

Implementing CSR in Fashion

Magdalena Plonka

IADE Creative University, Poland

m.plonka@mskpu.com.pl

Abstract

Purpose: To discover whether CSR as conducted by fashion brands in the three main CSR fields (environment, human rights and animal rights) results in a successful CSR strategy and CSR-based marketing.

Methodology: Review of literature and company websites. This paper addresses four market examples of CSR as applied in the clothing industry.

Their work, business models, CSR and PR strategy are analysed here through official data and available media information concerning the three most important CSR areas: environmental protection, human rights and animal welfare. It is also evaluated by reviewing the most influential intellectual thoughts on design as derived from Victor Papanek, Jonathan Chapman, Dieter Rams, William McDonough and Michael Braungart.

Findings: The paper shows that success with sustainable and ethical methods in fashion design and production exists but it appears when it is applied consistently to the three most important CSR fields: environment, human rights and animal rights.

Originality/value: The results of this study serve to advise clothing designers and fashion company marketing managers to compose their CSR strategies around the three important CSR fields: environment, human rights and animal rights. The paper shows that non-selective CSR is more effective and a company's CSR credibility is stronger when it is applied to all three areas.

This document may be helpful for art school students, fashion designers, CSR managers and other professionals interested in a responsible attitude to fashion manufacturing.

Keywords: CSR in Fashion Design, Sustainable Design, Responsible Design, Ethics in Fashion

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Corporate Social Responsibility

The beginnings

A responsible attitude to design and production was officially considered for the first time in the 1950s in the USA (Carroll, 1999), although a responsible approach to employees and work conditions could be found earlier, in the 19th century. These first CSR ideas expanded in the following decades to be finally named “Corporate Social Responsibility”. It was accepted as a necessary component of companies’ manufacturing and marketing policies and in part demanded by the public. Within the last 20 years, the subject of ethics has grown in importance and popularity and has started to be considered shameful not to include it in brand creation and production as more attention is directed to this topic by both stakeholders and customers.

Corporate Social Responsibility first appeared with the publication in 1987 of the report “Our Common Future” by the World Commission on Environment and Development, and it was exactly associated with sustainable business.

According to Paul R. Portney (2005), CSR is “ (...) a consistent pattern, at the very least, of private firms doing more than they are required to do under applicable laws and regulations governing environment, workers’ safety and health, and investments in the communities in which they operate.”

In short, the main theory of CSR is based on a company policy in which the interests of other participants in the production line, such as people and other living creatures, are respected, including effects to the environment. Also, CSR includes a company’s activity in which part of its income is reinvested for the benefit of other entities in the market. “It is a kind of nature of the business that extends beyond obedience to the law” (Carroll, 1999).

CSR goals are achieved depending on the company’s intentions, resources and finances. The attitude may be understood as management’s knowledge of and approach to more ethical business activity. Available resources may be understood as a company’s production capabilities regarding achievable goods and techniques. By finances, it can be inferred as the revenues attainable and those devoted to CSR. Also, geographic, cultural and historic factors cannot be disregarded as they, too, affect the results. All of these aspects are key applications and make responsible practices work if they are based on a range of ethical concepts.

At the beginning, CSR’s initial concepts were more about workers’ rights and labour conditions following the industrial revolution (Bubna-Litic, 2009). Then came health and environmental concerns, following the ecological awakening in the 1960s (Chapman, 2005), which considered them elements relating to (human) life safety and comfort. The latest concept was animal welfare, stemming from the extensive industrial use of non-human living creatures in mass production. This latter notion is commonly said to have been born in the 1970s with the publishing of Peter Singer’s book, which

gave philosophical statements for the movement (Rollin, 2008). As analysed by David Brennan (2005), a responsible business policy includes behaviour when “(companies are compelled to find sustainable solutions for their relation to human beings [CSR hereunder the relationship to employees, suppliers, customers, local communities, and other stakeholders], to the *external environment* [including environment and animal welfare] and to *the economy* [including economy of the community])”.

Hence, three fields of CSR were defined. Corporate Social Responsibility started not only to be a matter of human interest, but a humane approach to all aspects of design and production.

Concerns about Contemporary Design

Searching for new values

As the world is facing new needs given the condition of the planet, economy and society, ethically conscious invention and production has been discussed by many contemporary designers and critics: Victor Papanek, Dieter Rams, Jonathan Chapman, William McDonough and Michael Braungart. Acknowledging these needs, designers and theorists have directed their attention to principled motives, searching for higher values in the visual arts. Creators and theorists have had to honestly analyse contemporary design and cope with the issue it was simply missing—responsibility. Within this subject, the range of criticism is huge and does not relate to historical data or polemics on which styles of design are better. New, non-material values are sought here and the key questions concern what design is and what it should be.

