

Ecofriendly Textiles & Eco Labelling - Essential for Survival



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The Indian Textile Industry has an over whelming presence in the economic life of our country but it is facing a challenging condition in the field of quality and productivity due to globalization of the world market. So, leading the movement for Eco-friendly textiles should be the management mantra for Indian textile industry to become a successful player in the global arena of textiles with many avenues to capture in coming times in the eco-conscious scenario. The market place should respond with new technology to fit to the demands of greener lifestyle as desired by today's consumers. The present paper has been divided into four sections Introduction, Ecofriendly Fabrics, Eco Labels and Conclusion.

Clothing is a very important part of an individual's life as they contribute to his appearance and personality besides serving to protect the body. Clothes are so intimate, obvious and omnipresent part of our personality that no other expenditure of equal amount can contribute so much to the satisfaction of our deep desire for personal recognition and to the sense of personal security.

The present day fashion world has undergone various modifications & transformations to introduce some of the best fashionable clothing for men & women.

Due to the threat of Global Warming, there is growing demand amongst the customers for the ecofriendly products, may it be eatables, beauty products, shopping bags or even clothing. In the light of this development, the trend is changing in textiles from manmade materials to eco friendly ones.

In Environmental friendly clothing the production processes involved are considered to be of less harm to the environment. Such clothing is made without the use of pesticides, fertilizers, chemicals, genetic modifications and is recycled and biodegradable. Organic cotton is grown using organic farming practices and without toxic chemicals. The organic methods of agriculture are beyond doubt better for our bodies, our homes, and our planet and for future generations.

The consumers and manufacturers until 1990's , were of the thinking that synthetic fibres would cause the most harm to the environment and that cotton would clearly be an environment friendly textile. But studies conducted in 1990's however proved it wrong. According to the sustainable cotton project, a third of a pound of pesticides and other agriculture chemicals are used to produce cotton for one simple T-Shirt and ammonia, formaldehyde and some other chemicals are also used to process & finish it. Nowadays, to protect the environment, the consumers have changed their thinking and turned towards Ecofriendly clothing. Today, many clothing companies offer eco friendly clothes due to the increasing demand for Green Fabrics.

What is Eco-Fashion?

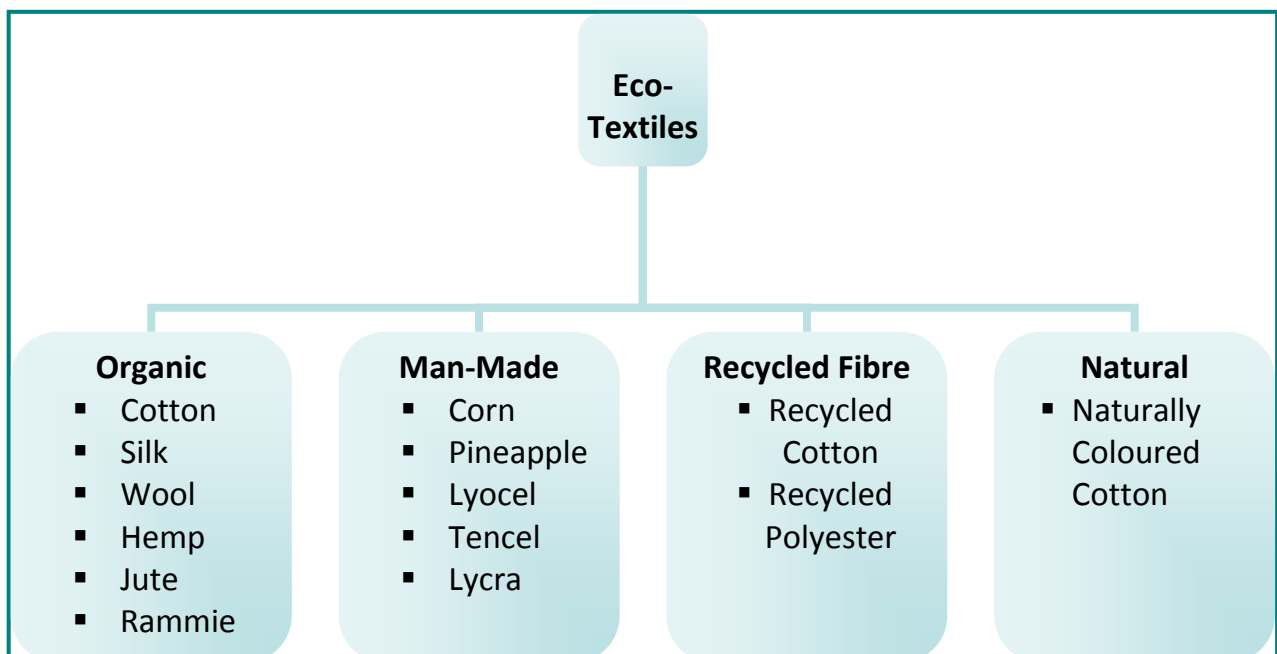
Eco-Fashion refers to the work of designers who use, produce & promote sustainable, ethical and environmentally conscious products. For Ecofashion a variety of terms have been used such as ethical, organic, green, fair-trade, recycled, reused & sustainable etc.

Ecofriendly Fabrics and their Benefits

What makes a fabric Ecofriendly?

