



THE SUSTAINABLE FASHION COMMUNICATION PLAYBOOK

Shifting the narrative: A guide to aligning fashion
communication to the 1.5-degree climate target and
wider sustainability goals

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACM	Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets
AGEC	Anti-Waste for a Circular Economy Law (France)
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority (U.K)
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
CEAP	Circular Economy Action Plan (EU)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMA	Competition & Markets Authority (U.K)
CMO	Chief Marketing Officer
CO ₂ e	Carbon dioxide emissions
COP	Conference of the Parties
EMF	Ellen MacArthur Foundation
EPR	Extended producer responsibility
ESG	Environmental, social and governance
EU	European Union
Fashion Charter	Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action
FITC	Fashion Industry Target Consultation
G20	Group of 20 intergovernmental forum
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GFA	Global Fashion Agenda
GHG	Greenhouse gas
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITC	International Trade Centre
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual and other
NCA	Norwegian Consumer Authority
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEF	Product Environmental Footprint
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
U.K	United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN Climate Change	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollars

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fashion sector is not on track to meet its sustainability targets, nor contribute to the global intention of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change or the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#). Its basis in unsustainable patterns of consumption and production is contributing directly and significantly to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste (UNEP 2021c; UNEP 2023).

Currently, it is considered responsible for between 2% and 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, as well as significant pollution, water extraction and biodiversity impacts, not to mention social injustices worldwide (UNEP 2023).

Changing consumption rates, increasing consumer knowledge and shifting consumer behaviours are seen as crucial to reducing the overall impact of the sector (UNEP 2023). This means confronting the dominant linear economic model and its accompanying narrative of newness, immediacy and disposability. While engagement with fashion and levels of consumption significantly vary by market, the way fashion is consumed all over the world needs to be much more sustainable, both in daily lives and for religious rituals, cultural events and celebrations.

The Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook acknowledges the cultural influence the fashion sector has through its storytelling and visual language. It presents the need to direct such efforts towards sustainable and circular solutions as a creative opportunity, and provides a much needed framework when policies around how to communicate environmental claims increasingly come into force.

It invites all fashion communicators to the table to contribute towards the transition, showing them how to take action through: 1) countering misinformation and greenwashing, 2) reducing messages

perpetuating overconsumption, 3) redirecting aspiration to more sustainable lifestyles, and 4) empowering consumers into their role as citizens to demand greater action from businesses and policymakers.

The Playbook is written for those communicating directly with individual consumer audiences about the fashion sector. This incorporates a wide range of roles and practitioners, from those in marketing, branding, advertising, public relations, creative direction, visual media, event production, content or social media at brands and retailers, to those involved in the wider communication ecosystem. This includes agencies, fashion and news media, imagemakers, digital platforms, entertainment properties, influencers, advocacy groups and educators. It is written for a global audience – as much for multinational organisations as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – recognising that speed of adoption and support required will vary.

The Playbook was developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UN Climate Change) Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action (Fashion Charter), and is the result of industry-wide consultations, literature analysis and peer review. It follows the recognition of communication as a driving force in fashion's climate response through the development and implementation of a dedicated commitment in the renewed Fashion Charter at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). This is to: "Align consumer and industry communication efforts to a 1.5-degree or Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) compatible pathway, as set out by the Paris Agreement Goals, as well as a more just and equitable future." (UN Climate Change 2021, p. 4).

In 2022 and 2023, UNEP and the Global Fashion Agenda (GFA) launched the Fashion Industry Target Consultation (FITC) to

identify and converge industry ambitions, including on circular systems. This Playbook further serves as the framework for a proposed target on eliminating messages encouraging overconsumption.

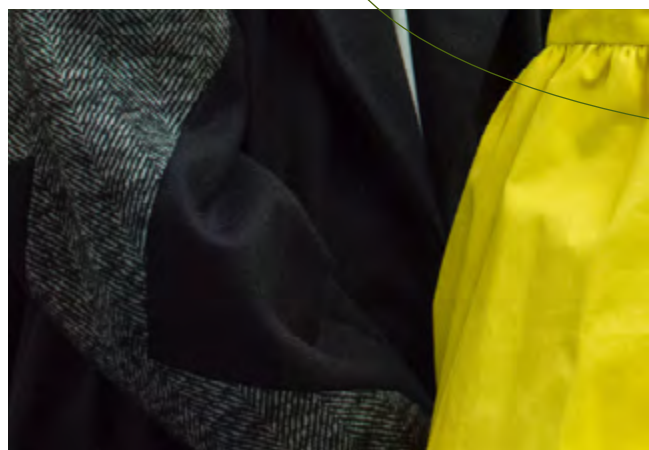
Encompassing both of these and looking more broadly at the triple planetary crisis, the Playbook aims to provide a shared vision, principles and guidance on how to align consumer-facing communication across the global fashion industry with sustainability targets, incorporating both environmental and social factors.

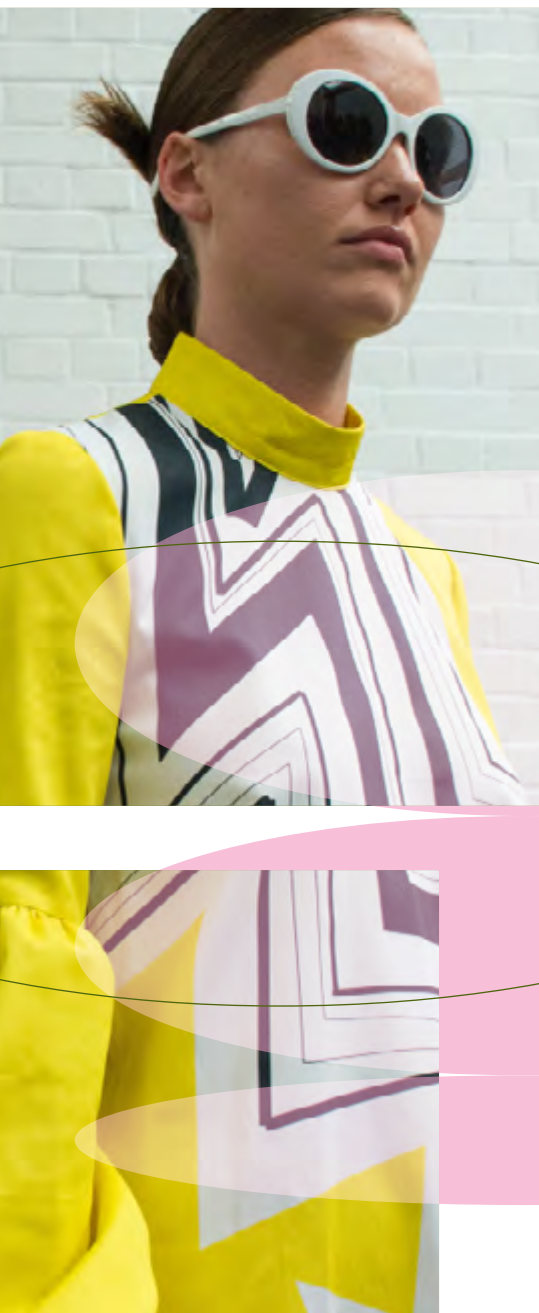
Doing so comes with confronting the role of the system communicators exist within. Mass consumption is a systemic issue (UNEP 2016b). Shifting the narrative of the fashion sector towards sustainability is inherently inhibited by the dominant economic system this is built on and the traditional objective of business. Ultimately this Playbook intends to help fashion

communicators explore how to assist in decoupling value creation from resource extraction and volume growth, while improving wellbeing.

In doing so, it emphasises for the first time in this sector the importance of the role of the fashion communicator to be an enabler and driver of systemic change. It considers communication an under-addressed area in the sector's sustainability efforts to date, and key to the transformation of the entire textile value chain, encompassing the design, production, retail and use of a textile product.

The Playbook is broken down into different levels for action, detailed with practical guidance, including globally-relevant advice on implementation, alongside best practice case studies for inspiration and replication across different forms of media and messaging.





Foundation level: Information

Misinformation and greenwashing are ubiquitous and a significant challenge. As sustainability has grown as a selling point, all manner of vague and inflated claims have appeared across advertising, marketing, media, packaging and beyond. A 2020 study by the European Commission found 53.3% of environmental claims communicated in the EU at large were vague, misleading or unfounded (European Commission 2022). Meanwhile, a fashion specific report finds 60% of sustainability claims by European fashion giants are “unsubstantiated” and “misleading” (Changing Markets Foundation 2021).

This has resulted in a confusing landscape for fashion consumers, with growing mistrust for what is and is not sustainable. A greater number of regulators are creating guidelines, investigating claims and taking enforcement action as a result.

Dedication to evidence and transparency are fundamental to communication change. This is presented as the foundation level of sustainable fashion communication within the Playbook, recognising the importance of translating technical, science-based information into credible and meaningful messaging. Communicators must work with sustainability experts to ensure relevant information is clearly and transparently shared, providing an evidence-base that is verifiable and comparable in an accessible way.

Build level: Culture

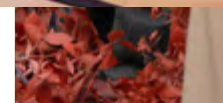
Fashion is essential to human culture. It inspires self-expression, identity and belonging and informs the values and actions of billions of people across all segments of society. In possessing one of the most powerful marketing engines on earth, fashion shapes the very notion of desire and aspiration, in turn impacting wider cultural norms and expectations. The role of influence and the subsequent impact communication has on consumption sits at the heart of what this Playbook addresses.

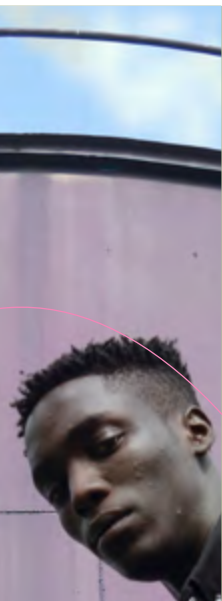
Communicators must eradicate messages of overconsumption and instead point consumers towards lower-impact and circular solutions. Fashion communication, when directed the right way, can use its cultural reach, powers of persuasion and educational role to both raise awareness and drive a shift towards a more sustainable and equitable industry. In doing so, it can provide a gateway to influence sustainable consumption, lifestyles and wellbeing at large.

To achieve this, storytellers, imagemakers and role models need to help portray alternative models of status and success,

decoupling identity from newness and recalibrating what is deemed aspirational so as to social proof a sustainable future. This is not about educating communicators on sustainability so much as it is about asking them to put their existing skill sets to the task of redirecting and reimagining how people engage with fashion. The balance between the science of sustainability and reimagining the fashion narrative is where communicators can excel. Approached creatively, there is a distinct value opportunity at play in this new paradigm.

When it comes to storytelling, the Playbook further emphasises how communication can play a significant role in exploring, explaining and celebrating the positive ecological, cultural and social values of the fashion sector. This includes the way in which fashion is deeply intertwined with the natural environment; with the diversity found in cultural heritage, art and craft traditions, customs, beliefs, histories and practices; and with the wellbeing of the individuals and communities it depends upon (Williams et al. 2021). Part of the communicator's role is about changing the standard for what is deemed acceptable, encouraging a more equitable industry and ensuring a just transition.





Leadership level: Advocacy

In spite of its focus on consumer-facing communicators, the Playbook recognises that individual behaviour change alone will not suffice and systemic shifts are also required at the business, societal and policy levels. Governments and companies have to be in the driving seat when it comes to rethinking, designing, delivering and enabling access to more sustainable solutions through policies, services and products, and ensuring that everyone's needs are met (UNEP 2020a).

Collectively, however, consumers play a key role in advocating for the broad and systemic change required for the fashion sector to reach its sustainability targets. While on the one hand, this is about enabling consumers to make more informed decisions based on effective and accurate communication from the market, on the other hand, the wider goal is to empower consumers in their role as citizens towards interrogating and

demanding greater action from businesses and policymakers, holding stakeholders throughout the sector to account.

Communicators in varying forms, but particularly influencers, the media, brand marketers and advocacy groups, can help educate for this. Education is needed inside organisations too, where communicators can further advocate for change, calling out challenges and critical areas that need to be addressed, beyond the confines of marketing towards confronting the complexity of the system and value creation itself.

The Playbook acknowledges the need for policy intervention to enact this level of change. It demonstrates how communicators can support and encourage policymakers to lead with measures that enable wider industry sustainability, and ultimately outlines the current and incoming policies that will impact communication work. It calls on policymakers to help shift unsustainable consumption patterns and discourage overproduction, while incentivising a just transition towards a sustainable and circular global value chain.



HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK



If you work in communication:

This Playbook is written primarily for you. Your must-reads are the 'Introduction' and 'The principles for sustainable fashion communication'. If you are advanced in your work in sustainability communication, you may even like to jump straight to section 3 explaining the principles so as to dive into the most practical part of the guide. Each of these has a detailed list of dos and don'ts for consideration, and a short series of questions to use as a checklist against all work whether you are employed by a brand, in the media, as an image maker or beyond. Further practical tools and resources are outlined at the end of the Playbook to help facilitate deeper knowledge and application.

You will also find the section on 'Measuring success' at the end of the Playbook particularly useful as you work to implement the principles and track how you perform accordingly.

If you work in sustainability:

This Playbook is primarily written to help those who are communicating about fashion - providing them with guidance on how to do so sustainably across a variety of different factors. As a first step if you work in a sustainability team, please share this with your communication colleagues. The Playbook can be used to help break down silos and facilitate greater collaboration between you and them, providing a framework for such efforts.

In your sustainability role, you will find most use in reading section 3 on the principles. Here, 'Lead with science' is unlikely to be new information to you and is where you will need to contribute the most in collaboration with your communication teams. The sections on 'Change behaviour and practices' and 'Reimagine values' comprise newer thinking, and are where you may bring significant creative contribution.

Other:

If you are not a part of either of the aforementioned groups, but you contribute to or collaborate with either, you will find this Playbook useful for understanding how sustainable fashion should be communicated. See the section on 'Broader stakeholder action' for a view on the role of other players including policymakers, CEOs, creative directors, manufacturers, start-ups, investors and beyond.

I.

ABOUT
THE
PLAYBOOK

Aims

The Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook (short: the Playbook) aims to provide a shared vision, principles and guidance on how to align consumer-facing communication across the global fashion industry with sustainability targets, incorporating both environmental and social factors.

It shows how fashion communicators – marketers, brand managers, imagemakers, storytellers, media, influencers and beyond – can help advance towards the Paris Agreement, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through: 1) countering misinformation and greenwashing, 2) reducing messages perpetuating overconsumption, 3) redirecting aspiration to more sustainable lifestyles, and 4) empowering consumers into their role as citizens to demand greater action from businesses and policymakers.

It does so in the context of recognising the fashion sector as one of global importance, but one struggling to address its wide-

reaching impacts, with unsustainable patterns of consumption and production contributing directly and significantly to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste (UNEP 2021c; UNEP 2023), as well as the interlinked issue of social injustice.

The Playbook serves to acknowledge the power of fashion's marketing engine and the significant role it plays in shaping desire and demand through its storytelling and visual language. It presents the need to direct such efforts towards sustainable and circular solutions as a creative opportunity, and provides a much needed framework when policies around how to communicate environmental claims increasingly come into force. Ultimately it intends to help communicators explore how to assist in decoupling value creation from resource extraction and volume growth, while improving wellbeing.

Box 1

What is sustainable fashion?

For this Playbook, fashion includes clothing, accessories and footwear made from textiles and related goods, extending from the production of raw materials and the manufacturing of garments, accessories and footwear to their distribution, consumption and disposal (UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion n.d.).

Sustainability practices are understood as those that balance economic, social and environmental considerations (UNEP 2023). As defined by UNEP: "A sustainable textile industry [of which fashion makes up the largest portion] is one that is resource-efficient and renewable resources-based, producing non-toxic, high quality and affordable clothing services and products, while providing safe and secure livelihoods" (UNEP 2020b).

Indeed, sustainability in fashion is about minimising impacts and increasing benefits across the entire value chain, encompassing the design, production, retail and use of a textile product, becoming a driver for the implementation of the SDGs. This includes, but is not limited to, such goals as SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), as well as SDGs 1, 5 and 8 (Poverty Alleviation, Gender Equality and Decent Work and Economic Growth) (UNEP 2022c).

It's worth noting, use of the word 'sustainability' is neither protected nor controlled, nor does the word have any legal significance. As highlighted in the 'Limitations' section of the Playbook, there is no globally accepted definition for the term. Ultimately, this currently allows brands to lead with vague and unverified claims of sustainability, presenting a large part of the challenge for communicators. See box 7: 'What is a sustainability claim' for UNEP's interpretation of this.

Box 2

Defining sustainable fashion communication

In this Playbook, "sustainable fashion communication" refers to communicating sustainably across the fashion sector, not just communicating about sustainability in fashion. This is an important distinction. Sustainable fashion communication can be defined as going beyond communicating about progress on corporate responsibility or sustainability goals, to also applying sustainability principles to everything communicated to consumers at large in a bid to elevate sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles, while also building and ensuring consumer education and trust.

In that sense, this Playbook is relevant to communication and communicators across the entire sector, regardless of their involvement in sustainability so far. It advocates for applying a sustainability lens to everything communicated on a product level (not just a sustainable collection edit for instance) through to overall brand messaging, campaigns, events, media coverage and the very basis of creative direction itself.

Sustainable fashion communication should focus on consumer-facing stories, images, messages and beyond in a way that not only minimises negative environmental and social impacts, but encourages more sustainable behaviours and values accordingly. In doing so, communication can become a contributor to the Paris Agreement, GBF and SDGs. Ultimately, fashion communication yields enormous power to embed and influence wider shifts in mindsets and values when it comes to sustainable lifestyles and should be recognised as a bellwether for greater change.

More information on UNEP's Sustainable Fashion Communication work can be found [here](#).



Development

This Playbook was developed based on insights from industry-wide consultations, literature analysis and peer review. It is a joint publication between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UN Climate Change) [Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action \(Fashion Charter\)](#).

It aligns directly to UNEP's [Textile Flagship Initiative](#); serving as an outcome from the key recommendations outlined for stakeholders in its Global Stocktaking and Roadmap reports (UNEP 2020b; UNEP 2023).

It was also informed by a joint consultation between UNEP and the UN Climate Change Fashion Charter, which together convened a network of over 160 diverse actors across the fashion sector globally, including government officials, researchers, NGOs, fashion brands and retailers, agencies and more. This culminated in recognition of communication as a driving force in fashion's climate response through the development and implementation of a dedicated commitment in the renewed Fashion Charter. Launched at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), it is to: "Align consumer and industry communication efforts to a 1.5-degree or Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) compatible pathway, as set out by the Paris Agreement Goals, as well as a more just and equitable future." (UN Climate Change 2021, p. 4).

