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SUSTAINING FASHION

GoLite's stronger, sustainable reprise

By: Alex Harrell

Photos courtesy of GoLite



After Bill Nye reported that the detrimental effects of climate change aren't 50 to 75 years away, but actually only 10 to 15, it's no surprise that one of the biggest forecasted trends for 2020 was sustainability and the use of recycled fabrics. While some designers have been habitually more concerned than others (we're looking at you, Stella McCartney) labels such as Comme des Garçons and Vivienne Westwood have stepped up and used the runway as an advocacy platform.

A survey conducted by Nosto, the e-commerce personalization and retail AI platform used by thousands of retailers globally, revealed that many people who want greater sustainability in fashion are acting on their principles by modifying their own behavior.

"Of those that want a more sustainable fashion industry, 57% say they try to keep clothes for longer because it's better for the environment," said Jim Lofgren, Nosto's CEO. "Although the research reveals many people aren't willing to pay extra for sustainability, these numbers do underline the strength of feeling on the issue."

Despite clothing manufacturers and retailers attempting to more sustainable, the message isn't getting through to the public; 45%

of the 2,000 consumers polled agreed that it's difficult to know which fashion brands are *really* committed to sustainability.

"Retailers are an important part of solving the sustainability challenge," Lofgren continued. "They can support the industry by making it easier and simpler for shoppers to make sustainable choices."

But the Pulse of the Fashion Industry 2019 Update isn't so confident. Its finding may even *raise* your pulse.

The Pulse Score is a global and holistic baseline of the sustainability management, target setting and implementation of sustainability initiatives of the fashion sector, created by Global Fashion Agenda, Boston Consulting Group and Sustainable Apparel Coalition. 2019's findings demonstrated that fashion companies aren't implementing sustainable solutions fast enough to counterbalance the negative environmental and social impacts of the rapidly growing fashion industry. If changes aren't made soon enough and fast enough, the industry won't achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals or meet the Paris Agreement.

But, for the first time, the Pulse's data confirmed that most consumers include sustainability considerations on their decision-making

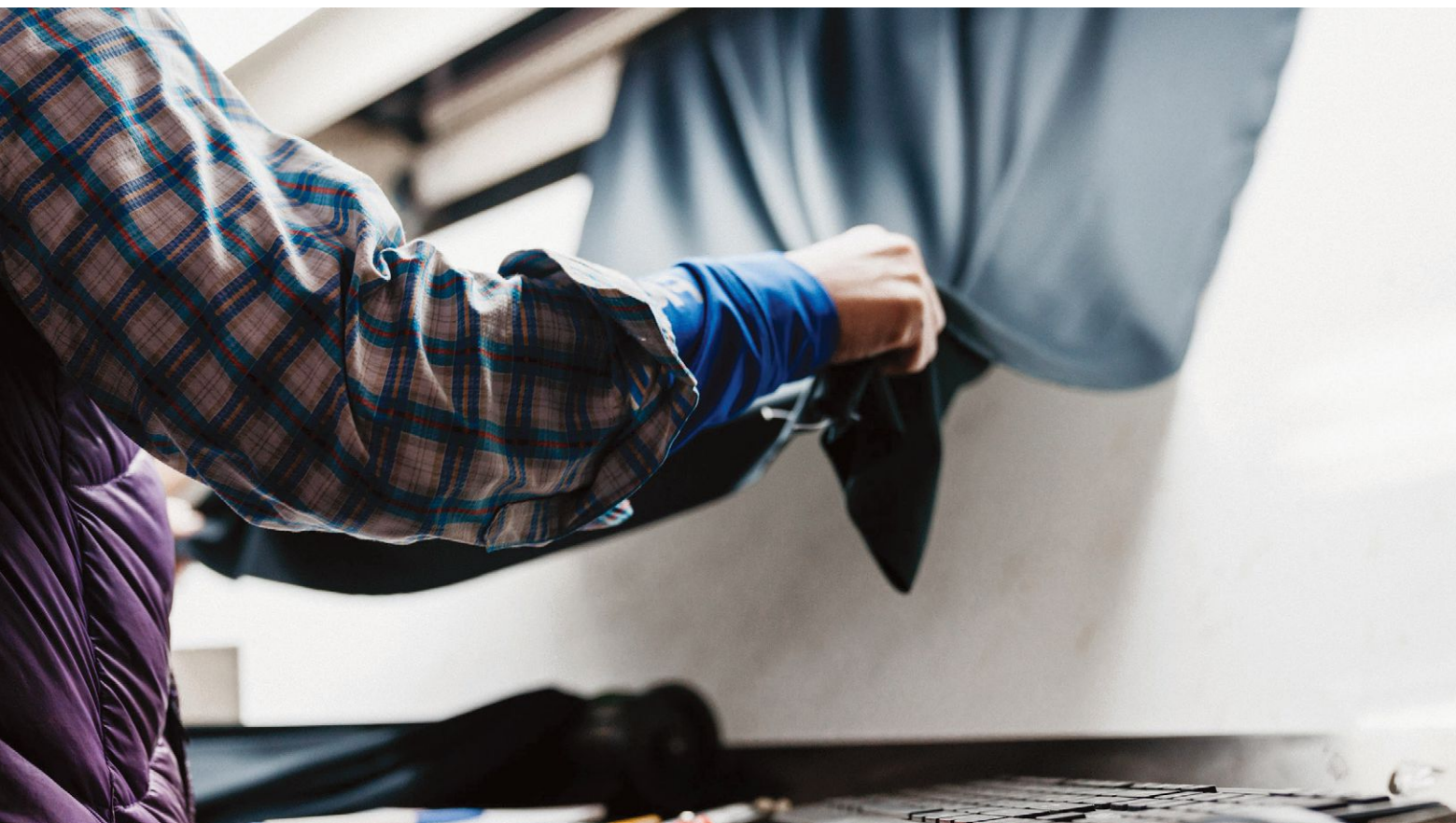
framework — similar to Nosto's findings. Proprietary research by Boston Consulting Group shows that 75% of consumers in the five countries surveyed view sustainability as extremely or very important. But sustainability alone isn't a powerful enough driver to influence purchasing behavior.

