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# Are Sustainably Minded Brands Ignoring the Importance of Fit?

By *Kate Nishimura*





Fit issues could be holding brands back from reaching their sustainability goals, Fashionindex said Monday.

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A webinar hosted by Fashionindex.com and fit solutions firm Human Solutions of North America highlighted the intersection between garment fit and brands' environmental impact. LIM College sustainability professor and Fashionindex founder [Andrea Kennedy](#) said that brands on a journey toward sustainability often focus on material innovations, like switching to recycled or organic fibers, or shifting to low-impact non-plastic packaging, rather than tackling an issue that could lengthen the lifecycle of their garments: [fit](#).

“It’s really important for a designer or a company owner at a fashion brand to know that fit is just as important as all of those other decisions when working towards sustainability,” she said. “No matter how circular or how low-impact your materials, your processes, and your practices are, if you have a garment that’s not designed to contour really beautifully on the human body, no one is going to keep it a very long time.”

Lack of attention to fit may actually be a primary driver behind goods being sent to [landfill](#), she said. “When we buy something that slips off our shoulders, or is too tight, or too loose, or accentuates an area we don’t want to accentuate, it’s disposed of,” she said. Kennedy noted that the issue has also created a reverse-logistics conundrum for brands, as returned products can’t always be sold due to damage or seasonality. “It becomes an excess merchandise problem,” she said, adding that human and natural resources are also wasted when goods aren’t able to fulfill their intended purpose.

While brands are increasingly relying on advanced [fit technology](#) to reduce sampling and production waste while improving accuracy, Kennedy also believes there is more work to be done in assessing and designing for different wearers’ body shapes. Rather than just focusing on size, the professor sees fashion adopting smaller, more tailored size runs that take body shape and demographics into account. “For instance, if you work for a really big designer brand, you’re going to have a different fit for the U.S. stores and the Northern European stores than you are for your Asian market,” she said, where clothing tends to run smaller.

“What excites me is [on-demand manufacturing](#), where you don’t have these giant batch [MOQs](#),” she added. “When we really get to the fashion of the future, that is having fashion made for your body. And when it does that, it will truly fit.”

Jamie Campbell, manager of fashion solutions for Human Solutions, added that the company, which analyzes fit through consumer data analysis, cross references age as a factor in fit. “We can look at an avatar of someone who is 18 to 25-30 years old and compare that exact [product] size to someone who is maybe 65, and there are clear differences in the body shape,” she said. The company helps its clients to dial in on their target shopper’s age and location in creating digital sizing models for their products.

Human Solutions has begun to develop standardized size tables for different regions across the globe, Campbell said. “We have a size table for Germany, which could also be applied to most of Europe,” she said, “as well as standard size tables for North America, which is the U.S. and Canada.” The group’s next venture is creating a table for China, which is slated for release this month.

According to Fashionindex research, fit should be the next frontier for brands, as the vast majority of designers, product developers and brand owners view it as a problem for their businesses. In a 2017 survey of more than 400 fashion stakeholders, 94 percent admitted that fit issues persisted across their brands.

“More than nine out of 10 [brands] know there’s a problem with their fit, and 80 percent of customers have problems finding garments that fit,” Kennedy said, adding that “continuing with business as usual” is no longer an option for brands that want to mitigate their environmental footprint.

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