Textile and apparel enterprises sustainable development strategy: focus on ecologic monitoring strategic communications

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1. Introduction

Sustainable development as a global mission is supported by the world community [14] to achieve economic growth [1, 22] and to realize the goals of the United Nations Organization [26]. The corporate organization is directly affected by the concept of sustainable development by determining its priority areas of activity [30]. To achieve a balance between environmental, social and economic issues, sustainable development touches the topics of continuous learning and implementation of educational standards [7, 18, 20], technological improvement of business processes [3, 8, 10, 28] and management approaches [5, 19, 21]. Due to its importance, sustainable development requires an evaluative approach to organize a system for monitoring and controlling the progress towards sustainability [2, 16, 24].

According to various estimates and studies, light industry and fashion industry (Table 1.) have a very negative impact on the environment.

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Abstract. Strategy determines the success of the long-term development of any enterprise. In the context of sustainability, the consumer wants to be aware of what strategic principles the company adheres to, including questions about the use of environmental materials, technological innovation, corporate social responsibility, and other aspects. All these aspects should be reflected in the sustainability strategy, which, like any document, is in closed mode. In order to broadcast certain business practices in the field of sustainable development, any brand of light industry and fashion industry needs a system of strategic communications. This paper analyzes the corporate experiences of famous brands in the industry, examining their mission, vision, principles, ideology, philosophy and so on. The study has created a unique model that can help brands with sustainability information policy from the perspective of privacy in terms of partial disclosure of their sustainability strategy. In the future, the study can be extended to quantitative and qualitative analysis of the effects of changes in the communication system.

Key words: light industry, fashion industry, strategy, brand, sustainable development, strategic communications system.
Table 1. Negative externalities of light industry and fashion industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sphere</th>
<th>Description of externalities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>• Dye contamination&lt;br&gt;• Plastic pollution&lt;br&gt;• Increased use of scarce water resource during production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>• Significant emissions of carbon dioxide and other chemicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>• Soil degradation&lt;br&gt;• Crisis of overproduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>• Use of child labor&lt;br&gt;• Low labor costs&lt;br&gt;• Poor working conditions&lt;br&gt;• Use of poor quality materials</td>
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Cotton production requires a significant amount of water (“2,700 liters of water as much as one person drinks in two and a half years”) (https://www.wri.org/insights/apparel-industrys-environmental-impact).


“About 20% of industrial wastewater pollution worldwide is due to the fashion industry” according to WRI reports (https://www.wri.org/insights/apparel-industrys-environmental-impact).

The industry’s movement in favor of awareness was not a momentary one. Over time, more news about the unsightly side of the industry – the prohibited use of child labor in garment production, the presence of hazardous lead in costume jewelry, the collapse of factories due to their dilapidated condition, and the lack of women in leadership positions began to appear in the media. All such situations demonstrated the social, corporate and environmental problems in the value cycle of the light and fashion industry. Consumer trends have also driven the industry towards sustainability. According to TheRoundup.org, nearly 60% of consumers pay more to brands that are sustainable, and the global market for sustainable brands is already around 17% (https://theroundup.org/environmentally-conscious-consumer-statistics/).

Changing principles of access to capital to finance strategic initiatives in international markets have significantly transformed companies’ approaches towards sustainability. Many fashion brands have begun to incorporate ESG principles into their corporate strategies, focusing on ethical production and transparency in their operations. Without these criteria, funding would not have been obtained.

Given the perennial economic problem of limited resources, and the need to take into account the trend towards sustainability, industrial companies must design their long-term development strategies with a view to achieving a balance between the environment, society and their objectives of economic efficiency. Consumers, in view of their growing ESG interests, require accessible information about the company’s performance in terms of sustainable development.

The scientific discourse does not contain information about the specifics of strategic communications of conscious brands, which predetermined the purpose of this study: based on the experience of identifying strategic communication tools of fashion companies, to form a conceptual model of broadcasting their strategy components in the field of sustainability.
2 Materials and Methods

Strategy is a confidential document, as it contains the strategic goals of the enterprise. Strategy as a search system [12,13], determines the long-term development of the enterprise, makes progress through the chaos of the unknown to a fully programmed future. Strategy consists of a clear and defined set of interrelated elements [27]. The key concepts of strategy are directly related to the idea of competitive advantage [23]. A successful strategy involves new management practices in view of the activation of shocks in the external environment [29].

In spite of its hierarchical, multicomponent and closed nature as a document, the consumer communicates with part of the strategy documents. The mission and vision are often found in the public domain. These first two documents in the strategy can be placed in official presentations and releases, in reporting documents in messages of top management and owners of enterprises of light industry and fashion industry. These documents are directed to the external environment of the enterprise and make part of the information about the company transparent and open. Mission as a driver of strategy [6], contains the interests of key actors [25] is formulated by top management [17] and defines the company's identity [4]. Vision is an important element in the strategy [11, 15] for the long-term perspective of the business entity. In the case of a vision document, information is also directed to the workforce, which allows the formation of a team united by common goals, strategic principles and values [9].

The strategic communication system allows to deliver key information about the company to the consumer and to its employees. The consolidation of business practices and a new brand, due to the new strategy, requires systematized knowledge and unified information messages. Communication builds business reputation and also influences the relationships between actors.

Using abstraction, comparison, benchmarking, analysis, synthesis, and contrast, this paper analyzes strategic documents through the lens of strategic communication system. The main purpose of this paper is to identify the used toolkit of domestic and foreign enterprises. Based on it, the author proposes a flowchart of sustainable enterprise strategy transmission.