Fashion cannot wait for consumers to lead the movement; it's time for designers and influencers to step in and take charge.

Like the designers at GoLite, for example. The Seattle-based brand's mission is to create high-performance, earth-friendly products for the good of the planet and the people. More than just a technical apparel company, GoLite pairs humanitarian and environmental initiatives with a sustainable clothing collection that marries outdoor performance and athletic function.

"When we set out to reintroduce GoLite, we knew we wanted to play a significant role in this movement," said company representative Janine Robertson. She's referring to GoLite's 2014 Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing. But in 2018, GoLite returned under new ownership and with a new mission.

"Back in the day, GoLite was beloved for a collection of ultra-lightweight, technical gear combining sustainability and affordability; the



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new GoLite is both similar and different,” Robertson said, explaining that lightweight performance gear is still at the core of what it does. “Times have changed and there’s more to the equation now. Consumers and retailers want to support brands that share their ethos and have missions that go beyond just making great gear.”

The brand’s pillars, GoAid and GoResponsible, were born from the inspiration to integrate humanitarian and environmental initiatives directly into the business model.

The first GoAid project supported medical teams with uniforms for their healthcare workers who care for refugees and impoverished families across the globe. For the future, GoLite is researching additional GoAid micro-enterprise programs that could leverage company resources, such as fabric, to empower people to support their families independently.

Equally important, she continued, is the GoResponsible commitment to utilizing the latest sustainable fibers, finishes and manufacturing processes while still developing new solutions. Over 80% of the introductory GoLite product line was made from environmentally preferred, recycled and low energy materials and processes. The packaging is made from 100% recycled materials.

“There’s a very healthy supply chain for recycled yarns in Taiwan, where most of our fabrics are made,” Robertson explained. “We’ve partnered with an amazing charity in Taipei called Da.Ai to help us source a good



portion of our raw materials. They have a huge network of volunteers who gather, sort and clean the post-consumer waste that then gets turned into recycled polyester fibers and fabrics. It’s a model we hope is adopted in more places as demand for recycled materials increases.”

GoLite’s signature ReGreen fabric was created in collaboration with Da.Ai and volunteers who collected and recycled the bottles. Using green bottles eliminates the need for dyeing, further reducing the eco-

logical footprint. Colored plastic bottles are less desirable and often go un-recycled into landfills. By making the fabric from recycled bottles, GoLite saved over 50% of the energy typically required.

“We put equal amounts of energy into our humanitarian initiatives as we do into the research and development of new and improved earth-friendly materials and processes,” Robertson said. “We want to remain a conscious brand; one that believes that profit without a positive impact is a loss.”

