

Ooey Gooley Vanshop Sustainability Report Analysis¹

This updated Sustainability Report seeks to fill the gap between Ooey Gooley Vanshop's current sustainability disclosure and the standards being sought by third-party ranking services like the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB). I acted as an employee of Ooey Gooley Vanshop, and it was my duty to include the pertinent information in their disclosure. This information included elements that would satisfy eco-friendly consumers, as well as those that would match up to SASB's guidelines for the Apparel, Accessories & Footwear industry. This report took further inspiration from Nordstrom's Corporate Social Responsibility Report. My familiarity with that report, in combination with the similarities in industries, meant that it provided a useful reference point when working through some elements of Ooey Gooley's report. I crafted a PDF that will be displayed on the Ooey Gooley Vanshop website as a resource for consumers who are interested in learning more about the sustainability practices being utilized by Ooey Gooley.

The first page is just a simple introduction to the report, featuring the logo and the title "Sustainability Report." Giving this document this particular title was important to me because I wanted it to seem cohesive and reflective of the type of reporting that the document contained.

Moving on to the second page, I offered an overview of the business I was working for, making sure to emphasize the sustainability narrative. In other corporate sustainability reports we have looked at, there was oftentimes a letter from the CEO or something similar that gave a glimpse into the goals and aspirations of the business on the environmental front. This particular

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element was included in Nordstrom's report, and lent it a familiar and official feel.² Here, I tried to encapsulate the same sentiment that is often found in those letters.

I chose to focus on Ooey Gooney's made-to-order practices, which serve to reduce waste. Additionally, here is where I began my discussion of the use of sustainable fabrics, which will become an important theme in the environmental and sustainability efforts of Ooey Gooney Vanshop. Finally, I started the discussion of Ooey Gooney's hopes for the future and their desire for growth and improved sustainability. All of these elements are central to Ooey Gooney's brand and their narrative on sustainability. For those reasons, I chose to include them early on in the sustainability report.

The third page offers an overview of the guideposts Ooey Gooney will be using in order to craft a cohesive sustainability narrative. Because of the clarity offered by the SASB materiality map, I chose those prongs to inform Ooey Gooney's sustainability disclosure. SASB's proposed disclosure elements for a business in the Apparel, Accessories & Footwear industry are raw materials sourcing, environmental impacts in the supply chain, and management of chemicals in products.³ I used these elements to craft a nuanced portrait of the sustainability efforts being undertaken at Ooey Gooney, and throughout this report I will flush out each of these prongs into a more complete disclosure.

On the fourth page I began my reflection of the SASB requirements with an overview of the sustainability of Ooey Gooney's raw materials. This is just a brief overview of the materials used. However, this is the most appropriate place to introduce the language SASB uses when analyzing raw material disclosures. According to SASB, raw materials sourcing disclosures are

² 2019 Corporate Social Responsibility Report, 5 Nordstrom (2019), <https://press.nordstrom.com/static-files/43af616b-37b6-4b40-be18-803c1e19094e>.

³ SUSTAINABILITY ACCOUNTING STANDARDS BOARD MATERIALITY MAP, <http://materiality.sasb.org/> (last visited May 9, 2021).

measured by two metrics. The first is the, “description of environmental and social risks associated with sourcing priority raw materials.”⁴ The second is the, “percentage of raw materials third-party certified to an environmental and/or social sustainability standard, by standard.”⁵ These elements helped guide the formatting of my disclosures.

Moving on to the fifth page, I began my discussion of the bamboo velour, one of Ooey Gooley’s main fabrics and what I was treating as a raw material. Here, I focused on some of the material’s most sustainable attributes. I mentioned Ooey Gooley’s supplier, who is the focus of a later page, as well as some quick facts about the process of growing bamboo. Finally, I discussed the closed-loop production that is used in cultivating the bamboo, which results in no chemical runoff. These were some of the main qualities I wanted to emphasize about this material, and I wanted consumers to know why this particular fabric was chosen.