Famous Austrian inventor Victor Papanek (in Lees-Maffei and Houze, 2010) was concerned about the role of 20th and 21st century design, describing it as shallow, lacking a human mission and an ethical approach. He called contemporary creation and production “design cosmetics”. He demanded design be less visual and more ethical, meaning precisely that it should be compassionate to humans and the whole natural environment and that it be really useful. Papanek (in Clark and Brody, 2009) called for “(...) an attempt to make designers aware that every choice and dilemma in their work can have far-reaching and long-term ecological consequences.”

Following his lead, these higher values should motivate artists and craftsmen to create and manufacture objects that form our veracity in an ethical manner. It is also the importance and consciousness of this mission that is so strongly proclaimed in Papanek’s texts (in Lees-Maffei and Houze, 2010): “[...] I must agree that the designer bears a responsibility for the way products he designs are received at the marketplace. But this is still a narrow and parochial view. The designer’s responsibility must go far beyond these considerations. [...] In other words, will his design be on the side of social good or not”. Papanek (in Clark and Brody, 2009) also strongly calls for building a link between design, human needs, culture and ecology.

William McDonough, an American designer, and Michael Braungart, a German scientist, created “The Hannover Principles: Design for Sustainability”. The Hannover Principles express a great concern about a designers’ role in creating our reality and quality of life. Among the mentioned priorities, they insist on responsibility for the consequences of design decisions upon human well-being, plus the rights of humanity and nature to co-exist in a healthy and sustainable way (in Lees Maffei and Houze, 2010). By nature, we can also understand it to be animal well-being, as they are part of the ecosystem, which is influenced by design and its related production. Both authors of The Hannover Principles are in unison in naming contemporary design poor in its upper values, “a linear, one-way cradle-to-grave model”. McDonough and Braungart (in Clark and Brody, 2009) define the connection between mass consumption and waste, which is escalating due to unsustainable design. They accuse designers of a lack of imagination in envisioning the consequences of creating short-term fashions and short-lived products. McDonough does not treat designers as the group that is actually creating this unsustainable reality, but as the ones supporting the throw-away culture that comes from obsolete and philosophically flat design.

As McDonough and Braungart say (*op. cit.*): “(...) neither the health of natural systems nor the awareness of their delicacy, complexity and interconnectedness have been part of the industrial design agenda. At its deepest foundation, the industrial infrastructure today is linear: it is focused on making a product and getting it to a customer quickly and cheaply without considering much else”.

Another meaningful voice in this chorus belongs to world acclaimed scientist and philosopher Jonathan Chapman (2009), who concentrates in his publications on responsible design, which includes sustainability, and ethics based on an empathy priority. As he writes in his book, “(...) far beyond this ephemeral world of technocentric design lurks a rich and interactive domain founded on a profound human need: the need for empathy. A sustainable realm where natural resources need not be ravaged to satisfy every fleeting human whim and the very notion of waste is obsolete. In this utopian futurescape, users and products flourish within long-lasting emphatic partnerships, blissfully oblivious to the relentless taunts of the capitalist machine. Radical new commercial environments are pioneered in which objects provide conservation pieces that link consumers with manufacturers, facilitating upgrade, servicing and repair (...)”. Chapman sees the future of design and production in an empathic, emotional durability that results in more ecological and ethical treatment of products and their manufacture. By being somehow spiritually attached to objects and understanding their impact on our surroundings, we may start respect them and prolong their use. In so doing, we may be both better designers and better consumers.

These ideas may be joined by the reflections on design expressed in the 1970s by Dieter Rams, a German designer who expected creators and manufacturers to follow good design according to certain principles. Rams’ “Ten Good Design Principles” (Lovell, 2011) also demand designers make things to

be long-lasting, serving consumers for many years without the possibility to be antiquated. They should include ideas that are environmentally friendly throughout the whole lifecycle of the product. Rams ideal is that well-designed and manufactured things actually make a contribution to the preservation of the environment and are really needed, which means they would be designed to be actually useful, not just design art. Design, in Rams' opinion, should be also honest, by which he should be understood as transparent in its aims. Rams treated obsolescence in design and production as a crime that should be overtaken by sustainable development. He put great responsibility on designers' role in the creation of a better reality in which we may live.

Fashion Design under Ethical Observation

Stylish ignorance

That is what selected great minds of our times think about design in general, but the design and production of clothes is also a sad example of all the concerns and philosophical disputes related to a lack of moral responsibilities in that specific sector. Fashion design might seem not about higher values or inner beauty but commercialized aesthetics and market position that result in the main goal of profits. As Kate Fletcher (2014), a scientist and an acclaimed CSR advisor in fashion industry admitted on her website, it is about the "(...) tendency of trends to trivialise a concept like sustainability—and reduce it to a colour palette, fibre selection, etc. (...)". Likewise, the CSR fashion leader, Stella McCartney (McCartney, 2014) honestly admits on her website that fashion is the last sector to develop an ethical consciousness, and that is something she resents about the industry.

