

Sustainability partnerships in the textiles industry

Textiles is the second most polluting industry (Ozdamar Ertekin, Atik, & Murray, 2020). In such industry, actors may rely on partnerships in addressing various sustainability issues through different mechanisms (Products, Processes, Policies, Awareness-raising campaigns, and Philanthropy), which could contribute towards change at different levels (Firm, Supply chain, Industry, and Society) (Beyers & Heinrichs, 2020; Stadtler & Lin, 2017). Therefore, we aim to answer the following questions: what mechanisms do sustainable textile partnerships utilise, and how do these mechanisms relate with the partnerships' targeted level of change? Our theoretical framework draws on sustainability issues in the context of textiles and the literature on sustainability-oriented partnerships, specifically focusing on their motivations, issues, mechanisms, and the level of change they target (Beyers & Heinrichs, 2020; Stadtler & Lin, 2017).

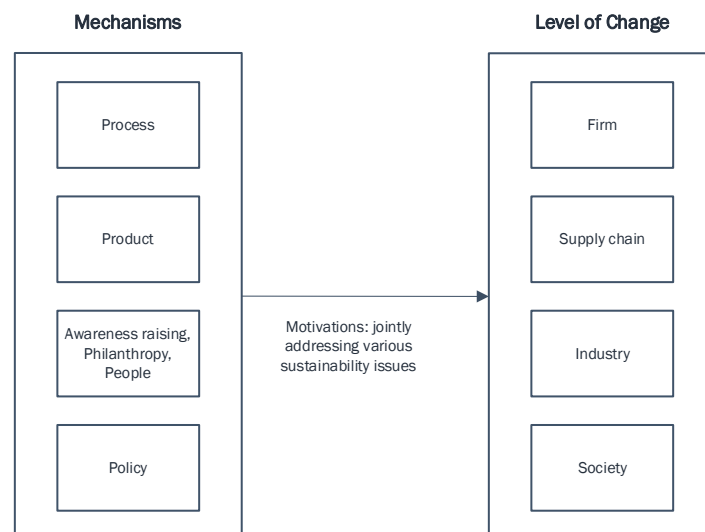


Figure 1 Partnership configurations for environmental improvement (Adopted from Stadtler and Lin (2017, p. 872))

We collected press releases from the Factiva database and gather information about the sustainability partnerships of the textiles actors. We identified 444 relevant partnerships by manually screening all the partnership announcements. To analyse the data, first, we conducted a qualitative content analysis based on the framework of Stadtler and Lin (2017) and coded all the partnerships' mechanisms and targeted level of change (Figure 2).

Partnership Announcement Text

Adidas and Parley for the Oceans, an environmental organization, have come together to fight ocean debris. In its new shoe line, Adidas will be making a shoe that will be completely made from recycled ocean wastes and illegal deep-sea gillnets. The prototype shoe was revealed at an event hosted by Parley for the Oceans for the United Nations.

Cyrill Gutsch, the founder of the eco group, said, "The objective is to boost public awareness and to inspire new collaborations that can contribute to the project and preserve the oceans. We are extremely proud that Adidas has joined them in the mission and is also putting its creative force to show that it is possible to turn ocean plastic into something cool and usable."

"Adidas has long been a leader in sustainability, but this partnership allows us to tap into new areas and create innovative materials and products for our athletes," stated Eric Liedtke of Adidas.

The material required for this project was collected by Parley for the Oceans, together with the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. They had to go on a 110-day expedition to follow a poaching vessel in the West African coast and retrieve the genets.

Online apparel retailer Asos has once again partnered with African clothing workshop SOKO KenyaAs part of the partnership, Asos provides ongoing practical support and employee training to help develop the SOKO Kenya brand and the team, which has grown from four to 50 employees over the last six years. The Kenyan clothing manufacturer, which has worked with Asos since 2010 on the production of the ASOS Africa collection, provides fair and safe employment and training for some of the country's poorest communities. The SOKO Community Trust was set up in 2014 and works in partnership with the Asos Foundation to provide women and men in the local Kasigau community with the practical skills and support needed to see sustainable improvement in their lives and lift them out of poverty.ASOS Foundation and SOKO Community Trust created Stitching Academy Kenya that trains local people in garment manufacturing.

First-stage Coding

Partners: Adidas and Parley for the Oceans

Motivations:

- "to fight ocean debris"
- "to make a shoe from recycled ocean wastes and illegal deep-sea gillnets"
- "to turn ocean plastic into something cool and usable"
- "to tap into new areas and create innovative materials and products for athletes"

Second-stage Coding

Type of Partnership: Cross-sector

Mechanism: Product

Level: Firm

Issues: Waste and Circular Economy; Sustainable materials-products

Sustainability Dimension: Environmental

Partners: Asos and Soko Kenya

Motivations:

- "to provide fair and safe employment and training for the poorest communities"
- "to provide women and men in the local communities with some practical skills and support needed to see sustainable improvements in their lives and lift them out of poverty"

Type of Partnership: Cross-sector

Mechanism: Awareness raising-People-Philanthropy

Level: Society

Issues: Poverty; Education

Sustainability Dimension: Social

Figure 2 Stages of Coding with Illustrative Examples

Next, we conducted logistic regression and we identified notable patterns among the different levels of partnerships. Compared to partnerships targeting the *Firm* level, the broader partnerships targeting *Industry*, *Supply-chain*, and *Society* are all more focused on social sustainability issues. Partnerships targeting these broader levels are also more likely to use *Awareness* or *Policy* mechanisms. We further found that partnerships targeting *Industry* tend to be bigger, and partnerships targeting *Society* tend to involve cross-sector partners.

To conclude, we contribute to the scholarly conversation on sustainability issues within textiles industry (Mair, Druckman, & Jackson, 2016) and more specifically add to the ongoing literature regarding the motivations, mechanisms and levels of change of sustainable textile partnerships (Beyers & Heinrichs, 2020; Stadtler & Lin, 2017).

References

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