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More Sustainably Made Clothing by Lena Vazifdar

Reiley Himpel

RTL:4050 Strategic Planning in the Fashion Industry

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## Introduction

In the CNN article “With Tradition and New Tech, These Japanese Designers are Crafting More Sustainably Made Clothing” by Lena Vazifdar, the topic of sustainability is brought to light. The main focus of this article is Japanese designers who are trying to create more sustainable options within the fashion industry. Sustainability is an interesting topic to me because it impacts everyone. To continue to be able to live on earth, people must realize the damage they are doing to it. New ways to improve our life on earth interests me, especially in the fashion industry since it is a main component to pollution.

## Situation Analysis

Shohei, a ready-to-wear fashion label who creates women’s and menswear, has been working with a Kyoto based artisan to produce textiles dyed that use traditional kakishibu methods. Lisa Pek, the creative director and Shohei Yamamoto, the CFO, founded the label in 2016 wanted to focus on the traditional craft of garment making, while also blending technology into the design; they use the kakishibu dyeing process. This is an alternative to the popular use of synthetic dyes, which can be damaging to waterways and soil. The fabric is then tanned in the sun. They also source fabric dyed using shibori, a hand-dyeing technique that is less harmful than synthetic counterparts. The company puts an emphasis on creating a dialogue between nature and technology, to inspire others to do the same to speak to the world as it once was, the world as it is now and the world that is still to come (Vazifdar).

## Problem Statement

Japanese fashion label, Shohei, is trying to assess and execute different methods to use for more sustainable clothing.

## Strategy Analysis

At Shohei, they are using various methods to improve sustainability within their garment dyeing process. A main method they are using is the kakishibu dyeing process. This is when the textiles are immersed in the fermented juice of unripe persimmon fruit. Then, once the dyeing process is finished, the fabric is tanned in the sun, which creates orange hues (Vazifdar).

A positive side to this dyeing process is that it creates a water-resistant effect when it is oxidized in the air and provides antibacterial properties (Creators). Also, historically, Japanese people have always enjoyed colors and texture of the natural reactions that happen on the garment. It changes after one week, one month, one year, and so on. The fast paced consumer society is something the kakishibu method meshes well with (Kakishibu).

A downside to this method is that it is much more time consuming than traditional methods, so companies may not want to make the switch, as they would be losing valuable time to create and push out products. Also, the positive of the dyeing method changing throughout time may not be a positive to some. People mainly buy clothing because they like how the garment looks as it is. The idea of colors changing with more wear may deter people from buying it.

## Recommendation

Reviewing the Shohei website, it was noticeable that they lean in on the fact that they are nature conscious. In terms of the kakishibu method, it is a small part of their website that is not that simple to find. Shohei should promote this method more, and turn the fact that the garment will change over time into a positive. No examples are shown on the “kakishibu” info page, which could be helpful for people wondering how their garment will look in the future. Also, they have a pop-up show in Tokyo, but could possibly expand to have more pop-up shops, maybe even outside of Asia. This could then spread the information about the kakishibu dyeing process. People could understand and learn about what it is, and the sustainability aspect of it.

## Questions

1. Would you be willing to pay more for sustainable clothing? Why or why not?
2. Why do you continue to shop at fast fashion companies since we, as fashion students, know how detrimental they are to the earth? Excluding Price.
3. How far do you think sustainability will go within the fashion industry? Can it only go so far?

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