically integrated companies in my sample, Hackwith Design House, Elizabeth Suzann, and Dorsu sew and produce their garments in house and thus have control over the process. They are semi-vertically integrated because although they do produce garments in-house, they do not own the farms that produce the natural fibers nor do they own the factories that turn the natural fiber into cloth.

For companies not relying on vertical integration, creating a local supply for different aspects of the garments can allow for accountability and transparency. For example, the hyper-locality of Uniform Handmade's supply chain for its alpaca-wool cardigan is noteworthy (see p. 152 for a description of the hyper-locality of Uniform Handmade's alpaca-wool cardigan) and both Orgotton's and Harly Jae's manufacturers are minutes away from their headquarters.

One of the most innovations employed by companies can be called "Collections/Capsules." A Collections/Capsule approach encourages consumers to buy fewer items and develop a capsule wardrobe centered on a few basic pieces. The list of companies developed this kind of clothing collection with pieces meant to be worn together, includes Brass Clothing, Devinto, Dorsu, Elizabeth Suzann, Hackwith Design House, Harly Jae, Lady Farmer, Orgotton, and Uniform Handmade. While fast fashion houses often present their new seasonal using collections, the brands listed above

specifically mentioned that they designed the clothes in this way with sustainability in mind, especially focusing on designing clothing to be season-less and timeless.

I wonder what changes the fashion industry would see if more brands advocated for decreased consumption and increased consumer education about how to purchase items that mix and match, so they need fewer clothes in general. Some might argue advocating for consumers to buy fewer clothes is anti-business. However, an innovative strategy exists to address this issue, too. Many companies have succeeded in establishing a loyal customer base through their consumer engagement and education and by producing quality garments. Indeed, May Ee Fong of Matter Prints shared that the company has one customer who wears their Matter Prints exclusively. This loyal customer base creates repeat purchases for a company.

I wrongly anticipated that representatives from more sustainable brands would actively seek certifications such as Fair Trade, Organic and B Corp. Whereas almost all of the companies saw the value in suppliers' certifications (to establish sustainable sourcing practices) and many of the interviewees said that certifications are on the long-term company agenda, most of the interviewees expressed confidence in their processes and felt there would be no need to achieve a certification. Some distrusted the certification process (Dorsu) and others believed their companies already employed sustainable processes (Tabii Just). One company does, however, emphasize certifications. Milanes, of Hope Made in the World, shared that the process of becoming certified *Child Labor Free* and maintaining this certification is an integral part of its operations and the company seeks out new certification opportunities and will obtain

more certifications in the near future. Certifications serve not only as a marketing tool, but also help remind a company of its core values.

Further research should examine whether certifications become more important as some of these businesses scale up operations and expand as they see fit. Many of the interviewees indicated they rely on relationships and trust with suppliers, but most of the operations remain small and the relationships seem manageable. If these companies expand, can they maintain close relationships with everyone along the supply chain? Maybe so. If not, how will the companies maintain their sustainability standards? In these cases, certifications may serve as a vetting process and accountability standard.

Throughout the interview process, the interviewees were emphatic about not coming across as “preachy” in their outreach and consumer education campaigns. I mention this because, although sustainability encourages high standards and better practices, pointing fingers, shaming people, and preaching at people does not effectively promote sustainability concepts and motivate change. Most of the interviewees said that instead of telling the customer what the customer should do, they choose instead to talk about what their brand stands for and why. They focus on the positive aspects of the retailer/consumer relationship instead of the negative aspects; no one wants to be shamed into buying anything.

An underrepresented theme was Increased Producer Responsibility. While many companies understand the importance of using biodegradable fabrics, only a few companies in my sample employed the self-imposed EPR and Zero Waste innovations. Because of these innovations effectively address waste in production and help divert waste at the end of a garment’s lifecycle, I feel they should be adopted by more

companies. Both Brass Clothing's "Clean Out Bag" and Hackwith Design House's "The Sustain Shop" could be replicated. Companies can adopt philosophies similar to those of Tabii Just and Study NY and minimize waste during production by designing clothes using the entire block of fabric. Similarly, Pyne and Smith's and Orgotton's emphasis on recycling the left-over materials into other products can easily be embraced by similar companies.

I was excited to hear many of the interviewees talk about "what's next" for their business indicating they are already thinking about how to improve their practices. Interviewees are aware of the ways they fail to meet their own standards and are already working on ways to address these issues. Businesses differed in how they engaged these innovative strategies; they typically followed the personal values of the people who owned the business. The next section will examine the impact of personal values on business values more closely.

Personal Values

"It's not personal, Sonny. It's strictly business," –The Godfather

The adage from *The Godfather*, "it's not personal, it's business," represents conventional business philosophy: profit above all else, even at the expense of customers, employees, and those along the supply chain. In contrast, in my sampling of small sustainable clothing businesses, I found that business is decidedly personal. Indeed, in the context of this research, I found that business values are based on the founder's/owner's/creative director's/designer's personal values. Those business values then inform business practices. In the United States, we have become accustomed to impersonal big box stores and consumerism rarely making a profound connection to the

founder and their personal values. However, in the case of these small businesses, I found it difficult to separate the values of the person from the values of the brand. In many of my interviews, this separation was not feasible because the person *is* the brand. I think of Aiste Zitnikaite of Devinto, Gina Moorhead of House of Gina Marie, Tabitha St. Bernard of Tabii Just, and Joanna McCarthy of Pyne and Smith. And many of the founders started their brands because they could not find what they were looking for in the existing fashion industry, and thus developed a clothing line to fit their own personal needs (such as Moore of Uniform Handmade and the Kingsley's of Lady Farmer).

Similarly, the designers and founders of Prairie Underground did not have formal sustainability training, but rather believed that business should be carried out ethically, and their sustainability practices were born from this internal motivation. This newfound value-set connection of sustainable businesses and the people involved speaks to a deeper sustainability innovation; the founders, makers, and designers do not want to take the personal out of the business.

Sustainability Trade-offs

As evidenced in the literature review and results section, there are many facets of sustainability (See Table 10). It is impossible to incorporate every sustainability practice in one business, not simply because it would be cost prohibitive, but because some sustainability practices can contradict or conflict one another. How is this possible? As previously discussed, sustainability has many definitions and the interpretation, best judgement, and exchanges determine what gets put into practice. If a business leader wants to pursue sustainability, he/she must make trade-offs by choosing between

sustainable and non-sustainable and by choosing which sustainability practices to incorporate.

