FEATURE — BREE DOAN

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Why is Sustainable Fashion Important? Dhana Inc. Has the Answer.

Why is sustainable fashion important? Why not fast fashion? How do our buying decisions effect the planet?

Recently, I spoke with Shamini Dhana, the Founder and CEO, to learn more about Dhana Inc.'s unique approach to sustainability. Through combining creativity and a Zero Waste model, Dhana Inc. is changing how we look at fashion.

THE CIRCULAR MEMORY JACKET

Why is Dhana Inc.'s clothing different? Dhana has created a completely customizable "memory jacket." Anyone can design the inner layer with 10 of your favorite T-shirts — memories waiting to be part of a greater story on the inner layer of the jacket, designed through a special online software.

Dhana Inc. makes the outer layer from reclaimed fabrics, also called "deadstock." They save and redirect unused clothing, usually sitting in fashion warehouses, into new clothing. Currently, over 70% of all clothing is considered waste and ends up in the landfill or is burned.

CREATING A BRAND

Following the ideals of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation for a circular economy, Shamini Dhana created a sustainable fashion brand. She launched the certified B Corp and Fair Trade company in 2008. Over time, it moved from an organic cotton company to completely Zero Waste in 2017.

WHY IS SUSTAINABLE FASHION IMPORTANT?

According to data from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

- Every second, a garbage truck of clothing hits a landfill or is burned.
- $500 Billion worth of textiles is lost every year due to it being thrown in a landfill.
- The average American throws away about 81 pounds of clothing every year.
- Fashion industries emit 10% more carbon emissions than all international flights and maritime shipping combined; at this pace, emissions could rise to over 50% by 2030.
- The fashion industry uses 93 cubic billion meters of water every year — enough to meet the consumption needs of 5 million people.

WHAT IS CIRCULAR FASHION?

Circular fashion is a commitment to creating clothing designed without waste and pollution, connected to the model of reduce, reuse, and recycle — a closed-loop system for textiles that extends the life and value of clothing.

In 2017, Dhana signed the 2020 Fashion Commitment and adapted to its four principles: design for cyclical fashion, take back clothing, resell clothing as a new item (upcycling), and use it as feedstock for new fiber.

WHAT IS NEW TO DHANA INC. IN 2021?

New technology is creating a space for digitizing fashion — searching for vintage clothing through AI, and designing clothing for virtual reality. Dhana Inc. is using technology so that anyone can design their own clothes and become a co-creator of fashion.

HOW YOU CAN CREATE YOUR OWN DESIGN

Now, anyone can completely customize the jacket: upload photos of shirts and choose where panels go in an easy design, drag-and-drop manner. Dhana also offers to take material back once it has gone through its lifecycle, recycling it into feedstock for new fiber.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Support circular fashion brands — Dhana Inc., Queen of Raw
- Buy second-hand clothing — ThredUp, eBay, Etsy, Poshmark
- Recycle — jeans through Blue Jeans Go Green
- Donate clothes — Dress for Success, St. Anthony's, Goodwill
- Reuse — clothing swaps, repair, or repurpose materials

About the Founder and CEO, Shamini Dhana

Dhana Inc., a Certified B Corp, was founded in 2008 by Shamini Dhana, a former Silicon Valley investment banker turned entrepreneur. Dhana's vision is "Uniting Humanity Through Fashion" with the mission of "connecting people and planet through the medium of fashion".