The EcoChic Design Award
MARKETING SUSTAINABLE FASHION

MARKETABILITY
SUSTAINABILITY
TRANSPARENCY

ORGANISED BY

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WHAT IS IT?
Marketing is a tool for communicating the value of a product or service to customers.

WHY DO IT?
It is important to make information on your clothing’s sustainability credentials available to your customers, both so that they have the opportunity to value the considered nature of your brand, and to allow a transparent and honest contact from the onset. This will help your customer to connect deeper with your brand and to have a growing interest in dressing sustainably.
HOW DO I DO IT?

1 MAKE YOUR DESIGNS MARKETABLE

Good design is your most important marketing tool. If your product is sustainable but the design is not great, then no one will buy it and that is not sustainable! Good design always needs to come first and sustainability should be the secondary message.

EXPERT’S TIP

— Filippo Ricci, Co-founder of From Somewhere & Co-curator of Estethica —

The fundamental rule when you sell a fashion collection is that the design and style is there and that your product has something unique. With this achieved, you will have a narrative in your collection. If you also have a sustainable narrative in your collection then it is incredibly important that you include the sustainability of your collection into your marketing. But the sustainability should not be the main focus or the main message. Always remember, if the collection is not good then it is not going to sell.
Know who you are designing for. Understand your target audience and their likes and dislikes. Do you see a gap in the market? What does this group want? You need to get under the skin of your target audience to discover how to dress them.

**EXPERT’S TIP**

— Tamsin Lejeune, Managing Director & Founder of Ethical Fashion Forum —

Look at the market and where the opportunities for sales are located. Many businesses and entrepreneurs fall down on the fact that they spend all their time looking at wonderful fabrics and products, without having them fully market targeted.
IT’S ALL ABOUT THE STORY

Start a conversation and make the customer a part of the solution. Tell them how the product is made and where it comes from. Connect your customers with your story and the journey of the brand.

EXPERT’S TIP

— Lucy Siegle, Journalist & Broadcaster —

The important thing for me is the narrative behind clothes and behind their design. It’s all about a story. Consumers increasingly like to know where something is from and why it has been made. We live on a planet that is overcrowded by consumer goods from fashion to colours of paint. You have to make a case for what you’re producing these days. Why is it being made? As a designer, you can’t just design for landfill, you have to design for somebody and for some reason. As a consumer, I want to know what’s the reason for your design and why you’re bringing this product to the market.

— Becky Willan, Co-founder & Director of Given London —

It is really useful to think about your brand as a story and then the role of marketing becomes how you tell that story when you’re not there to tell it to somebody face-to-face. The first thing to think about when writing your brand’s story is; ‘Who’s going to read it and who’s going to be buying my products?’ With these questions answered, you can then think about how you get some clarity into the story that you’re trying to tell. I think what’s interesting about sustainability is that it can be a really important part of your brand story but it’s never going to be, and it never should be, your whole message.

Rags2Riches have a strong brand story behind their up-cycled products, which are made by disadvantage artisans in the Philippines.

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Make your message simple and focus on one key message to grab your customer’s attention. Find out what is unique about your designs and highlight this in your marketing. Once you have your customer’s attention you can tell them more later.

**EXPERT’S TIP**

— Lucy Siegle, Journalist & Broadcaster —

One of the key problems with communicating sustainable messaging is trying to put everything on one huge clothing label, as long as a cow’s tongue! That is not going to work. People are not going to read it and your message is not going to get across to your customers. So you need to find short cuts and these shorter messages must really pack a punch so that your customer really knows what you’re doing. You only get one chance to impress a consumer now — so you really have to go for it!

**BE DIRECT**

Use direct, clear and consistent language. Don’t use vague and irrelevant terms, especially words such as green and eco. Don’t overwhelm the consumer with too much information and don’t make claims unless you can back the claims up.
GET ONLINE

Online is a great channel to share more information about your brand’s story, which can’t be communicated in-store or on the garment. Your customers might not be located in a single market so get online to spread your story. Use social networks and a website to communicate your brand’s philosophy with your customers. This will allow you to share information instantly and bring your customers behind the scenes of your brand, giving them access, authenticity and engagement.