Table 10: Sustainability Concerns for Clothing Companies

Environmental Concerns	Social Concerns	Economic Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circular production and design • Use of biodegradable/natural fibers and trimmings vs. synthetic fibers • Addressing pollution along supply chain processes and lifecycle of garment • Eliminating microplastics • Organic processes • Certifications • CO2 emissions/Carbon footprint • Local vs. global manufacturing • Consumption habits • Diminishing waste • Lifecycle of garment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing neocolonialism • Addressing human trafficking • Fair wages • Fair working conditions • Benefits for workers • Women’s rights • No child labor • Certifications for accountability • Fashion as Art • Artisans • Addressing cultural appropriation • Political involvement • Local vs. global manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling • Supply Chain logistics • Employee salaries • Operational cost • Material cost • Production cost • Landed costs • Consumer demand • Markets (niche) • Price of clothing • Profit margin • Type of business (legal) • Waste cost

A sustainable business that does not make money is not a sustainable business.

Incorporating sustainability values typically means the cost of production and business management increases which in turn increases the price of clothing for sale. As businesses adopt more facets of sustainability, the business either absorbs the cost and profits less or charges more and consequently, the consumer pays more. Different businesses have found ways to address higher cost, whether by providing extensive consumer education about the cost of clothes, encouraging “buying fewer items so that you can spend more on the ones you need to buy,” and by creating practices that decrease

cost for the consumer, such as DTC retailing. But at the end of the day, these clothing companies need to make a profit, and this means the money they make from the clothes needs to be greater than all costs, including the money they invest in sustainability. Companies must pick and choose which sustainability practices to focus on to avoid the “cost-prohibitive” reputation of sustainable clothing. Below, I discuss different sustainability values that seem to be in conflict and can present difficulties as companies weigh what sustainability standards and practices to pursue.

High standards & Rigidity vs. Compromise & Flexibility

At what point does compromising sustainability values diminish the sustainability of a business or product? (This, of course, implies that different “levels” of sustainability exist, although they have yet to be defined.) What constitutes a compromise regarding sustainability? In what respects people are willing to compromise—and if they are willing to compromise— depends on their values. For example, the two retailers in my sample, Iconable and Thread Harvest, both had high sustainability standards, but the way they went about enacting and presenting these standards differed. Colombel of Iconable said that the brand would never compromise on human rights and would never carry synthetic materials. Consumers will always know these two values underlie each garment that Iconable carries. With the use of the impact badges, Thread Harvest provides the customer with a variety of options—“values”—to choose from: living wage, empowering women, eco-friendly, fair trade, employing the marginalized, and charity supporting. Morris shared that most brands qualify for at least 3-4 impact badges. Unfortunately, this means that the company might carry clothing made from synthetic materials (a direct conflict with Iconable’s values). Which company is more sustainable

and incorporating “best practices”? Perhaps this is not a valid question because the companies enact their own values in unique ways.

Durability vs. Compostable

In contrast to the fast fashion mode of production and turnover, each person I interviewed agreed that a garment should be made to last. However, “durability” is not the only high priority of sustainability. For example, many of the interviewees stressed both quality of garment and use of biodegradable materials as high priorities. At Lady Farmer, the two are not mutually exclusive. The company produces clothing and trimmings that are biodegradable and—if not compostable—recyclable (for example, metal components of garments). The Kingsley’s stressed that they sell durable products and respond to consumer demand by creating a completely compostable product. However, many other companies choose to use non-biodegradable trimmings (such as non-biodegradable thread) because of their durability. Gray of Prairie Underground specifically stressed that the Prairie Underground team chooses to use biodegradable fabrics coupled with polyester thread with their pants so that the garment will last longer pre-disposal. Gray said that the company prioritizes producing garments that would not tear or wear down as easily and in order to do so, they compromise on the biodegradability of thread content. Which practice is better? It depends on what the brand—and its customer—values more.

Utility vs. Art

Utility and art also fall under the umbrella of sustainability. Utility in the clothing industry appears in the form of durable, basic, season-less, timeless, and multifunctional clothing. Utility is sustainable because it can help consumers reduce the amount of

clothing they purchase and how long their clothing lasts. Art, however, presents itself in the designing, making, and wearing of a garment. Art incorporates the ideas of the creator, the beauty of a fabric and garment, and the creativity of the process. Many in the industry and many consumers who wear and appreciate garments consider fashion an art form.²⁶⁴ Art can reflect culture and relates to the “social” aspect of sustainability.

Sometimes, utility and art are integrated. Sometimes, they are not. Art can be practical, but it also does not have to be. In addition, personal values define what each person considers art. Art is in the eye of the beholder and is subjective. How, then, can we measure the sustainability of a garment when using both utility and art as measures? The answer is complex.

“Sustainable Synthetic” vs. Natural Fibers vs. Biodegradable Fibers

There is no consensus as to what constitutes sustainable fabric, and because there are many fabric options available—many of which claim to be sustainable—the fabric selection process is tricky. Most brands studied emphasize using natural fiber clothing due to natural fiber’s biodegradability properties. Unfortunately, not all natural fiber clothing is equal in sustainability properties. For example, the processes of turning raw trees into man-made cellulose fabrics can be chemical-heavy and destructive to the environment.²⁶⁵ I even heard an informal speaker argue that polyester could be considered sustainable because it uses very little water compared to the production of conventionally grown cotton fabric and it is recyclable. Calling polyester “sustainable”

²⁶⁴ Georges Berges, "In Defense of Fashion as a True Art Form," Observer, June 20, 2017, <http://observer.com/2017/06/fashion-true-art-form/>.

²⁶⁵ "Fiber Selection: Understanding the Impact of Different Fibers Is the First Step in Designing Environmentally Responsible Apparel," National Resource Defense Council, April 2012, <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/CBD-Fiber-Selection-FS.pdf>.

ignores the energy intensive processes and microplastics dangers (as discussed on p. 15), and most in the sustainable fashion community do not consider it a sustainable material. However, some brands use recycled polyester, repurposed fabric such as fabric made from plastic water bottles, or Dead Stock Fabric that could include synthetic fibers. Most individuals interviewed for this research consider these types of fabrics “less bad” because they have sustainability concepts woven into them (such as diverting waste from landfills and repurposing plastic waste); however, using these fabrics ignores other key sustainability such as the sluffing of microplastics during clothing use and washing as well as lifecycle circular economic concepts when disposing of the garment.

