

Module 2 Paper

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Sustainability in the fashion industry has become increasingly prominent to both businesses and consumers. The environment's health has projected that if certain practices and routines are not altered or changed within this industry, it may cause issues that can be hard to reverse. Textile and fashion industries have acknowledged this and have made efforts to combat issues such as but not limited to excessive waste, pollution, and high volumes of water consumption. The field of sustainable alternatives offers a variety of textiles, techniques, and practices that aim to neutralize these issues. Businesses such as Patagonia and Kotn (which is based outside the United States), have the initiative to set forth a blueprint that may ultimately transform the fashion industry as a whole. To fully grasp the concept of sustainable alternatives one must be exposed to the facts about the industry's issues, fashion brands that are exercising these alternatives, and the textiles being used for these certain techniques

Overview of Industry Issues and need for Sustainable Alternatives

The fashion industry faces hurdles on its road to eco-friendly practices. Most of them being intangible forces. Demand for clothing that is created by the consumer is hard to ignore in the fashion industry. Fast fashion is the poster child when it comes to these issues, as this sector of fashion houses the most fads which increases the likelihood of land pollution and excessive waste. This type of fashion usually garners the quickest production and distribution time to capitalize on the demand and trend (Earth.Org, 2022). Hence the word "fast" in fast fashion, the materials, and techniques used are often cheap and have minimal quality control. Synthetic materials and textiles also pose an obstacle in the pursuit of sustainable alternatives.

Synthetic textiles require more chemical finishes which promotes higher chances of land and air pollution. This is also a significant issue for the fashion industry because Polyester is a

synthetic textile that takes up 51% of the overall textiles used (WollyGreen, 2022). This is alarming because this means that more than half of the clothing being made within the fashion industry is made up of or includes synthetic textiles. The issue does not stop there as these textiles are very hard to break down to their chemical infrastructure. It will take a very long time for these textiles to break down and go back to the Earth. Being that 85% of clothing in the United States will end up in landfills, sustainable alternatives are much needed in this area of the industry (Portela, 2021).

Sustainable alternatives are needed because this is above the fashion industry. The amount of pollution that comes from other factors also causes immense damage to the environment. It does not help the case if the industry neglects this issue because as time progresses, so will the effects of the practices that have created these issues. This is only a snapshot of the fashion industry and does not give a definite answer as to what the state of the environment or fashion would be like in years to come. However, it should be noted that fashion labels are taking on this recurring issue.

Fashion Brands Implementing Sustainable Alternatives

For a fashion brand to be eco-friendly, sustainable alternatives must be present in all aspects of its business. Patagonia which is based in California has positioned itself to be one of those brands. Although the brand cannot escape being part of the 51% that use polyester, the majority of the products they make include recycled material both natural and synthetic. Patagonia uses recycled and organic cotton in its products but this alone does not make it an environmental alternative. It is how they process and implement that cotton into the garments that prove sustainable alternatives were used. There is more to cotton than meets the eye as the United States has created innovative ways to keep pests away from it and produce greater

quantities (Goldstein, 2022)". There are concerns that if the fashion industry has a huge turnaround and decides to exercise sustainable alternatives, natural resources and fibers will gradually become scarce over time. Genetic modification has been used to combat this fear and has shown promising results, especially with cotton. Practicing these alternatives is just half the puzzle in the fashion industry. With making an effective product, marketing is essential.

The brand's marketing revolves around product longevity and environmental awareness. Their marketing has also made it known to their consumers that overconsumption of clothing is something they do not stand for. "The brand's "Don't buy this jacket" campaign was designed to tackle the issues of consumerism head-on (Wolfe, 2022)". Marketing to consumers about how they can help slow down environmental pollution and think ethically invites them to do just that. As a stakeholder of the brand by purchasing Patagonia products, the consumer will feel an obligation to consume less and utilize what they have until it is no longer functional. In an interview with a Patagonia staff member, it was said that their mission statement spawns from their personal experiences with the environment and wilderness. The founder of the brand Yvon Chouinard is known to be a rock climber, a hobby that demands the most sustainable wear to ensure comfort and safety (Sonsev, 2019). Advertising is an effective way of influencing sustainability and growing awareness surrounding the topic. Patagonia is not the only fashion brand that is environmentally conscious as there are ones outside the United States that uphold similar initiatives.

Kotn, a certified B-Corp fashion brand has made great strides in using sustainable alternatives. Based in Canada, the brand offers minimalist essential pieces of both clothing and home decor with a premium feel. The cotton used along with other textiles and materials are processed with little to no excess waste and are made in safe working environments. Unlike

Patagonia, instead of using recycled materials, the fashion brand goes right to the source before starting production. Outsourcing their cotton from small farms in Egypt, Kotn makes it a priority to undergo the most organic and preserving processes to deliver eco-friendly products. Kotn oversees the production of their clothing to ensure that working conditions are safe and that innovative technology is being used to its highest capacity. As of 2017, Kotn has a B Impact Score of 95.5 out of 100 (BCorp, 2022). The brand values transparency and this is projected from start to finish in regards to the manufacturing process. During this process, the brand keeps in mind who their ideal consumer is and what they will appreciate about the product.

Kotn intends to adhere to adults who appreciate organic and premium material straight from the source. The price range for a Kotn product is not too costly which is surprising being that their material has not been drenched in chemical finishes (Harris, 2019). These products are affordable and sustainable, things that can breathe fresh air into the fashion industry. Cotton is



perceived as the most reliable and eco-friendly material for source making clothing. However,

new technology and innovation have made it possible for cotton and other materials to reach new heights without sacrificing the health of the environment.

Bio Synthetic Textile Production

Biosynthetic material production has been overlooked due to its synthetic infrastructure. However, the production and the finished product have been known to preserve more resources and deplete excessive water consumption in the long run. There are many biosynthetic materials and textiles out there and consumers may not even know their clothing might contain them.

Faux leather is a prime example of a biosynthetic textile. Although it is not leather, innovative and sustainable alternatives are used to make it. What makes biosynthetic textile production a better alternative is the process it goes through. Bacteria and fungi which are a part of nature are used to transform these textiles to minimize or eliminate the use of harsh chemical dyes.

Mylo is a prime example. Mylo is a trademarked textile that is made using fungi and has been used by some of the worlds leading fashion brands. Textiles like this are pivotal and can change the fashion industry entirely as technology deems it possible to mix science and fashion to better the environment. Overall, the fashion industry has to take accountability for its practices and shift over to sustainable alternatives.



Mylo Textile

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/style/article/Meet-Mylo-Bolt-Threads-latest-textile-that-12861807.php>

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