

# Sustainable Policies and Practices: A Case Study Approach

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## ABSTRACT

*This research is a case study address to the unfolding of perspectives, thoughts and practices to sustainability in the fashion and textile sector. Textile industry leaders and practioners have their own techniques for sustainable approach. The story of their success is the story of “sustainability” at the primary level. This study creates a myriad picture of the measures taken towards sustainability which impacts the lives and occupation of people involved in the value chain, waste generators, and largely the consumers. The industry leaders selected for this research have revived the Indian traditional culture of practicing Sustainability through craft. The magnificence of the Indian crafts is resurrected through reaching out to the global market by being in the trends. With the contribution of craftsmen, the industry leaders and practioners have displayed a whole new approach to sustainability. Currently the model of Circular economy (textile) has presented a \$500 billion opportunity to the fashion and textiles industry.*

**Keywords:** *Circular economy; Crafts and sustainability; Sustainability in fashion; Waste management; Social accountability.*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Textile industry leaders have used technology and digital tools to join the dots of Sustainability. Through collective efforts, waste moves in a circular direction and ends up as the raw material instead of in the landfill sites. The two case studies conducted in this research throw light on the diverse journeys of the dynamic entrepreneurs. It was seen that a lot of relevant work was being done in the area of sustainability. Sustainable corporations are working in partnership with multiple stakeholders within the community for all round development leading to success, financial benefits and stability. Collaborative works are being carried on within business houses, academic institutions and civil associations. These organizations not only carried out training, research, and experimentations on sustainability and CSR but also worked with multiple backward communities in order to make them powerful and improve earnings through livelihood creations.

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### 1.1 Objectives of study

- The study aims to understand the various sustainable challenges faced by the textile industry
- The study aims to comprehend the measures taken by the Industry leaders in the path of sustainable development

## 2.0 Literature Review

The need to preserve the environment for maintaining harmonious existence of human beings amidst nature is the meaning of sustainability (EPA, 2016). Sustainability was first explained in the Brundtland Commission of 1987 as allowing the needs of an entire community to be fulfilled without hampering the same needs to be met by the future community (Brundtland Commission, 2016).

One of the major reasons of waste is the quick attainment and rejection of goods (Kate & Lynda, 2012). All the merchandise that are being produced in a short span of time are becoming unwanted just as quickly due to the ever changing preferences of the people. As a result the environment is struggling with mounting waste. The sustainability test of the industries is linked to globalization of businesses. Due to severe competition the global brands have outsourced its production to the developing countries. The developing countries in turn have put economic development before environmental protection although the industries ostensibly have made many rules and regulations to protect environmental concerns.

However governments have not been able to form successful methods to implement them. In reality the governments of these countries support only the economic growth and there are no regulations to protect the environment (Magnus & Michele, 2016). Thus achievement of sustainability is not only the prerogative of the researchers, govt., consumers and activists but also the consciousness of the industry leaders who have thought of novel methods to fight sustainability challenges.

### 2.1 Hypothesis

To understand if the industry members are aware of the sustainable challenges facing the environment and if any measures are taken to reach the sustainable goals

## 3.0 Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research design

Case study research method was selected for this study as this method requires careful observation of a unit e.g. unit of a person, family, institution, or even an entire community (Research Methodology, 2019). It is a method of study in depth rather than breadth (Marrelli, 2007). Case studies emphasises on in depth details of a selected condition

or event. Case studies are suitable for finding or analysing the unit of study, related practices that occur and its interrelationship (Houghton C, 2015).

Therefore case study is fundamentally a concentrated examination of a particular unit of study (Johnson et al, 2007). Case studies are most suitable for observing social units (Marrelli, 2007). Through the case study method interrelationships of an individual factor of a society or any part of society may be analysed. For example case study is suitable to study the life of a prisoner.

Through this method the researcher can take necessary permissions and then cover the daily aspects of a selected prisoner's life. Discover his relationships with others, his thought progression through time, his day to day conduct etc. Case study is therefore most suitable for conducting an exhaustive study on a person or a social unit (Gray, 2009).