As was noted before, CSR as a requirement and tool for more ethical business and design is perceived to still be a missing element, so among the biggest challenges current fashion designers face is the issue of corporate responsibility. But fashion has emerged to be both resilient to implementing a responsible approach and at the same time the best field to practice it as fashion garment manufacturers inseparably influence the sensitive areas of sustainability, human rights and general compassion, which includes animal well-being. It is crucial to have innovative CSR practices as it touches all three of the most important ethical fields that are still neglected.

CSR in Fashion Design

Environment, animal rights and human rights in CSR in fashion

As mentioned before, ethical design and production, including in fashion, are based on three areas. The first is ecology, as the environment is a popular concern among customers. It is well-received and easily understood as it is in everyone's interest to promote health and sustaining the world in which we live. This includes company "green" activities, such as saving energy and water in factories and shops, research into and use of eco-friendly fibres, organising recycling and reusing old clothes, reducing

waste, using eco-friendly packaging, and limiting transport distances. These practices are also reinforced by additional actions such as joining pro-environmental campaigns by NGOs, mostly by transferring some funds to this aim. Although environmental protection is the most visible CSR field in the fashion industry, it still lacks profound understanding and an honest approach to this topic, which has been exposed by many journalistic investigations and reports.

Then there is animal rights, placed ahead of human rights as a goal as it is easier to achieve in clothes manufacturing. Here, CSR success in fashion is simply attained by excluding animal-derived products and animal abuse from clothing production. Natural furs, skins, exotic pelts and feathers are not welcome under such a policy. In case natural leather is used, it is to be sourced from controlled suppliers, often certified organic and from animals bred also for meat, not only for their hide. Although most of the largest world retailers exclude natural fur and exotic leathers from their collections, there are still many brands, especially in the luxury sector, that trade on animal exploitation.

The last CSR element in fashion design is human rights. It is encompassed by the fair-trade movement but is also the hardest goal to reach, as unfair practices are maintained by larger, economic factors, demanding world stock prices, and the need for reorganisation of mass manufacturing processes. Cutting costs by lowering salaries and work conditions, replacing jobs with machines and outsourcing work to developing countries are common in the fashion industry. These practices influence the living and labour conditions of “global south” inhabitants while raising profits for brands. Increasing better working and pay conditions for employees mostly means reducing a company’s income. It also might minimize their competitiveness on stock markets, which is often an argument used by brands that struggle to implement CSR. Many companies that want to follow the CSR path try to solve this problem by publishing their code of ethics for more responsible fabrication or by locating part of their production in controlled factories and involving themselves in pro fair-trade actions. Unfortunately, the reality of fashion’s backstage production for most of the largest retailers remains the same and is linked to sweatshops manufacture.

To be able to perceive the fashion industry as transparent and effective in ethical practices, it should be honestly compassionate to both humans and other creatures living on our planet and towards the environment. This is demanded not only by great authorities but also by public opinion, stakeholders, workers and the condition of our planet.

CSR Approach

How not to be deceived by “greenwashing”

CSR in fashion has been in practice for some time now. There are many clothing companies on the market that invest in sustainable production, have special human rights directives, or include animal

welfare in their strategies. Of course, they might have a different approach to this topic and the grounds for investing in a CSR policy vary a lot. CSR is sometimes treated as a company's main ideology, as demonstrated by Marks&Spencer, a company that advertises itself as the most responsible supplier in the world (Grayson, 2011). CSR might also be treated as a market demand and a response to customer needs, as seen with H&M (Ihlet, Barlett, May, 2011). But more than these examples, CSR is also a tool for powerful public relations, which unfortunately sometimes results in just pure "greenwashing".

"Greenwashing" is cosmetic action based on CSR goals transformed into practices that seem pro-ecological or to care about the public welfare but which truly have no significant benefits for the participants of the manufacturing chain or for the customers. It has the intention of drawing public approval, a positive opinion and gaining new clients with noble-looking PR arrangements, or sometimes, even outright lies. The stories of Nike and Adidas are relevant here. They took part in the Greenpeace campaign of "zero discharge of all hazardous and persistent chemicals at all points in global supply chains", which aimed to exclude harmful substances from clothing, but later high levels of the targeted chemicals were found in outfits produced by both of the companies.¹ This is an example of when CSR can be used as a tool to mislead customers and to gain appreciation for actions that actually do not improve our lives. Greenwashing superficially touches the sphere of CSR, winning our belief in a better world. When greenwashing is later revealed, it hits the public trust in companies, spoils the image of true CSR, and prevents customers and honest brands from benefiting from it in the future.

