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Novel economic models evolving in apparel sector to engrain & sustain sustainability maintaining profitability

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Abstract

This chapter discusses with examples adoption of new & emerging models for Sustainability in Apparel sector. It elaborates the practical approach to and the future roadmap laid down by industry practitioners as well as academia. It discusses relevant examples aligned to the theme as the need of sustainability being ingrained is more necessary than it ever was.

It elaborates how the supply chain in apparel sector needs to more agile to avoid inventory loss and loss due to sudden changes in demand like in the COVID scenario. It also addresses various dimensions of better preparedness for such unprecedented situations so that "sustainability can be sustained" without compromising on any of the three pillars of sustainability.

Keywords: Novel economic models, sustain sustainability, apparel sector

Introduction

In the current context when the challenges are more humungous than the opportunities, optimism leads the industry to devise economic models which are novel and impactful to engrain and sustain sustainably along with profitability. This paper is a confluence of strategies and actions of industry leaders giving a mosaic picture of policies and practices, strategies and operations, challenges and future road map portraying how the industry plays pivotal role in integrating Sustainability in the Garment Industry.

Role of consumers

It all begins with and boils down to the consumers. If Design is the fetus of sustainability, production process is the heart & consumers are the soul. As rightly highlighted consumer, tastes, preferences and priorities have been shifting. A survey conducted pan India highlighted that consumer awareness towards sustainable apparels is high, their purchase preferences towards sustainability has changed in positive direction. There is a huge market gap of sustainable products that are available to and accessible by customers. Despite intention of purchase, availability and price points emerged as major reasons of gap in acceptance of sustainable products in the Indian market.

Pull production system to replace push

The current economic scenario has made "pull" from customers & buyers act as trigger to drive manufacturing as demands are currently frozen to eventually avoid dead stock and have Just-in-time inventory. Adapting to basics and essentials has become a necessity. Huge pile of unsold items, customs for transport to second hand clothing market, copyright issues etc lead to huge dead inventory leading to unsustainable practices like incineration of products. In the process green washing becomes the respite of companies.

Fast Fashion versus slow fashion

Fast Fashion has a huge cost of Sustainability. The "true cost" of fast fashion can be seen in the river bodies close to manufacturing hubs as they reflect the "color of the Fashion Season". It can be very well be seen in the landfill of developed countries where one third of the landfill is clothing. The world seems to be moving towards a huge burden of waste and inevitable climate changes

Trash to treasure

The sweet taste of finding worth in waste is the key to the industry making a giant leap towards sustainability. Up cycling and down cycling are the mantra to sustainability.

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The scrap fabric/katran from cutting room in an apparel manufacturing facility makes the whole value chain score bad on sustainability. This needs to be address by using patterns with zero waste or better Computer Aided Technology facilities for better pattern utilization.

Paradigm shift from Linear Economy to Circular Economy

One of the paradigm shifts in the industry has been the shift from Linear Economy to Circular Economy. The take- make waste has taken enough toll. There is a compelling need for integrating Sustainability. Take -make-waste model gets redundant giving rise to circular economic models which is not only adaptive but also lean and sustainable.

Sustainable Technologies

From new Technological innovations like water less dyeing to using plastic retrieved from the oceans, from how "making App" makes making easy to how "don't buy me" Patagonia jackets make sustainability trickle down to the consumers' closet. Waterless dyeing, laser technology etc are just few ways to reduce the usage of resources making the processes more sustainable.

Business models

Business models adopted by companies in the current scenario make them sustain the economic stress. The models or strategies - most of them are sustainable in approach. discussing a few examples, this paper establishes how these strategies inspiring examples to drive the change. The industry experts discussed their business strategies fortifying sustainable practices and also laid out their future roadmap and strategies. The need of the hour is business model Innovation

Role of Information and Communication Technology

ICT is a strong tool for the same. As per world bank- "ICT, Information and Communication Technology is a key driver that shifts value along the value chain and enables new business models". Be it using ICT as a tool to connect all the nodal points facilitating seamless, real time and right information in the supply chain or measuring and managing the ecological footprint of a product, ICT can be a facilitator for integration of Sustainability in various ways. There is need for Multi-stakeholder Platform which shall have rippling impact on the fashion industry making the value chain sustainable. Especially during COVID-lockdown, when the nearest places are poles apart, significance of ICT has become more than it ever was in the current context, ICT plays a crucial role in seamless connectivity across the value chain for facilitating Sustainable supply chain.

Sustainability and academia

Sustainability and academia are intertwined. E-learning applications for capacity building on sustainability in fashion. Academia has a strong commitment towards creating future ready professionals, to be able to meet the challenges of weaving sustainability into the fashion industry and to be able to use ICT as a tool for Sustainable Fashion.

Extended Producer Responsibility/EPR Framework

In Specific context to E-Waste can be a learning for Fashion Industry too. Efforts and Initiatives by Information and Communication Technology can be a strong tool in

promoting as well as communicating the stories of these brands to consumers to facilitate trickling down of Sustainable Fashion in true sense.

Conclusion

As per Business of Fashion, Sustainability is a key driver of the industry. It is pertinent to mention that the key to integrating sustainability in Apparel sector is emergence and adoption of Novel Economic Models Evolving in Apparel Sector to Engrain & Sustain Sustainability maintaining Profitability.

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