The less harming is the process of making a fabric to the environment, the more eco friendly it is. Such fabrics have some of the following characteristics:

- Minimum use of chemicals and pesticides during cultivation- Less harming chemicals are used if required for cultivation, whereas neem leaves are used to protect plants from insects and worms harming them.
- Eco friendly certification- It is very important aspect to prove that the particular fabric is Eco friendly and it shows that the fabric is environment friendly without any harmful chemicals.
- Fair trade practices- This includes environmentally friendly processes, healthy working environment for producers, respectful relationship between producers and buyers, a fair wage for the producers and also gender equality with respect to wages and working conditions.
- Animal friendly- The production of eco friendly fabrics does not harm the animals as no chemicals and pesticides are used during its production and healthy farming practices are done.
- Does not harm humans involved in the manufacturing process- Since no chemicals are used from the manufacturing to marketing of eco friendly textiles, so they pose no threat of any kind to the health of persons involved.



- Some Eco friendly clothing is recycled material- This is useful as no new materials are used to make this clothing instead used material that are recycled and then re-used. Practices like recycling maintain and increase sustainability of an eco system.
- Ecofriendly clothing usually last longer than regular clothing.

Some of the fabrics & textiles that are common for Ecofriendly clothing includes hemp, Jute, Calico, Hessian cloth, Organic Cotton, Recycled Polyester, Bamboo Fibre, Tencel, Ramie, Organic Pool, Organic Linen etc.

There are various brands retailing Eco friendly clothing in the market. Some of the National and International brands producing Eco friendly clothing for men are Van Heusen, Arrow, Allen solly, UV&W, Duke, Ed Hardy, Octave, Marks & Spencer, Woodland, Levis, Monte Carlo, Wills Lifestyle.

National and International brands producing Eco friendly clothing for women are Madame, Woodland, Khadi, Fabindia, UV&W, Zara, Provogue, Wrangler, Punk, Lee cooper, Arrow, Colorplus, Neva, Wills lifestyle.

Ecolabelling

Ecolabelling is a voluntary method of environmental performance & labeling that is practiced around the world. An Eco Label is a label which identifies overall environmental liking of a product or a service within a specific product category based on life cycle considerations.

The World's first Ecolabelling was initiated by Germany in 1978. Canada, Japan & US established Ecolabelling schemes in the late 1980's. Many other governments along with privately operated labels were launched during 1990's. Today, Ecolabelling is being implemented in more than 30 countries.

Eco Labels direct the consumers and producers that the product is Ecofriendly with fewer undesirable environmental impacts and at the same time encouraging the manufacturers to develop and supply environmentally sound products.

The Indian government launched "Ecomark", a voluntary ecolabelling scheme in February 1991 with the earthen pot or Matka as the symbol. The other Ecolabels include GOTS (Global Organic Textiles Standards), Organic Exchange 100, EU Eco Labels, Blue Angel, Echomark, National German Label, National Japanese label, Green Mark.



The EU Eco-label, also called 'flower' because of its logo, was introduced in 1992 and is now one of the major voluntary instruments included in the New Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy, Action Plan adopted by the European Commission in July 2008. Eco-labels are the ways to make the green choice, enabling environmentally sustainable purchasing by customers.

Ecolabels can be classified on the basis of the certifying agency:

First Party Labelling

This is related to labels which are set up by individual manufacturer groups and contains information about the particular environmental advantages of their products that the producer need to communicate to the consumers through media or advertisements.

Second Party Labelling

It refers to labels established by industry associations for their member products. The criteria for certification for such labels are usually formed by external proficiency from academia and environmental organizations.

Third Party Labelling

This is regarding labelling schemes set-up by a public or private organization free from producers and distributors and the labels are certified to a producer and appear on a product which met the criteria laid down by the label-initiating body. These types of labels are usually desired by consumers and environmental organizations.

Seal of Approval takes into account many factors including environmental policy goals, consumer awareness of environmental issues etc. and govt. agencies may be involved in the application of the scheme. European Union Eco flower and Germany's Blue Angel are well known seals of approval.

Ecolabels may also be distinguished on the basis of the manner in which they are organized:

Independent Labels

Independent labels are more often issued by nongovernment organizations or research institutions and they take into consideration either the whole life cycle of product or the quality of the end product.

National Labels

National labels are given by govts. of different countries and deal with the environmental issues most appropriate to that particular ecology like Eco-mark of India, Green-mark of Taiwan, Eko-seal of Holland etc.

Multinational Labels

Multinational labels are set up by a multinational body and concentrate on the environmental impact of a particular region and include labels like the EU flower label and the Nordic Eco label.

The quality, cost-effectiveness and competency of Ecolabelling schemes can be improved by joint govt. private sector or public-private participation to grab the attention of clients through right marketing of Ecofriendly products.

Conclusion

We live in changing times, where more and more awareness is growing towards creating a healthy and Ecofriendly environment. In the earlier times, a garment was chosen from the shelf for its look or style only. But today's well informed consumer has high inclination towards the performance characteristics in addition to the colour, cut, and design of apparel. The ecoproblems in textile industry occur during growing of raw-material, some production processes, selling and final disposal of the product. In the global clothing and textiles market, its time for the survival of the fittest. But the existing market share of Ecofriendly products is small and the companies manufacturing them are quite few in number. So, those who will start early in the production of Ecofriendly clothing and launch their brands in this domain are sure to reap maximum profit because of the look good and feel good promise that Ecofriendly products deliver. So, Ecofashion needs to be promoted more to motivate consumers to be more demanding for environmentally responsible clothing besides the enormous benefit to our planet.

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