

**Sustainability and the Environment:
Textiles used in Small and Medium Apparel Firms in the United States**

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Purpose: As a result of the alarming negative impacts of the textile and apparel industry, it is under pressure to incorporate sustainable development. The literature supports the need for sustainable development in the fashion industry and the need for it to happen in the first stage of the design process through textile selection. The literature also calls for designers as change agents and proposes that small to medium enterprises are the innovators and change makers. Previous studies have focused on textile options, the sustainable impact of each textile and identified sustainable textiles selected and sourced by larger firms such as Patagonia and Levi. There is a gap in the literature identifying the sustainable textiles used by that small to medium size apparel firms in the US. The purpose of this study is to conduct a content analysis on sustainable textiles selected by small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in the apparel industry based in the United States and understand how these textiles contribute to the triple bottom line.

Design/methodology/approach: A content analysis approach is used with the main data source of online websites of ten apparel design firms. First, purposeful sampling was used to find sustainable fashion brands located in the US that are SME's through a google search. Second, the website was observed to identify sustainable textile options from the literature review. This study applied the theoretical framework of the triple bottom line to create a content analysis of the textiles selected and their contribution to the triple bottom line. This research will provide an overview of sustainable textiles selected and sourced by small to medium sized apparel firms.

Findings: The findings show that the sustainable textiles contributed to the triple bottom line environmentally through textile choice of blends and non-blends, natural and synthetics. In addition to textile choice, the environmental considerations included Global Organic Textile Certified (GOTS), Eco label certified, natural, unbleached, low impact dyes, hand dyed, closed looped production system, donations to water and tree preservation, fabric made in USA, garment made in USA, local artisans and slow fashion production. The sustainable textiles contributed to the triple bottom line socially through transparency of where the fabric and garment is made, fair trade textiles, fair trade factories, fair labor practices, and manufactured in USA. The economic considerations were based solely on the price of the garment. Prices range from \$12 for underwear to \$750 for a coat. There was a wide range of pricing points depending on brand.

Originality/value: This research contributes to the field of sustainable textiles and apparel and small to medium apparel firms in the United States. Few studies exist that show how firms are able to meet the triple bottom line while using sustainable textiles. This research shows that it can be done in a variety of price points.

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