While conducting case studies the researcher generally assumes that there is uniformity in the human nature although human nature may change according to circumstances (Research Methodology, 2019). Due to the individualistic approach case studies are often not comparable. Some scholars do not find this method scientific as the subject of case study gives information according to his own perceptions and this may not be significant scientifically or applicable universally (Butina, 2015).

There is always a lingering threat of prejudice (Bain, 1934). Case studies are also time consuming and expensive (Research Methodology, 2019). Consequently the case study method was found suitable for the present research.

### **3.2 Case study-1**

The first case study was carried out on an industry expert in the field of sustainability, Dr. Nayan Mitra, Founder-Director - Sustainable Advancements (OPC) Private Limited, e-mail: mitra.nayan@gmail.com website: [www.sustainableadvancements.com](http://www.sustainableadvancements.com)

This is a woman owned micro enterprise. This company aims to promote the Ps of the SDGs, through a two way pronged approach – Advocacy and Implementation. We aim to bridge the gap between ideas and action, communities and businesses, India and the rest of the world. To introduce the word Sustainability in a layman's term, it means 'To live and to let live .... to live on!' The concept has been around since 1994 when John Elkington first coined the term 'Triple Bottom Line' which was, for the longest time known as the 'Sustainability Framework.' However, it had a myopic vision and only spoke of planet, people and profit; whereas the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as put forward by the United Nations, speaks of the 5 Ps that are key to Sustainability – Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.

The vision at OPC is to bring together and work in collaboration with the different stakeholders in the society, for the society and to bring about peace, prosperity and continuity. Hence, they work with Corporate houses, Universities, Civil societies, individuals and communities, where they drive the common agenda of sustainability. OPC has some expert committee members and partners with whom they work closely. On one hand they conduct coaching, documentation, research, publication on Sustainability and CSR; on the other hand,

they work with various disadvantaged communities, empower them and raise their standard of living through livelihood generation. They work with over 100 women led micro enterprises in the rural segment. The biggest strength of this organization is that they have a niche clientele of a loyal set of customers who really care and also indulge in word of mouth publicity. This helps them to create an impact at a multi stakeholder level.

Each of their products sends out messages and is known as ‘impact bags’ which can be customized them as well. Their books, publications and researches are well accepted by both international and national fraternity, which gives them faith that there is collective thinking and that transformation is really happening. In the last few years, they have worked on issues regarding but not limiting to circular economy, corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainable organizations, to name a few.

To conclude, the concept of sustainability in India needs more awareness – a lot of it is already ingrained within our culture, and hence has lost its novelty. This has to be revived. It is not an easy journey, but incredibly exciting. There is a need for more entrepreneurs in this field who can dare to dream for them as well as for the world.

### 3.3 Case study-2

The second case study was carried out on Ms. Archana Vashist Panda, Operations Manager & Lead Accreditation Auditor at Social Accountability, e-mail: [apanda@saasaccreditation.org](mailto:apanda@saasaccreditation.org) Social Sustainability is about creating sustainable enterprises through social accountability. Having audited companies throughout the world and interacted with male and female workers of different age groups, religions, languages, it has been realized that though a lot has been done, yet much still remains to be done in India to create sustainable businesses. To many, the word ‘sustainability’ is synonymous with environment, carbon foot print, GHGs, conservation of resources etc. While this may be true, it is impertinent to emphasize the importance of social sustainability, without which, the overall goal of a sustainable enterprise may not be claimed.

Social sustainability means advancing human rights at workplaces and creating a world where businesses, and communities thrive together. This is possible only when business decision-makers understand the significance of developing respect for and investing in, its people. The belief system of SAI and SAAS is to achieve and demonstrate social sustainability, organizations must measure and improve and be accountable for their workplace social practices. In recent times, SA8000, social accountability certification and social fingerprint services have become important tools for enterprises wishing to gain credibility within global (and increasingly domestic) supply chains.