This commitment serves as a common vision on how fashion communication must evolve to meet the sector's climate targets and contribute to the SDGs. During COP26, UNEP also shared insights from the consultation and an outline of draft recommendations for how the commitment could play out in practice, tying in broader sustainability principles beyond climate impacts (UNEP 2021b). The draft recommendations were then shared with those involved in the consultation and tested with communication players in a series of workshops, while a call for case studies was put out seeking real-world examples of best practices in sustainable fashion communication, resulting in more than 100 submissions for consideration. This went to all regions, including via the UNEP textiles expert community, as well as to UN Climate Change Fashion Charter signatories and those who participated in the initial consultations in 2021.

The Playbook also connects to UNEP's work with the Global Fashion Agenda (GFA) on the Fashion Industry Target Consultation (FITC) in 2022 and 2023, which aimed to identify and converge industry ambitions, including on circular systems. This Playbook serves as the framework for a proposed target on eliminating messages encouraging overconsumption.

Finally, this Playbook was supported by expert consultation and sent for peer review to more than 150 global stakeholders.

Box 3

About the UNFCCC Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action

Under the auspices of UN Climate Change, fashion stakeholders worked during 2018 to identify ways in which the broader textile, clothing and fashion industry can move towards a holistic commitment to climate action. They created the [Fashion Charter](#), with the mission to drive the fashion industry to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050 in line with keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees. The Fashion Charter was launched at COP24 in December 2018 and renewed at COP26 in November 2021 (UN Climate Change 2021).

Box 4

Connecting to UNEP's Textile Flagship Initiative

Through its [Textile Flagship Initiative](#), UNEP provides strategic leadership and encourages sector-wide collaboration to accelerate a just transition towards a sustainable and circular textile value chain. Its work in sustainable and circular textiles has outlined the imperative for the fashion sector, representing apparel and footwear, to become "radically and rapidly transformed to become circular, including reducing consumption and production impacts whilst increasing the utility gained from each product" (UNEP 2023). Circularity is considered a means to achieving sustainable development and is central to the delivery of many of the SDGs, in particular SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production (UNEP 2022a). The aim is to reduce and disconnect the use of natural resources and environmental impacts from economic activity, while continuing to enable improvements in human wellbeing (UNEP n.d.).

Within its report on Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain – A Global Roadmap (2023), UNEP identifies specific priority actions for communication and consumer engagement actors, including to:

- Make behaviour change aspirational
- Help understand the complexities of 'the consumer'
- Reduce the 'consumptive' mindset

As an output from the Roadmap, this Playbook addresses fashion communication and its supporting ecosystem, recognising it as an under-addressed area and a key enabler in the transformation of the entire textile value chain.

"The private sector as well as those who communicate to consumers and citizens specifically must play a strong role in creating and communicating a more sustainable and circular textile value chain, while also moving towards a more just and equitable system. This includes the wider landscape of brands, advertisers, media, influencers and more who reach their audiences most frequently, who must become part of the solution to develop and perpetuate a new narrative for the sector, building demand, shaping desire and demanding change from all stakeholders globally." (UNEP 2023)



Scope

With the purpose of the Playbook focused on demonstrating how to align consumer-facing communication across the global fashion industry with sustainability targets, its scope is to:

- Provide concrete insight based on industry consultation for how to build a positive new narrative for the fashion sector aligned to key sustainability targets
- Include high-level principles and specific guidelines for users, including globally-relevant advice on implementation
- Share best practice case studies for inspiration and replication across different forms of media and messaging

The focus on consumer-facing communication recognises a consumer as an individual purchasing, using and/or disposing of goods and services for private purposes. The Playbook is aimed primarily at shifting the behaviour of consumers in or moving into middle class urban lifestyles - the largest consuming segment of people in industrialised regions and increasingly in all other regions, and those who help drive global aspirations (UNEP 2016a).

This Playbook acknowledges those individuals as more than the sum of their purchases, or the consumption of such goods and services, identifying them more broadly as citizens. However, for the sake of this document, they are considered first and foremost as fashion consumers and shoppers. Box 10 expands more broadly into using communication as a force to provide agency to consumers, empowering them into their role as citizens.

This Playbook does not however suggest the onus for change is on individual action - it recognises the role consumers can play but does not imply they are solely or mainly responsible and able to fix the sector's issues. As with UNEP's Textile Value Chain Roadmap report, the Playbook places its emphasis on how organisations (public and private) with power and influence can change systems, create incentives and

shift expectations to support consumers in adapting their behaviour and values towards more sustainable patterns (UNEP 2023).

It is also important to note that addressing sustainability in the fashion sector and its communication looks beyond climate and environmental impacts. It must expand to include the understanding of intersecting issues, such as social justice, diversity, marginalised populations and workers' rights, gender equality and representation (see box 9), as well as the wellbeing and treatment of animals (see box 5). Use of the word 'sustainability' throughout this document should be seen as inclusive of all of these factors. More detailed guidance on a just transition can be seen through the work of the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO 2015), while assessing sector risks and taking a due diligence approach through that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2018).

Where possible, the Playbook looks holistically at such challenges and the way in which communicators should be considering them. However, it focuses purely on the communication side of such efforts and not on shifting the underlying issues they present. Communication is not independently going to solve the triple planetary crisis. Wider and more specific action from a multitude of different stakeholders is required, and can be understood in detail through UNEP's Textile Value Chain Roadmap report (UNEP 2023).

Also to note, outside of this scope of work are detailed guidelines on such things as the specific evidence to use to support product sustainability claims or indeed the relevant databases, resources or assessment methods organisations should employ to support them. Communicators can however find further information on addressing such areas via suggestions for practical tools and resources in section 7.

In the 'Principles' section of the Playbook, best practice examples are shared through specific industry case studies. As per the disclaimer in this document, it should be noted UNEP and UN Climate Change do not endorse any part of the case studies featured, nor the total conduct of the

businesses included. Further, their inclusion does not suggest they are representative of all the requirements for sustainable fashion communication simultaneously. Instead, they have been chosen for individual principles they align with, and in many cases only those. Thus, a piece of communication work that is particularly

strong on substantiating its claims may not contribute towards new modes of aspiration or success, and vice versa. Indeed, therefore the need for the Playbook exists, so all players can work further towards adopting the full framework for sustainable fashion communication at large.

Box 5

Animal welfare

Animal welfare plays a crucial role in sustainable development for people and the planet, with inextricable links to ethical, political, economic, environmental and social issues, as well as specifically to SDG 12 for sustainable consumption and production (UNEP 2019b). Animal welfare issues are evident within the fashion sector (Collective Fashion Justice n.d.), incorporating both wild and farmed animals, relating to both their unlawful killing and widespread mistreatment (Condé Nast n.d.). Improving animal welfare can tackle some of the key drivers of the triple planetary crisis, thus it must be a central focus of this Playbook for communicators also. Any references to the environmental and social considerations of the industry are therefore to be seen as inclusive of animal welfare throughout.



Limitations

This Playbook recognises that for communication change to play out at scale, several wider, parallel efforts will also need to come into force. Accordingly, there are limitations to adoption of the principles while these workstreams are still needed.

These include:

- Increased research, including transparent access to and greater reliability in the accuracy of data across all environmental and social factors; global and regional insights on consumer attitudes towards sustainability to support the segmentation of messaging for different target audiences, cultures and channels; and wider behaviour change research
- Education of consumers, journalists, marketers, leaders, policymakers and beyond
- Unity on language so there is a consistent global taxonomy for key terms including and related to “sustainability”
- Regulation and incentives that are set and enforced, from mandates on disclosures to stringent frameworks on green claims at the international level. (See section 4 on ‘Connecting to policy’)

Such limitations should not however become excuses for inaction, rather reinforcement of further work required. Communicators can play a role in facilitating such progress, particularly around areas such as increasing transparency and helping with education.

The systems challenge should also be considered, as explored in section 2.

Who is this for?

For the purposes of this Playbook, a communicator is considered anyone responsible for any stage of communication about the fashion sector directly with individual consumer audiences. This incorporates a wide range of roles and practitioners, from those in marketing, branding, advertising, public relations, creative direction, visual media, event production, content or social media at brands and retailers, to those involved in the wider communication ecosystem. This includes agencies, fashion and news media, imagemakers, digital platforms, entertainment properties, influencers, advocacy groups and educators.

That said, the guidelines are written primarily for those working in or for a fashion brand or retailer. This can be seen particularly with the dos and don'ts highlighted in section 3. But the principles at large, and the guiding questions that follow each of them, can be applied to all other communication job roles. They will help a journalist identify the sustainability credentials of a story they want to tell; an agency or imagemaker to verify if the work they have created with a brand or retailer stands up to the test; or an influencer to sense check whether a partner is aligned with their values or if their own

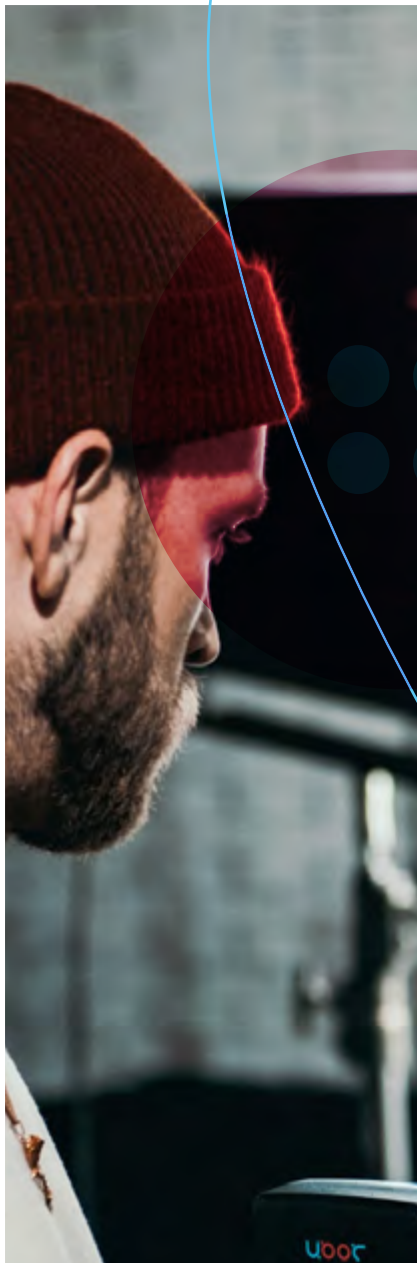
messaging on sustainability is accurate and appropriate.

The information is relevant to organisations ranging in size from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to multinational companies around the world, recognising their differing roles to serve as agents of change and to support innovation, versus addressing impacts and shifting practices, respectively. On that basis, the Playbook acknowledges that some players within the value chain have more resources to work towards adopting all of the principles immediately, while for others it will be more of a journey towards the full ambition - especially for SMEs in developing countries.

In reading this Playbook, fashion communicators of all types and sizes should not only be able to take direct action in implementing sustainability principles within their own work, but be able to understand the wider context of how fashion can use its creativity, ingenuity and cultural influence to be an enabler and driver of systemic change across the fashion sector, the entire textile value chain and beyond. The intention is to inspire a sense of responsibility among all actors to do so.

Figure 1. Different roles within the fashion communication ecosystem (non-exhaustive list)

Role	What they do
Ad agency	Paid by brands/retailers to develop strategies, campaigns and messages
Brand manager	Develops a deep understanding of audiences and customers, creates campaign objectives and oversees/leads brand marketing work
C-suite	Includes the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) setting the strategic direction of a company or organisation (and often also the face of e.g. a brand or retailer thus has a public profile representing it), and Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) responsible for driving sales through brand management and marketing communications
Creative director	Operates in both a design and marketing capacity, setting the vision for and overseeing a brand, product, concept, campaign or idea. Often also the face of e.g. a fashion brand, thus has a public profile representing it
E-commerce or web manager	Oversees a brand or retailer's website activity, including updating stock and inventory, creative content, promotions
Educator	Works for a school, university or other (training) institute. Shares relevant knowledge and insights of both theory and practice
Influencer, brand ambassador	Shares products, campaigns, promotions or key messages with their own community of followers who see them as a role-model or opinion former. Often paid for by a brand or wider organisation to create organic and relatable content
Journalist, editor	Reports on and analyses news, product collections, trends and more
Media	Channels through which communication is placed. For instance, digital, print, broadcast or out of home outlets that carry images, text, videos, podcasts, illustrations and beyond. Includes product placement in entertainment properties. Also used to describe the 'fashion media' or the group of editors and journalists who reach consumers and buyers through written and visual means
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade associations, advocacy groups	Works to improve the performance of the sector, often advocating for and supporting change through consumer-facing and industry campaigns, as well as policy requests. Provides technical support and input. In some instances, also runs large-scale events such as fashion weeks around the world and engages in trade fairs, advertising, education, publishing and lobbying
Photographer, filmmaker, imagemaker	Creates visual content on behalf of brands, fashion media and more
PR, publicist	Develops brand messages, campaigns or experiences to distribute to influencers, media and others, and supports in the placement of the product/brand in the market
Producer	Manages fashion week shows, events and exhibitions. Also includes technical artists and set designers
Product marketer	Develops product specific messaging and claims
Social media executive	Provides ongoing content and channel management directly to key audiences across digital marketing platforms. May also be called digital marketing executive, incorporating a wider remit such as affiliate, email and search marketing
Stylist	Selects and curates fashion products to feature in photography, films and other visual media, as well as in red carpet and social media appearances



II.

INTRODUCTION

Architects of desire

The scope of the triple planetary crisis – climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste (UNEP 2021c) – requires immediate action across all sectors and groups. Fashion can, and must, take a leadership role to contribute towards accelerating the sustainable transition.

Fashion is essential to human culture. It inspires self-expression, identity and belonging and informs the values and actions of billions of people across all segments of society. In possessing one of the most powerful marketing engines on earth, it shapes the very notion of desire and aspiration, in turn impacting wider cultural norms and expectations.

This influence and the subsequent impact it has on consumption is at the heart of what the Playbook addresses. Fashion communication, when directed the right way, can use its cultural reach, powers of persuasion and educational role to both raise awareness and drive a shift towards a more sustainable and equitable industry. In doing so, it can provide a gateway to influence sustainable consumption, lifestyles and wellbeing at large, contributing to numerous SDGs, including sustainable consumption and production, gender equality (see box 9), decent work and economic growth, and beyond.

At its most basic level, the broad communication ecosystem - including designers, brands, retailers, media, influencers, visual and entertainment content creators and imagemakers, and social platforms - shapes what and how much people buy, how they use and value those items, as well as how they then value themselves.

While traditionally targeting high-consumption markets largely in the Global North, fashion communication influences global and regional attitudes. It has played into upholding and promoting the North American and European “dream”, defining

appetites of the new urban middle-class everywhere (UNEP 2016a). Included in that is a new generation of two-to-three billion citizens in key developing markets (Wilson and Dragusanu 2008), who are aspiring to a higher quality of life and the ‘dreams’ promoted by Global North fashion marketing, and ready to spend accordingly (UNEP 2016a).

China is often talked about as the key emerging consumption market due to volume size, but other regions such as West Asia are also important to recognise for shopping behaviour. For example, the average consumer in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia respectively spends over six times and two times as much on fashion as those in China (The Business of Fashion and McKinsey 2019). Further, while consumption levels vary by market and by income, the way fashion is consumed all over the world could be more sustainable, both in daily lives and for religious rituals, cultural events and celebrations.

In recent decades - for it is still relatively new - the dominant economic model for fashion has been a linear one based on ‘take-make-waste’, with an accompanying narrative centred around newness, immediacy and disposability. This, coupled with the extractive and exploitative basis of apparel production, feeds into the triple planetary crisis, driven by huge volumes of unsustainable production and consumption.

This is a moment for change. Despite increasing efforts to tackle the issues and an expanding market for sustainable and circular businesses, the fashion industry is expected to miss the 2030 emissions reduction targets by 50% (McKinsey and GFA 2020). Currently, it is considered responsible for between 2% and 8% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as well as significant pollution, water extraction and biodiversity impacts, not to mention social injustices worldwide (UNEP 2023). Workers

in the textile value chain face exploitation, systematic underpayment, forced labour, severe health risks and verbal and physical abuse (Fashion Revolution 2019), with women particularly vulnerable as they represent the majority of the garment workforce and experience incidents of gender-based violence and harassment (see box 9) (Business Human Rights 2022). At the other end of the clothing life cycle, every second, the equivalent of a rubbish truck full of clothes is burned or added to landfill (EMF 2017), often in developing countries in the Global South that are unable to process this volume of waste.

In 2019, the GFA called out that sustainability solutions are not being implemented fast enough to counterbalance the negative environmental and social impacts of the growth the sector is experiencing (GFA et al. 2019).

The fashion sector accordingly needs to address holistic issues across the entire value chain to align with the Paris Agreement, GBF and broader SDGs. Within that, changing consumption rates, increasing consumer knowledge and shifting consumer behaviours are crucial to reducing the overall impact of the sector (UNEP 2023). In producing its Textile Value Chain Roadmap, UNEP finds: “Addressing production impacts alone will not be sufficient to transform the industry in time. Consumption must be a central pillar... from reducing the volume of new products purchased to examining how items are cared for and disposed of at their end of use.” (UNEP 2023, p. 13)

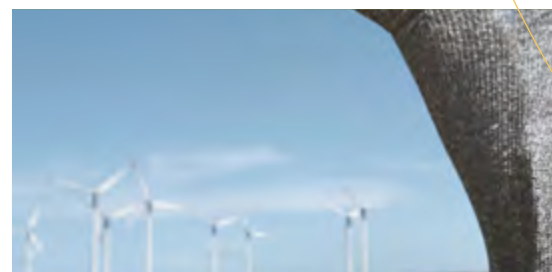
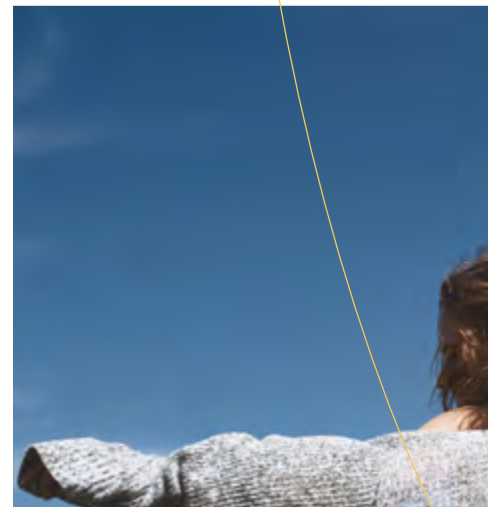
This is not to say that the onus for change is on consumers and citizens, nor is individual behaviour change the answer. Systemic shifts at the industry and policy level will need to be put in place for a true transition, but there is large scale power that comes from consumer agency, which when directed can play a significant role in facilitating this movement. (See box 10 on The role of the ‘consumer’ in systems change).