Fabric made from 100% cotton, wool, hemp, and linen are all biodegradable and these are generally considered sustainable (especially if the processes of turning the raw material into fabric account for water usage and pollution). However, many other fabrics exist that claim both natural fibers and sustainable properties such as wood pulp fabrics, or rayon. Lyocell (Tencel is one of lyocell’s most recognizable brand names²⁶⁶), bamboo rayon, modal, and viscose are all types of rayon made from cellulose fiber from trees.

Many in the sustainability community would argue rayon is less sustainable than other natural materials because of the environmentally harsh processes the raw material undergoes as it is turned into fabric. However, even fabric from wood pulp has varying degrees of sustainability. For example, Tencel, considered the most sustainable option of fiber made from wood pulp, incorporates eucalyptus. As far as the different types of wood used to make man-made cellulose fibers, eucalyptus is considered to have the “least

²⁶⁶ “TENCEL™ cellulosic fibers of botanic origin define a new standard of sustainability and natural comfort for you,” Tencel, <https://www.tencel.com/>.

harsh” environmental impact. Brands such as Hackwith Design House incorporate Tencel into their fabric selections.

Bamboo is another fabric that many brands, such as Devinto, incorporate because of its desirable draping and fit properties, and the preference for bamboo rayon over oil-based synthetic fabric like polyester. However, St. James from Study NY gave a different opinion. St. James adamantly opposed bamboo and called it a “misunderstood fabric” in the sustainable clothing community. She does not believe bamboo rayon is sustainable at all and therefore does not use it. She said that bamboo fabric has been considered very sustainable, but that categorization is highly contentious due to habitat destruction, resource use, and the processes of turning the raw cellulose into fabric rely on toxic chemicals. Moreover, bamboo rayon used in fashion is typically blended with synthetic materials such as spandex which negates any redeeming biodegradable qualities it could have had.

This brings up another layer to the question of “what is sustainable fabric?” Many fabrics are formed from a variety of materials, using a blend of natural fibers, spandex, and/or rayon. For example, Orgotton uses an OEKO TEX certified organic cotton blend that contains a small percentage of spandex. When talking with the sisters from Orgotton, they explained that this fabric appeals to customers because it washes and wears well. The sisters are happy with the organic component of the cotton and the comfort and stretch the spandex provides. When I asked why they chose to use the OEKO TEX fabric, they said that they respond to consumer demand: if a customer gravitates to one fabric over another, they listen (more on this in the next section).

Is a shirt produced with 95% organic cotton and 5% elastic more sustainable than a conventionally grown 100% cotton t-shirt? Some people would argue that both are bad because the elastic can degrade into microplastics and the conventional cotton causes pollution and requires large volumes of water. And what if the consumer likes the fit, feel, and wash-ability of a shirt made with 5% elastic? The near limitless fabric blends offer many options for the consumer and many fabrics come with a “sustainable” label. As evidenced in my sample, the brands have differing philosophies in how they engage sustainable fabric.

Consumer Demand vs. Business Values

What does the consumer want and what will they buy and at what price point? This research does not seek to address the specifics of price point, but it is still important to include it in this discussion because it is of utmost importance to the individuals I interviewed. Similar to the durability vs. composability trade-off, the conflict between consumer demand and business values addresses the reality that businesses need to produce products that sell. This conflict arises most in regard to the fabric and trimmings companies used in their products, mentioned briefly above. For example, the founders of Orgotton indicated their customers absolutely love the fabric used in their products. Customers appreciate not only the reliance on certified organic cotton, but also the properties of the fabric. The small amount of spandex adds desirable stretch, making this organic cotton/spandex the best fabric option for the style and consumer Orgotton pursues.

What consumers want and are willing to pay for is mixed and the interviews reflected this mixed feedback. For example, the sisters at Orgotton said that their

customers do not necessarily need all the information on sustainability. In contrast, Husted of Hackwith Design House, Pape of Elizabeth Suzann, Guy of Dorsu, St. James of Study NY, the Kingsleys of Lady Farmer, and de Lacy of The Fabric Social shared that their customers not only want to know, they demand the sustainability information of supply chain processes, labor practices, and materials used.

MTO vs. Using Excess for another Purpose

Interviewees supported Made to Order (MTO) production as a popular business model. (It is important to note that some “innovations” simply resurrect old practices. I still include it as an innovation because of the direct contrast to fast fashion.) While MTO can be considered an innovative business practice, I would not classify it as a “best practice” because I would not recommend this model to every business. For example, while MTO helps decrease waste, a company that does not employ MTO but designs “zero waste” and has Increased Producer Responsibility for its clothing still addresses the waste issue, albeit in a different way. MTO might not make sense for a business that not only sells DTC but also sells to retailers as the company may need to anticipate sales from previous seasons to keep up with demand. Additionally, MTO garments do take longer to arrive at customers’ doors—businesses need to take into consideration that many customers are impatient and accustomed to a quick turn-around time with orders.

Local vs. Global

Some businesses have focused on sourcing and building niche markets all over the world. Still others have focused on more sourcing and selling in local markets. There are arguments in favor of both market-building models. Regionalism is a popular sustainability concept. Locally-focused companies can decrease their carbon footprints

by decreasing the distance traveled by the resources they use. However, having a global market means businesses do not have to necessarily cater to local consumer demand: their consumers around the world already form a niche market. And by extension, they can better weather the ups and downs of a local market. Someone somewhere in the world will still want what they have to offer, even if the demand has cooled off elsewhere. On the other hand, a business that focuses on a more local customer base does need to hear what their customers want to a greater extent because of the smaller customer pool. In this case, perhaps a business's carbon footprint is smaller, but their designs could be more susceptible to trends, use of different unsustainable fabrics, and even price fluctuations if the company chooses to respond to demand as opposed to create demand.

Short-term Issues vs. Long-term Issues

Addressing both short-term and long-term sustainability issues is of utmost importance: the future of sustainable fashion demands we look into both as we try to reimagine the current system. The conflict between short-term and long-term issues can be best understood by examining the conflict surrounding Dead Stock Fabric (DSF) (see p. 158). While the sustainable clothing community widely uses DSF, as evidenced by its use by seven of the 20 businesses I interviewed, not everyone agrees about the actual level of sustainability of DSF.²⁶⁷²⁶⁸ DSF has become an industry in and of itself, relying on conventional clothing's wasteful systems: the industry exists because of the copious amount of waste created in both fabric production and garment production. "Jobbers"

²⁶⁷ Allison Calabrese, "Why Fashion Made with Deadstock Fabric Is Really Just Greenwashing" *Virtue Vice*, August 03, 2017, <https://shopvirtueandvice.com/blogs/news/why-fashion-made-with-deadstock-fabric-is-really-just-greenwashing>.