Connecting this disclosure to the relevant SASB prongs was not perfect, but there was still some important connectivity. The first SASB prong calls for a description of environmental and social risks. While Ooey Gooley’s disclosure is not as detail oriented as I would have preferred, it does encapsulate some of the big environmental risks that are reduced by the use of bamboo. The second SASB prong calls for the use of third-party sustainability standards. I have incorporated most of this information on the pages focused on chemical management. However, I will note here that Nature’s Fabrics’ bamboo velour has received OEKO-TEX Standard 100 certification and has been certified as a “wild crop” by the Organic Crops Improvement Association International. Including all of this information allows the disclosure regarding Ooey Gooley’s bamboo velour to reflect the standards set forth by SASB regarding raw materials.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

The sixth page is a similar analysis of Repreve Recycled Polyester. First, I emphasized that Repreve is made from post-consumer waste and quantified that by including the specific metric that Repreve diverts 13 plastic bottles per yard of fabric, meaning that waste does not go to oceans or landfills. Additionally, I mentioned Repreve's OEKO-TEX Standard 100 Certification. Also, toward the end of this disclosure I mentioned the benefits of using recycled polyester (as opposed to virgin polyester), and the resulting reduction in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

As I did with the bamboo velour, I hoped to adequately reflect the relevant SASB prongs. Repreve's use of post-consumer waste conserves water and energy, while simultaneously emitting fewer GHGs. The sentiment reflects SASB's calls for reflection on the relevant environmental risks, even if it somewhat neglects similar social risks. Further, the reference to the OEKO-TEX Standard 100 satisfies SASB's preferred use of third-party sustainability standards.

The seventh page includes an overview of Ooey Gooley's supply chain practices. Here, I touched on the impact of supply chain on sustainability efforts, as well as reemphasized Ooey Gooley's commitment to made-to-order practices in order to minimize waste. Finally, and I expand upon this further later on, I alluded to sustainable packaging changes. Regarding SASB's treatment of supply chain disclosures, there are two prongs of the guidelines on environmental impacts in the supply chain. The first of these is, the "percentage of (1) Tier 1 supplier facilities and (2) supplier facilities beyond Tier 1 in compliance with wastewater discharge permits and/or contractual agreements."⁶ The second is the "percentage of (1) Tier 1 supplier facilities and (2) supplier facilities beyond Tier 1 that have completed the Sustainable Apparel Coalition's Higg

⁶ *Id.*

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Facility Environmental Module (Higg FEM) assessment or an equivalent environmental data assessment.”⁷ Overall, this is probably Ooey Gooley’s weakest area of disclosure. While I was able to include a good amount of information on the supply chain currently in use, it is not at the level of detail SASB recommends.

The eighth slide is focused on packaging and how it impacts the supply chain of Ooey Gooley. The packaging disclosure from Ooey Gooley does not fully align with the SASB guidelines, but it does represent tangible steps toward increased sustainability. In particular, the move toward eco-friendly packaging signals important characteristics about the brand itself as well as its approach to low-waste clothing production. The Better Packaging Co. (the packaging supplier used by Ooey Gooley) offers some sustainability information on their website, but they do not emphasize any specific compliance legality.⁸ These shortcomings from this specific supplier are frustrating, and they may precipitate a shift to a more transparent packaging company. However, discussions of packaging waste have dominated much of the mainstream conversation around clothing companies’ supply chain, as emphasized in the Nordstrom Corporate Social Responsibility Report.⁹ Packaging waste is a major concern among environmentally conscious consumers, so including this information in this report was absolutely necessary.

Pages nine and ten focus on the third-party suppliers Ooey Gooley uses for their two main fabrics. I included these pages here because of their relevance to the idea of Ooey Gooley’s supply chain, and to maximize transparency. The page on Nature’s Fabrics does not contain information about the bamboo velour that was not incorporated into the raw materials section,

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ THE BETTER PACKAGING CO., <https://www.betterpackaging.com/better-packaging-co/> (last visited May 9, 2021).

⁹ *2019 Corporate Social Responsibility Report*, 28 Nordstrom (2019), <https://press.nordstrom.com/static-files/43af616b-37b6-4b40-be18-803c1e19094e>.

but it does include an active link where consumers can learn more about the specific chemical processes used in the cultivation and production of the bamboo velour. The page on Pine Crest Fabrics includes some of the general sustainability practices used by Pine Crest, specifically some of the best practices used in their eco-friendly mills, as well as the in-house sustainability efforts they emphasize. The disclosure of this information emphasizes transparency in the supply chain, even where some details are not fully accessible.

Turning from these disclosures back to the SASB prongs emphasizes where Ooey Gooley's disclosures currently fall flat. At present there is no information about wastewater discharge permits, nor any information about either of the main third-party suppliers completing the Higg FEM. Because of the lack of information on these points, this information may help Ooey Gooley to select different suppliers in the future, so this analysis will prove helpful in some capacity.