Communication should thus play an anchoring role in fashion’s sustainable transition; using its “well-developed communications engine to shape culture, ideals, aspiration and values to create a vision of what a new sustainable textiles future could be” (UNEP 2023, p. 13). Indeed, marketing should shift from being an engine of growth to one that centres its focus on social, environmental and economic performance combined (The Sustainable Marketing Compass n.d.). See section on ‘Recognising and addressing the systems challenge for fashion communicators’.

Towards a new fashion narrative

To date, consumer-facing communicators have largely been left out of sustainability conversations. This creates a dysfunctional relationship between sustainability-related commitments and the dominance of consumption messaging being put out into the world, not to mention a deluge of misleading claims, known as greenwashing (UNEP 2022c).

Indeed, misinformation and greenwashing has become so ubiquitous, a 2020 study by the European Commission found 53.3% of environmental claims communicated in the EU at large were vague, misleading or unfounded (European Commission 2022). Meanwhile, one fashion specific report finds 60% of sustainability claims by European fashion giants are “unsubstantiated” and “misleading” (Changing Markets Foundation 2021). At worst, this greenwashing consists of “unscientific methods and selective implementation” (Bates Kassatly and Baumann-Pauly, 2021, p. 5) designed to mislead or confuse consumers. At best, it results in a brand promoting a niche sustainable line as progressive, while business-as-usual continues with the majority of wider collections. As consumers increasingly prioritise and demand more sustainable fashion products, greenwashing has proliferated in an attempt to meet this demand and differentiate products in a crowded market.





“The world is in a race against time. We cannot afford slow movers, fake movers or any form of greenwashing.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations, speaking at the first meeting of the High-Level Expert Group on Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities (UN 2022)

A clear framework for what counts as ‘sustainable’ is necessary, and a variety of regulators are focused accordingly - creating guidelines, investigating claims and taking enforcement action (see section 4 on policy). Communicators may soon find themselves racing to catch up with legislation as a result. Dedication to evidence and transparency therefore is fundamental to communication change. In the guidance section of this Playbook, this is presented as the foundation level of sustainable fashion communication, recognising the importance of translating technical, science-based information into credible and meaningful messaging.

But a sustainable transition for the fashion industry must also focus on a change in cultural narrative as it pertains to consumption. [UNEP’s vision for sustainable fashion communication](#) is: “To build demand and inspire action for a positive fashion future, by changing the dominant narrative of the sector from one of extraction, exploitation and disposable consumption, towards regeneration, equity and care.” (UNEP 2022c, p. 27).

Fashion is a sector with the ability to lead the way towards a more sustainable, equitable and just future, not only through its action but its storytelling, image making and culture shaping. It must harness its power, ingenuity and creativity to transform from today’s cycle of unsustainable production and consumption patterns towards inspiring and realising a positive fashion future aligned to the sustainability targets of the sector. Imagine if all the creative talent - something that exists in abundance within fashion - was redirected towards envisioning such a system, ultimately ensuring a new narrative is the

most widely accepted and valued version of this industry.

“The world is sorely in need of visions that can inspire and guide us to a sustainable future civilization. Imagining sustainable futures is a powerful catalyst for transformative change and for co-creating desired worlds that respond to different identities and aspirations,” reads the Hot or Cool Institute’s report on 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Towards A Fair Consumption Space for All (Akenji et al. 2021, p. 125).

Ultimately this is about the sector’s ‘brainprint’ and not just its footprint; about the influence what it puts out into the world has on consumption. This could include a luxury fashion show that prompts a dozen fast fashion collections, a campaign from an advertising agency that encourages a spending splurge, an editorial shoot from photographers and stylists that drives people to the stores, or the affiliate shopping lists from journalists that make readers click to buy. It also incorporates the influence of TikTok, Instagram, WeChat, QQ, Weibo, YouTube and beyond.

A study of fashion publications, bloggers and influencers in the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland (U.K) for instance, found a dominant pro-shopping agenda across all content, with an emphasis on instructive consumption phrases related to novelty such as “must buys”, “buy it”, “obsessed” and beyond (Denisova 2021).

The advertising consumers are exposed to is also relevant. An individual in the United States of America (USA) is estimated to see between 4,000 and 10,000 ads daily, for example (Simms 2021), while forecasts

indicate over USD 778 billion will be spent on advertising globally in 2023. Over half of that is in the digital space (Dentsu 2022). The majority of this is pro-consumer marketing; with efforts to promote new sustainable ways of living vastly out-scaled and under-resourced by comparison (UNEP 2016b).

The U.K.-based organisation Purpose Disruptors has acknowledged the brainprint of advertising and is calling for the adoption of the Advertised Emissions concept. These are the emissions that result from the uplift in sales generated by advertising. "Advertised Emissions provides a measurement framework so the [advertising] industry, as architects of demand, can switch from promoting high-carbon brands and categories to low-carbon alternatives, thus accelerating the societal shift towards a sustainable future," it explains (Purpose Disruptors n.d.). It also identifies that the advertising industry adds an extra 32% to the annual carbon footprint of every single person in the U.K (Purpose Disruptors 2022). The Advertised Emissions framework is now part of the UN Climate Change Race to Zero campaign guidelines.

With its centrality in culture, fashion can play an outsized role in influencing more sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles, bringing them to life for all sectors in ways that have not yet been seen. This, then, is fashion's opportunity to be a wider part of the solution for both people and planet; to use its marketing prowess and position as architects of desire to shape new cultural norms and expectations.

Doing so will take bold vision but could also influence and set precedent for the wider movement, transforming fashion into a cultural leader in sustainability.

The business case for communication change

The balance between the science of sustainability and reimagining the fashion

narrative is where communicators can excel. There is an opportunity for existing skill sets to be put to task to fill the creativity gap and help promote a sustainable future (Futerra 2015). Approached creatively, there is a distinct opportunity at play to become a growth brand in this new paradigm.

As already identified, however, this must be done with a firm grasp on honesty and evidence, so that such a focus on sustainability isn't just a marketing ploy, and thus a form of greenwashing. As highlighted in Box 2, sustainability principles should be applied to everything communicated to consumers at large in a bid to elevate sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles, while also building and ensuring consumer education and trust. If done right, the contribution this communication can make to the sustainable transition will bring strategic value to the industry.

Sustainability-first businesses are seeing rapid growth. Four circular business models (resale, rental, repair and remaking) currently represent a USD 73 billion market. Collectively, they have the potential to grow from 3.5% of the global fashion market today to 23% by 2030, representing a USD 700 billion opportunity (EMF 2021). Resale or the second hand clothing market alone is predicted to be twice the size of fast fashion by 2030 (ThredUp 2021). Designers leading with themes such as upcycling and reuse, while small in most instances, similarly occupy a growing share of both market and voice.

Organisations focusing in this direction can gain competitive advantage by improving their image, reputation and relevance with potential and existing customers, engaging a market that is more in demand of sustainable solutions than ever before. More than two-thirds (69%) of Vogue audiences around the world now say sustainability is an important factor when making a fashion purchase (Cernansky 2021). Meanwhile, 98% of consumers think brands have a responsibility to make positive change in the world, yet most Millennials and Generation

Z do not think brands are ever honest about things like how their workers are treated and how environmentally friendly their products are (Futerra 2019).

Research to date has shown an intention-action gap however, where good intent does not translate into pro-environmental behaviours (UNEP 2017a). In fashion particularly, price has been a core component of the consumer decision making process. The Boston Consulting Group, for instance, finds that while 71% of global consumers are concerned about sustainability in fashion, only 3% of them are willing to pay a premium for it (Sanghi et al. 2022).

Yet a recent study by McKinsey & Company and NielsenIQ, looking across a variety of consumer categories in the USA, shows there is strong evidence that consumers' expressed sentiments about environmental, social and governance (ESG)-related product claims are now translating into actual spending behaviour (McKinsey 2023). Interestingly in South East Asia, a report found 71% of Singaporeans were not willing to pay more for sustainable fashion specifically, but those in Viet Nam (75%), Thailand (65%) and Indonesia (62%) were (Tan 2022). Deloitte meanwhile notes more needs to be done to give consumers greater access to information and offer better affordability and availability of sustainable options (Deloitte 2022).

Outwardly showcasing these efforts will also lead to attracting, inspiring and retaining talent who similarly want to work for such businesses, providing them with a greater sense of purpose, as well as that of investors looking at the ESG strategy of the company.

As policy increasingly emerges in this space (see section 4), it will also become a business imperative to do so. Communicators will need to serve alongside their sustainability counterparts to ensure compliance and avoid penalties. Furthermore, should some of the more

Box 6

A fair consumption space for a 1.5 degree lifestyle

The Paris Agreement, established at COP21 in Paris in December 2015, is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. Its aim is to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees (UN Climate Change 2015).

Aligning communication efforts to 1.5 degrees, as per the commitment added to the UN Climate Change Fashion Charter at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021 (UN Climate Change 2021), therefore means to only promote lifestyles and values that similarly ensure global temperature rise is kept to an absolute minimum. The intention of this Playbook is to demonstrate how to achieve that through fashion communication, ensuring such objectives are in line with not only climate targets but wider sustainability goals to encourage responsible practices for the sake of people and the planet, the world over.

A key element of this is addressing consumption. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identifies that tackling the climate emergency requires fundamentally reducing how much we consume (IPCC 2022). UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2020 shows more than two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to households' consumption and lifestyles, incorporating direct emissions from activities and those from the entire life cycles of products and services (UNEP 2020a).

One of the core priorities identified in UNEP's Textile Value Chain Roadmap is to address overconsumption. While recognising that more work is needed for a clear, agreed definition of overconsumption, it tentatively defines this as consumption that is a) beyond the physical and core social needs of an individual, b) primarily driven by peripheral social needs (e.g., personal image and identity), and c) inconsistent with all other people on earth having the same level of consumption while ensuring planetary sustainability (UNEP 2023).

Target 12.8 of the SDGs is to "promote universal understanding of sustainable lifestyles", ensuring by 2030 people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature (The Global Goals n.d.).

A sustainable lifestyle can be defined as "meeting basic needs and living well, while embracing the idea of sufficiency"; a challenging vision at a time when consumerism is a way of life and aspiration for many (UNEP 2016b). This is particularly the case as it pertains to the fashion sector.

A report by the Hot or Cool Institute analysing fashion lifestyle carbon footprints across G20 countries suggests an average global per capita fashion consumption footprint target of 128.7kg of CO₂e by 2030 to comply with the 1.5-degree target of the Paris Agreement (Coscieme et al. 2022). It demonstrates by comparison that high income countries currently consume the fashion footprint equivalent of 330kg of CO₂e per capita per year,

while upper middle-income countries are at 179kg of CO₂e and lower middle-income countries at 69kg of CO₂e. For instance, Australia has the highest per capita footprint from fashion consumption at 503kg of CO₂e per year, while India has the lowest at 22kg of CO₂e; less than 5% that of Australia.

At the two extremes of the scale, this means Australia would need to bring down fashion consumption emissions by 74% to be compatible with the 1.5-degree target, the report explains. By comparison, India is below the 2030 budget and would be able to increase per capita fashion consumption.

There are, however, also significant disparities within countries based on vast wealth distribution inequalities, and the high consumption levels of high income groups. Across G20 countries on average, the emissions of the richest 20% are 20 times higher than the emissions of the poorest 20%, Hot or Cool finds. According to this analysis, the richest 20% would have to reduce their footprint by 83% in the U.K for instance. By comparison, 74% of people in Indonesia live below sufficiency consumption levels of fashion.

Living and consuming sustainably (broadly and within fashion specifically) must therefore differ by context; there is no universal 1.5-degree lifestyle. Rather, everyone needs to imagine a world in which some people consume less, while those who still need to meet basic needs consume in a way that is different from contemporary materialism (UNEP 2016a). The IPCC encourages the top 10% of income earners worldwide particularly to limit consumption and explore the good life consistent with sustainable consumption (IPCC 2022).

Hot or Cool's suggestion lies in the concept of a fair consumption space. This is defined by an "ecologically healthy perimeter that supports within it an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for individuals and societies to fulfil their needs and achieve wellbeing" (Akenji et al. 2021). This would ensure overconsumption is curbed while sufficiency levels are realised.

It presents several low-carbon lifestyle options accordingly. These include absolute reductions in high-impact or unsustainable consumption (e.g. buy less), modal shifts to alternative products or services (e.g. buy better, such as circular fashion models including second hand garments instead of new), and efficiency improvements (e.g. produce better, such as through switching to less carbon-intensive fibres). The IPCC refers to a similar model called the "avoid-shift-improve" approach (IPCC 2022).

A 1.5-degree lifestyle is not just about individual choices in this context; it's about a holistic vision that includes governments and businesses enacting policies that guide people towards these types of lifestyles (UNEP 2016a). The fashion sector has an opportunity to input not only through transforming its own model, but also by redirecting the influence it has over sustainable values, in turn influencing such lifestyles, which is once again where communicators come in.

ambitious policies currently on the table pass, a greater levelling of the playing field will occur within the sector, opening greater opportunity for business value creation through sustainability credentials.

Recognising and addressing the systems challenge for fashion communicators

A call for communicators to help drive change cannot exist without also confronting the role of the system they exist within. Mass consumption is a systemic issue (UNEP 2016b). Shifting the narrative of the fashion sector towards sustainability is inherently inhibited by the dominant economic system this is built on and the traditional objective of business - the profit motive - feeding it. The current marker of success for communication teams to drive conversions and increase sales is at odds with the necessary reduction in consumption that will be required to help meet sustainability targets. For fashion marketers in particular, focus is consistently on pushing new products and collections founded on a primarily linear model in a bid to create overall growth-based value for the company. Even sustainable improvements at product level or the trial of circularity initiatives are currently outweighed by targets to increase sales volume.

This challenge lies at the heart of the fashion sector's sustainable transformation, not just as it pertains to the role of the communicator. During consultations for the Playbook, the cause behind a lack of action

was due to insufficient support or true buy-in from the company board answerable to such a system, as well as management contravening its own short-term (profit-based) objectives. When progress is made, there is then deep-seated concern or fear over getting things wrong and receiving backlash.

Balancing this tension with the sustainability mandate will take a combination of both creativity and critical long-term thinking from leadership. The ultimate goal is to decouple value from volume growth, as identified in UNEP's Textile Value Chain Roadmap (UNEP 2023), with promise in policy interventions and new business models (UNEP 2016b). Industry-wide conversations about degrowth - as a controlled reduction to align output with the limits of the planet - are increasing accordingly in the context of reaching wide sustainability goals and the specifics of SDG 12 for sustainable consumption and production. As per the IPCC: "Prosperity and the 'Good Life' are not immutably tied to economic growth." (IPCC 2022 p. 178). Yet any discussion around reducing consumption must also ensure potential trade-offs are mitigated as much as possible to ensure a just transition that avoids the loss of livelihoods (UNEP 2023).

Can there be a world where communication and marketing are no longer primarily about driving volume growth, but ensuring performance across the SDGs, tying in economic, social and environmental factors? As mentioned in the section on 'The business case for communication change', investment potential will be defined by those with solid ESG procedures and not just sales growth over the longer term. The savvy communicator is already helping their business to prioritise this.



What this means for you

Tackling all of this will have to be a core consideration of sustainability work for the sector to meet its 2030 goals. This is not something that can sit on the shoulders of communication actors alone - but rather a wide variety of stakeholder groups including business leaders, investors, policymakers and beyond.

However, addressing the system and its challenges should be considered part of the same conversation as redirecting all communication work to align with more sustainable lifestyles. The latter cannot ultimately be extracted from the former. Redefining value is accordingly something communicators can play a role in, all while implementing immediate, actionable steps towards change as defined by this

Playbook. After all, value is something fundamentally connected to aspiration, which the communicator arguably holds the key to, as already outlined. Shifting those desires and setting new cultural trends cannot be underestimated (UNEP 2016b).

While this Playbook is primarily about external consumer-facing communication, communicators also have a role to play in internal communication. There is a responsibility here to help drive change from the inside, actively demonstrating how to lead by example, as explored in depth in the principles related to advocacy. The next section, which introduces these principles for sustainable fashion communication, outlines fundamental ideas and guidance for how communicators can align their external work to sustainability goals in practice.



“Preaching to the converted isn’t going to make the difference we need in our societies. So, we need brave and fearless people inside corporates. We need strong and young voices, not worn down or subsumed by a company’s culture, to be the flea in the ear, the conscience, the voice of reason that forces corporates to move beyond lip service to sustainability and start doing something meaningful.”

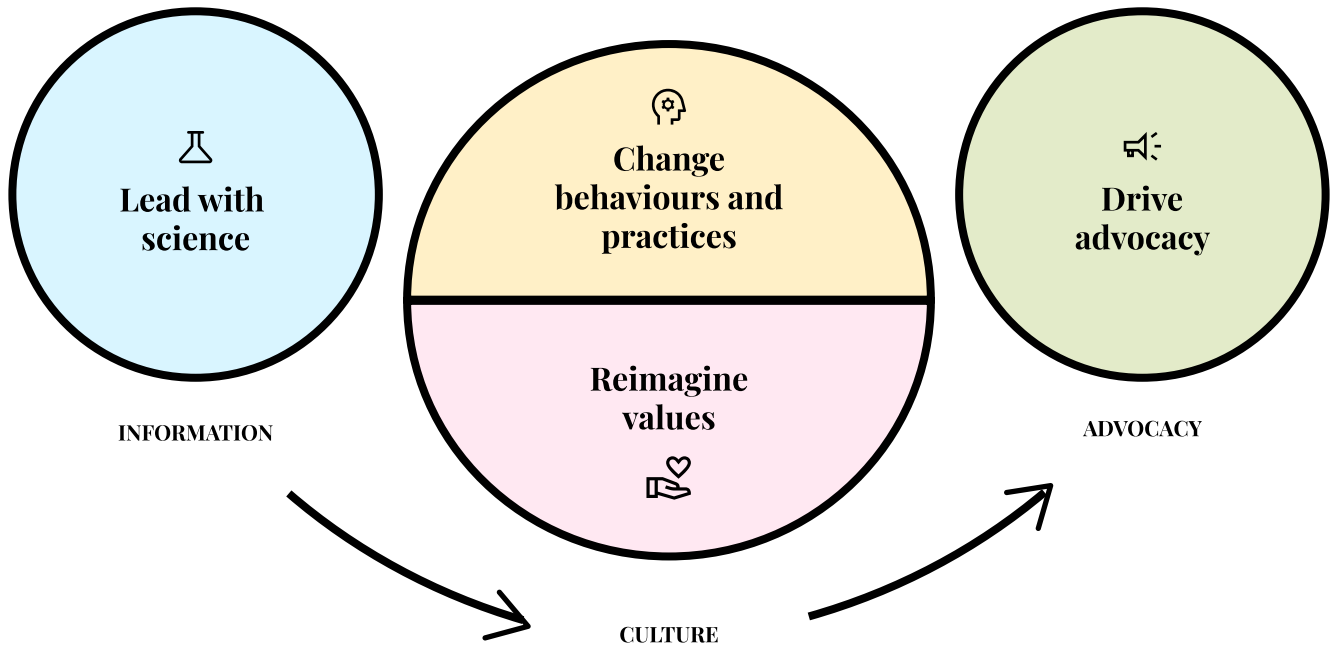
Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, in a speech delivered at the Driving Change for the Planet – ChangeNOW Summit (Andersen 2021)



III

THE PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION COMMUNICATION

The principles for sustainable fashion communication



Principle 1: Commit to evidence-based and transparent communication efforts

Principle 2: Ensure information is shared in a clear and accessible manner

Principle 3: Eradicate all messages encouraging overconsumption

Principle 4: Champion positive changes and demonstrate accessible circular solutions to help individuals live more sustainable lifestyles

Principle 5: Spotlight new role models and notions of aspiration or success

Principle 6: Focus on inclusive marketing and storytelling that celebrates the positive ecological, cultural and social values of fashion

Principle 7: Motivate and mobilise the public to advocate for broader change

Principle 8: Support dialogue with leadership and policymakers to enable wider industry sustainability

Using the principles

The principles are designed to provide communicators with clarity and standards for best practice in sustainable fashion communication. They are shown within figure 2.