That is why it is important to understand what CSR best practices should look like, cite good cases of responsible company strategy and see how CSR could be successfully implemented. The selection of brands and designers listed below should help one understand the main mechanism of effective CSR and also find its weak points, including mistakes in creating an ethical policy in fashion design and its production. The description does not include historical or economic data about their status. It concentrates on an enterprise's formal responsibility mission and it reports its official actions. The choice includes four world-known suppliers, of which behind two stand famous designers and two are companies that represent the mass production sector. All of them sell and produce their goods globally and are successful fashion brands.

The Stella McCartney Phenomenon



1.

As the most popular world protagonist of ethics in fashion design, Stella McCartney is also one of the most recognizable and economically successful fashion creators on the style stage. A responsible approach to design based on an innovative, modern philosophy has been treated by her as crucial to her company (Cervellon, Hjerth, Ricard, Carey, 2010).

Although personal judgments of style and professional achievement might vary depending on one's preferences, there is no doubt she represents the fulfilled dream of the design critics mentioned earlier. What is important, though, is that McCartney is consistent in her CSR policy and still very profitable (Carcano L., 2010). Her company's actions are based on a CSR policy defined by the three main components—environmental preservation, animal welfare and fair-trade support—combined with a marriage to a lucrative business.

As we can read in her website's statement, "Stella's World", sustainability concerns her most. The company's impact on nature is a very important driver in her creations. These include ecological materials such as organic cotton, recycled fibres and plant textiles, and incorporate ecological packaging, such as corn-plant fibre biodegradable bags that have been specially innovated for use by the company. Wood used in her shops' decor is FSC certified, meaning it has been derived from sustainably managed forests. Moreover, McCartney's CSR policy includes minimizing water usage and CO2 emissions in shipping. LED lighting is placed in her stores. The company also organizes recycling events for customers and energy-saving devices in her stores, including solar and other renewables. The use of hybrid cars for business journeys is just one more detail in her environmental policy.

Then there is concern about social problems, which is expressed by a careful choice of responsible contractors and formal control of suppliers. It is supported by cooperation with independent fair-trade

organisations, which makes it more credible. Moreover, the designer takes part in charity programmes providing work in areas of Kenya endangered by poverty. The Stella McCartney brand also cooperates with international institutions (Natural Resource Defence Council, Ethical Trading Initiative, International Trade Centre), which are focused on improving working conditions and reducing the environmental impact of industrial production.

Although the actions and declarations on fair-trade issues are clear, there are shadows on McCartney's Corporate Social Responsibility practice. The brand belongs to the Kering Group, a holding company that had not been known as pro-environmental until it published its "Sustainability Targets Progress Report 2014", which might change its image and the common practices of the group. Beyond that, though, what also did not bring a good attention to McCartney was her partnership with Adidas, especially a deal to provide U.K. team uniforms for the 2012 London Olympics which were found to have been produced in sweatshops run by Adidas' Chinese suppliers. Although the designer claims her production units are controlled places, manufacturing clothes in a controversial country known for breaking human rights, animal rights and polluting our environment by unsustainable production made the publicity critical, especially as the designer answered to *Above Magazine*: "When we can make things better, we do ... (but) if we were too extreme it would get in the way of my job (...)"ⁱⁱ

Animal welfare is for the designer probably the most important of all three of the ethical fields. McCartney was raised as a vegetarian and animal activist, and her personal beliefs make a powerful CSR tool. She openly states that it is forbidden to use leather or any skins or natural fur in her enterprise. Even her shoe collections do not include fish glue. Wool that is used to prepare her clothes comes from suppliers that do not carry out "mulesing" on sheep (a practice of cutting out parts of sheep flesh to prevent flystrike).

McCartney declares her wishes to treat her designs as luxury clothing, but with the luxury she would like to sell a hidden message, a bonus of ethical standards that are not so obvious to some of her clients. She prefers that CSR is concealed in the garments themselves for those who are not interested in responsible design. The idea is to make them positively surprised later with the ethical and aesthetical quality of the things she designs in her own company. She would like to persuade them to be more conscious and responsible consumers. But the designer also announces her ethical philosophy on her website and in media interviews to a great extent, which does not leave any doubt about her life and business philosophy. Concluding, McCartney wisely balances her expression of a CSR policy. She is consciously clear with her ethical views, especially as CSR pertains to customers, but does not do it in a way that is intrusive or scares away clients unfamiliar with the topic.

