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Current Events Have Made Transparency a Top Consumer Demand

By Liz Warren



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Consumers have requested [transparency](#) from brands for years—and after a tumultuous 2020, they'll demand it.

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In a webinar hosted by Carved in Blue on Thursday, denim experts shared insights on this and other demands that will shape the future of fashion. According to Tomas Vucurevic, managing director of ingredient branding consultancy Braind, the narrative is no longer just about sustainability.

“The sustainability topic is shifting toward a transparency topic. You really have to be transparent in everything you do, and you have to deliver,” he said. “The sheer sustainability aspect is a no-brainer. We’ve discussed this for 10 years already.”

Sustainability has become a buzzword used by many throughout the denim [supply chain](#) to convey their dedication to making positive environmental and social change. But while some are genuinely making strides in progress, many are abusing the term and engaging in greenwashing, said Alberto Candiani, owner of Candiani Denim.

“I see many other mills going after us, not to copy the fabrics, but mostly to copy our marketing and communication,” he said. “That is a little disappointing and it’s happening all over the world.”

The solution to greenwashing, he added, is transparency. From growing their own vegetables to learning how to mend, consumers have used the pandemic to boost their understanding of what it truly means to be sustainable—and they will choose to support brands with ethical practices. Despite many consumers being financially strained, they will likely choose to invest in quality pieces rather than succumb to fast fashion, experts agreed.

And it’s not just COVID-19 that has caused people to reassess their habits. Current events such as the police killing of George Floyd in the U.S. and the subsequent global protests have pointed to a collective sense of holding people accountable for their actions.

“The reactions in the U.S. are much stronger than they have been before, on any such cases,” Vucurevic said. “People are becoming more emotionally involved in things.”

As society continues to shift its focus to what's truly important, there will be a bigger push to end greenwashing, he added.

“Coronavirus means the end of greenwashing and the end of claims which you cannot fulfill,” he said. “And everybody who's in the sustainability business in the future needs to prove every day with all their actions that they are sustainable, and the rest will disappear.”

This consumer shift will also open more doors for ingredient branding. As consumers continually grow more educated on the fashion supply chain, they become more open to learning about what makes up their jeans.

But companies must be strategic about their storytelling. According to Marco Lucietti, senior advisor of Isko, it shouldn't be done to simply check a box.

“You cannot expect a payback within one or two seasons,” he said. “Ingredient branding works, but only if it's connected with a long-term vision of the company. Otherwise, it's just a waste of money.”

Vucurevic agreed, adding that it's not just about getting a hangtag on jeans—it's about building and maintaining a reputation for your brand.

“It is something where you step out of the role of the supplier and take responsibility for the quality you are delivering,” he said. “So at the end of the day, it's a quality management system.”

coronavirus (COVID-19)

supply chain

transparency