The eleventh page introduces the Chemical Management prong of the disclosures. Here, I have included references to the OEKO-TEX Standard 100 certifications I mentioned in earlier pages. This standard, only alluded to before, indicates that the materials in question are free from harmful substances. Additionally, I included bamboo velour's organic certification information. Finally, I mentioned Ooey Gooley's use of chemical management as part of the material-selection process.

Per SASB, there are two metrics used to evaluate a business' disclosure of chemical management in their products. The first of these is, "discussion of processes to maintain compliance with restricted substances regulations."¹⁰ The second is "discussion of processes to

¹⁰ SUSTAINABILITY ACCOUNTING STANDARDS BOARD MATERIALITY MAP, <http://materiality.sasb.org/> (last visited May 9, 2021).

assess and manage risks and/or hazards associated with chemicals in products.¹¹ Regarding the first prong, the use of fabrics that have OEKO-TEX Standard 100 certification is a crucial first step in maintaining the appropriate compliance with restricted substance regulations. However, the second prong is somewhat neglected by this reporting. Currently, Ooey Gooley does not disclose any information about managing the risk associated with chemicals in their products and it is something that should be included in greater detail in upcoming sustainability reports.

The twelfth page focuses on Ooey Gooley's concern with microplastics. While this issue is not directly included in SASB's guidelines, it is a waste/chemical management issue that Ooey Gooley wanted to be sure was addressed in the event that consumers had concerns. Synthetic fabrics, like Repreve recycled polyester, shed microplastics when washed in washing machines. However, despite the negative impact this can have on the oceans, it can be controlled by in-unit bags or washing machine attachments. Ooey Gooley wants to work to educate consumers about this issue, and advocate for more sustainable washing methods. While greater disclosure of information and risk should be incorporated into the website and future reports, Ooey Gooley has used social media to share some of this information with customers.

The thirteenth page focuses on an overview of Ooey Gooley's goals for the future. This slide offers commentary on Ooey Gooley's plan for sustainable growth and keeping sustainability at the heart of their business model. The main themes include sustainability in small businesses, the eco-friendliness of slow fashion, and a reemphasis of the SASB prongs.

The fourteenth page emphasizes possible improvements in Ooey Gooley's fabric choices. The main elements touched upon here are a potential for new, sustainable growth via a hemp collection and an expressed desire to incorporate more sustainable thread. These small factors are

¹¹ *Id.*

some tangible steps Ooey Gooley is planning to take in order to increase the sustainability of their raw materials. Further, these planned improvements could easily aid better disclosure of SASB-recommended information. Ooey Gooley could use the guidelines from SASB, particularly its preference for third-party certifications, in order to choose suppliers for hemp and sustainable thread.

The fifteenth page discusses possible improvements to the supply chain. These include localizing production and minimizing gaps in the supply chain. Additionally, this page focuses on Ooey Gooley's commitment to increased transparency and use of sustainability assessments. These latter goals reflect SASB's preference for the disclosure of wastewater discharge permits and contractual agreements, as well as the completion of the Higg FEM or comparable assessments. Articulating these goals helps guide Ooey Gooley toward greater SASB compliance in the future.

The sixteenth page focuses on Ooey Gooley's desire to improve chemical management. Specifically, increased use of third-party certifications will help emphasize Ooey Gooley's claims of sustainability and will help solidify their commitment to SASB's chemical management recommendations.

The seventeenth and final page discusses a very broad picture of what the future of Ooey Gooley might look like. An optimistic and earnest conclusion like this is very much in the vein of what a company like Nordstrom is doing (their final page articulates all the sustainability standards they met or exceeded).¹² Here, Ooey Gooley reiterates their message of sustainability and inclusivity, which is essential to their brand. Additionally, they emphasize their hope for sustainable growth, and include a call to all customers, encouraging them to reach out with

¹² 2019 Corporate Social Responsibility Report, 35 Nordstrom (2019), <https://press.nordstrom.com/static-files/43af616b-37b6-4b40-be18-803c1e19094e>.

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comments, concerns, and suggestions about sustainability. I used this broad and positive language to emphasize the primary goals of Ooey Gooey as a business and as a sustainable actor.

My writing of Ooey Gooey Vanshop's Sustainability Report sought to reflect the broad ethos of the brand, while emphasizing environmental concerns and reflecting the relevant SASB prongs for Apparel, Accessories & Footwear brands. With these goals in mind, I emphasized transparency and, where applicable, spaces for growth and instances of success. I hoped to create a report that was genuine about the sustainability realities and goals of this brand, while crafting a narrative that reflected one of the major indices in ESG reporting.