

## **THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF PATAGONIA**

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**Annotation:** This article explores how the sustainability can be incorporated into the fashion industry with examples of Patagonia

**Key words :** sustainability, apparel industry, green business, fashion responsibility

The fashion business is renowned for its capacity to introduce trends that have the ability to influence society and have an impact on general consumer purchasing patterns. Therefore the customer demands and largely determines the industry's direction. According to a McKinsey survey performed during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, "67% of customers consider the use of sustainable materials to be an important purchasing factor, and 63 percent consider a brand's promotion of sustainability in the same way. These factors became the primary reasons behind the increasing demand for sustainable fashion brands.

The textile and apparel sectors are currently focusing on sustainability-related challenges. A few years ago, supermarkets started offering a large variety of organic food to customers. Recently, primarily in reaction to customers increasing awareness of the manufacturing process, major clothing retailers have begun to sell lines of conscious clothing and have included other sustainable products.

The main objective of this paper to explore the main tools of creating sustainable fashion model by analyzing the successful sustainable apparel company-Patagonia, which is famous for successfully incorporating the sustainability concept into their business operation.

### ***The case of Patagonia***

Patagonia is an example of a big company that successfully integrated a sustainable business model and gains a competitive advantage against its competitors. The initial purpose of the company was to sustain its founder's lifestyle of climbing and surfing (Chouinard & Stanley 2012). Later, it started to grow and became as one of the leading clothing producers in the world. The company was one of the first clothing companies which converges toward green business, when they realized their company could damage the planet. Social activities toward the sustainable development at Patagonia range from the establishment of childcare, maternity leave and flexible working hours over the support of zero waste manufacturing to reduce the harmful consequences of their business and also reduce the manufacturing costs.

- **Core Values:** Patagonia is guided by a set of core values that drive its business practices and decision-making. These values include:
- **Quality:** Patagonia is committed to producing high-quality products that are durable, functional, and built to last, promoting a sustainable approach to consumption.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** The company is dedicated to minimizing its environmental impact throughout its supply chain. It actively seeks sustainable materials, implements eco-friendly production methods, and supports environmental initiatives and activism.

- **Transparency:** Patagonia believes in being transparent about its business practices and supply chain, sharing information with its customers and stakeholders openly.

**Activism:** The Company uses its platform to advocate for environmental and social issues, supporting grassroots activism and engaging in political advocacy to drive positive change

#### ***Patagonia marketing campaigns***

Patagonia launched ad- campaign ‘Don’t buy this jacket’, asking consumers to rethink their purchasing decision if they really need this jacket. The advertisement communicating to consumers by telling them: “Reduce what you buy, repair what you can, reuse what you no longer need, recycle what’s worn out”. Patagonia strategy was to developing the sense of responsibility among their consumers, they at the same time pledged to reduce resources, consumption and waste. For example some of their fleeces are made out of recycled plastic bottles, thus upcycled or reused.

The campaign proved to be very successful branding: not only creating an interactive brand experience, but also creating the strong ties with the customers, building a community of people who see themselves as environmentally conscious and demanding high quality products- but are also willing to pay a premium for such a product. The company also cooperated with platform eBay and launched special initiative to create brand shop with reused equipment, where customer could acquired reusable and safe clothes and equipment. This strategy followed their reuse and recycle principle, which they are pledged to do.

#### ***Sustainable supply chain:***

They demand transparency from the companies which they are cooperating and complete information of the circumstances the company delivers its value proposition. They shorten the supply chain, for example by using organic cotton from the United States and also work closely together with their suppliers to ensure they meet certain environmental and social standards. All this is accompanied by a website where customers can trace their purchased products throughout the supply chain. The concept of the ecological footprint is used by Patagonia to show the impact of doing business, especially within the supply chain and also as a measure to show results in resource use reduction as it puts an absolute measure to resource consumption (Nesslinger 2014).

The company has introduced the Footprint Chronicles, an interactive platform that enables customers to track the environmental and social consequences of Patagonia's products. This tool offers customers detailed insights into the materials utilized, the manufacturing facilities involved, and the overall environmental and social impact associated with each product. Patagonia, has developed new standards that prevent abuse exploitation. Employers, employees and recruiters were also informed about such hiring practices. To make amends, Patagonia has asked suppliers to pay all agency fees to migrants so that they receive their full wages (Simpson, 2015). Patagonia works hand in hand with its suppliers. Thai Alliance Textile is a wool manufacturer that Patagonia can ensure that it is 100% organic wool. A third partner, Control Union, has been involved to ensure that it is certified again, but Control Union is a private organization and does not publish its monitoring processes (Pongtratic, 2007). Due to Control Union's profit-oriented intent and the high costs of the annual certification for Thai Alliance Textile, there is an incentive to coordinate with one another in order to save costs (Pongtratic, 2007)

## **Conclusion**

The example of Patagonia demonstrates that building a sustainable business requires a holistic approach that integrates sustainability into every aspect of the organization. Patagonia's marketing strategies have played a vital role in establishing the brand as a leader in sustainability. Their authentic and transparent communication about environmental issues and their commitment to social responsibility have resonated with consumers, resulting in a loyal customer base and increased brand reputation. According to the analysis of Patagonia strategies based on Bocken business model archetypes, a strong emphasis was given on environmental and social values. Their approach to product design, production processes, and supply chain management reflects a deep commitment to minimizing environmental impacts and promoting fair labor practices. By incorporating sustainability throughout their operations, Patagonia has set a benchmark for sustainable business practices. The last, but also the main contributing factor is their marketing strategy. Patagonia distinguishes itself from other retail brands by embracing environmental responsibility through unconventional campaigns, establishing its pioneering status in the industry. Despite contradicting traditional marketing strategies, Patagonia's anti-consumerism practices showcase its successful approach of prioritizing the planet over company profit. By incorporating political and anti-consumerism messaging in their advertising efforts, Patagonia not only sparks controversy but also engages with their audience, inspiring action on environmental and social issues. Patagonia effectively builds ethical awareness through their marketing strategies by connecting their buyers to their brand. Their overarching mission, evident in their entire business model, is centered on saving the planet. This alignment of values with corporate social responsibility fosters a strong relationship between Patagonia and their audience. As supported by research findings, organizations that prioritize and actively engage in environmental and social protection efforts garner increased consumer support. Consequently, Patagonia's commitment to putting the planet before profit and deviating from conventional profit-oriented standards has positioned them as the leader in outdoor clothing.

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