3 Results

Light industry and fashion industry experience

Urbantiger is a local brand from St. Petersburg, which has been operating in the medium price segment since 2017. This company defines for itself a 4-component model of sustainable development (Table 2.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model item</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>• Transformation of the business model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>• Responsible sourcing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible</td>
<td>• Responsible selection of fabrics and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Product quality</td>
<td>• Quality control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible</td>
<td>• Slow fashion principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reducing carbon</td>
<td>• Recycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A new</td>
<td>• Rethinking of packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible</td>
<td>• Philanthropy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>• Education about new opportunities for conscious consumption</td>
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Table 2. Negative externalities of light industry and fashion industry
To move the brand strategy, it is necessary to be sincere in clients' relation. We believe that it is important to create a strong personal relationship and to work on the company's values:

• Trusting interactions
• Sustainable development
• High-quality products
• Respect for the environment

We are making our commitment to the planet and its inhabitants. That's why we strive to make our business sustainable. We define our actions and decisions in accordance with the principles of circularity, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic responsibility, which are most important for modern companies. We try to be a good partner for ecologically aware brands.

Our strategic priority is the protection of the planet and its inhabitants. We are considering our business not just a source of profit, but as a tool to improve the quality of life for everyone. We are taking steps to implement our values and ensure that our business is sustainable and beneficial for the future of the planet.

We have made a decision to develop our business in accordance with the principles of sustainability. We are implementing a number of measures to reduce our environmental impact and improve the quality of life for our customers. We are using innovative technologies to create sustainable clothing, and we are committed to using only natural fabrics in our products.

We are also developing a new initiative to reduce our waste and water footprint. We are working with suppliers to improve the sustainability of our products and to ensure that they are made in a responsible manner. We are making our business sustainable and we are committed to the planet and its inhabitants.
rather than a strategic goal (https://12storeez.com/sustainability). This strategic positioning gives unlimited possibilities: the brand makes no empty promises, so it always looks good to conscious consumers even when making minimal progress. The company defines three key sustainability objectives for itself: taking care of working conditions, the health and well-being of the company's employees and partners, reducing harm to nature in the production of clothes and extending their lifespan (https://12storeez.com/sustainability).

Corporate social responsibility, mission and priorities are reflected in the Code of Conduct (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model element</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Team          | • Accountability and equality  
|               | • Fair pay  
|               | • Balance between work and holidays  
|               | • Fighting corruption  
|               | • Inclusive environment  
|               | • Health and Safety at work  
|               | • Sustainability in the office |
| Business      | • Cult of quality  
|               | • Continuous development  
|               | • Environmental responsibility |
| Principles of work with partners | • Strategic partnership |

Source: compiled by the author on https://12storeez.com/about/code-of-conduct

From the perspective of today's labor market, the issue of work-life balance is coming to the forefront. It becomes important for labor resources not only to have interesting tasks, but also a comfortable environment without toxicity. It can be noted that this is an element of strategic motivation that is very important for the workforce.

The company's mission does not state the sustainability agenda: “to fill every moment of life with beauty”. In terms of strategic communications, when entering a query in search engines, the search engine produces a result that does not contain information about sustainability – “the official website of the manufacturer 12 STOREEZ. Large selection of dresses, shirts, suits, outerwear, accessories and more.” A separate line of clothing made of eco-friendly materials is collected in the catalog for the convenience of finding conscious consumers. The visual and media content is done in graphic minimalism, but there are fewer references to sustainability than the previous brand. As the brand has strategic goals for international development, in terms of consumer trends, the company will need to build a clearer brand promise of sustainability.

4 Discussion

To make a choice, the consumer wants clarity and transparency about the company in terms of its strategic approach, position, attitude and the ESG actions taken. Easy to find information, clarity and clarity of the message of the new business practice of sustainability can be a driver for the consumer who is looking for conscious light industrial and fashion brands.

In translating the available corporate strategy documents, the company should be guided by the following principles:

1. Unity. The information in the online and offline brand space should be the same. If they are not followed, the consumer may be misled, which is not desirable because in some (2024),
countries it entails different degrees of liability. And in the fashion industry, this can lead to significant reputational losses, which will affect sales, strategic partnerships and more.

2. Correctness. Information can be easily verified, so you should initially build an honest and trusting relationship with your audience.

3. Integrity. All types of communication (verbal, visual, auditory) should be synchronized. Pastel colors, as well as the sounds of nature (forest noise, birds singing, the sound of the surf), renewable materials used in stores and showrooms of the brand, can also broadcast ecological standards of activity.

Below is the author's block diagram of the strategic communications system, which reflects the strategy of sustainable development of the brand of light industry and fashion industry (Fig. 1).

Fig.1. Strategic communications system of sustainable strategy development. Source: compiled by the author

5 Conclusion

The light and fashion industry continues its strategic development in the area of sustainability. Increasing attention is being paid to the ESG agenda as consumers increasingly demand environmentally and socially responsible commercial products. Since then, numerous strategic initiatives have been implemented to promote sustainability practices within the industry.

Strategic communications are necessary for any brand to broadcast certain business practices. In the case of sustainability, the consumer wants to know about sustainable materials, technological innovation, corporate social responsibility, gender equality, brand philanthropy and so on. All this will form additional value for the company, which should translate not only into brand equity, but also into sales. As a result of the study, an author's model has been created that can help the brand to meet the challenges of informing corporate sustainability policy.
In the future, the research can be continued in the context of quantitative and qualitative analysis of communication system transformation effects.

References


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