

Designing Slow fashion footwear in a pandemic: Challenges and solutions

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Abstract

With an increasing demand for designer shoes and the rising per capita income in developed and developing countries, there has been a steady increase in global demand of fashionable footwear over the last few years. Before the covid 19. Pandemic, the footwear industry was projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.5% for the forecast period of 2020-2027. The onset of the pandemic however has massively impacted the way we produce and consume goods.

The pandemic and the resulting shutdowns revealed the vulnerability of global supply chains as countries restricted trade, logistics remained disrupted and orders cancelled due to sudden decline in demand. The new business scenario is forcing the whole industry to review strategies and plans.

This film submission focusses on the challenges a slow fashion business based in New Delhi, India, is faced with in the current situation and the key strategies that may help in survival and growth. The data has been gathered from primary observations of Banjaaran INDIA, a footwear design and manufacturing label, combined with research from academic literature. The study has been analyzed by identifying and categorizing relevant concepts examining the internal consistency of each category.

The aim of the submission is to form a comprehensive model with pillars and strategies that a slow fashion small business can benefit from as it struggles in the current business scenario.

The core subject of the model is the idea of interaction, engagement and forming an indelible, transparent relationship with the consumers and associates, along various stages of development of the product.

The functional design of Papanek (1984) is based on the idea that design must be the bridge between human needs, culture and ecology. Another important concept called telesis is the connection of a product with time, culture, society and nature. Embedding and educating the customers about the presence of these ethos ensures that the consumers understand how something was made and develop a lasting relationship with the brand.

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The film will describe these strategies as implemented by Banjaaran India. The boards below depict the topics the short film will encompass utilizing products from the label, their design process, sourcing methods, artisan production techniques followed, and social impact by the label.

Attachment and individualism in design: Aesthetic should be an inseparable aspect of functional design. By discussing and disclosing the inspiration and encouraging a conversation around the roots of the product, will inspire the customers to embrace it.

Slow fashion labels should boost an individual's sense of self. Hethorn (2008) therefore emphasized people instead of objects for design- possessing emotional and expressive aspects would lead to greater satisfaction and long product cycle in return.

Responsible material choices: While choosing material is an essential part of aesthetics, it also plays a remarkable role in sustainability aspect of design. By ensuring that our materials are responsibly sourced and For the selection of materials, both the resources and disposal have to be taken into account. The life cycle of materials, and recycling of materials are a few ways to ensure the best possible use of available resources. 'Cradle to cradle', a philosophy developed by Braungart and McDonough suggests that instead of simply saving natural resources, attention should be paid to the life cycle of materials. Instead of throwing products away, their material should be reused.

Artisan production Methods: Handcrafting forms a crucial part of slow fashion. On a symbolic level, it can strengthen appreciation and attachment towards a product. Hand crafting can also be a good way to add details thus ensuring individualism. By encouraging artisan production methods slow fashion businesses ensure that traditional crafts thrive and artisans can remain employed thus ensuring local more sustainable operations.

Societal Implications of the label: Social responsibility as discussed by Dickson, Loker and Eckman (2009) refers especially to the ethical and responsible actions taken by business towards labor standards and fair working conditions.

By bringing transparency in the working conditions, a business gains trust from the label thus ensuring a lasting relationship with the brand.

Keywords: sustainability, transparency, footwear, individualism, responsibility

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