²⁶⁸ Whitney Bauck, "Is Deadstock the Future of Sustainable Fashion?" *Fashionista*, April 26, 2017, <https://fashionista.com/2017/04/deadstock-clothing-fabric-sustainable-fashion>.

exist as middlemen to sell this left-over fabric. Given the market for DSF, what incentive does the conventional industry have to create leaner and less wasteful processes? Most people would agree that diverting waste into useful products is worthwhile; however, perhaps the growth of the DSF industry has allowed the initial owners of the cloth stock to be less mindful about their fabric consumption practices, leading to the ambiguity regarding the sustainability of DSF.

The question becomes, what aspects should people in the sustainable fashion world prioritize: Dealing with the problems of the old system in the short term that created DSF in the first place? Or helping establish new systems for the long term that would eliminate DSF? I suggest that both need to be addressed and it is up to the people heading the businesses to make the decisions based on what makes the most sense for their companies and their sustainability visions and practices.

Dealing with the old systems means continuing to use DSF to divert large amounts of waste from landfills or from being burned. However, helping establish new systems that eliminate the waste in the first place is a better long-term solution. Building new systems that address the errors of the conventional system excites me personally, but if companies stop using the DSF, that leaves a lot of fabric that is eventually burned or placed in a landfill. Additionally, new fabric production consumes incredible amounts of resources and is resource intensive. Many argue that it is unsustainable to produce new fabric when so much left-over fabric remains in storage. What is the answer to this sustainability conflict? Businesses must decide which value they will prioritize.

Trends vs. Mindful Consumption

The conflict between producing and marketing to trends and emphasizing mindful consumption relates back to consumerism and what the consumer wants to purchase. Understanding trends vs. mindful consumption begs the question, who creates demand for trendy clothes? The customer creates demand through what they purchase, but marketing and consumer education influence what the customer wants to purchase. Because consumers tend to follow fast fashion's directions, they will gravitate towards trendy garments. It can be tempting for sustainable fashion companies to produce items along the lines of those trends because "it's what the consumer wants." However, if a company focuses on mindful consumption, some might view them as hypocritical if they produce trendy pieces. At the same time, if people tend to purchase trendy clothes anyways, shouldn't sustainable trendy options be available to the consumer? Regardless of the trends, the sustainably produced clothes need to be stylish to appeal to consumers. That raises the question: Where is the line between a stylish garment and a trendy one?

Stay Small vs. Grow

In general, interviewees mistrusted growth, perhaps because most view growth as synonymous with the unfettered growth that has caused environmental and social problems. Uniform Handmade's Katy Moore, although not fundamentally opposed to growth, was in tune with this. She wanted to make sure that as her company grew, it stayed true to her values. Similarly, Husted, the representative of Hackwith Design House understood that investors could force major growth and expansion but stated that the company will remain an LLC because the leadership team wants to maintain control over the company and with it, the integrity of the company's values. Growth may not be synonymous with unsustainability. I discuss this more in the "Scaling" section below.

The next section also includes discussions of “Collaboration” and “Adaptability” because I suggest that collaboration, adaptability, and a mind for scaling are all “best philosophies” needed for sustainable clothing companies.

Collaboration

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

Succeeding in a sustainable business and countering the issues of fast fashion requires collaboration. The 2018 Pulse document also underscores the need for collaboration in the clothing industry’s pursuit of sustainability.²⁶⁹ According to those I interviewed, collaboration takes many forms, including that between a business and its consumer, a business and other businesses, a business and its many stakeholders, businesses and government, businesses and non-governmental organizations, and even collaboration within a business among managers, designers, etc. While collaboration is not new to business, the emphasis on collaboration for the sake of sustainability and not simply for profit distinguishes sustainable business and “business as usual.” St. James of Study NY spoke to this distinction from her experience in both the conventional and sustainable fashion industries. She said that business in the conventional industry is incredibly competitive, but that the emphasis on collaboration in the sustainability community means these businesses are less competitive and are more open to share industry tips and what works well. In this way, businesses in the sustainable community do not have to “reinvent the wheel” regarding sustainability concepts.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ "Pulse of the Fashion Industry Executive Summary," Global Fashion Agenda and Boston Consulting Group, 2018, 3, <http://www.globalfashionagenda.com/pulse/>.

²⁷⁰ Tara St. James, Zoom conference call with author, March 7, 2018.

In my sampling of businesses, nearly every brand collaborated with its consumers through the use of social media, newsletters, and/or online reviews. These efforts went beyond traditional marketing because the people behind the social media accounts (often the owner or someone in close contact with the owner) interacted with and kept in touch with consumers to understand their wants and needs. This relationship and use of social media to collaborate resulted in the incorporation of customer feedback on many design variables such as styles, sizing, cuts, fabric, and colors and it allowed the brands to be responsive and nimble in giving the customers what they requested.

This process of collaboration can also steer a business in its next direction, for example, a brand could ask, “What do you want to see us produce next? Swimsuits or jewelry?” This lets the brand make informed decisions about the direction of the business using real time input from their already established customer base. An example of business and consumer collaboration outside of social media is the Slow Living Conference hosted by Lady Farmer. Lady Farmer customers and those with likeminded interests participate in this conference dedicated to slow fashion, slow food, and slow living. While there, they can share ideas, connect, and help define what slow living looks like in different contexts. This event gives Lady Farmer a unique and in-depth look at their customers’ needs and wants, and helps company personnel understand how to fulfil unmet needs moving forward.

Business to business collaborations are highly effective for marketing, especially on social media. The prevalence of pop-ups (both online and in person) as a sustainability innovation speaks to the importance and effectiveness of partnering with other brands to sell clothing and goods. Pop-ups allow brands to extend their reach, entice

new customers, and inspire new designs. For example, Elizabeth Suzann has collaborated with another sustainable clothing line, Alabama Chanin, to create a collection of clothing that is slightly different from both brands silhouettes as it incorporates aspects from both aesthetics. Both Elizabeth Suzann and Alabama Chanin market this line on Instagram effectively reaching each other's customer bases.

Businesses also collaborate through working in a collective space, for example, Devinto and Uniform Handmade both have workspaces they intentionally share with other makers. The business structure of Known Supply functions as a collaboration for other brands to use (p. 97). Milanes of Hope Made in the World utilizes the expertise of Verde Fulfilment (p. 85) to fulfill her company's shipping needs. When Bédard-Potvin started Harly Jae, she utilized Factory 45, a startup launch that helps kickstart conscious fashion brands. Hackwith Design House's "The Sustain Shop" (p. 75) essentially copied Eileen Fisher's "The Renew Shop" with input from the Eileen Fisher team.