'Lead with science' is the starting place for all communication, as well as the foundation for everything else to grow from. It is the 'information' layer, showing scientific rigour and a dedication to evidence, transparency and accessibility. All communicators should already be working towards this with their sustainability teams as standard practice in their organisation, dedicating resources to it accordingly.

'Change behaviours and practices' along with 'Reimagine values', are one step along and can be considered together as the 'cultural' layer. This is where building begins for a new narrative. It is not just about being data-led in the representation of your work, but providing a new vision for consumers to embrace as they shape and understand the value in their own actions towards sustainable lifestyles. This is where the focus of wider communication stakeholders today should be beyond the efforts of their sustainability teams. This is also where most of the work will need to be done to move towards systems change - it is where the most resource will be needed but also where the most creativity can be added.

'Drive advocacy' is then the 'advocacy' layer. This is the leadership level of sustainable fashion communication and is about going beyond your own organisation and practice to support broader sustainable change within the sector.

This is not to say the graphic in figure 2 must be followed step by step. While a foundation should be set through Lead with Science in all cases to avoid any

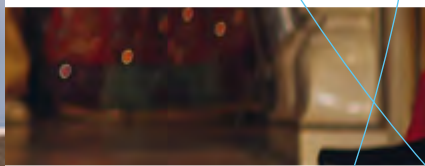
form of greenwashing, the other elements can be approached at the same time. Furthermore, it is not expected that all of the principles apply simultaneously to every piece of communication work. Instead, they should be considered relative to what is most relevant. What is communicated on a product label will vary vastly to a video campaign or a fashion show, for instance.

Each area is outlined per the structure of the graphic over the following pages explaining this further, with practical guidance throughout, including a detailed list of dos and don'ts for consideration, and a short series of questions to use as a checklist (where relevant) against all work. You can also find case studies to showcase those already providing examples of best practices.

The intention of the Playbook is to provide a concrete starting place on sustainable fashion communication against each of the principles outlined. Further practical tools and resources are suggested in section 7 to help facilitate deeper knowledge and application.

All efforts towards sustainable fashion communication should also be underpinned by a focus on reducing the environmental and social footprint of the development and production of any form of communication assets or events - from photoshoots and filming to fashion week shows and set design, as well as the distribution of that messaging. The result should have minimal impacts, providing positive benefit where possible. This is a foundational expectation and is not included in detail in the principles of the Playbook - again, see section 7 for relevant resources here.





Actions for communicators

- I. Commit to integrate and follow all the principles in your communication practice to encourage broader change and action from the sector.
- II. Share these principles across your teams and value chains, providing a common perspective and lens to all involved groups, especially decision makers.
- III. Establish a sense of ownership for the principles internally, determining who is responsible for ensuring any communication output is aligned accordingly and a process for its sign-off.
- IV. Consider what resources you have - and what resources you need - to bring these principles to life for your audience groups.
- V. Review the principles and their associated guidelines at key points in your communication process - e.g. for campaign work from the initial strategy and planning, through to creative design/production, post-production, media planning and post-campaign measurement - to ensure consistency and commitment across processes.
- VI. Encourage sharing and continuous learning internally and externally, including exploring new collaborations and voices that add value and new perspectives as further science, insights and best practices are developed.
- VII. Integrate the principles in your internal reporting framework to monitor progress and drive further improvement, creating an accountability and governance structure against them.

FOUNDATION LEVEL: INFORMATION

LEAD WITH SCIENCE

Summary: Ensure relevant information is clearly and transparently shared, providing an evidence-base that is verifiable and comparable while adhering to relevant regulatory policies.



The basis of sustainable fashion communication is a commitment to being evidence-based and data-driven. It is through this that accuracy can be ensured and claims can be verified. In line with the fundamental principles of UNEP and the International Trade Centre's (ITC) Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information (UNEP and ITC 2017), communicators should be thinking about reliable, relevant, clear, accessible and transparent information as to what goes into each product, covering both environmental and social issues.

Misinformation and greenwashing are a significant challenge within the fashion sector. As sustainability has grown as a selling point, all manner of vague and inflated claims have appeared across advertising, marketing, media, packaging and beyond. Indeed, information seems abundant but is often incomplete, unreliable, untrustworthy and overwhelming. The European Union (EU) finds there are currently more than 200 types of eco-labels in the EU market for instance, many of which are unverified and misleading (European Commission 2023a). In the U.K, the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) is specifically reviewing the fashion retail sector due to widespread concern for the way in which certain items of clothing are touted as better for the environment, promoted as using recycled materials, or branded as 'sustainable' (CMA 2022a).

This has resulted in a confusing landscape for fashion consumers, with growing mistrust for what is and is not sustainable as shared by brands, the media and beyond. Such misinformation in fashion must come to a stop. If communicators or the communication itself is made to hide, manipulate or exaggerate anything - intentionally or not - it should be a red flag. Often the information omitted contributes just as much to the story - it is pointing to the sustainable credentials of one product or line as though it is representative of the whole collection, for instance. Or promoting something with vague language such as "ethical", "eco" or "green" to make it appear as though it is environmentally or socially friendly without any analytical information to back it up.

Leading with science is an antidote to greenwashing and misinformation.

As a starting point, greater transparency is required. This should not be conflated with sustainability, rather transparency speaks to the public disclosure of information that enables people to hold decision-makers to account (Fashion Revolution 2022). It requires companies to know what is happening upstream in the value chain and to communicate this knowledge to both internal and external stakeholders (UNECE 2022). Businesses should be following the concept of human rights and environmental due diligence - looking at their own activities and that of actors along the entire life cycle of their products. For communicators, reporting of progress and disclosure of that information is key.

Communicators should note one of their key roles is to team up with the sustainability experts (either those with technical knowledge in-house or those providing them with such insights) to obtain the full set of scientific evidence for reliable claims. Vague or inflated claims may not be intentional, but can easily occur when there is a lack of true scientific understanding. Crucially, it is not about a communicator having all the answers but knowing who to ask for them, how to fact check them, and indeed then how to accurately communicate them. It is through this sort of collaboration - where different skill sets come together - that we will see greenwashing extinguished.

The ultimate requirement is a holistic and accurate account of relevant impacts. Conducting a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of products and services is recommended, but particularly for SMEs with resource limitation to conduct such studies, a hotspots analysis can already help identify the significant environmental issues from a life-cycle perspective and the relevant trade-offs. Communicating how specific impacts are then addressed (e.g. GHG emission reductions), is key for credibility and transparency.

As identified in the limitations of this Playbook, there is a distinct need for more concrete and reliable data across the sector at large. There is no one single,

globally agreed methodology to substantiate environmental claims. Some of the measurement tools available are critiqued as not fit for purpose and consequently fraught with controversy, making it a complex landscape for communicators to navigate (Kent 2022). The EU continues to develop the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) Category Rules for apparel and footwear – a detailed set of rules to assess the environmental performance of products throughout their life cycle (accounting for all the upstream supply chain and downstream activities), following a LCA-based methodology. The PEF aims to provide a standardised framework to substantiate, communicate and compare environmental impacts of products. But the EU similarly recognised in its March 2023 Green Claims Directive that “addressing the very wide and fast changing area of environmental claims by means of a single method has its limitations” (European Commission 2023a).

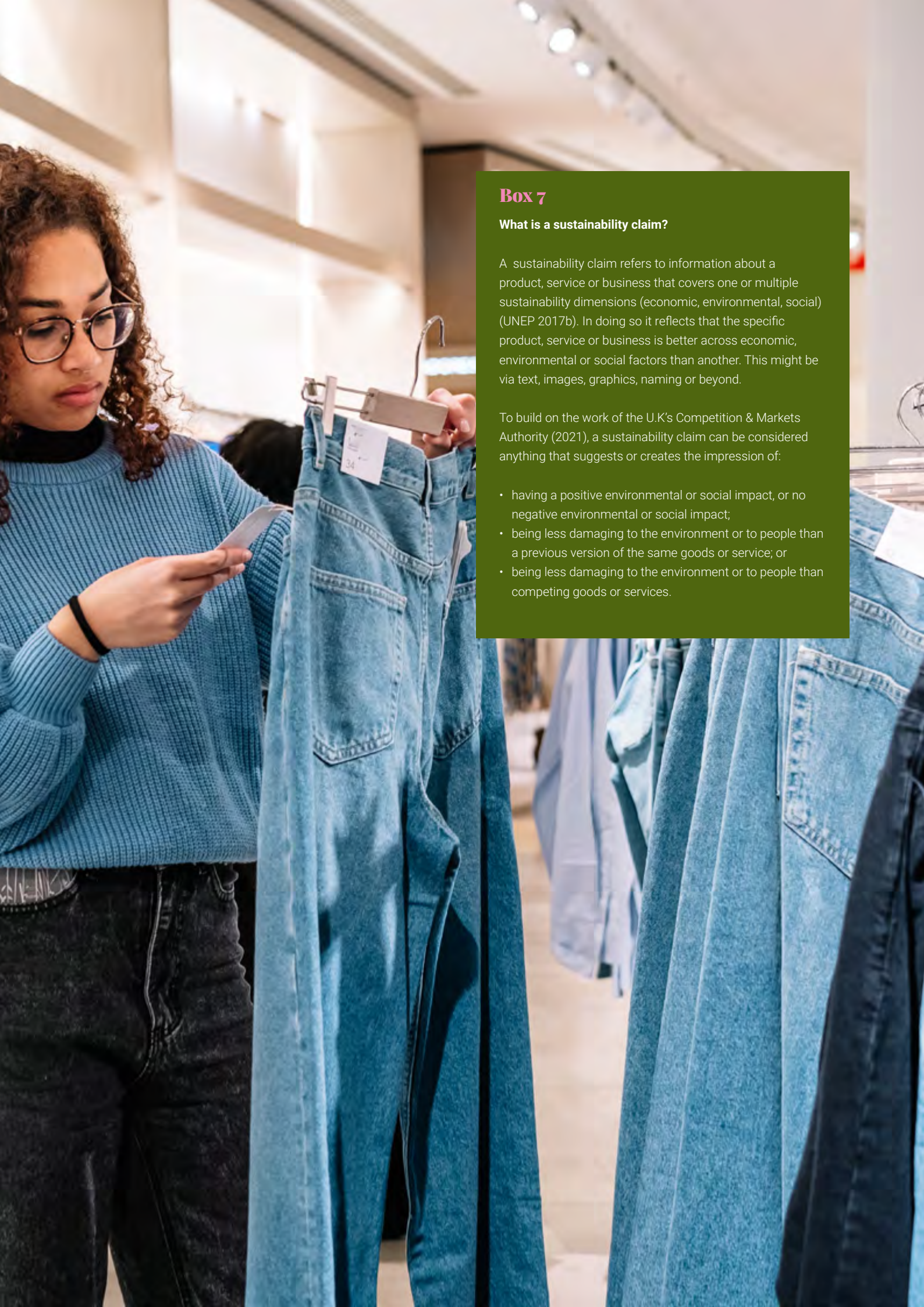
Having noted the challenges, there is mounting scrutiny and regulators are taking action. For instance, in New York, a class action lawsuit was filed in 2022

against a fast fashion giant by a consumer over misleading and misrepresentative environmental claims, including the specific use of product scorecards (The Fashion Law 2022). A second followed in Missouri (Write 2022). Meanwhile, the Norwegian Consumer Authority (NCA) has recently referred to the use of information from certain databases of standardised measurements of value chain sustainability in the fashion sector as not evidence-backed when it comes to comparing the environmental footprint of an organic cotton t-shirt with a conventional cotton one, and thus misleading (Forbrukertilsynet 2016). The Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM) has taken a similar stance on those issuing insufficiently substantiated sustainability claims (ACM 2022).

There are therefore increasing risks associated with making claims. As well as following the dos and don’ts recommended in this Playbook, communicators should stay alert to evolving legislation and recommended tools as a result (see section 4 on policy).

Further resource: The ‘Lead with Science’ section of this Playbook finds its foundation in [UNEP and ITC’s Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information](#), building upon them and applying them specifically to the fashion sector. Use this tool for greater detail on making effective environmental, social and economic product claims. A short video summarises the Guidelines [here](#).





Box 7

What is a sustainability claim?

A sustainability claim refers to information about a product, service or business that covers one or multiple sustainability dimensions (economic, environmental, social) (UNEP 2017b). In doing so it reflects that the specific product, service or business is better across economic, environmental or social factors than another. This might be via text, images, graphics, naming or beyond.

To build on the work of the U.K's Competition & Markets Authority (2021), a sustainability claim can be considered anything that suggests or creates the impression of:

- having a positive environmental or social impact, or no negative environmental or social impact;
- being less damaging to the environment or to people than a previous version of the same goods or service; or
- being less damaging to the environment or to people than competing goods or services.

Principle 1: Commit to evidence-based and transparent communication efforts

DO	DON'T
Provide accurate, detailed and clear information on relevant sustainability attributes, ensuring the message conveyed reflects the evidence. Make sure claims are specific and explicit so they can be understood and interrogated.	Only provide limited information that is hard to access or find. There should be no intention to hide or omit details.
Work with established third-party certification schemes and standards, as well as accepted industry data sources to both provide evidence and substantiate claims, and to verify them. Ensure you are working with reliable organisations to do so, endorsed or applied by governments, nongovernmental organisations or competitors. Where possible, join existing schemes instead of creating new singular methodologies to help facilitate greater harmony within the industry.	Make assumptions or claims without evidence. Absence of evidence is not an excuse for greenwashing. If there is no robust basis for quantification, preferably certified by a third party, it is better not to claim it at all.
Detail the limits and assumptions of any claim and its evidence. Clearly share both what it achieves and what is omitted, providing context and outlining where further progress is needed. Ensure communication is clear about why the impact data is representative of the actual product, or indicate where it concerns only general, average data.	Use a claim (or a headline) to mask or bring ambiguity to other issues, or to exaggerate the sustainability of the product, the range or a whole organisation, thereby misleading the consumer.
Focus first on credible communication about your own product and its attributes and/or impacts over comparative claims. However, if you are making comparisons, ensure they are fair. It can be useful for the consumer to establish performance against a benchmark, but context must be provided. This could be against where an item began (e.g., what the impact reduction is against a baseline), a similar product, the market average or a leading product. It is essential to carefully assess whether claims have the methodological, evidential and legal basis to allow consumers to directly compare (UNEP 2017b).	Make unsubstantiated or subjective comparison statements, without quoting standards, test data or another basis to provide context.
Use language that is clear, easy to understand and factual. Keep up to date on industry definitions and the potential to misuse language. (See section 7 on 'Practical tools and resources' for helpful insights).	Refer to vague terms that can easily be misinterpreted such as "eco", "green", "sustainable", "ethical", "regenerative", "cruelty-free", which on their own do not have standard definitions and require greater industry-wide scrutiny.

DO

DON'T

Provide traceability on all claims - offer access to the methodology and sources of what you use. Be clear how, and by whom, it was developed, and where the evidence has come from. Where relevant, also engage with supplier communication teams to collectively determine information, narrative and content.

Use proprietary methodologies that are not shared.

Provide a truthful representation of your impacts. It is essential that information provided communicates at least the most significant and relevant impacts (hotspots). Referring to only a single issue or hotspot, or one with lower importance can mislead the consumer, as can using aggregate scoring which may hide a particularly negative impact. Ask the sustainability teams or those experts providing the information to present you with the full picture accordingly.

Imply that a minor improvement has a major impact. For example, if 80% of a product's environmental impacts are during production, do not suggest that better packaging, which represents only 3% of overall impact, makes the product better than others. Similarly, do not promote a product when it only achieves the minimum regulatory requirements or common industry standard as though it is significantly better than what is expected.

Be transparent on processes and partners throughout your value chain. Employ advanced technologies (including blockchain, machine learning, the internet of things, or physical tracer technologies such as DNA marking) where relevant to help do so (UNECE 2022). Ensure the publishing of supplier lists is in a downloadable and machine readable format (csv, json or xlsx, aligning with the Open Data Standard for the Apparel Sector).

Conceal details on your partners, processes or those of the suppliers you work with. At the same time, do not rely on transparency efforts as a brand differentiator or campaign in of itself.

Follow the concept of human rights and environmental due diligence and report about progress. (See OECD Due Diligence Guidelines, as listed in section 7, for more)

Hide issues and risks, or how the enterprise has addressed potential and actual harm, including with affected stakeholders.

Take responsibility for what happens throughout your value chain. Own it through your communication. Even where you are not in control of them, you are accountable for impacts through every stage of production and consumption.

Shift the burden to the producers you rely upon.

Consider communication at a product level contingent upon also communicating what the overall brand is doing.

Communicate the sustainability attributes of a product in isolation of brand activities (and vice versa) - this can be considered greenwashing.

State current position and progress in the context of long-term commitments. Communicate where the brand is on its journey (including relative to adopting a life cycle approach) and why it has not yet achieved something. Transparency does not need to be about perfection. Be honest about where gaps are and what is being worked on, but ensure there is a realistic plan in place for attaining long-term targets, including appropriate milestones.

