



1

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE?

A clear and easily understandable set of rules that allows consumers to evaluate the degree of sustainability of products does not exist.

The Decalogue on Social and Environmental responsibility in the fashion sector was promoted by The Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana (The National Chamber for Italian Fashion) in 2012, but it is considered as a guidance, since it has no actual executive or legislative power.



2

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BE "ECO"?

The cost of a garment is calculated on raw material, processing, finishing, packaging and operating expenses. When it comes to a sustainable and ethically produced garment, traceability, certifications, origin of materials, energetical and environmental management and safety of workers are also to be considered. Recycled or reused materials have an additional cost as well, which is related to its collection, selection and processing.



3

COTTON VS POLYESTER

Cotton is naturally sourced and reusable. However, it requires an extensive use of water, soil, pesticides, that may pose a risk for workers' health. Virgin polyester is obtained from petroleum through a high energy-intensive process, that releases volatile particulate matter and acids like hydrogen chloride. It is not biodegradable, it can end up in landfills or even disperse microplastics; it can be recycled.



SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Most recycled polyester clothing on the market is made from plastic bottles.

The mechanical process used to transform bottles into fibers, along with the mechanical and chemical stresses that clothes undergo during washing, releases microplastics.

Moreover, those fabrics are of a lower quality compared to virgin material, and therefore they are more prone to deterioration and to a higher loss of microfibers.



5

NEXT-GEN MATERIALS

Innovators are growing bio-based substitutes for conventional livestock derived materials (e.g., leather) and fossil fuel-based synthetics (e.g., polyester). Some of these new bio-based textiles can be engineered to deliver performance features alongside properties such as biodegradability. Unfortunately, these innovations are plagued by high initial costs, large requirements for capital, and resistance to change.



6

THE DARK SIDE OF ONLINE SHOPPING

The objects that we purchase and return every year generate 15 million tons of CO₂, which relate just to their transportation (a returned item travels 2000 km on average). It is thought that returned items go back on the shelves and are sold again, but most of them end up in landfills. In fact, it not convenient for luxury brands to sell at discounted prices, while it is way more expensive for cheaper brands to inspect and fix the items rather than sending it to a landfill.



7

FROM ONE APP TO ANOTHER

According to BCG (Boston Consulting Group) strategic consulting, the share of second-hand clothing will increase from 21% in 2020 to 27% in 2023. This will happen thanks to apps like Vinted, which has 65 millions subscribers; Vestiaire Collective, which, by committing to local or direct shipments, avoided the production of 1167 tons of CO₂; and Armadio Verde, which saved 2,4 billion liters of water and 3,3 thousand tons of CO₂; Zalando Second Hand, which allows users selling their clothes to get a coupon or to donate them to the Red Cross and WeForest.



THAT

8
NOT ALL
GLITTERS
IS GOLD

The green marketing phenomenon presents a positive communication strategy but sometimes also a poor environmental sustainability. H&M is an example: the company has a business model that focuses on frequently updated fashion collections, but their green collection has a higher percentage of synthetic materials compared to the primary one (72% vs 61%). Any of the certifications coming from a third party doesn't support the material used for the green collection.



MUCH MORE THAN A PURCHASE

Shopping is much more than the mere purchase of products and services. It is a way to express ourselves, to empower our individual identity, and live a social experience.

This activity contributes to our self satisfaction and gratification.

Shopping behaviour is also mediated by environmental factors such as item positioning, music, lack of clocks in the shop, that are taken advantage of by sellers in order to encourage purchases.



10

RENTAL: SOLUTION OR PROBLEM?

Clothing rental, of both formal items and special occasion clothes, increases by 10% every year. Benefits of rental consist in a reduction of waste and an increase in the life of the garments.

However, the environmental impact of transportation (taking the clothes back and forth between the warehouse and the renter) and of dry cleaning should be considered.



UNSUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

Clothes are sealed in plastic packaging and cardboard boxes. Items ordered online are delivered in plastic bags or plastic boxes filled with tissue paper or bubble wrap.

Packaging accounts for 40% of plastic waste and 11% of it originates from clothes packaging.

Only a small amount of that plastic is recycled, a lot of it accumulates in landfills or incinerators or is dispersed into the environment.

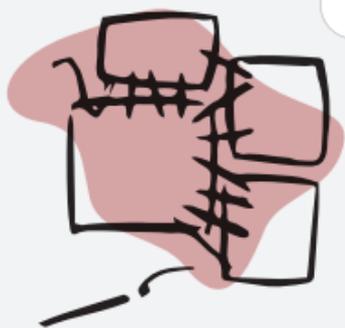
12



AS LONG AS THE BOAT GOES

Fashion factories are often remotely located, so transportation of the good relies heavily on trucks, boats, and planes. Around 90% of clothes are transported by container ship yearly, but cargo airplanes are often being preferred because they are faster and reach the shelves quicker.

If the fashion industry moves just 3% of garment transportation from ship to air cargo, it could result in more than 100% more carbon emissions than if all garment transportation were by ship.



THREAD AND NEEDLE

Due to social barriers and clothes' lower prices, only 20% of fashion items are repaired and recycled.

Activities such as repairing and mending garments play an important role in reducing the social and environmental impact of fast fashion. The spread of such practices might as well lead to an increase in jobs and an improvement of social welfare.



14

WHEN IN DOUBT, DRESS SUSTAINABLE

Sustainability has officially become a recurring theme in the fashion industry, encouraging some brands to launch new initiatives and to set new goals to make their productions more ethical.

Trainers and jeans remain two of the most sought-after product categories in sustainable fashion, with a yearly growth of 142% and 108% respectively.



15

PLAY IS THE WORK OF THE CHILD

Child exploitation in the textile industry is mainly concentrated in countries where labour is cheaper, from the harvest in cotton field to the packaging in large factories, where children work up to 12 hours a day.

Bangladesh is the world's second producer of clothing and according to UNICEF, child exploitation reaches 1 million of children in the country.



BUY NOTHING - MAKE SOMETHING!

More than a third of the European population buys more clothes than those they need. In Italy, several institutions (for example HUMANA) offer to collect clothes and redistribute them to those in need.

They also can sell those donated clothes and thus support social development projects.

When garments cannot be reused, they are employed in the production of textile fibers.

