The State of the Apparel Industry

The apparel industry’s environmental and social impact on the planet is far from glamorous. A single article of clothing has most likely travelled to over four countries before it reaches the consumer. In addition, worldwide consumption of textiles is estimated to be over 30 million tons a year. It is also estimated that the average American throws away more than 68 pounds of clothing and textiles per year.

The Life Cycle of Apparel

Each stage involves a variety of processes that have negative impacts on the planet. Fertilizers, field emissions, dyeing, printing, and finishing are areas that are particularly detrimental. A life cycle assessment of cotton fabric indicated that yarn spinning, dyeing, and finishing were the largest contributors to global warming potential, energy demand, and acidification potential in the manufacturing stage. Finishing and dyeing impacted eutrophication potential, and water usage the most.

Social injustices are tragically common in the apparel supply chain. Workers suffer from low wages, excessive overtime, barriers to collective bargaining, and gender inequality, due to the apparel industry’s fierce competition, and threat of manufacturer relocation.

Better Business Practices

Certifications and third party regulation allow designers and consumers to demonstrate their preference for responsible products.

- **Oeko-Tex (100, 100plus, 10000) Standard** attempts to mitigate disagreements in manufacturing on which products are “ecologically harmless for humans.”

- **Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)** examines ecological and social criteria, backed up by independent certification, throughout the entire supply chain. The standard covers the processing, manufacturing, packaging, labeling, trading and distribution of all textiles made from at least 70% certified organic natural fibers.

- **OE 100 and OE Blended** ensures the integrity of organic cotton fiber during its agricultural production.

- **Bluesign standard** is an efficiency certification that can be applied to the entire production chain, from raw material to final product.

- **Global Recycle Standard (GRS)** certifies recycled content claims addressing traceability, environmental principles, social requirements, and labeling.

Value Proposition

Forget-Me-Not Sourcing is an online interactive textile database of information on sustainable fabrics for emerging fashion designers constrained by time and funding who cannot easily navigate the complex world of environmentally and socially responsible fabrics.

FMNS wants to make sustainable fashion a reality for all designers. We’re on a mission to bring efficiency and greater accessibility to the sustainable textile sourcing process as one part of the solution, so that each designer has an equal opportunity to engage in environmentally and socially responsible design.

Target Customer

The company is targeting emerging designers, who are establishing themselves in the industry, but do not have the resources to hire their own sourcing teams. These designers spend $5,000-$100,000 on fabric per year and have had their own collections for 2-8 years. Through expert interviews, the company found that the designer makes fabric selection regardless of customer preferences, and has tremendous influence in manufacturing processes. Therefore, increasing demand for sustainable textiles would have to begin with the designer.

Customer Problem Defined

Through extensive market research the company discovered four major customer problems:

- 85% of a designer’s time is spent sourcing fabrics
- Capital limitations prevent designers from hiring sourcing teams
- Designers are constantly looking for differentiation strategies
- Lack of information on where to find sustainable materials

One Designer Can Make a Big Difference

Each designer has the potential to achieve tremendous environmental savings by sourcing sustainable textiles instead of conventional textile.

For example, if a designer sold 125 t-shirts in a local boutique, she would need to source 125 pounds of cotton fabric.

Designers will pay Forget-Me-Not Sourcing for information on where to find credible sustainable fabric manufacturers. Designers will have direct access to manufacturers through the FMNS website where they will be able to order swatches and sample yardage. Once an order is placed, manufacturers will ship fabrics directly to designers.

Forget-Me-Not Sourcing

The apparel industry is crowded with many players acting between manufacturers and designers. Some sell fabrics based on order size, some work closely with manufacturers, while others hold inventory. Forget-Me-Not Sourcing will act as a collaborator in order to simplify the sourcing process.

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