EXPERT’S TIP

— Filippo Ricci, Co-founder of From Somewhere & Co-curator of Estethica —

Online is becoming the main platform for fashion in general and online is a fantastic tool for marketing because it gives a lot of freedom. I believe sustainability will gain a lot of strength if the online tools are used properly. My suggestion is when you plan your marketing activities start to use online tools, such as your own website and any other social network tools. Make sure you have strong and well-planned marketing around your sustainability initiatives so that the message is loud and clear.

YURI MAN

DESIRE TO REWORK EVERYTHING WASTED
YURICRAFT@GMAIL.COM
+852 60673760

ARCHIVE RANDOM RSS SEARCH

9TH JUN 2013

Panels cut from fabric swatches, bindings cut from main fabric of a bra.

Image credit Yuri Man

Yuri Man, The EcoChic Design Award Hong Kong 2011 Finalist, set up a blog to promote her brand, Yuri Craft, and to share with her customers about how her sustainable collection was made.
NETWORK WITH LIKEMINDED PEOPLE

We believe sustainable fashion should be the norm and not a niche. Keeping up-to-date with what is happening in the sustainable fashion arena and targeting likeminded organisations, people and magazines may be a great platform to spread your own message. Check out the sustainable fashion trade fairs and events in your area to get the local lowdown.

Katrien Van Hecke prefers the personal and direct contact she gets at trade fairs and events. She can then personally speak to people and tell them the process of making her collection and the story behind it.

BE CREATIVE

Show your designs in their best light. Put them under the spotlight in a guerrilla fashion show or installation, create a video or do a fashion shoot. Good imagery and story telling will help you market your clothes to the mainstream fashion crowd whilst still sticking out.
BE SUSTAINABLE

Think about the materials that you use when you market your brand and the impact these have on the environment. Use as little packaging as possible and skip unnecessary embellishments and labeling. Go digital to save trees and to make a more lasting impression. To put it simply, practise what you preach.

BE TRANSPARENT

Be transparent about your progress. No one is perfect — be open about your weaknesses and progress. No brand is 100 percent sustainable and certainly not from the beginning.
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Yuri Craft  http://yuricraft.tumblr.com/

LEARN THE LANGUAGE...
Closed loop design is when a product is designed to have another function after its use thereby eliminating all waste. In this way, a used product’s output becomes the input for a new product or function.
Clothing banks are garment recycling stations put up in a community, often by a charitable organisation, where consumers are able to recycle their used clothing.
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a voluntary initiative by companies to reduce the negative social and environmental impacts of their business. Cradle to cradle refers to a closed loop design process, which is free of waste. When a product is no longer useful, it becomes material for another product. Cut-and-sew waste is excess textile from the cutting and sewing phase of garment manufacturing. It is often considered waste and is discarded due to its uneven and small formats. Down-cycling is to recycle a material into something of lower quality. Eco-labeling are environmental claims made on a product or through advertising using certifications, logos, symbols or vocabulary. Greenwashing is misleading consumers regarding the environmental environmental benefits of product. Life cycle is the resource extraction, manufacture, distribution, use, disposal and recycling of a product. Post-consumer waste is waste collected after the consumer has disposed of it. Pre-consumer waste is manufacturing waste that has not reach the consumer. Recyclable is a material that can be reused at a similar level of quality. Recycled is when a waste material or product has been reused and turned into a new usable material or product. Reduce, reuse, recycle are the so called 3R’s that classify waste management, according to their order of importance. Reduce your consumption and usage, reuse items again and recycle materials. Responsible consumerism is choosing to purchase products and services that take into account their social and environmental impact. Secondhand is a product that is acquired after it has been used by someone else and is not new. Supply chain are the resources and steps involved in moving a product from raw material to consumer. Sustainability is a lasting system, process, that meets the current needs while preserving for the future. Sustainable fashion is clothing that is produced with respect to the environment and social impacts throughout its lifespan. Sustainable textile is a textile that is produced with minimal environmental impact. Textile recycling means reusing or reprocessing used clothing, fibrous material and/or textile scraps from the manufacturing process. Textile waste is a material that is deemed unusable for its original purpose by the owner. Transparent being open and honest about your business practices. Triple Bottom Line is ‘People, Planet, Profit’ which refers to a company considering more than their financial outcomes. Up-cycling is the recycling of a material into a product of higher quality.