More than business to business collaboration, businesses also collaborate with organizations. Every participant in my interviews shared they were involved in the organization Fashion Revolution to some extent, even if only through the social media campaign to raise awareness. Certifications also can be considered a collaboration with clothing brands partnering with the organizations that provide the certifications. De Lacy highlighted The Fabric Social's partnership with Action Aid Australia in their efforts to improve the impact of aid through "business boot camps" (p. 140). Representatives of Study NY and Tabii Just shared the importance of the BFDA workspace and community (p. 128).

I found business and stakeholder collaboration to be most evident in the manner in which the companies engaged with the artists that work along their supply chains. House of Gina Marie places high importance on art, craftsmanship, and artisanal practices by partnering with her artisanal tailors in Vietnam, and making them an integral part of the brand's story. Similarly, Matter Prints and Fabric Social work with artisans in both printing and weaving and highlight those people on their websites and social media.

All of these unique collaborations promote more sustainability. In fact, it can mean multiple businesses with similar values working together to both enhance sustainability and make even more money. Collaborations can drive capacity-building and the potential for businesses to increase profit, or innovate new strategies, and/or find new markets. More than that, collaboration naturally lends itself to creating both informal and formal sustainability networks, invaluable for longevity in the field.

Connecting with likeminded people is important not just for the businesses, but for the people working in the sustainable clothing industry, too. Hannah Guy of Dorsu was especially transparent when she shared that working in the sustainable clothing field can be extremely difficult because even though she feels confident in the work she does, the conventional system is so massive that it is difficult to see real change happening, especially on a large scale. Guy has a unique perspective as she lives and works in Cambodia. She sees sides of the garment industry that are hidden from many in the West. It can be exhausting to implement sustainability concepts and work hard within one's own context and see very few broad sweeping changes in the greater industry.

Most commonly associated with fields such as social work, "compassion fatigue" can affect those working in the sustainability field. Dr. Charles Figley defines

compassion fatigue as, “a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper.”²⁷¹ Traumatic stress stems from the fact that the scale of the sustainable clothing industry is a drop in the bucket when compared to the overwhelming magnitude of and the issues associated with the CCI. Although, the sustainable clothing industry is growing due to greater demand for transparency, so there is hope for lasting change. Collaboration with others in the field creates solidarity, brings new innovations and ideas, and I would suggest helps promote longevity of being in the field and effectiveness of remaining adaptable and resilient.

Adaptability

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

—*Maya Angelou.*

Collaboration and adaptability often go hand in hand. In his book, *Group Genius*, Keith Sawyer discusses innovation, creativity, and the power of collaboration. In Chapter 8, titled “Organizing for Improvisation”, Sawyer lists Ten Secrets of the Collaborative Organization. The first secret-revealed is that collaborative organizations are “able to adapt in response to market shifts and continue growing.”²⁷²

Sawyer mentions companies stuck in the outdated “linear” model of creativity that is boxed up in a separate department. He argues that “in collaborative organizations, innovation is diffused throughout the company.”²⁷³ This reminds me of how people talk

²⁷¹ "Did You Know?" Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, <http://compassionfatigue.org/>.

²⁷² Keith Sawyer, *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration*, New York: Basic Books, 2017, 160.

²⁷³ Sawyer, 176.

about transformative sustainability. Sustainability is not siloed off into one department, but rather embedded in every aspect of the organization and its processes. In my sample, I witnessed how connected each person and each aspect of the businesses were to the other aspects. Possibly, a reason this worked so well is the small size of the companies.

Sustainable businesses need to engage in a continual process of learning, and this includes continuously challenging what it means to be a sustainable business and to explore this. We are so focused on the metrics of sustainability, perhaps we forget to embrace the ambiguity of innovation that has not fully developed into a “best practice” or accepted way of doing sustainable business.²⁷⁴ Moving through the learning processes of innovation give rise to adapting practices (such as zero waste), materials (what the company believes is best), processes (like supply chain efficiencies), and customer engagement (how effective can a company share its message and make sales).

I especially noticed the youngest companies in my sample had stories about adapting their organizational practices early on in their business history. Moore from Uniform Handmade changed her fabrics and her designs as she learned more about the unsustainability of synthetic materials. Similarly, Bédard-Potvin of Harly Jae continues to refine what intentional and sustainable fabric means for the company. She also made the changes from a polyester blend in her jumpsuit to all-natural materials or DSF moving forward. The Kingsley’s of Lady Farmer started with the intention of sourcing all local raw materials from “seed to sewn,” but they soon realized this would not be possible due to lack of infrastructure for farming hemp in the United States, as well as producing the raw material they wanted into fabric. They adopted a new plan of sourcing

²⁷⁴ Ross Gittell et al., *Sustainable Business Cases*, Creative Commons, 2012, 25.

non-local materials in the best fabrics they could find. The Kingsley's also hold a long-term vision of sourcing hyper-locally as they work to build the infrastructure they need to produce "seed to sewn" in Virginia.

Adaptation was not limited to the very new companies. Hannah Guy of Dorsu spoke of the company's three—very different—business iterations that evolved over time as the owners learned more and steered the business in the direction that made the most sense for them. Orgotton's founders talked about their business journey evolving from screen printing to producing clothing as they pursued putting their own label in the shirts they sold. Sometimes, even the brand is an adaptation as in the case of Study NY, because its founder and designer, Tara St. James, worked in the conventional and sustainable clothing industry for years before starting her own line.

Perhaps if more businesses viewed sustainability as an adaption for working and thriving in the business world today, it would have a more transforming effect than it is having now. Sustainability, by its nature, is both highly adaptable and an adaptation. The interviewees in my sample support this notion and they posture themselves with a learning mindset to continue adapting their practices.

Sawyer argues that businesses can adapt because they have "left many irons in the fire" and have many projects going on at once. Sustainability is the epitome of "many irons" because it is so comprehensive. I argue that sustainability and collaboration are such adaptations that businesses employ to remain relevant and in tune with its customer base. Not only is the market driven by consumer demand in part, but businesses are running into real limits of natural resources these days. To continue growing, businesses need to innovate and adapt otherwise, they will find themselves figuratively "sticking to

the knitting” and failing to embrace new innovations and the best sustainability practices that work well for the success of the company.