Only point to long-term targets or give a false impression of progress because of them. Pledges and commitments are necessary, but it is also important to disclose the status and efforts underway to address them in real-time.

Checklist:

- ☐ Is there reliable, independent evidence or high quality third-party certifications to substantiate and verify the claims?
- ☐ Are the methodology and sources made available to the public or at least to a competent body to assess the quantity and quality of information shared?
- ☐ Are limits of the claims clearly stated and given in context? Is it evident the claims are not masking negative impacts of the product or wider organisation?
- ☐ Is the information shared a major driver of the sustainability performance of the product, service or organisation? Does it provide a relevant view of the impacts, taking into account hotspots across environmental and social issues?
- ☐ Is the information shared done so relative to long-term commitments, making it clear where the organisation is on its journey?

Principle 2:

Ensure information is shared in a clear and accessible manner

DO	DON'T
Ensure information shared (particularly of a technical nature) is clear, concise and easy to understand, whether via text or visuals. Ensure consumers can differentiate between product and brand information.	Use pictures, graphics, even colours that would serve to mislead the consumer or contribute to a different understanding of the validity of a claim.
Provide relevant and useful information to different consumer audience groups. Think about how to share digestible details for the majority, while providing further access for those interested to dive deeper. Educate customer-facing teams so they have the knowledge and skills they need to help customers make more sustainable/circular choices.	Overload consumers with too much information up front in a way that only leads to confusion. For example, endless logos of certification schemes, especially those irrelevant to current claims or products. Conversely, do not oversimplify information so that it becomes another form of greenwashing.
Make all sustainable fashion communication accessible and simple to find. Share (relevant) information across multiple consumer touchpoints. This could be at point of sale, on multiple website pages (including on the corporate site and specific product pages) and via social media. Provide educational content in the moments consumers are most receptive to learning (e.g. when scrolling TikTok) versus when they are in shopping-mode.	Bury information in clunky annual reports, audits and other non-consumer-facing communication channels, or restrict sustainability communication to the corporate page of a website only.
Consider the digital fluency of your target audiences when determining the best means of communication. Different age groups and markets/regions may be more fluent with digital means of communication and use of social media than others. Also ensure inclusivity of content, incorporating e.g. subtitles, alt texts.	Limit communication channels, leaving out key consumer groups, or create barriers to the information (such as small font size, technical language or data).

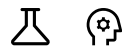
DO	DON'T
Support claims with narrative stories, case studies and testimonials to demonstrate and link back to further information. Creatively translate technical concepts into meaningful communication. Taking an approach that is engaging and entertaining can also increase the effectiveness of the communication.	Limit to numbers and hard facts without adding detail and colour that helps make information digestible. Conversely do not oversimplify the information in a way that loses its credibility.
Share information on an ongoing and timely basis, similarly ensuring evidence is kept up-to-date.	Update information infrequently, relying only on annual reporting, or through specific campaigns and seasonal cycles.

Checklist:

- ☐ Can consumers easily access sustainability information about the product, service or organisation? Can they do so using customary means of communication in their region?
- ☐ Is the information shared clear, useful and easy to understand? Is it well organised and structured, with additional details available elsewhere to support better and more technical understanding?
- ☐ Is the information communicated in an engaging and entertaining manner in order to drive effectiveness?
- ☐ Are sustainability claims/strategies/messages shared on an ongoing and timely basis?



Case study: Nanushka, Connected Products



Budapest-based contemporary label Nanushka teamed up with product-cloud platform EON, to place Circular IDs, or digital passports, within its garments. The aim was to provide detailed information as to each item's history and allow consumers access to unique information, content and services, in doing so creating deeper engagement and increasing brand loyalty. In a practical sense, this meant a QR code displayed on a label sewn into the product. By scanning the code, the user reaches a dedicated page with details on product composition, provenance (in some instances back to where the raw material was sourced from) and the story of the item. There are also garment care suggestions and information on where to go for repair, rental and resale. The intention was to also allow for instant authentication and traceability so as to support circular opportunities and the continued extension of the product's lifetime.

Impact: Since launch, Nanushka has included Circular IDs on 2,595 products (in total 115,003 items), resulting in a total of 24,595 pageviews to date. The average time spent on the pages is 1-minute 8-seconds, which is higher than time spent on other content pages, proving interest in the content and the provenance of the product. Nanushka has also seen uptake on its offer of circular services through the initiative, such as repairs in store, and resale and rental services through partners. As a next step, it will look to offer an integrated resell service through each digital ID allowing customers to sell their item on directly through the brand.



Case study: Allbirds, Carbon Footprint Calculator



Footwear brand Allbirds developed a life cycle assessment (LCA) tool to estimate the cradle-to-grave carbon footprint of its products. That includes materials, manufacturing, transportation, product use and end-of-life. It then uses that information to label each of its products with a carbon footprint, like calories displayed for food shoppers. The tool, its methodology and datasets were developed and are kept updated in partnership with external consultants. They are further validated by third-party experts in line with the International Organization for Standardization. The methodology has also been published for public use.

Impact: According to the company's assessment, on average, a pair of Allbirds shoes has a footprint of 7.12 kg CO₂e. The latest figure comes after a 19% reduction in its per-product carbon footprint in 2022. It has a goal to reduce its per-product carbon footprint by 50% by 2025, and near zero by 2030. In 2021, Allbirds open sourced its carbon footprint methodology tool to the entire fashion industry - providing access to the proprietary information so they too can calculate their products' carbon footprint. Its intention in doing so was to enable wider industry action, increasing transparency and accountability for sustainability. Off the back of this, Allbirds partnered with Adidas co-creating a running shoe that, according to the two companies, had a carbon footprint of 2.94kg CO₂e. Allbirds then took it a step further in 2023 announcing what it refers to as the world's first net zero carbon shoe, the M0.ONSHOT.



ORDER # 00000001 SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2023	
01: TREE DASHER 2 NATURAL BLACK	8.22 KG CO ₂ e
02: TREE RUNNER SANDHIA WHITE	6.77 KG CO ₂ e
03: SMALLERDS WOOL RUNNER LIGHT GRAY	3.53 KG CO ₂ e
04: ANYTIME NO SHOW SOCK BLUEZARD	6.72 KG CO ₂ e
TOTAL:	19.24 KG CO ₂ e
OFFSET TO ZERO:	0.00 KG CO ₂ e







CHANGE BEHAVIOURS AND PRACTICES

Summary: Show how consumers can enjoy fashion while living within the limitations of the planet and respecting human rights and dignity. Encourage lower impact options and circular solutions that normalise more sustainable behaviours.



The cultural layer of sustainable fashion communication brings a greater focus on the role of the individual consumer and redefining their relationship with clothing. Communicators should be thinking about how to shift the contribution advertising, marketing, social media, journalism and beyond makes towards overconsumption. Instead they should point consumers towards accessible alternatives when it comes to both enjoying and caring for fashion. This is where decoupling value from production growth and resource extraction comes in (UNEP 2011).

Fashion fosters an overconsumption problem. No amount of eco-labelling or sustainable claims can take away from the fact there are too many items being produced, purchased and thrown away each year, not to mention the volume already available for further usage. Traditionally, fashion communicators play on this rapid cycle of novelty and obsolescence, using trend as a way to keep selling to consumers even when their wardrobes are full (Fletcher 2014).

Clothing production doubled between 2000 and 2015, while the number of times a garment was worn before being discarded decreased 36% during the same period (EMF 2017). This is something the industry is reluctant to talk about. The 2022 Fashion Transparency Index, an annual review of 250 of the world's largest fashion brands and retailers reviewed and ranked according to what information they disclose about their social and environmental policies, practices and impacts in their operations and supply chain, found 85% of brands do not publish their production volumes (Fashion Revolution 2022).

Communicators across the board have a responsibility to explore how to reduce messages that encourage such volumes. This means redirecting the notion of shopping as reward, breaking the continuous markdown cycles the industry employs, and not commodifying issues like the climate crisis, thus suggesting

individuals can help by shopping their way out of the problem. Tied back to this Playbook's communication foundation of 'Leading with science', any form of consumption should not be framed as devoid of consequence.

This goes beyond information-based messages and brings in the emotional element of decision making. Beyond technical detail as highlighted in the 'Lead with Science' section of the Playbook, this is about communicators using their skills and budgets to make the more sustainable option the most attractive one (as per the below mentioned hierarchy - from reduced consumption to a new sustainable product or service). It's the one that brings optimal personal gain, whether that is physical or experiential, as well as environmental and social benefit. It is about considering decision factors such as price, quality and style, as well as emotional realities including habits and decision fatigue (particularly with the volume of confusing misinformation shared) (UNEP 2023). As with all modes of fashion communication - from social media posts to fashion week shows - it is about selling an idea as much as it is a product.

Sustainable fashion communication then is about increasing knowledge, inspiring and actively demonstrating how individual consumers can experience sustainable lifestyles and practices today – beyond just purchasing and using garments, towards enjoying and caring for them in more responsible ways and ultimately giving wearable items further lives for longer so they don't merely contribute to the mountains of textile waste seen around the world. The role of the imagemaker to engage visually-oriented audiences is particularly important here.

There is a hierarchy that applies to do so. Individuals should be encouraged to actively buy less and only buy what is necessary - as defined by a fair consumption space for a 1.5 degree lifestyle (see box 6). Preference thereafter should be given to less intensive and lower impact consumption, with

circular alternatives such as buying second hand promoted before more sustainable products as a default. Communicators should also be sharing insights on extending the life of garments through responsible care, including reduced washing and drying, repair options and instructions, and managing end of life with 'take back' schemes, recycling, upcycling and more. It is about celebrating and normalising all of these things, as well as showing how tangible, actionable and accessible they can be in the consumer's current context, rather than as a far off reality.



Principle 3: Eradicate all messages encouraging overconsumption

DO	DON'T
Redirect shoppers towards responsible consumption, such as supporting thoughtful purchases based primarily on needs and considering circular alternatives. See box 6 defining a fair consumption space and a 1.5 degree lifestyle.	Use buying new items as a key for psychological needs (i.e., retail therapy), such as promoting disposable, one-off purchases for immediate gratification, or using language such as “must-have”.
Publish annual production volumes of new products.	Shout about e.g. sustainable capsule collections or progress with recycled materials all the while continuing to increase production volumes of new products.
Engender pro-sustainability attitudes and appetite for sustainable lifestyles more broadly. Promote a vision of how fashion items can fit into a sustainable lifestyle at large, painting a picture (via imagery, video, text, experiences, events and beyond) of what that could look like. This comes with the caveat of living the values you are promoting.	Use sales promotions, multi-buy offers, one-click purchasing, subscription models, limited runs and customer loyalty schemes that incentivise impulsive and unnecessary consumption or that make it difficult to offer sustainable alternatives. Similarly, do not rely on the use of continuous markdown cycles, buy now pay later schemes, free returns and next-day delivery options purely as a marketing ploy.
Opt for media placement and buys that support responsible consumption (see above).	Advertise alongside media that otherwise encourages overconsumption (e.g., reality television or sponsored haul videos on social media).
Tell (and show) the story of fashion products in a manner that helps increase their value - reimagining them as lasting items with a role in enhancing consumers' lives.	Devalue the product through cheap promotions and sales tactics that suggest obsolescence.

DO	DON'T
Promote benefits of sustainable products or services beyond their environmental and social credentials. Connect them to functional, emotional or social attributes that may more greatly motivate the customer, such as value for money, quality, desirability and self-worth (Futerra 2015).	Limit to stereotypical and generic environmental and social imagery and messages that do not extend beyond being informative.
Engage with relevant team members to input on how the pricing of all products and services can be fairly and clearly communicated, considering their true cost across environmental and social factors.	Use shock marketing tactics such as putting specific items on sale at extremely low prices to drive traffic, or participate in extravagant, one-off sales days (such as Black Friday). Doing so only implies there are no costs or impacts in production, devaluing fashion and normalising the notion of disposable.

Checklist:

- ☐ Do communication materials demonstrate product longevity over disposable or one-off buys?
- ☐ Are sales promotions and media buys thoughtful and considered, rather than promoting overconsumption?
- ☐ Does the communication activity inspire and encourage consumers to engage in more sustainable lifestyles at large?
- ☐ Is the “why” of sustainable products or services clearly stated and explained? Do the benefits inspire and motivate behaviour change?
- ☐ Are all products fairly priced in relation to their environmental and social costs?

Principle 4:

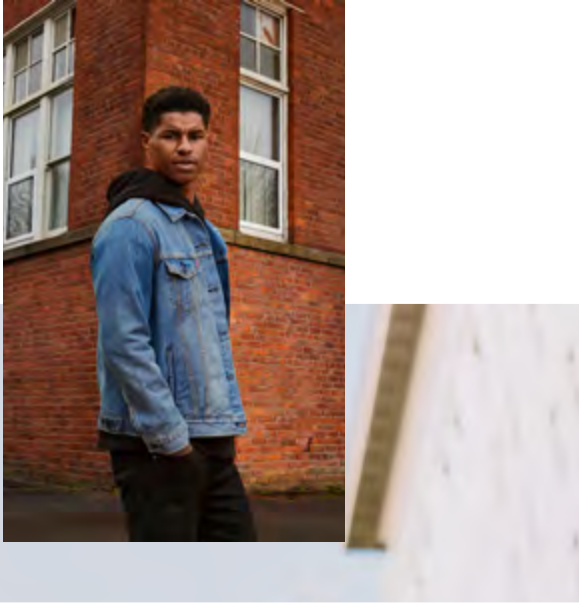
Champion positive changes and demonstrate accessible circular solutions to help individuals live more sustainable lifestyles

DO	DON'T
Use choice editing. Make more responsible and sustainable options the easy ones to find, platforming them ahead and instead of less sustainable products and services. For example, by offering filters and labels (based on rigorous criteria that validates them as such as identified in the 'Lead with Science' section) or second hand items on websites or sections in stores. Consider this a creative opportunity to make it visually appealing and 'on brand' to do so.	Obscure or outprice more sustainable options.
Champion new ways of engaging with fashion outside of ownership. Commit a greater share of marketing budget to pointing consumers towards circular alternatives available today, such as rental to replace one-off buys, or digital engagement rather than real world purchases. Consider how such services and business models are promoted and operated so as not to also push overconsumption. Similarly, refer back to the 'Lead with Science' section to ensure reliable claims on their relative impacts.	Limit enjoyment of fashion only to new purchases or endorse obsolescence including disposability and one-time use.
Use industry moments such as fashion weeks as an opportunity to (visually) present new ideas - such as the beauty that can be found in second hand and vintage garments, or in upcycling or restyling existing pieces.	Maintain the status-quo with large scale events that focus again only on promoting mass consumption.

DO	DON'T
Demonstrate and provide greater and more equitable access to circular alternatives, helping to scale up schemes so they are available beyond pilot experiments, one-off moments and key capital cities, as well as to wider audience groups incorporating size-inclusivity and income levels.	Cap promotion of circular initiatives so most consumers do not have access to them, or use messages that guilt and shame those who do not.
Help consumers value and look after their clothes for longevity. Provide clear messages and language to extend the useful life of items, from stories on how to style pieces from within a customer's existing wardrobe to responsible care and repair instructions. Encourage consumers to actively engage with changing how they look after items. Consider loyalty programmes focused on repair for example rather than discounts for repeat purchases.	Leave out responsible care and repair instructions for clothes beyond the legally required information.
Share options for a garment's end of life, thus engaging in a long-term communication relationship. This could include resale platforms, recycling, reuse schemes or responsible disposal. This enables consumers to make better and more informed choices, while supporting deepened customer loyalty. (Again, consider how such services and business models are promoted and operated so as not to also push overconsumption. Similarly, refer back to the 'Lead with Science' section to ensure reliable claims on their relative impacts).	Forget your customers after they have made a purchase, in doing so not concerning yourself with how they value or use the items. Similarly, do not counter positive behaviours by incentivising further consumption through take back schemes, such as by offering money off new products for used items collected.

Checklist:

- ☐ Are sustainable products or services easy to find? Is there clear signposting on websites and in stores?
- ☐ Are alternative, circular means of consumption promoted and made accessible?
- ☐ Is there clear and concise guidance provided for consumers on responsible post-purchase care? Is there information available on how a product should best be considered for end of life?



Case study: Levi Strauss & Co., Buy Better, Wear Longer



The multi-platform Buy Better, Wear Longer campaign from denim brand Levi's was unveiled in 2021 focused on responsible production, reduced consumption and less waste. Its objective was to challenge people to be more intentional about what they buy and how long they keep their clothes, communicating a commitment to quality clothing that can last for generations. The initial iteration of the campaign featured six changemakers and activists from different regions sharing their work on issues critical to the future of our planet in a series of videos. The campaign aimed to encourage consumers to buy Levi's SecondHand and use Levi's in-store Tailor Shops to extend the life of their garments, demonstrating how the business is focusing on creating revenue streams that do not rely on selling new products. A follow-up film launched in 2022 tracked a pair of jeans through a multitude of owners rewearing and repurposing them in a bid to showcase the durability of the product.

Impact: Levi's saw an 80% uptick in average daily brand mentions across global social platforms following the launch of the campaign, with social sentiment at 87% positive.¹ Research also showed an increase in perception of Levi's being a brand that is sustainable and "preserves the Earth for future generations" among Generation Z.² But more than a piece of marketing, Buy Better, Wear Longer was intended as a call to action, representing company-wide alignment in support of its sustainability goals. One of those goals is to be circular ready by 2026, based on meeting all pillars of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) Make Fashion Circular Framework. This includes that a pair of Levi's jeans is designed to be worn for years if not decades, to be repaired or refashioned if needed and to be passed along to new wearers, all while contributing to the owner's authentic self-expression rather than the waste stream.