To sum up, the designer is active with her CSR policy in all three of the most important fields, but as recent research shows, companies that strongly proclaim their CSR strategy need to be extremely transparent and consistent in their policies, otherwise they might lose customer trust and draw

criticism instead of appreciation (Polonsky, 2008). McCartney, as a quite strong proclaimer of ethics in fashion, will be judged more carefully than any other company that just adds some ecological issues to its marketing. Situations such as the outfits for the Olympics might minimize her CSR efforts, so the designer should be more careful in the future in this matter.

Issey Miyake



2.

Issey Miyake is a Japanese creator whose constant and deep research in innovations in textile knowledge, clothes design and construction are not only enterprises but acts of art united with scientific and sustainable efforts. As the author himself claims, clothes design is “a concept which explores not only the relationship between the body and clothing but also the space that is born between them”. The philosophy has evolved and grown as Miyake’s interests have always been grounded in innovative clothing combined with modern research and development.

The designer is recognized in the market as an innovative creator, and in 2007 he launched the “Reality Lab”, a separate section within his company with strictly scientific aims. According to Miyake’s website, he did so to develop “designs that reflect and address the way people live today” and to explore ways of making things that will renew “the possibilities of Japanese craftsmanship”.

This craftsmanship means putting pressure on local design and on cultural preservation. When analysing CSR activities, it is a specific case of taking care of native culture that brings other ethical aspects. Local production means lower environmental impact of transport. It is also about using natural resources that are locally available, likely making production more in harmony with the surrounding environment. The concept is also not about global production but about creating responsibility among the local society for the products it brings home. It includes working conditions, which might be better controlled when manufacturing is nearby. Miyake employs a Japanese crew and personally supervises the research. It is obvious that by not offshoring his production, it gives him effective tools for control and indirectly is joined to more fair-trade practices.

What about another CSR area—the environment? Among many achievements of the “Reality Lab” are computer graphics applications that allow for the opening of a single pleat to construct a three-dimensional model with smoothly curving surfaces that fold and curve in three dimensions. Not only this, but the materials are made from polyester derived from recycled fibres collected in Japan, which recently started to be the main focus of Issey Miyake Design. The creator has been underlining his pro-environmental policy in his media communications and following that, recently collaborated with a Japanese chemical company that developed specialized equipment to revert used polyester back to its original source material of dimethyl terephthalate.ⁱⁱⁱ Miyake’s brand collaborates with many institutions in its quest for new ecological solutions in textile, clothes and furniture design. One example is the IN-EI Issey Miyake lamp’s Tatsuno-Otoshigo model, which uses recycled PET as the main material. The same material is then used in his collections.

All the above show a great interest in national culture and ecology, but not necessarily in animal well-being which is another important CSR issue. Here there is some controversy and consequences as to a lack of preservation of the natural environment. A careful check of garments produced by the creator throughout his career, one will find clothes made of fur. Sometimes these items are made of faux fur but sometimes it is a real animal product. There are no statements on that issue on his website or in media, and Miyake has not joined pro-animal actions. Media commentaries on his natural fur pieces relate to neutrality, and putting fur among other natural fibres as good for customers and the environment. It is important to comment that fur production is definitely an important issue in pro-animal welfare NGO campaigns and that fur production is one of the worst industrial animal abuse areas. From time to time, independent organisations conduct undercover investigations within either western or eastern fur farms and publish reports that reveal negative facts about fur-bearing animals’ living conditions and slaughter (Płonka M., 2013). It is awkward that Issey Miyake remains ignorant to the problem. It is also controversial for a creation that is advertised as pro-ecological as natural fur manufacturing and post-production are scientifically proven to be unfriendly to the environment and even 20 times more harmful to the ecosystem than the whole production process of faux items (Płonka M., 2013).

In conclusion, Issey Miyake seems to practice CSR in a discreet manner, does not use ecological slogans or make statements on ethics but still manufactures products and sends information that can be picked up by CSR-conscious customers. So far, no violations of human rights within Miyake’s company have been found or revealed, there have been no scandals connected with jobs or product outsourcing by the Issey Miyake brand, and no greenwashing within his brand has been exposed. But it should be mentioned that to ecologically conscious and generally CSR-sensitive clients, Miyake’s lack of overt concern about animal-derived products in his company’s products might seem incorrect. Also, the lack of cooperation with independent supervisory organisations and certification of his

ecological inventions might interfere with his planned or unplanned CSR efforts, making his company's strategy not clear for clients and not that effective.

M&S



3.

In 2007, British retailer Marks & Spencer launched Plan A, a campaign setting out 100 responsibility commitments which were to be achieved in five years. Recently, the company introduced its new Plan A 2020, which also consists of new, revised and existing promises that are proudly said to make M&S the world's most responsible major retailer. The brand's official policy is based on ecological goals and ethical priorities towards people, the environment and animals.