Scaling

“Going back to a simpler life is not a step backward.” –Yvon Chouinard

In conventional business, scaling up implies that growth equates business profit and follows the “more equals better” philosophy. Should scaling also be part of a sustainable business model?²⁷⁵ Many people I interviewed are invested in thinking about scaling, but scaling sustainably (Elizabeth Suzann, The Fabric Social, Thread Harvest, Lady Farmer, and Dorsu) or simply intentionally remaining small (such as Hackwith Design House and Uniform Handmade).

Pal and Gander argue that sustainable business models in fashion need to be better designed to scale up and sustainable business models, in their current form, cannot become the standard model of the fashion industry.²⁷⁶ I suggest that Pal and Gander were either not analyzing highly innovative or creative companies or were still trying to work within the conventional model of scaling. Pape and her team at Elizabeth Suzann found a successful way to engage scaling her business without compromising its values to deal with the rapid growth of the company (p. 70). Perhaps with this new model, Elizabeth Suzann will not make as much as she could have with an unencumbered production process, but the company is still growing: with projections of \$6 million in profit in 2018,

²⁷⁵ E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered*, New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2010.

²⁷⁶ Rudrajeet Pal and Jonathan Gander, 2018, “Modelling environmental value: An examination of sustainable business models within the fashion industry,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 184 (2018): 251-263.

up from \$3.3 million in 2017.²⁷⁷ Yes, the issue of scaling sustainable practices is big (no pun intended), but manageable. With willingness to make a profit but not as large a profit in the conventional system, a company has options. People have the capacity to create systems that will work both for sustainability and for scaling.

Elizabeth Suzann's team created a new business model by thinking outside the conventional system and revamping how they take orders. This created more predictable production numbers week by week and helped manage the workload on current employees. The Elizabeth Suzann team stuck to their values and got creative in addressing their issue of production. This model works for them. We desperately need new ways of thinking. Be willing to sacrifice some profit for purpose; conventional business model might say that's wrong, but it's the conventional system that has gotten us into this mess in the first place, so I am willing to place my bets on new business model innovations, even if they are imperfect.

If Elizabeth Suzann's new system does not work out and/or if Pal and Gander are correct, before we start changing the sustainable systems to be more scalable, another important question to be asking is this: Is scaling the goal? Traditional business owners and economists might say so. Based on my research, I think it would be "ok" to try to develop new system, even if these systems are meant to be operated at a much smaller scale. Maybe the founders of companies with the intention to remain small are on to something.

²⁷⁷ Liz Pape, "Times they are A'Changing: a Conversation about Growth and Adaption," Elizabeth Suzann, May 16, 2018, <https://elizabethsuzann.com/blogs/stories/times-they-are-achanging-a-conversation-about-growth-and-adaptation>.

We need to refine our vision of what scaling means. Currently, scaling up means growth and more. What if scaling could instead mean better: that a company could “grow” by bettering its practices instead of simply its bottom line. This would be quantified not only in profit, but in how the environmental and social spheres are bettered. Perhaps this distinction is what Benefit Corporations address as this new model of business.

The clothing industry needs sustainability because the scale of the industry and its operations has wreaked havoc on our earth and people. The clothing industry needs to scale down. I would agree wholeheartedly with Pal and Gander that sustainability concepts are not scalable, because they are not meant to be scaled to the extent of the CCI: the world’s resources and people cannot accommodate a garment industry at the current scale, even one that incorporates sustainability or not.

A business focused holistically on “Better” instead of “More” might grow, or it might maintain a profit without scaling up. Profit might not be as large as it could be without limits or constraints, but is this a bad thing? I believe everyone I interviewed would agree that, when discussing scaling, the first questions asked should be, “What are we doing and why are we doing it?”, and “What is the effect on the earth and its people?”

I hypothesized that young small businesses can do a better job at innovating sustainability practices than most large corporations because they are not already entrenched in conventional systems. Because of the posturing of each business in my sampling to holistically and comprehensively address sustainability concerns, I conclude that my hypothesis has been confirmed through my research.

Moving Forward

“Sustainability is no longer just a trend, it’s a business imperative.” –Global Fashion Agenda

Sustainability is truly a nuanced concept, and this can cause discomfort for businesses and consumers alike when implementing sustainability concepts is not as simple as we would like it to be. When I started this thesis process, I certainly wanted to assuage my own discomfort by narrowing down what sustainability practices are “best.” It can be difficult to narrow down what sustainability practices most effectively address the issues of fast fashion, because some can seem directly opposes to others (as discussed on p. 176). I then wondered if my pursuit of “best practices” was grounded in sustainability. The conventional clothing industry makes money by streamlining processes and coming up with one way that “works” or makes the most money. In trying to determine best practices, I have essentially been looking for one streamlined “best” way for a business to work sustainably or become the most sustainable. I too have been trapped and confined by the conventional model. Perhaps one of the ways that sustainability is truly innovative is that the “best” sustainability practices vary by company and will encompass multiple approaches.

Differing values, conflicting opinions, and, consequently, different practices exist across the sustainable clothing industry. Perhaps, instead of viewing this as negative or unproductive, we need to incorporate this into what sustainability means in the clothing industry. These differences support innovation by requiring people to clarify what they are doing and why they are doing it, and allows for diverse—not streamlined—practices that can transform production and business strategies. This would mean that the ambiguity of sustainability is an integral part of the practice of sustainability. I conclude

this thesis with my own recommendations for businesses and consumers and suggestions for further research.

Change the Dominant Social Paradigm of “More is Better”

“How can we even begin to disarm greed and envy? Perhaps by being much less greedy and envious ourselves; perhaps by resisting the temptation of letting our luxuries become needs; and perhaps by even scrutinizing our needs to see if they cannot be simplified and reduced.”
– E F Schumacher

In the above quote, E. F. Schumacher asks and answers an essential question of sustainability.²⁷⁸ In essence, the “More is Better” paradigm relies on greed and envy. As indicated in my interviews, producers and consumers focused on sustainability can feel like they fight an uphill battle against “More is Better.”

While most who work in sustainability would argue that more does not mean better, it seems that the conventional system of “more” still has many of us captured by the idea that “more” *is* better. Indeed, we have been socialized into this line of thinking, so it is no surprise that it will take strong acts of will to disengage from this thinking. We call for *more* transparency, *more* equitable supply chains, when we really mean that we want *better* practices.