**Practices & principles of social sustainability** - Social sustainability can be achieved by recognizing and adhering to universal workplace practices such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. The SA8000 standard is based on these principles. Originally created by SAI in 1997, SA8000 is world’s leading certification program. It also provides a roadmap and a credible, holistic framework allowing organizations of all types, in any industry, and in any country to

demonstrate their dedication to the fair treatment of workers. Recognizing the significance of 'management systems' underpinnings of SA8000 performance elements, SAI went on to develop social fingerprint tool. SAI believes that every company has a unique social fingerprint – a unique mark that shows the world how they do business. Many companies across the world have used SAI's social fingerprint tool to demonstrate their commitment towards improving lives of workers step-by-step. Methodologies to measure and improve social performance and social sustainability, based on internationally recognized standards of decent work, SA8000 applies a management-systems approach to social performance and emphasizes continual improvement—not checklist-style auditing the international standard comprises of nine elements: child labor; forced labor; health & safety; freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; discrimination; disciplinary actions; working hours; remuneration; and management system. Although not all organizations are ready for social certification to the entire standard, all can benefit from management system approach to sustain and improve performance over time. SAI's Social Finger print tool is: a program of ratings, trainings, and toolkits to help businesses measure and improve management of its social obligations regardless of its current performance, management maturity, size and nature of its business. Social Fingerprint techniques have been successfully used to improve social performance of companies, both large and small, including waste pickers operations in Brazil—a program recently initiated to replicate in India.

**Pathway to win-win** - SAI's SA8000 certification and social fingerprint social accountability initiatives improve wellbeing of workers while establishing pathways towards an improved level of social performance. In doing so, they also provide credible level of assurance to buyers, government and interested parties. When effectively implemented, they also improve profitability and competitiveness, thereby creating a sustainable win-win for workers, companies and society as a whole.

#### 4.0 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The concept of sustainability alone cannot survive without any social relevance of it since social sustainability is about making socially responsible enterprises. Worldwide, the USD 1.3 trillion textile industries utilize more than 300 million people along the value chain. It is only through social responsibility and accountability that there can be reasonable use of human workforce. Social responsibility is the basis of sustainability. The case studies of these sustainable enterprises rests on the basis of Sustainability. The teamwork of thoughts from industry practitioners who have done additional work to imbibe sustainable practices in their daily lives is worth following and imbibing. This is the research of the sustainable story of entrepreneurial success through adopting sustainable ideas, research and social responsibility.

The case studies help to understand the various sustainable challenges faced by the industry. These elucidate the measures taken by the Industry leaders in the path of sustainable development. The results supported the Hypothesis that the industry

members are aware of the sustainable challenges facing the environment and have taken measures to reach the sustainable goals.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Many other sustainable organizations assessed and improvised their work environment so that they are responsible for their social sustainability and community practices. These are important tools for gaining community responsibility certifications and as a result social fingerprint services have become important tools for companies wanting to increase credibility within global and domestic supply chains. Lot of sustainable entrepreneurs are operating from the tribal belts of the country which are primarily women dominated. This assists not only in heralding a sustainable social change but also increasing the tribal community status. At the grass root level technological advances are continuously being shared with the artisans so that millions of buyers and sellers of handmade sustainable products can be connected. As a result artisans can now put up on sale their products not only to the local retailers but also to global retailers for the expansion of their businesses.

A number of designers working on the concepts of sustainability are bringing waste back as raw materials through the technique of upcycling. Pre consumer waste materials are gathered from the fashion industry and designed to create functional products. This has turned into a worldwide sustainable movement which offers consumers reliable and superior quality upcycled substitutes to their basic needs. Various sustainable enterprises are involved in designing and developing cloth bags to reduce the consumption of plastic bags. Through the life cycle assessments done by the environmentalist it is established that cotton bags are eco-friendly if used for a long period of time. Its performance is further improved if finishes of pest repellents were added to it. All these features are taken into account while creating sustainable cotton bags.

Researchers and entrepreneurs are also involved in recycling the waste plastic so as to reduce synthetic waste from reaching the landfills. The plastic is recycled using eco-friendly chemicals and processes and caters to industrial needs of plastic in sectors e.g. the automobile sector, house hold sectors, commercials establishments etc. Thus it is concluded that sustainable business development has a huge scope of growth in India as the country and the world at large grapples with the problems of environmental damage caused by unsustainable business practices. A lot of entrepreneurs are hugely successful in creating sustainable business ethics and this research paper gives relevant examples to lead the way in sustainable development.

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