While following a green pattern at M&S, the corporation deserves special recognition in its Environmental and Chemical Policy. As we can read on its website, in 2012 M&S signed up to Greenpeace's Detox 2020 campaign and worked with the NGO to develop new chemical commitments that have strengthened their pro-environmental practices. These practices embrace the non-use of hazardous chemicals such as alkylphenol ethoxylates and heavy metals commonly used in cover textile printers, finishing facilities, laundries and tanneries as well as dye houses. The company would like to attain zero discharge from M&S dye houses by 2020. By this, M&S understands that it needs to excel at water and energy management, chemical and dyestuff management, production efficiency and effluent treatment testing and compliance. As announced on its website as part of Plan A, M&S launched three eco-dye houses that have been used as test beds for new environmental concepts and technology. As a result, processes are now being used in the M&S supply chain that reduce the impact on the environment, such as Cold Batch Dyeing, a development that, on average, uses 50% less water and reduces carbon by 30%.

Within environmental protection, its actions also include using recycled paper in packaging and certified paper for printing garment labels. It includes recycling, reusing or even reselling clothes. These practices are operated in cooperation with Oxfam, and the company calls it "shwopping". Shwopping with Oxfam has proved effective as M&S managed to turn over 7.8 million garments

worth an estimated £5.5 million to the charity. The company claims on its website: “(...) By shwopping, we hope to achieve a dramatic reduction in the number of clothes sent to landfill in the UK—at the moment, it’s around 1 billion per year, which is an average of 16 items per year per person. By collecting as many clothes as we sell—that’s 350 million a year—we want to change the way we all shop forever (...)”.

But the biggest green actions by M&S are concentrated on its Carbon Neutral theme. Its carbon-neutral goal is implemented by the company through its support for the growth of clean and green energy, such as projects in Turkey, where M&S is helping to develop two wind farms. It has already been very successful and verified, attaining Gold Standard Certification. Next, it encourages sustainable farming and reforestation projects such as those in Kenya (also tree planting programmes in Borneo and promotion of the use of sustainable farming against deforestation and soil erosion). Again, it is monitored by specialized organisations, the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standard. In China, for example, Marks & Spencer supports a carbon-reduction project that uses agricultural waste as a source of renewable energy in rural Wuhe County. Materials such as rice husk and cotton straw are a renewable source of biomass. This organic waste is bought from approximately 15,000 smallhold farmers and is used to generate renewable electricity through biomass combustion. Also, the project funds help enable this renewable energy biomass plant to compete against cheaper fossil fuel alternatives.

M&S includes wildlife protection elements in these projects but it has a separate and precise animal welfare policy. The company does not use animals to test beauty or household products and no individual ingredients used in M&S products have been animal tested either. In fashion, the company also claims not to have ever sold products with real animal fur, specifically fox, sable, mink, chinchilla, rabbit or Karakul. Further, M&S’s official papers claim it does not use any endangered species defined in the list of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Also, Angora rabbit fibre is not allowed in any M&S textile or clothing production, and wool, cashmere and mohair must not be obtained from the live plucking of animals. The same goes for feathers and down. What draws further attention to the company’s practices is its internal ban on the design of clothes made from leather obtained from live skinning or live boiling or on cow hides sourced from India, as the latter brings with it many controversies connected with unethical cow maintenance and slaughter in that country. To support its pro-animal ideology, M&S works with suppliers and groups, including the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) in the development of the company’s General Merchandise Animal Welfare Policy.

As the corporation’s attitude to the natural environment and animal products used in its production is claimed to be ethically standardized, it is also said to concern M&S workers and contractors. The company honestly admits: “(...) Because our suppliers often have their own complex supply chains, it

would be impossible for us to monitor or control the working conditions of each individual who contributes to what ultimately becomes a Marks & Spencer product. However, we are determined to do everything we can to bring fair sourcing principles to all stages of our supply chain. We have therefore published our Global Sourcing Principles to set out our beliefs and standards and guide our suppliers (...)" M&S is understood to expect them to improve working conditions according to those promoted by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), a collaborative group of companies, trade unions and human rights groups joined by M&S in 1999. These principles include enhancements on working hours and conditions, health and safety, rates of pay, terms of employment and minimum age of employment. They are described in M&S's Global Sourcing Principles. The company claims to regularly visit and assess all production sites by its suppliers using their own people. Results of the above are reported to ETI and summarized in its annual Plan A Report. Also, within the brand's products there are garments with a Fair Trade logo, which is a world-recognized certification for ethical trading and production.

Summing up, M&S is definitely a brand that tries to be very consistent and transparent in its CSR policy towards environment, human rights and animal welfare. It honestly admits which CSR goals are achievable for the company and which are still in progress. What is very important is that the results of its progress to date are exposed in detailed documents published by the firm and supported by its collaboration with recognized external institutions, a fact that strongly supports the company's CSR credibility.