¹ Source: Pulsar TRAC

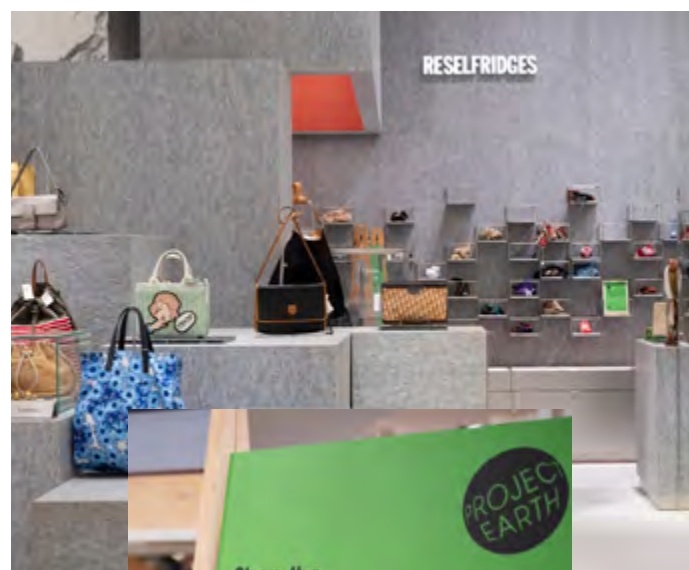
² Source: Global Brand Equity tracking July 2021

Case study: Selfridges, Project Earth



U.K retailer Selfridges launched Project Earth in 2020 to change the way people shop and the way it does business, and to create a more sustainable future for people and planet. The strategy is built on three themes: Materials, Models and Mindsets. This means driving a transition to more sustainable materials, embedding circular business models through its circular ecosystem of products and services, Reselfridges, and challenging the mindsets of its teams, partners and customers. As well as dedicated training for teams and engagement through community groups, the mindsets commitment is evident in customer activations and campaigns such as Reselfridges The Wedding, showcasing pre-loved and rental outfits for brides, grooms and guests; SUPERMARKET, a four-week experimental shop of the future bringing together on-demand, cutting-edge materials and sustainable innovation; and Worn Again, a season of experimental second-hand and circular shopping experiences. In 2022, Selfridges outlined its progress and set new 2030 targets as part of its first Project Earth Report, including for 45% of transactions to come from circular products and services³, to only stock products that meet its strict environmental and ethical standards, and to build an inclusive retail culture in which teams, communities and customers put people and planet first in all decision making.

Impact: In 2021, Selfridges featured 1,220 brands in its Project Earth Edit, which in turn accounted for 12% of the business' own-bought sales. It also saw significant uptake for its RESELFRIDGES circular models in store, including sales of over 17,700 pre-loved items, 2,000 rented items, 8,500 refills and 28,000 repairs, although Selfridges has been transparent these currently account for only 1% of total transactions. Research carried out by the business shows customer awareness of sustainability initiatives at Selfridges grew from 11% to 52% over the past five years. Today, 80% of Selfridges' team members believe they can contribute to sustainability through their role.



³ Selfridges refers to a circular transaction as one that includes at least one resale, rental, refill, repair or recycled product, and excludes home, food and restaurants.

Box 8

Film and media presenting a positive fashion future

Over the past decade there has been an increase in films and media focused on the topic of sustainable fashion, with the aim to both show the damage the industry is causing and awaken consumers to an alternative model. Benefit lies in the reach these platforms have, often to an audience who may otherwise be unaware of the topic.

One of the original examples is [The True Cost](#) (2015), a documentary that exposed the human rights violations and environmental destruction occurring within recently industrialised countries at the hands of the garment sector. More recently, [Trashion](#) (2023) focused on the impact of fashion at end of life, showing what happens to synthetic clothing exports.

A solutions-driven focus is also now emerging, engaging consumers in the positive angle of change. One such example is *Fashion Reimagined* (2022), a film that follows Amy Powney, creative director of London-based fashion brand, Mother of Pearl, on a mission to create a sustainable collection from field to finished garment. The documentary examines sustainability at every step and focuses on the triumph that comes from combatting the challenges that arise for the brand throughout.

[Made in Bangladesh](#) (2019), meanwhile, is a film drama based on the true story of a young woman fighting for worker rights in a garment factory in Bangladesh. It is an eye-opening narrative depicting the reality of many, primarily female, textile workers worldwide. The protagonist's story demonstrates bravery, hope and change through her resilient search for solutions to the factory's unfair treatment of her and her coworkers.

On the media side of things, to mark its 25th anniversary in 2021, Vogue Taiwan launched a campaign called [#Vogueconscious](#) ([#Vogue有意識](#)) to encourage its audience to adopt a sustainable, eco-friendly lifestyle. Through a "conscious challenge" on social media, it invited celebrities to share beloved fashion items they have owned for more than 10 years. On the 14th of each month, named Vogue Awareness Day, readers are presented

with conscious-driven, original, digital content covering culture, lifestyle and fashion. "Our approach is a very realistic one. Unlike the commonly used 'authoritative' editorial voice in Vogue, our communication strategy for sustainability is 'sharing and growing in this together,' inviting our readers/audiences to learn with us, rather than learn from us," said Leslie Sun, editor in chief, Vogue Taiwan (Condé Nast 2021).

Numerous new media publications focused entirely on sustainable and circular fashion have otherwise launched. These include glossy titles like [Display Copy](#) in the USA, which doesn't promote a single new fashion item on its platform, only vintage and upcycled pieces, and [The Calendar Magazine](#) in the U.K, which has a mission to drive meaningful change via inspiring and positive content, showing its audience how to shop and live more sustainably. [More or Less](#), also in the U.K, is focused on provoking thought around fashion consumption, bringing onboard photographers, stylists and designers committed to reshaping a society of excess, while Germany-based [Lissome](#), another independent title, publishes an annual print edition envisioning holistic fashion futures, featuring essays, interviews, poetry and fashion stories.

[Twyg](#) in South Africa and [Green Queen](#) in Hong Kong, China are both digital sites sharing news, interviews and insights on sustainability to educate, inspire and inform both consumer and trade audiences, while [IMPRINT](#) is the editorial offering of Tanzania-based sustainable e-commerce platform, Industrie Africa, featuring voices in African fashion and culture that are catalysing sustainability in the industry. Further print and digital publications such as [Atmos](#), [Emergence Magazine](#) and [Grist](#) are weighted towards climate justice issues, featuring fashion as part of their coverage.

Further inspiration for a positive fashion narrative can be taken from fashion weeks focusing on and showcasing sustainable fashion, including [Copenhagen Fashion Week](#), [Brazil Eco Fashion Week](#) and the Circular Design Challenge at Lakme Fashion Week.

BUILD LEVEL: CULTURE

REIMAGINE VALUES

Summary: Actively seek to separate the belief that consumption and ownership lead to happiness and success. Paint a picture of how positive new values can look when considering wellbeing, equity and community.



If individuals are to change their behaviours and practices, we will also need new visions of what enjoying fashion outside of material wealth can look like, reconnecting emotional values away from new consumption. This links directly back to the goal to communicate a 1.5 degree lifestyle as set out in box 6. It is a reimagining that will require storytelling and imagemaking that demonstrate alternative models of status and success, decoupling identity from newness and recalibrating what is deemed aspirational. It will require spotlighting new role models including social influencers and thought leaders (IPCC 2022), and sharing positive stories that show the possibility of doing things differently. It is about raising awareness of such redesigned aspirations to social proof a sustainable future.

While this is portrayed in the Playbook's principles within the central cultural layer for communication change, reimagining values can also be considered the anchor to systems change. Redefining cultural norms and expectations is what will catalyse, for instance, behaviour change. Arguably redirecting consumption must start here.

The fashion industry model is one predicated on constantly feeding desire. Consuming has become a way of defining social standing - it is about fulfilling and shaping self-identity and self-worth targeted particularly at women and girls bringing about unrealistic perceptions of what it takes to fit into society (see box 9). In a world of unequal social structures, shopping has become the thing that helps define and move individuals up the proverbial ladder. It is entrenched behaviour, perpetuated by social media and social media influencers that serve as engines of hyperconsumption (Siegle 2019). But it is in that same regard, social influence is now needed to encourage awareness and wider uptake of alternative models instead – to make that which is better for people and the planet seem the ultimate in 'cool' and desirable, and not just worthy (UNEP 2022c).

Sustainable choices need to become status symbols. Yet what is deemed aspirational and why consumers make certain choices will depend upon their socio-economic context. While the base aim is to reduce overconsumption among the top 20% of earners particularly (see box 6), making sustainability desirable should not mean discriminating against lower income groups, nor guilt or shaming them for what they can or cannot afford. Sustainable consumption cannot become an elitist or wealthy opportunity only, but neither can that become an excuse for inaction and ongoing overconsumption.

When it comes to desire, it's important to recognise the outsized influence communication can have on values, which in turn impact behaviours and thus consumption. Ultimately, the vision should step beyond sustainability - embracing everything it is about, without specifically referencing it in a technical sense - in doing so driving aspiration for a new normal that enables improved behaviour to naturally occur. The power is in the communicators' hands as storytellers and imagemakers to shape cultural norms and expectations, be it redirecting away from overconsumption as is the basis for much of the Global North, or tapping into the conscience, cultural awareness and traditional links to sustainable lifestyles that exist in recent memory for many societies in the Global South. How, in all instances, do we encourage a focus on wellbeing and community over material wealth? And how, per the 'Change Behaviours and Practices' section of the Playbook, do we redirect the dopamine hit that comes with buying something new towards sustainable practices instead?

Where the 'Lead with science' section of this Playbook was about pulling communicators into sustainability, this part is about bringing sustainability into culture. This should be the communicator's comfort zone - their usual playing ground. It is not therefore about educating them on how to drive

engagement, but asking them to redirect and reimagine what they ask people to engage with.

Similarly, communication can also play an increasing role in exploring and explaining the ecological, cultural and social values of the fashion sector - meaning the way in which it is deeply intertwined with the natural environment; with cultural heritage, art and craft traditions, customs, beliefs, histories and practices; and with the wellbeing of individuals and communities (Williams et al. 2021).

This spans from its roots in and impact on nature and biodiversity, as well as animal welfare, through to the lives of the garment workers – the majority of whom are women (ILO 2022) – and marginalised communities it depends on. It is about how what one buys links back to all these entities on the one hand, and celebrating them on the other.

“Success and happiness should not be measured in the accumulation of things, particularly when rampant consumerism is killing our planet. Take personal responsibility. Choose low-emission transport. Choose sustainable diets. Choose green energy. Choose second-hand. Choose a better future.”

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, in a speech delivered on World Environment Day (Andersen, 2022)

Sustainable practices are neither a new, nor an exclusively Global North concept. Many cultures in the Global South have traditional fashion practices that are sustainable by design and practice, improving habitats, livelihoods and wellbeing while preserving culture and know-how. Highlighting these cultural practices can provide a regenerative and restorative narrative whereby fashion can become part of the solution. Further, communicators from different cultures can have significant impacts on framing how recalibrating the value of clothing can also be a way of honouring and celebrating such cultural values.

Ensuring consumers are aware of all of these interconnections, and the sector's role in climate justice is key. This comes with the caveat of living the values you are promoting. Part of the communicator's role then is about changing the standard for what is deemed acceptable, encouraging a more equitable industry and ensuring a just transition.





Box 8

Gender equality and fashion communication

Fashion communicators have a role to play to help work towards SDG 5 to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. While the textile industry creates significant economic opportunities in developing countries, garment workers, particularly in the Global South, frequently operate in unsafe conditions and are subject to exploitation, systematic underpayment, forced labour, severe health risks, sexual harassment and verbal and physical abuse (Fashion Revolution 2019). The fact women make up the majority of the garment manufacturing workforce (estimated at 80%) means they are disproportionately affected by these issues (ILO 2022). The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in April 2013, in which more than 1,132 people were killed and 2,500 injured - most of them women and girls - brought global attention to the poor labour conditions faced by workers (ILO n.d.).

Gender equality and human rights are key ingredients for environmental sustainability (UNEP 2021c), therefore advocating for gender justice, the rights of female workers and implementing transparency in supply chains can be seen as a central part of any efforts towards sustainability and recommended practice within the industry. Further, ensuring that gender equality and human rights are communicated openly ensures that society is more in tune with what should be perceived as acceptable. Women must also be given a greater share of voice within the industry by ensuring they occupy leadership and decision-making roles, as well as a place both in front of and behind the camera when it comes to communication work.

Indeed, the gender discussion also relates directly to changing the content of the communication output itself. Research indicates fashion adversely impacts women and girls’ self-esteem leading to mental health issues. Fast fashion particularly reinforces insecurities, body image issues and drives unsustainable consumption of clothing items accordingly (Ramesh 2022). Changing perceptions of what is considered ‘attractive’ when it comes to women and girls is crucial, and thus fashion-related communications have a responsibility to portray women and girls in a more realistic and representative manner that promotes self-esteem, diversity and belonging, and good mental health.

Principle 5: Spotlight new role models and notions of aspiration or success

DO	DON'T
Demonstrate new visions of status and success, presenting a visual narrative (via imagery, video, text, experiences, events and beyond) of aspirational sustainable lifestyles, wellbeing and community.	Suggest self-esteem and social status are separate from or clashing with sustainability. Do not include stereotypical or patriarchal examples that reinforce harmful norms and behaviours.
Socialise examples of valuing fashion outside of material wealth, including circular alternatives as highlighted under 'Changing Behaviours and Practices', as well as new notions of wellbeing and fulfilment. This could include passing things down to future generations, making and repairing emotionally resonant items or reconnecting with traditional techniques to maintain them, sharing positive stories that demonstrate community connections or belonging, engaging in status through digital fashion and more.	Infer that shopping and consumption are a means to emotional fulfilment, or that newness and volume is aspirational.
Promote sustainability (including both reduced and responsible consumption) as cool and desirable over worthy or charitable. Make it something consumers want to engage with.	Guilt consumers into participating in sustainability, present a picture of doom and gloom, or suggest abstinence and sacrifice is the only option for engagement. Similarly, do not shame those who cannot afford otherwise.
Promote positive gender narratives, dispelling myths on body types and what is considered 'attractive' particularly for women and girls.	Push consumption by playing on body image issues and mental health.
Bring your sustainability teams into the creative space of communicating sustainable lifestyles and values with the aim of shaping new cultural norms and expectations.	Operate in silos between the two different departments, negating the opportunity to gain input on wider communication work and vice versa.

DO	DON'T
Turn to or nurture relevant social influencers and thought leaders to support and spread the message (from repeat wears and rental fashion to broader pro-sustainability attitudes), in the process helping to social-proof it.	Work with ambassadors, models or spokespeople for one-off moments who do not holistically embody your values and beliefs, nor serve as role models for the bigger picture you are presenting. Similarly, do not work with influencers who otherwise heavily promote overconsumption (such as by rewarding or promoting unboxing or haul videos).
Use cultural moments and ambassadors to normalise sustainable behaviours, connecting with your audiences at the moments that matter.	Share environmental or social messages only on recognised awareness days, such as International Women's Day, World Environment Day or Earth Day.

Checklist:

- ☐ Does the communication activity promote new notions of value, status, success and wellbeing?
- ☐ Are influencers and opinion leaders involved to help social proof sustainability?
- ☐ Do the beliefs and values of the ambassadors involved align to that of the message?
- ☐ Are sustainability teams embedded in communication activity at large?

Principle 6:

Focus on inclusive marketing and storytelling that celebrates the positive ecological, cultural and social values of fashion

DO	DON'T
Demonstrate the interconnectedness of fashion with people and communities, and with biodiversity and nature. Educate consumers on the origins of their garments from farms, trees or fossil fuels, for instance.	Exclude from your communication the resources, inputs, people and processes that support development and production.
Showcase the heritage, craftsmanship and cultural connections inherent in products and services, paying tribute to their provenance. Tell the stories of local communities and grassroots initiatives - such as those of indigenous peoples with connections to the land or heritage techniques - encouraging inclusive dialogue and diverse understanding (Fashion Values n.d).	Appropriate others' work and cultures without due credit.
Use your platform to amplify diverse voices and communities across the value chain. Raise awareness of social and labour issues within the textile sector, highlighting for instance the lives of garment workers, farmers and affected communities (with emphasis on marginalised and vulnerable communities).	Exclude stakeholders representing your organisation across the value chain, as well as the audiences you're trying to reach.
Establish inclusivity and representation both in front of and behind the camera, taking into consideration gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality, geography and beyond. Ensure this crosses the development, production and approval of communication work.	Promote a homogenous view of beauty, class, success and wellbeing.

DO	DON'T
Consider the cultural context of your messages, media or mode of communication and tweak accordingly. Understand your cultural and market landscape to ensure your messages resonate.	Assume what works in one country or region is applicable in another. For example, acceptance and uptake for resale and second hand clothing purchases vary greatly based on market.

Checklist:

- ☐ Does the communication connect back to the positive ecological, cultural and social aspects of fashion? Does it showcase the people or resources involved?
- ☐ Does the work amplify diverse voices and communities across the value chain?
- ☐ Is there representation and inclusivity both in front of and behind the camera?
- ☐ Has the cultural and social context of the message been considered and the work adapted accordingly?

Case study: Reformation, Getting Stuff Done



Getting Stuff Done, a campaign from USA-based fashion brand Reformation, was created to both inspire and educate customers, in turn influencing sustainable lifestyle choices. It features a diverse group of influential individuals from different regions committed to sustainable actions in their life, work and activism. Those profiled appear on several of Reformation's owned channels, including its website, Instagram and Facebook, sharing details about the work they do to effect change in both video and written interviews. The aim is to showcase the brand's values by aligning with like-minded individuals 'getting stuff done' in the areas of sustainability, environmentalism and climate justice.

Impact: The campaign shares diverse voices and perspectives with a broad audience, spotlighting and amplifying role models from sustainability-related fields by highlighting their work and solutions. Education is the primary impact goal, using the Reformation platform to increase awareness of such leaders and how they relate to the subject matter. Thus far it has resulted in 2.7M impressions with 52.2K engagements. Each post on average has reached 110K unique individuals.





Case study: LilaBare, Urithi



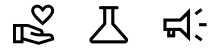
LilaBare is a Kenya-based fashion brand working with a network of skilled artisans and creatives. To celebrate its connections to the earth, and its focus on regenerative, natural and handmade clothing, it launched a fashion film for spring/summer 2022 called Urithi - a Swahili word meaning "heirloom". The film campaign is a tribute to nature, with creative director Ria Ana Sejpal narrating: "In this moment, we recognise the power our Mother Earth gives us... We honour our duty in caring for her, with respect and love, in the knowledge that to care for her is to care for ourselves. We celebrate and empower every living entity that goes into making purposeful creations." The film is set in a crater called Hell's Kitchen in Kenya, which reaches an average temperature of 50-degrees Celsius every day. The intention of such a setting is to represent what exploitative methods of fashion production, including linear and fast fashion processes, do to the world. The campaign gives representation to marginalised communities relevant to Kenyan fashion, including non-binary, curvier and more petite models.

Impact: LilaBare received strong feedback on the film from its audience and customers, particularly with regards to how its storytelling facilitated change in the perspectives of those who watched, enabling them to reframe their personal narratives around fashion consumption to reflect a more conscious approach. More directly, the film tied to the brand's namesake collection launch, and its goal to promote and sell the line, as well as to bring awareness of its ethos focused on high standards of ethics, responsible and regenerative production and consumption, re-evaluation of perceptions around the value of fashion, and inclusivity of minority communities.