The social and economic factors behind fast fashion underscore a symptom of a cultural shift that has occurred, arising from the pursuit of more. We seek more data, quicker response times, etc. than ever before. Amazon Prime allows us to purchase goods with “one-click” with a guarantee of quick delivery, we purchase many of these

²⁷⁸ E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered*, New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2010, 40.

goods on credit cards with borrowed money, and add luxuries to our list of “necessities.” We, as a society, consumer more, more quickly, and on a larger scale than ever before.²⁷⁹

Is our desire for more, for quantity, making us happier? Except when basic needs are met, the answer is no.²⁸⁰ Why, then, do we continue in a rush for more stuff and things? Why do we let marketing persuade us that we need more clothing to be happy? Changing our paradigm from “more” to “better” could be a way to start and both businesses and consumers have a shared responsibility to revise the paradigm together.

Shared Responsibility

“Fast Fashion is like Fast Food. After the sugar rush, it just leaves a bad taste in your mouth.” – Livia Firth

Many stakeholders share responsibility to create a sustainable clothing industry. Indeed, achieving sustainability in any industry requires group effort and collaboration and hinges on businesses, consumers, investors, governments, manufacturers, artisans, designers, farmers, etc., working together to address the issues created by decades of fast fashion..

My research focused on the companies, and the interviewees from each company stressed the importance of the customer driving demand. Each company must clean up its supply chain, create management practices that reflect sustainable values, and then make this information available to the consumer. At the same time, the consumer has great responsibility to not only demand sustainable practices, but to hold the companies—and their bottom lines—responsible to transparent sustainable practices.

²⁷⁹ *The Story of Stuff*, Directed by Louis Fox, 2007, Free Range Studios, The Story of Stuff Project, May 24, 2017, <https://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff/>.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Recommendations for the Clothing Company

“A fresh generation are marching for revolution and they want to wear clothes that tell a new story. Let’s give it to them.” –Naomi Klein

Companies that pursue sustainability need to remain committed to innovation by seeking out best practices and philosophies (even if there is not a set way to incorporate them), understanding that business constantly changes, remain nimble to adjust and adapt to the market and consumer demand, and remember that just because an industry has done something and it has been profiting does not necessarily mean the industry should keep doing it that way. Each of the sustainability innovations uncovered in this research presents opportunities for sustainable practices. If we view business as an extension of human creativity, I argue that companies need to make room for creativity within their business models and budgets, and use that to drive innovation.

Being intentional with each decision is important. I also suggest that every company spend time to “know thyself,” defining what specific sustainability practices to incorporate, understanding what compromises the company may be willing to make, and maintaining autonomy over all practices and processes. When a company and its employees have clear values, it becomes easier to live up to them. For example, if a company sets a standard of using only biodegradable materials, it would be extremely apparent—and wrong— if they used synthetic materials. When a company articulates what compromises it makes and why, the consumers can see more easily the intentionality behind the decision-making processes. For example, if a company chooses not to produce Made to Order, they need to have a sustainable strategy to deal with waste and extra inventory through recycling, repurposing, or reusing and a way to communicate the choices and practices like through the company website. Maintaining autonomy over

processes allows the company greater control of decision-making and can keep the company nimble in the face of changes. But what does this mean for the consumer?

Recommendations for the Consumer

“The educated consumer is the strongest force on earth.” –Sally Fallon Morrell

First and foremost, I recommend that consumers actively seek to address their consumerism. Ultimately, we need to buy fewer clothes. People need fewer articles of clothing and can extend the life of the clothes they do have if they care for their clothes well (learning how to care for different fabrics regarding washing/drying) and mend their clothing if it tears. If a consumer cannot mend the clothing, I suggest seeking the services of a professional mender. For example, if the heel of a pair of boots wears down, instead of throwing the boots away, take them to a cobbler for new heels. Additionally, before purchasing articles of clothing, I recommend exploring trading clothing (like at a clothing swap), then buying used, and only then purchasing new quality-made garments from trusted, sustainable companies.

One of the best ways to ensure a sustainable wardrobe is by staying informed. Thankfully, these days this is easier than ever because sustainability professionals and bloggers make information available about new clothing lines, sustainable practices, and they make recommendations every day. I stay connected through Instagram and by subscribing to newsletters of bloggers who reflect my own values regarding sustainable consumption and clothing.

The process of transitioning from conventional to sustainable consumption habits can be difficult, especially if the wardrobe a consumer already owns is not considered sustainable. In general, most people own clothing made of synthetic fibers. So, should a

person dispose of their non-biodegradable clothing and create landfill waste in this process? Or should they wear said clothing until it wears out, while at the same time worrying about the microplastics generated every time they wash the garments? Ultimately, creativity is key. In reality, synthetic fabrics are not going away any time soon. So, how can we address the microplastics problem? A good solution in the meantime would be purchasing a microplastics filter device to attach to a laundry machine. Better yet would be developing washing machines designed to filter out the micro plastics before they enter the waste water supply.

Before starting this thesis, I was conscious of how I shopped, but by delving into the worlds of fast and slow fashion, I have transformed my attitude towards clothing acquisition and consumption. When purchasing every article of new clothing, I am much more discerning, and I choose garments that go with the clothing I already own, creating a capsule wardrobe. I also make sure the fabric and trimmings are biodegradable (no synthetic material), the life cycle of the garment can be tracked (as much as possible) from seed to sewn, and the garment comes from brands that are extremely transparent about their sustainability practices.

It is important to note that for me, maintaining these standards would be incredibly cost prohibitive if I purchase new clothing. This has helped me in three specific ways: I now shop much less frequently, I focus on wearing what I already have in my closet, and I am intentional about what I add to my closet: it must be a piece that I really love, fits me well, and that goes with other items in my closet. Additionally, this new standard makes me seek out clothing swaps and second-hand clothing (to which I also apply my biodegradable standards).

Regarding care and disposal, I wash my clothing according to how the fabric best responds for longevity, and I send unwearable items or those not good enough to give away to textile recycling facilities. These days, I am much more involved with my clothing, knowing each garment has a story attached to it, whether the story be that I have owned the garment for 5+ years, I have mended it myself, or that it came from a brand I know and respect. I also must mention that this new approach to clothing has greatly impacted how I think about consumption in general and my consumption regarding other items such as food, household goods, and gifting has become much more intentional and well-thought-out with a mind to the social and environmental impact of my purchases.

Further Research

“... because there is no ‘planet B.’” – First used on signs at the climate rallies in Copenhagen in 2009

Much work remains to be done in order to transform the conventional clothing industry. In my research, I investigated innovative sustainability practices among small, young clothing companies. Further research is needed into many of the singular sustainability practices (for example, I could have written an entire paper about direct to consumer (DTC) retailing). Moreover, my research has an inherent bias because I collected data from individuals working for companies themselves. It would be important to analyze third party reports on young small sustainable clothing companies.