H&M



4.

The fourth clothing brand of interest in this analysis of ethical practices in fashion design and production is H&M. The choice of this company could be questionable as H&M has been constantly criticized by media and specialized organisations in many articles and reports concerning human rights

in its manufacturing units (Graß, 2013). H&M's production is based on offshoring and on putting the main responsibility for working conditions on its suppliers, located mainly in China, Cambodia and Bangladesh, that is, countries that have difficulty following Western work and democracy standards. It also addresses the topic of very low pay for its suppliers' workers, which in Bangladesh is about \$43 a month. But as offshoring is a global, common practice among big retailers and has a major impact on the shape of the market, that is why other, CSR-positive practices within this company also have a significant influence on global clothing manufacturing trends.

As the company lacked support because of the negative publicity and from customers sensitive to CSR principles, it tried to repair its image by publishing several documents on its website. These include a Code of Ethics, Discrimination and Equality Policy, Harassment Policy, and Home Working or Human Rights Policy. In general, they address issues of the integration of ethical rules among its employees and suppliers, equality of all employees in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, respectful treatment in the workplace and duty to protect human rights, a zero-tolerance policy on bribery and corruption, "(...) a working environment free of harassment, victimization and inappropriate behaviour of all kinds (...)", usage of home work for some parts of the production process, human rights related to labour conditions, and women's rights separately.

So far, enforcement of the company's ambitious prerogatives listed above is folded into its suppliers' obligation to sign and follow the H&M Code of Ethics and from an agreement with Union Network International. A brief document available on the H&M website was signed in 2004. The H&M website states: "(...) We underline our commitment to employee representation through our Global Framework Agreement with Union Network International (UNI). This declares that both the company and our employees regard the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work to be the cornerstone of our cooperation. Our main contact point for this agreement is Handels, the Swedish Commercial Employees' Union, which is a member of UNI. [...] H&M also has got a signed agreement with the European Works Council (EWC) the aim of which is to bring together workers' representatives (usually trade unionists) from all the EU Member States the company operates in, to meet with management, receive information and give their views on current strategies and decisions affecting the enterprise and its workforce (...)"^{iv} H&M also started working with UNICEF in 2004, providing funding and other support to help abolish child labour around the world. But the exact shape of this cooperation is not revealed on its website. On the topic of fair living wages to garment workers, the enterprise expresses its concern and support for payments to employees that covers workers' basic needs. H&M hopes that through its efforts, the company's suppliers should have improved pay structures for fair living wages in place by 2018 and that it will affect around 850,000 textile workers. Taking into consideration about 1900 sweatshops that cooperate with this retailer, which does not have its pattern factories, as for example, does Marks&Spencer, H&M's plans seem very idealistic. What's more is they are not covered

by any official documents or the assistance of independent groups. H&M does not mention any other NGOs apart from UNICEF to support its pro-ethical activities or any specialized organisations to certify them, which might have the effect of making the corporation's stated practices less reliable. Also, apart from declaring two community projects that include training for potential H&M workers, such as those organized for its stores in Saudi Arabia, or supporting the improvement of healthcare for workers in Bangladesh (in cooperation with USAID- the United States government agency) by providing cheaper health service, the company does not give examples of spectacular actions for its workers or suppliers as in reality it could. The above examples are not that significant for people involved in H&M's global manufacturing chain and may be counted as smooth PR actions rather than a strong attempt to radically change towards more ethical production.

Whether in the human rights area H&M still has a lot to do, its actions in the ecological field are much better, and the company might be held up as one of the best advocates of green textile promotion in clothing production. H&M is well known for its "conscious collections", which consist of more ecological garments than found in traditional mass fashion. The company has the biggest range of clothes made of organic cotton on the market (cotton grown without chemical pesticides and fertilizers, which contains no GMOs and is treated with more delicate substances in the post-production process). H&M also sells items made of recycled cotton. Although the brand does not have any certification for its green cotton, it belongs to the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), an organisation that popularizes better quality cotton, according to the BCI website. Herein lies the doubt, though, as to whether this is really the right initiative. In media, BCI is portrayed as an organisation that supports cotton suppliers that unfortunately cannot meet organic cotton guidelines but still want to be perceived as more pro-ecological and better cotton producers. BCI is accused of leading to a decline in the cultivation of organic cotton in India.^v As BCI's standards are lower than those for ecological cotton, its fibre is easier and cheaper to obtain. By using green slogans but having a lower price, it is more competitive in the market. But from the other side, what is significant for the sustainable part of the fashion industry is that H&M names itself as the biggest user of organic cotton in the world. Its actions seem to be the most important for the growth of this kind of market and thus it may deserve the support of customers and public opinion.