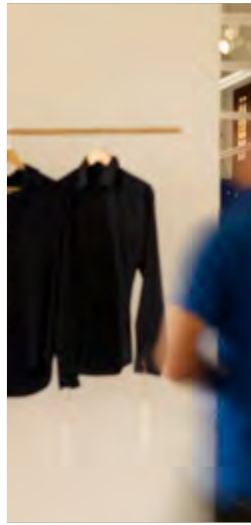


Case study: SukkhaCitta, #MadeRight



Since its inception in 2016, Indonesia-based fashion brand SukkhaCitta, a B-Corp certified social enterprise, has based its entire marketing and communication plan on its #MadeRight™ campaign. Inspiring to be a movement for change, it invites consumers to ask how and why something was made, making them more conscious of the impact of their purchasing decisions on the lives of people and the planet. Doing so supports the fact the organisation leverages indigenous agroforestry ('Tumpang Sari') wisdom to grow cotton and natural dyes and then engages artisan communities across rural villages to hand-process them into fabrics and garments. The campaign primarily plays out through infographics on social media and in-depth web articles raising awareness of various social and environmental issues, ranging from what a living wage is through to the true cost of synthetic colours, appropriation of artisanal textiles, the impact of microplastics and beyond. SukkhaCitta has also hosted a series of exhibitions and events under the #MadeRight umbrella focused on topics such as craftsmanship and slow fashion, as well as how indigenous regenerative farming traditions can heal the soil.

Impact: The result of SukkhaCitta's work is a community of self-reliant artisans and farmers across Indonesia, composed particularly of women whose lives they have both supported and changed. #MadeRight is referred to as part of this DNA. Its mission is to create lasting change driven by three principles: to raise awareness on the diverse social and environmental issues hidden behind the seams, to reconnect people with the impact their choices have, and to invite people to be part of the solution by changing how something was made, from farm to closet. Through its in-person exhibitions and events alone, SukkhaCitta welcomed 100,000 attendees, who could learn more about the social and environmental issues behind their clothes, along with why #MadeRight makes it easy for them to be part of the solution.





LEADERSHIP LEVEL: ADVOCACY

DRIVE ADVOCACY

Summary: Use your platform and influence to empower consumers in their role as citizens. Educate internally and externally on the level of change required, supporting dialogue with policymakers on a just transition towards a sustainable and circular global value chain.



The final level for sustainable fashion communication is where we see the leaders play. This is about recognising the responsibility and opportunity communicators have to drive wider change beyond their own sphere. It is about motivating the public to advocate for what is needed of the system, educating internally and externally on the changing sustainability landscape, and supporting and encouraging policymakers to lead with measures that enable wider industry sustainability. This sort of communication can be relevant at any time, but is most effective and authentic when the other two layers of work (encompassing 'Lead with Science', 'Change Behaviours and Practices', and 'Reimagine Values') have been done, or are at least underway.

As highlighted in the section of this Playbook on 'Recognising and addressing the systems challenge', mitigating the triple planetary crisis is not going to happen through individual behaviour change alone and requires systemic shifts at the business, societal and policy levels. Fashion communicators - both within brands and the wider communication ecosystem - can help give the public agency, empowering them in their role as citizens and not just as consumers (see box 10). The aim is to enable them to advocate for the political, individual and collective changes they want to see, demanding more and better from the products and services offered to them, discouraging harmful norms and cultural practices, interrogating choices that are made and holding stakeholders throughout the sector accountable.

Forming a groundswell of citizen action is well-proven to drive change and is in fact enshrined in article 6 of the UN Climate Change Doha Convention and article 12 of the Paris Agreement (UNEP 2020a). There is an opportunity at hand to capitalise on growing civil environmental consciousness, particularly among the youth, and direct it

towards the fashion sector. For a new global narrative on fashion, it will take this sort of civil mobilisation throughout communities, over cultural divides and to differing levels of society (UNEP 2022c).

Communicators across varying roles, but particularly influencers, the media, brand marketers and advocacy groups, have a role to play to help educate for this. As highlighted in various other sections of the Playbook, informing consumers in a bid to help expand their knowledge on everything from what and how a garment comes to be, to how fashion is inherently connected to nature and to intersectionality, or the benefits of circularity, is a key part of this work. One step further is to share insights on the system-level challenges and relevant solutions.

Many fashion organisations for instance - with their platforms and powers of influence - are already endorsing wider issues, including LGBTQIA+ and gender rights, gun control, voting and more. Promoting brand purpose is achieved by championing causes beyond that of their own, turning to bold storytelling with a philanthropic angle to engender support. Sustainability fits under this same remit. However, in all instances businesses shouldn't be seen to communicate any such campaigns without also contributing themselves to the change. It is greenwashing or indeed purpose-washing to support such initiatives and not already be there as an organisation. One cannot endorse a campaign on living wage if they don't ensure the workers throughout their own supply chain already receive one. This only serves to take responsibility away from the work the businesses themselves must do.

As a result, communicators should also be educating themselves as well as those around them internally, sharing knowledge to meet the needs of all stakeholders on an ongoing basis and ensuring accountability.

Those in communication roles have the skill set to advocate for change not only externally, but from within the organisation - calling out challenges and critical areas that need to be addressed, beyond the confines of marketing, and confronting the complexity of the system and value creation itself (see section on 'Recognising and addressing the systems challenge for communicators').

The need for policy to support all of this is also highly identified. As well as directing consumers towards mechanisms to positively influence and increase action from policymakers, there is also an internal lever communicators can pull to persuade senior leaders to use their influence to impress upon policymakers the need for such change in line with industry-wide targets.

Collective action is another field communicators can play in to help this. Several coalitions exist within the sector to drive change – with set targets and ambitions accordingly – but communicators are conspicuous in their absence. Communication has a role in helping to bring stakeholders together, presenting potential visions for a positive industry and inspiring collaborative solutions for how to get there. Moreover, motivating support from citizens and policymakers at large will need broad consensus and pooled resources to support it.





Box 10

The role of the 'consumer' in systems change

Collectively, consumers play a key role in advocating for the broad, systemic change required for the fashion sector to reach its sustainability targets. While on the one hand, this is about enabling them to make more informed decisions off the back of effective and accurate communication from the market, on the other, the wider goal is to drive them in their role as citizens towards interrogating and demanding greater action from businesses and policymakers alike, including more transparent and responsible practices across the fashion sector, from environmental considerations to greater worker rights.

At scale, demand from civil society can help cause a 'tipping point' to transform markets, mainstream sustainability for a product type, enable cost-effectiveness of new innovations, drive forward policies, and deliver genuine, widespread social and environmental benefits. According to the IPCC, once 3.5% of the population are mobilised on an issue, far-reaching change becomes possible. Further, only between 10% and 30% of committed individuals are required to set new social norms (IPCC 2022).

Companies within the private sector should not see this call for citizen action or consumer behaviour change to mean they do not need to act, rather the opposite. As per the IPCC: "Individual behavioural change is insufficient for climate change mitigation unless embedded in structural and cultural change." (IPCC 2022, p. 121). Governments and companies have to be in the driving seat when it comes to rethinking, designing, delivering and enabling access to more sustainable solutions through policies, services and products, and ensuring that everyone's needs are met (UNEP 2020a). Moreover, increasing demand from the public will make it all the more a business imperative and advantage.

Once again, this Playbook does not place the onus for change on individuals. While they have an important role to play in changing behaviour towards sustainable lifestyles and as outlined in this box, demanding the wider shift at large, the duty to act should not be placed on them.

Principle 7:

Motivate and mobilise the public to advocate for broader change

DO	DON'T
Empower citizens to engage in and advocate for what is needed of the system. Provide positive and action-based recommendations to assist them in their efforts. This comes with the caveat of living the values you are promoting.	Suppress citizen engagement for change, ignoring calls for better processes and policies or for holding you as a key stakeholder in the sector to account.
Provide consumers (and wider stakeholder groups) with a mechanism for feedback and action relative to the business, its products and services. Listen, engage and foster two-way dialogue with your audiences, as well as update them on changes you are instigating as a result. Support traditionally marginalised communities, including – but not limited to – women, young people, indigenous and tribal peoples, and persons with disabilities, to have a voice within the organisation and its value chain particularly.	Exclusively talk to gatekeepers of industry, reinforcing patriarchal and traditional power structures. Do not operate in a disconnected way from that of your stakeholders.
Educate consumers on the topic - from the detail of sustainability efforts being made to the changes required from a systems standpoint. Direct audiences towards credible sources of information to support further engagement.	Hide relevant information that could help educate employees, consumers, suppliers and policymakers.
Engage with advocates, activists, the broader supporter community and affected stakeholders (with emphasis on marginalised and vulnerable communities) to understand one another's perspectives. Better yet, tell the stories of those pushing for such change relative to your organisation and its ambitions.	Ignore and exclude voices outside of typical power structures and influence or of those that disagree.

DO	DON'T
Use your platform and influence to champion wider causes than your own goals and targets. Employ storytelling to increase knowledge and generate support. Share and help spread civil movements and political initiatives such as petitions that focus on driving change. Ensure value alignment in doing so.	Use brand purpose as a vehicle to mask certain activities of your own, thus greenwashing or "purpose washing" in the process.

Checklist:

- ☐ Does the communication empower and encourage citizen engagement and action?
- ☐ Is there a forum for feedback from consumers and wider stakeholders? Are those audiences being listened to and engaged with, and that insight being reviewed and integrated?
- ☐ Is knowledge and insight about sustainability shared frequently internally and externally?
- ☐ Is the organisation open to and engaging with advocates, activists, affected stakeholders and the broader supporter community?
- ☐ Is the communication used to champion and raise awareness on wider causes beyond the organisation's own? Is it doing so in a way that ensures it is not otherwise greenwashing or purpose washing?

Principle 8:

Support dialogue with leadership and policymakers to enable wider industry sustainability

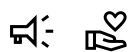
DO	DON'T
Work to employ a rigorous internal communication strategy on all sustainability work and targets to help ensure buy-in and visibility for internal teams and wider stakeholder groups of this as a priority. Equip people, no matter their role, to feel empowered and confident to talk to commitments.	Keep sustainability work within its own silo, thus perpetuating a lack of understanding, support or accountability from employees and wider stakeholders, let alone customer engagement.
Call out challenges witnessed or experienced within the organisation, questioning decisions and holding senior leaders to account.	Assume what the organisation is doing in sustainability is up to speed with the evolving external field (technically and culturally), or operate in your own silo rather than using communication as an opportunity to integrate across departments and influence wider change.
Support, encourage and work directly with policymakers to help them understand the challenges, best practices and wider changes that are needed to improve standards across the value chain and introduce measures that drive scalable change. Again, ensure efforts align not just to the organisation's values but industry-wide targets. Where there isn't the ability to do this directly, join multi-stakeholder initiatives or interest groups on the topic.	Lobby purely on your own agenda and not in the interest of industry wide targets, or say and promote one message while other parts of your organisation actively work against it through their own lobbying and advocacy efforts, especially in developing manufacturing countries where companies and other industry players can have an outsized influence.
Be aware of your power. Persuade senior leaders and the organisation's spokespeople to actively use their connections and levels of influence to affect positive change aligned to industry wide targets and impress upon policymakers the need for it.	Misuse power and influence, or suppress or withhold opinions that may help lead towards action and transformation. Do not hide behind corporate fronts without acknowledging the human input and element to business.

DO	DON'T
Sign up for and support multi-stakeholder industry initiatives for better standards, policies, raised ambitions and beyond. Ensure communication teams are at the table and included as part of these collaborative discussions.	Go it alone. As fashion is part of a complex global supply chain where each player is dependent on others, working together from both a consensus and resource perspective can unlock greater opportunities.

Checklist:

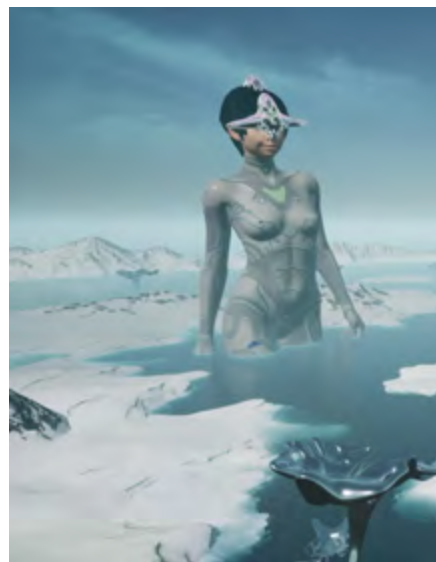
- ☐ Are communicators holding leaders to account, questioning decisions and scrutinising challenges?
- ☐ Is the organisation and/or its senior leaders in dialogue with policymakers to impact scalable change?
- ☐ Is there participation and support for collaborative, multi-stakeholder initiatives, with communication team presence?

Case study: Vogue China, VOGUE Meta- Ocean



VOGUE Meta-Ocean was a mission-led project for ocean conservation and ocean literacy created in support of the UN Ocean Decade and the SDGs. Spearheaded by Vogue China and in collaboration with seven global Vogue markets, it made use of Web3 technologies to showcase virtual art seemingly suspended in water creating a digital fashion Atlantis. The work was created by 24 artists from across creative disciplines. It further consisted of an avatar called INFNI+, which launched on the cover of VOGUE+, Vogue China's companion title that invites cover stars to curate separate bi-monthly issues. The guest edit was a deep dive into the ocean through the lens of China's leading creatives in the digital arts, discussing the role everyone must play in ocean conservation. A physical installation of Meta-Ocean followed as part of the Vogue WORLD exhibition in Shanghai run by Vogue China. Guests used a controller to navigate their way through the Meta-Ocean, engaging with the virtual artworks while immersed in the underwater environment.

Impact: The intention of the initiative was to both highlight and educate audiences about ocean conservation and species that are in danger of extinction. The metaverse experience gained 72,000+ unique visitors (as of November 2022) across the globe with a 15-minute average dwell time. The exhibition meanwhile drew more than 4.26 billion impressions on Weibo, hitting the platform's list of top trending topics in the country.





Case study: Patagonia, Patagonia Action Works

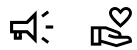


Patagonia Action Works is a platform from outerwear brand Patagonia that aims to connect individuals with grassroots groups so they can help take action on some of the most pressing issues facing the world today. It invites the public to participate through events, petitions, skilled volunteer opportunities and donations. Through the company's long-standing giving programme One Percent for the Planet, Patagonia also gives grants to many of these organisations. It has done so for programmes related to land use, sustainable agriculture, pollution, freshwater ecosystems, renewable energy, environmental justice, biodiversity and more.

Impact: The aim was to build on Patagonia's granting programme by empowering the public to connect with a global network of grassroots groups and take direct action - in doing so demonstrating how companies can propel their efforts in social responsibility with community mobilisation. In the last year, Patagonia Action Works resulted in 400,000+ meaningful advocacy actions, including skilled volunteering, event attendance, petition signatures and direct donations, creating USD 1.9 million in value.



Case study: Remake, PayUp



PayUp was a campaign launched by global advocacy organisation Remake in 2020 to recover the USD 40 billion owed by brands to suppliers for clothing already in production or completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to ensure that full wages and severance were paid to garment workers worldwide, in doing so avoiding and rolling back a humanitarian crisis triggered by garment worker layoffs without pay, as garment workers do not have a social safety net and mostly work in nations that lack unemployment insurance. Spearheaded by Remake, the movement grew into a global coalition of garment workers, union leaders, civil society, citizens and activists and went viral on social media using the #PayUp hashtag. A petition was launched to coincide with it, resulting in 270,000 signatures from citizens worldwide. The campaign has since morphed into a movement to increase corporate accountability and champion worker-driven solutions to build a fairer fashion industry.

Impact: PayUp was the most successful labour rights campaign in fashion in modern history, in terms of its economic impact for garment workers. It resulted in the recovery of USD 22 billion of the estimated USD 40 billion in cancelled contracts from 25 major fashion brands including Target, Calvin Klein, Amazon, Asos, Nike and Gap. The campaign likely ensured that millions of dollars in wages flowed back to garment workers and averted millions of job losses at the start of the pandemic.





IV

CONNECTING TO POLICY

Around the world, new legislation and policies are underway to address numerous aspects related to sustainable fashion communication - incorporating product and environmental claims, environmental and social disclosures, and the challenges of greenwashing primarily. There are also policy moves to enable sustainable lifestyles and consumption, which should similarly be considered (UNEP 2022b).

Communicators should endeavour to integrate the most stringent and advanced guidance, such as that incoming from the EU on sustainable and circular textiles, across all markets they operate in.

A sample of recent policy initiatives and updates on further work being done in this space is listed in the table below by region/country (as of April 2023). This is focused on communication-related policies specifically, and not wider incoming legislation around driving for a more sustainable industry at large, including such areas as chemical usage, living wage, extended producer responsibility (EPR) on waste and beyond. These and wider should similarly all be seen as relevant to communicators ahead.

It should also be noted this is a non-exhaustive list of global guidelines on sustainability claims or communication, for which many markets have their own variations. Rather it is an outline of those with specific relevance to the fashion sector today based on current investigations, cases or indeed targeted legislation, and an indicator of the breadth policies can take. Numerous wider case examples related to other sectors (automotive, finance, food and beyond), especially when it comes to greenwashing, should also be reviewed for the impact they may have on fashion.

To date, the majority of relevant incoming policy is being shaped in the Global North. Numerous further guidelines, especially on environmental claims and ecolabels, are being developed in, for instance, India and Peru, but are not yet finalised. While it is expected direction will be taken from key economic markets such as the EU, this is a rapidly evolving space and it is good practice to remain up-to-date and ahead of the game as a stricter legislative and regulatory environment unfolds across the board relevant to business, markets and activities.

