

Killer Clothes: The Waste We Create

By Eric Sandahl

Celebrities have a bigger impact on the clothing industry than you may think, since many of them have a following of millions on social media. The celebrities can promote products and companies that are not sustainable because there are many celebrities that are not educated in the field of sustainability. Many celebrities, however, have educated themselves and understand their role in today's world as an influencer. For example, Pharrell Williams, Own company G-Star, invested in Bionic Yarn, Bionic Yarn produces textiles from ocean waste. And these textiles Pharrell Williams uses to create his clothing.

There are also other companies out there who made products from ocean waste, like Karun, who I had the opportunity to visit for my practicum. I travelled to Chile to visit the company who is striving to become a sustainable company. The headquarters are located in Puerto Varas, which is a very tiny village in Chile. The founder of Karun is Thomas Kimber. The company is already one of the most sustainable companies I know of. According to Mr. Kimber, many companies "are talking the talk, but not walking the walk". Meaning that they say they are sustainable, but behind closed doors, they're not.

Karun makes handmade sunglasses in Chile using the native wood of fallen trees and plastics from the ocean. They work with Mapuche people and poor communities. The resulting product is a uniquely crafted product, combining sustainability, design and quality.

I had the opportunity to follow along around the office and even visit the poor micro-entrepreneurs that live on the outskirts of Puerto Varas. The way Karun runs the company is pretty extraordinary. The company works with people like Elsa who creates the straps for the glasses out of wool from nearby farmers, this is her home where she makes them and to her, it's her mansion. The next entrepreneur I met was Rosa and Pedro. The couple lives in this house, which has Rosa's Restaurant attached here. Rosa makes empanadas, some of the best I've had. Rosa is able to run her restaurant, thanks to her husband Pedro. Pedro collects the washed-up fishing nets that end up on the beach from commercial fishing industries, he then sells the material to Karun that creates sunglasses. Pedro then uses his income to help his wife with her restaurant and also send his daughters to college. This is an example of how a company like Karun, not only is sustainable but also helps the community.

The fashion industry today produces over 58 million tonnes of waste, much of which ends up in the wrong places. The waste destroys the environment killing animals and creating dangers living environments for villages surrounding the factories. A large number of companies have the power to change today's fashion industry and a few have started changing for the better. I learnt that companies need to focus on developing solutions, like the circulatory system that benefits the environment as much as the company. The consumers of today's fashion are becoming more educated and heading towards a more sustainable approach to shopping eco-friendly clothes. The clothing industry is in no doubt slowly achieving sustainability.

So next time you enter the store to buy a t-shirt, remember that you have the choice to make the world a better place for everyone. Now Out of all this information, there are 3 things I want you to remember when you go home. - Buy less, buy better, and recycle.