Apart from organic cotton, H&M has been strongly promoting its conscious collections. Amongst its actions, are priorities such as choosing and rewarding responsible partners and investing in available ethical and ecological solutions. These collections consist of recycled wool, organic hemp, organic silk and linen, organic leather, recycled plastic, polyamide and polyester or FSC natural rubber. The Forest Stewardship Council is an organisation that supports and controls sustainable forest management. In this case, FSC-certified rubber comes from better supervised rubber tree plantations. Another H&M pro-environmental achievement is the introduction of Lyocell, a textile made of TENCEL® (eucalyptus) and MONOCEL® (bamboo) fibres that have a lower impact on the

environment in comparison to other fabrics. The H&M conscious collections are strongly promoted by the company with ecological-based mottos and are already well-recognized in the market. As H&M CEO Karl Johan-Perrson says: “At H&M, we have set ourselves the challenge of ultimately making fashion sustainable and sustainability fashionable.”

Animal well-being in H&M’s policies is also an important issue. As we can read on its website, the brand cares about animal welfare and endangered species. The corporation does not sell genuine fur and is a Fur Free Alliance-listed retailer, which makes its attitude to fur production official and also sincere. It also does not accept down plucked from live birds and does not use Angora wool. Merino wool used in its products must come from farms that do not practice mulesing. H&M does not sell exotic animal skins and its leather products come only from animals bred for meat production, in which case the company uses it as a by-product or kind of waste from another industry and not one for which the animals had to be specially farmed or killed to obtain the hide. The brand also does not accept the hides of cows from India.

In summary, H&M follows a CSR policy based on two important responsibility areas, environment and animal welfare, but it still needs to develop on human rights issues. It also lacks transparency and confirmation of its engagement with independent organisations. It should also report its actions in a more detailed manner to build public confidence in its CSR intentions.

Conclusion

While the above examples show how the mechanisms of CSR in fashion work, it also exposes the fact there are still many challenges in this area. The Stella McCartney brand, with its idealized and very strong CSR communication, should be more consistent and careful in practice, as the public will judge such a principled CSR profile more critically in its actions. In contradiction, Issey Miyake does not reveal a CSR policy in his PR communication, apart from his interest in sustainable science and preserving local culture and craft. Although he is not that far from achieving good CSR priorities, an imprecise PR strategy in this matter and the selection of only two of the main CSR areas as part of responsible management and design puts into question whether it is a conscious act or just a coincidence. M&S emerges as a CSR leader, as it is consequently active on all three CSR fronts. It also smartly bases its responsible practices and communication on transparency and reporting plus maintains cooperation with specialized organisations. It seems honest and consistent and rewarded with success by its responsible image. The last brand analysed here, H&M also tries to cover environmental, animal welfare and worker’s rights topics, but it is linked more to a general impression that the company uses CSR as a marketing tool. The H&M CSR communication is strong but is not supported by credible and measurable practices as in the M&S example. Also, the lack of clear reporting and vague actions on human rights might destroy the company’s CSR efforts.

To sum up, textile corporations need a new, better design strategy that minimizes the negative manufacturing results in three main areas: environmental protection, animal welfare and human rights. The moral goals at this point give something more than personal satisfaction and peace of mind for the designers, fashion management and a group of new customers. It has a bigger impact than traditional advertising and communication with customers; it is an underestimated value to design and is expected by CSR-conscious designers, philosophers and a growing circle of stakeholders.

CSR policies should result in sustainable and compassionate fabrication, fair-trade relations between employees and employers, supplier and recipient, and should exclude harm to living creatures. Fashion design must find a way of production and running the business that includes moral values and social consciousness in its manufacturing and an awareness of its side effects on all three fields of CSR concern.

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1. (2013) Stella McCartney Noemi totes made in Nairobi, Kenya, produced with the International Trade Centre's Ethical Fashion Initiative.
2. (2013) Issey Miyake Heat-Retaining Menswear From Recycled Polyester Issey Miyake Autumn/ Winter 2013
3. M&S fair-trade cotton advertisements
4. (2010) H&M recycled polyester and organic cotton collection 2010

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ <http://www.care2.com/causes/5-examples-of-greenwashing-in-the-fashion-industry.html> [Accessed: 09.2014]

ⁱⁱ <http://ecosalon.com/behind-the-label-is-stella-mccartney-a-sustainable-brand/> [Accessed: 09.2014]

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.ecouterre.com/could-polyester-be-the-next-eco-friendly-fabric/issey-miyake-1325/> [Accessed: 09.2014]

^{iv} <http://www.etuc.org/european-works-councils-ewcs>) [Accessed: 09.2014]

^v http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-03-11/news/48118258_1_cotton-production-ginners-organic-cotton [Accessed: 09.2014]

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