Figure 3. Examples of recent relevant policy actions for fashion communicators by region/country (non-exhaustive) - as of April 2023

Region / Country	Detail	Resources
Australia	The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is stepping up its focus on greenwashing after a survey of 247 businesses and brands across eight sectors found over half made misleading claims. Within this, the cosmetics, clothing and footwear, and food and drink industries had the highest proportion of concerning claims (ACCC 2023). The ACCC will be conducting further analysis of these issues and will undertake enforcement, compliance and education activities where appropriate. It will also produce targeted guidance for specific sectors. This falls under the Australian Consumer Law, which prohibits using vague, unsubstantiated, misleading, confusing, false or deceptive claims.	Green marketing and the Australian Consumer Law Greenwashing by businesses in Australia: Findings of the ACCC's internet sweep of environmental claims
EU	Textiles was identified in the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) as a key value chain to address in order to transition to sustainable and circular production, consumption and business models. This resulted in the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, adopted in March 2022, which aims to encourage a consumer shift towards quality, durability, longer use, repair and reuse". Within that framework are a number of relevant initiatives, which in turn are connected to the European Commission's New Consumer Agenda, which sets the vision for the EU's consumer policy until 2025, and the European Green Deal, Europe's new agenda for a resource-efficient and competitive economy. Of note for communicators are proposals such as that for a Directive Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition, which amends the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive and the Consumer Rights Directive, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the Green Claims Directive. The latter was adopted in March 2023 to complement the proposal on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition, by providing more specific rules on voluntary and explicit environmental claims and proposing common criteria against greenwashing. It outlines that such communications will have to be independently verified and substantiated with scientific evidence. Further relevant and complementary initiatives include the Sustainable Products Initiative, which includes proposals for the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles itself and the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation. This proposes a transparency obligation requiring large companies to publicly disclose the number of products they discard and destroy, and the introduction of a Digital Product Passport, which will mandate products to be tagged, identified and linked to data relevant to their circularity and sustainability. The Commission will also review the Textile Labelling Regulation with a view to introduce further information such as, for example, sustainability and circularity parameters, care, uniform size or origin. The criteria of the EU Ecolabel for textiles and footwear, a third party verified certification for low environmental impact products, is further being reviewed. Also relevant is the voluntary Sustainable Consumption Pledge, which aims to speed up business' contribution to the European Green Deal.	Circular Economy Action Plan Consumer Rights Directive Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation EU Ecolabel EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition European Green Deal Green Claims Directive New Consumer Agenda Sustainable Consumption Pledge Sustainable Products Initiative Unfair Commercial Practices Directive

France	France has recently introduced one of the world's first legal sanctions against greenwashing. Under the new amendments of the French Consumer Code, companies can now be fined for up to 80% of the cost of the false promotional campaign, must publish a correction on billboards or in the media, and add a clarification on the company website for any greenwashing or misleading claim they make for a period of 30 days. This aims to increase the responsibility and accountability of brands as well as avoid the distortion of ESG (James 2021). In addition, the Anti-Waste for a Circular Economy Law (AGEC) announced in February 2020 requires marketers (distributors, importers, producers...) to provide greater transparency by indicating the country in which operations including weaving, dyeing and printing took place. They must also inform consumers on the environmental qualities and characteristics of waste-generating products. It was brought into effect on January 1, 2023 for the largest players, before a gradual extension over two years. It further reinforces the law prohibiting the destruction of unsold textile items and forces systematic redeployment (in particular through donating), reuse and recycling of unsold new products.	LAW n° 2020-105 of February 10, 2020 relating to the fight against waste and the circular economy LAW n° 2021-1104 of August 22, 2021 on the fight against climate change and strengthening resilience to its effects
Germany	In 2023, Germany will introduce the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, requiring large businesses operating in the country (more than 3,000 employees in 2023, or more than 1,000 employees from 2024) to disclose how they are managing social and environmental issues in their supply chains. Businesses will be fined up to 2% of global turnover for failure to comply. Reporting will be required no later than April 2024. A longer-term research project by the The Federal Environment Agency of Germany is otherwise underway focused on communication relative to ecodesign and greenwashing. This will result in revisions to several key publications including Environmental information for products and services, Environmentally relevant product information in e-commerce, and Guidelines for more environment-friendly solutions in online-shopping. Meanwhile, as with the EU's Ecolabel, Germany's Green Button is a government-run certification label for sustainable textiles. It evaluates whether companies take responsibility for respecting human rights and environmental standards in their supply chains.	Environmental information for products and services, requirements - tools Environmentally relevant product information in e-commerce – opportunities for sustainable consumption Guidelines for more environment-friendly solutions in online-shopping Supply Chain Due Diligence Act The Green Button
Norway and the Netherlands	The Norwegian Consumer Authority (NCA) recently ruled one fashion brand's use of sustainability information from a database measuring and scoring the environmental impacts of materials as misleading to consumers. The ruling found the data being used to show that an organic cotton T-shirt has a lower environmental impact than one made from conventional cotton, was not backed by enough evidence. It has similarly warned another fashion brand employing the same tool. This constitutes a breach of the Marketing Control Act, the authority says, and those continuing to use them may face economic sanctions (Kent 2022b). In follow-up, the NCA published joint guidance with The Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM) for use of such a tool.	ACM and NCA: Guidelines for the clothing sector regarding the use of a material index in marketing communications NCA guidance on sustainability claims used for marketing purposes NCA: Misleading about environmentally friendly clothes
U.K	The Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) in the U.K has published its Green Claims Code offering guidance for companies making environmental claims, while actively investigating three fashion brands for potential breaches of consumer protection law due to misleading environmental claims (CMA 2022b). It has also provided advice to the government on areas including standardised definitions of commonly-used environmental terms, legislative changes to improve supply chain transparency and refocusing consumer law to support sustainable consumption. Meanwhile, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has recently published new guidance on misleading environmental claims and social responsibility to coordinate with the CMA, updating it in February 2023 to include direction on the use of carbon neutral and net zero claims in advertising.	ASA guidance on the environment: misleading claims and social responsibility in Advertising CMA guidance on environmental claims on goods and services Environmental sustainability and the U.K competition and consumer regimes: CMA advice to the Government

USA

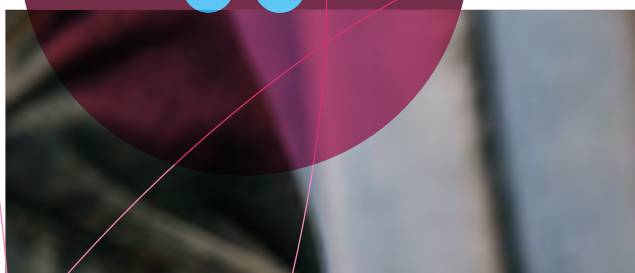
In the USA, the Federal Trade Commission is due to publish an update to its 2012 green guidelines based on increasing consumer interest in buying environmentally friendly products. It sought public comment on the updates in December 2022.

Meanwhile, New York State's Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act (The Fashion Act) is a new bill requiring fashion organisations with revenue in excess of USD 100 millions to disclose their environmental and social due diligence policies. If passed, it will require supply chain mapping, impacts shared across environmental and social factors as well as plans to reduce them, and information on such areas as annual volume of material produced and workers' wages. The disclosure will need to be posted on the seller's website.

[Assembly Bill A8352: Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act](#)

[Federal Trade Commission "Green Guides" Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims](#)

[Federal Trade Commission Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims: Regulatory review; request for public comment](#)



The wider role of policymakers in shifting fashion consumption and communication

In order to achieve the SDGs by 2030, policymakers are instrumental in tackling the poverty, gender and wealth inequality, climate breakdown and environmental degradation the fashion industry is a part of (Fashion Revolution 2020). In spite of making increasing efforts in this direction, businesses in the sector operate with voluntary commitments and little mechanism for accountability (GFA et al. 2019). Policy intervention is accordingly seen as crucial to enact real change (Kent 2023).

This Playbook provides actionable guidance for fashion communication, and the associated ecosystem around it. Through the vision it presents of what ‘good’ sustainable fashion communication looks like, and the concrete principles it puts forward, it serves as a framework through which policymakers can hold the fashion industry’s communication activities to account.

Beyond the specific communication-related policy examples highlighted from different markets in figure 3, the role of policymakers to help shift unsustainable consumption patterns and discourage overproduction is crucial. With the policies they add or remove, they can help change social norms. This could for example come from regulating fashion advertising and influencers on social media, banning things like retailers’ free return policies or the export of low-quality used garments that end up as waste, incentivising sustainable purchases and reduced production through different tiers of EPR fees made visible to the consumer, and supporting solutions that improve use-phase impacts and extend the useful life of a product. Policymakers should be centring efforts to incentivise the switch to circular business models through tax breaks and subsidies, as well as facilitating such infrastructure - from access to rentals or repairs, to waste reduction and recycling processes.

In making it harder for unsustainable fast fashion practices to operate however, policymakers should carefully consider

potential social and economic consequences of reduced production and consumption, incentivising a just transition towards a sustainable and circular global value chain. Effective policies that take into account inextricable linkages between the environment and people should be implemented. There is a need for a coordination mechanism for policymakers to help identify and address synergies and geographical trade-offs from potential global and national policy interventions, and forge cooperative trans-national efforts on circular textiles. This likewise applies to communication and consumption related efforts. A deeper dive on all of this can be found in UNEP’s Textile Value Chain Roadmap and its action for policymakers (UNEP 2023).

Government-led campaigns targeting consumers and raising awareness on the need for sustainable consumption related to fashion at a national and international level would further help. The European Commission’s 2023 ReSet the Trend campaign is one such example - it engages Europeans in the battle against fast fashion and raises public awareness about the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (European Commission 2023b). Chile is also proposing such a move, including a proposal for a communication campaign to raise awareness about the impacts of fast fashion as part of the government’s Roadmap for a Circular Chile by 2040 (Government of Chile 2021). The aim is to raise awareness of avoiding the linear economy and rather promote circular habits and practices and more sustainable lifestyles. A more specific textiles or fashion angle could be taken within other consumption-based initiatives, such as India’s Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) campaign, which focuses on circular behaviour among consumers, encouraging “mindful and deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption” (Government of India n.d.).

V

BROADER
STAKEHOLDER
ACTION

Beyond the specific guidelines outlined in this Playbook and the immediate actions highlighted for communicators in section 3, there are a series of more focused takeaways and actions for consideration for broader stakeholder groups, as shared alphabetically here. This is where each can leverage their position to help contribute towards systems change through the lens of communication. Wider actions for each relevant group can otherwise be understood in detail through UNEP's Textile Value Chain Roadmap report (UNEP 2023).

- **Academics:** Integrate sustainability across all study programmes. Provide new research, curriculum and education efforts to align and drive thinking around systems change. Contribute in creating a supportive discourse through research and public and media engagement.
- **Agencies:** Question the claims clients make, their business practices and overall efforts to ensure they are legitimate and aligned with the 1.5-degree pathway of the Paris Agreement, the GBF and wider SDGs. Use your influence to redirect any clients not looking in this direction.
- **Brand SMEs:** Serve as agents of change, supporting social and environmental innovation, and demonstrating new ways to do business. Experiment with new models, materials and means of transparency. Use your platform and founder profile to question the fashion system, calling and advocating for wider change.
- **Creative directors and CEOs:** Use your platform to influence and mobilise the industry and policymakers towards broader change. Present the creative and strategic vision for a new fashion future. Support your communication teams in how to adopt these principles, establishing supportive governance and reporting processes to both enable and motivate them to do so. Demand

transparency and clear information through your value chain so you can be fully aware of the impact of your decisions.

- **Fashion media:** Spotlight those driving change, educating and informing on best practices. Challenge notions of newness and disposability. Point to new ways to enjoy fashion away from wealth and material consumption. Centre wider justice and wellbeing topics.
- **Financial institutions and investors:** Actively invest in businesses with demonstrably good ratings, increasing available funding for sustainable and circular solutions. Tie financing to communication-specific conditions such as transparency, substantiated claims (no greenwashing) and no promotion of overconsumption, and initiatives aimed at increasing ambitions, bringing transformative changes and addressing harmful norms.
- **Government/policymakers (see section 4 for greater detail):** Develop and enforce standards for sustainability and environmental claims. Create mechanisms to investigate and hold to account any form of misinformation or communication that promotes overconsumption. Similarly support policies and incentives that help to shift consumption patterns and disincentivise overproduction. Require greater standards for production and care.
- **Imagemakers:** Help bring to life the vision of a new fashion future, using your creativity to present a visual narrative of an equitable (and aspirational) consumption space for all.
- **Influencers, celebrities and opinion leaders:** Serve as a role model for sustainable lifestyle and behaviour. Use your voice and platform to advocate for broader institutional and political change.

- **Manufacturers and suppliers:** Map business practices, and provide transparency and accountability across the value chain. Work to provide key sustainability insights on all products, proactively supporting brand partners in developing communication aligned with the Playbook principles. Influence further suppliers to do the same. Work with sales teams to help your customers further understand the role of communication.
- **Multinational brands and retail businesses:** Develop and contribute to common standards to shift towards more sustainable practices, transparency and accountability. Share data where possible. Provide financing and guarantees to incentivise and drive greater action faster. Question and explore how to decouple value creation from resource extraction and volume growth.
- **NGOs:** Catalyse and challenge the industry status quo, providing common voice and direction to key industry issues, and advocating and supporting rapid action to change them. Provide technical support and input. Convene stakeholders to encourage collaboration on solutions. Support the communication efforts of others, e.g., SMEs in developing countries.
- **Startups and innovators:** Create a new North Star for the industry to prove out new sustainable and circular business models and approaches that can be scaled. Work with experts and expert tools to ensure credible data to support claims. Vocalise and advocate for these new solutions.





VI

MEASURING
SUCCESS

Measuring the impact of communication and tracking its input on industry progress towards sustainability targets can be a challenge, particularly for complex and long-term social and behaviour change and shifts in values and beliefs. While industry standards may not yet exist, commonly used marketing metrics and measurement can be employed to gauge effectiveness of individual campaigns and long-term outcomes, such as measuring change in behaviours and practices, purchase intent for more sustainable options, change in brand/campaign/product awareness or sentiment, and greater awareness of important topics.

Such tools should be utilised accordingly. The following outline can serve as a framework to help guide communicators on what to look at within these. It is a suggestion of overarching measures based on the dos and don'ts tables of the Playbook principles and by no means definitive or exhaustive. More quantifiable means, such as how to define "increased consumer understanding", will be required over time to improve on such efforts.

As highlighted under the 'Actions for Stakeholders' section of the Playbook, success must not only look like integrating the principles into the communicator's practice, but also into their internal reporting, with an accountability and governance structure created against them.

Figure 4. Measures of success: suggested framework

Theme	Principles	Measure Indicator communicators are directly accountable for	Outcome Indicator communicators can help influence
Lead with science	- Commit to evidence-based and transparent communication efforts - Ensure information is shared in a clear and accessible manner	- Number of businesses providing credible sustainability information on products and services at point of sale - Number of businesses understanding and complying with emerging environmental claims codes - Number of businesses increasing transparency by publishing credible sustainability information and presenting it in a clear and accessible way to the consumer - Percent of businesses working with established third-party certification schemes and standards to provide evidence and substantiate claims - Increase in number of businesses providing traceability on all claims, offering access to methodology and sources used	- Increase in consumer understanding and awareness of key environmental and social impacts of products, industry - Shift in purchase intention and action towards lower impact options - Low/few incidents of legal or regulatory rulings for inaccurate or misleading environmental or social claims in fashion - Number of businesses adopting life cycle approach - Industry-wide increase in data accessibility and quantifiable information
Change behaviours and practices	- Eradicate all messages encouraging overconsumption - Champion positive changes and demonstrate accessible circular solutions to help individuals live more sustainable lifestyles	- Reduction in sales tactics such as one-off promotions, multi-buy offers, limited runs and free returns - Reduction in elevation of overconsumption messages such as haul videos on social media - Increase in number and percentage of messages and moments promoting alternative business models (such as rental, resale) and better use phase impacts (including care and repair) - Increase in understanding and purchase intent of more sustainable and circular business models and options - Percent of consumers with positive views of circular and sustainable business models - Number of new and retained users for new circular business models - Increase in awareness of lower-impact usage, including care and repair - Percent of consumers reporting low-impact care behaviour and actions to increase longevity	- Number of companies reporting on production volumes of new product - Reduction in new items produced - Increase in percent of global fashion sales through circular and sustainable business models - Number of organisations with >50% of revenue from circular and sustainable business models (number of businesses decoupling value creation from volume production) - Reduction in communication teams measured against sales of new product or volume growth, rather performance across the SDGs, tying in economic, social and environmental factors - Reduction of consumption levels in developed countries and products per capita - Increased duration and number of uses per product per capita - Reduced impact from washing, clothing care, with shift to lower frequency, less water, heat and chemical use - Growth in the scale of market revenue from repair and refurbishment businesses - Growth in number of items collected and recycled - Number of companies fairly and clearly communicating pricing relative to environmental and social factors - Number of companies committed to paying a living wage

Theme	Principles	Measure Indicator communicators are directly accountable for	Outcome Indicator communicators can help influence
Reimagine values	- Spotlight new role models and notions of aspiration or success - Focus on inclusive marketing and storytelling that celebrates the positive ecological, cultural and social values of fashion	- Increase in number and frequency of messages encouraging sustainable lifestyles and enjoying fashion outside of consumption - Number of organisations exclusively promoting sustainable values, products and messages across all channels - Increase in number and frequency of messages that align sustainable or circular options with aspiration or social status - Increase in influencers, celebrities and opinion leaders actively participating in and posting about sustainable fashion/lifestyles and different consumption models - Increase in number and frequency of more diverse and inclusive imagery, and in the teams creating it - Increase in positive gender narratives associated with fashion - Number and frequency of references to intersections of fashion with ecological, social and cultural values - Increase in storytelling amplifying diverse voices, local communities and grassroots initiatives	- Positive shift in public opinion, attitudes, and actions in support of sustainable fashion - Marked improvement in the social status of sustainable fashion, such as through popular culture references - Shift in cultural norms and expectations tied to fashion consumption - Number of organisations with explicit focus on emotional longevity in product design and styles - Increase in number of organisations that offer consumer experiences outside of purchase or consumption of material goods - Increase in global consumer awareness of fashion's intersectionality - Number of organisations employing models of success focused on wider stakeholder value, e.g. performance across the SDGs, tying in economic, social and environmental factors
Drive advocacy	- Motivate and mobilise the public to advocate for broader change - Support dialogue with leadership and policymakers to enable wider industry sustainability	- Increase in storytelling focused on advocacy and activism, and in action-based recommendations for consumer engagement with the system - Increase in organisations offering feedback mechanisms for stakeholders on sustainability - Increase in number of people and groups mobilised to join advocacy platforms - Increase in number of organisations supporting and championing wider causes than their own - Increase in number of organisations actively engaged with policy discussions - Percent of consumers considering themselves educated on sustainability - Percent of industry stakeholders considering themselves educated on sustainability - Number of organisations with a communication representative supporting multi-stakeholder industry initiatives	- Number of consumers vocalising / sharing information on sustainable fashion with their own networks or actively participating in sustainable fashion movement - Increase in industry stakeholders and stakeholder types engaged in sustainable fashion - Increase in number and type of stakeholders challenging the industry status quo across social justice and environmental issues - Increase in engagement between government and fashion sector across key markets - Increase in stakeholder support for new investment, infrastructure and policies for sustainable fashion - Increase in policy frameworks for sustainable claims - Increase in policy frameworks relative to change needed across the value chain, including for production and consumption - Increase in relative outputs and measures of success from multi-stakeholder industry initiatives

VII. PRACTICAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

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Policy

- See also: figure 3 on 'Table detailing examples of recent relevant policy actions for fashion communicators by region/country'
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