Additionally, I measured neither the scale of the innovation, nor the effectiveness of these innovations. For many of the companies, the effectiveness cannot be measured yet because the innovations are so new. Following up on this research in five or so years could be interesting to see where the company is in their sustainability journey, what

innovative practices were effective, and what other innovations they chose to adopt over time.

Another important relationship not fully researched here is how governments and businesses can work together for solutions. Public policy can both influence business practices and consumer purchasing habits through incentives or taxes. For example, the recent ban of plastic straws in cities such as Seattle (and now California) will do much not only to greatly reduce plastic straw consumption but also to promote innovations of sustainable alternatives.²⁸¹ Of course, eliminating plastic straws is only a small part of what needs to be done to address our plastic pollution, but it is a start.

Further research on the rise of Social Media—and specifically Instagram—on both consumer and business behavior would be helpful, too. While Instagram is being used as a marketing and educational space, ecommerce through Instagram is steadily on the rise (p. 38). As micro communities of like-minded people who would otherwise not be connected continue to grow, Instagram increasingly becomes a tool for commerce and consumption. The potential influence on consumption and the counter-balance of sustainable fashion's efforts would be fascinating to document.

While this thesis focused on the businesses themselves and their specific business practices, another project could research how consumers engage with sustainability in the clothing industry. This would be worthwhile because, outside of the “loyal fan bases” that many companies have established, the average consumer may not spend much money on sustainable fashion compared to low cost fast fashion. In addition, as indicated

²⁸¹ Hilary Brueck, "The Real Reason Why so Many Cities and Businesses Are Banning Plastic Straws Has Nothing to Do with Straws at All," Business Insider, October 22, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/plastic-straw-ban-why-are-there-so-many-2018-7>.

several times throughout this thesis, more research should be done regarding the price point of sustainable clothing and consumer behavior relating to niche markets vs. mainstream markets. This research could help sustainable clothing companies tailor their marketing strategies to best fit their own niche markets.

Another important point of further research is the technology used by the fashion industry. From some of the literature, I expected that my interviews would yield more technological innovation ideas. Whereas some sustainable fibers and materials could be considered technology as well as design techniques such as Zero Waste design, no other new technologies were mentioned. Yet, there are new technological innovations used in the sustainable clothing industry that beg further research such as additive manufacturing (3D printing).

Another innovation that kept coming up in my literature search (although not in journal articles, but rather in the latest online fashion magazines and business publications) was the use of blockchain for tracking supply chain logistics.²⁸² Blockchains are like ledgers that can be added to and edited by multiple parties.²⁸³ But it is important for supply chain tracking, a blockchain document can only be changed when there is a consensus among the group. Blockchain could revolutionize supply chain transparency. By using blockchain, companies would have a way to track a garment from “seed to sewn” and could communicate this to its consumers. Additionally,

²⁸² Whitney Bauck, "The Beginner's Guide to How Blockchain Could Change the Ethical Fashion Game," Fashionista, April 18, 2018, <https://fashionista.com/2018/04/what-is-blockchain-explained-ethical-fashion-supply-chain>.

²⁸³ Portia Crowe, "There Is a 'game Changer' Technology on Wall Street and People Keep Confusing It with Bitcoin," Business Insider, March 05, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-blockchain-2016-3#blockchains-are-ledgers-like-excel-spreadsheets-but-they-accept-inputs-from-lots-of-different-parties-the-ledger-can-only-be-changed-when-there-is-a-consensus-among-the-group-that-makes-them-more-secure-and-it-means-theres-no-need-for-a-central-authority-to-approve-transactions-1>.

companies would no longer be able to use excuses like “We did not know our workers were exploited!” or “We had no idea the working conditions were so bad!” because there would be a clear document showing exactly who is working for whom, including second tier suppliers.

My Final Take-a-way: Hope

“Call it ‘Eco Fashion’ if you like, but I think it’s just common sense.” –Livia Firth

When I started this project, I worried I would encounter a lot of greenwashing and insincere sustainability claims, for the sake of appealing to customers or as a marketing ploy. I am so glad to be able to report that my worry was unfounded. I talked with 22 people, a collection of business owners, designers, a lawyer, entrepreneurs, and operations managers, etc., all of whom were dedicated to their brand and to furthering the sustainability agenda. I feel so fortunate to have come away from this experience more encouraged than discouraged. Yes, there is more work to be done. Always. However people are doing it and are paving the way to come up with different “best practice” in different contexts. This is inspiring and empowering. If there is one thing I want my thesis to be a testament to, it’s that there is hope. Often, our social and economic issues can be incredibly daunting in both big picture and detailed ways. I have demonstrated that fast fashion is one industry that may not operate sustainably, and may never do so due to its scale and entrenched practices. Yet, there are those who are genuinely invested in combating the issues of fast fashion and establishing new and innovative ways of sourcing, producing, and managing business operations. So, let’s celebrate the good work being done and remember, at the same time, to keep up the fight and do our parts. I end my thesis with gratitude and hope. I hope you are encouraged, too.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Beginning questions:

1. Who are you (name) and what is your role in the company?
2. When was the business founded? In response to what recognized need?
3. What background and/or education informed the company quest for sustainability?
4. Have there been other businesses that have motivated/inspired the company (both positively and negatively)
5. How does the company define sustainability?

Organizational Practices questions:

1. Does the company have a sustainability network or organization within the field? A cohort of sorts?
2. Does the company consider itself innovative? If so, please describe.
3. What role does the company take in consumer education?
4. What is the size of the company? (How many employees, how you categorize: small, medium, large)

Supply Chain Management questions:

1. Please describe the company's supply chain.
2. What has informed/educated the company SCM practices?
3. What does your company do? (Retail? Online/Storefront? Both? Warehouse? Sourcing? Production?)
4. How do you verify this supply chain?
5. How far back do you check?

Certification questions

1. Does the company use/pursue Certifications?
 - a. If so, what ones? And why?
 - b. If not, but the company wants them, is there a strategic plan for certification? Or does the company have specific reasons for not?

What's next? Questions:

1. Since the company's inception, have you seen an increase in demand for more sustainable clothes? Or changes in the sustainable clothing industry? Please describe.
2. What's next for the business? (examples: expansions, zero waste campaign, the dreams!, and goals)

Am I missing anything?

1. Should I be asking any other questions? And if so, which ones?