

Sustainability is a complex concept. The definition quoted most often comes from the UN World Commission on Environment and Development: “sustainability is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

When talking about fashion, to many ‘sustainability’ means “being environmentally friendly and being respectful to people”. After all, sustainable fashion refers to clothing that is designed, manufactured, distributed, and used in ways that are environmentally friendly.

Another term that is traditionally linked to sustainability in the conscious consumerism world is ethical fashion. Ethical fashion refers to clothing made in ways that value social welfare and worker’s rights. Because environmentalism goes hand in hand with socially equitable practices, however, ethical and sustainable fashion are intricately tied together.

In theory, all of these definitions sound right — and they are. They are indeed correct, but incomplete.

The current fashion industry is plagued by serious and alarming issues that go beyond the traditional meaning of sustainability and that we cannot keep ignoring.

Cultural appropriation. Systemic racism. Intellectual property theft. Elitism.

These are just some of the ongoing problems of this industry.

At ELOQUĒNTIA, we believe that the term ‘sustainable’ should not only include the definition of ‘ethical’, but also of human values. Being respectful of culture and heritage should be a pillar of fashion. Ensuring that creatives are properly credited for their original designs and hard work should be a pillar of fashion. Making the industry accessible to all should be a pillar of fashion. So why aren’t they?

At ELOQUĒNTIA, we have made a pledge to expand the true meaning of sustainability, and we want other individuals and entities to expand it with us. Being sustainable is a mindset, a lifestyle that is based on respect. How can you be respectful of the planet, but not of its people? How can you not be respectful of their beliefs, their cultures, their integrity? Every one of these aspects go hand in hand, and one cannot exist without the others.

Moving forward, we will not address any brand as ‘sustainable’ if they do not tick every single one of these boxes. They might be ‘partially sustainable’ or ‘only sustainable in a certain area’, but we cannot and will not throw this word around as if it did not hold any kind of value. Words have consequences — let’s stop pretending that they do not.

A brand that uses conscious materials but does not treat their workers fairly does not deserve to be labelled as ‘sustainable’. A brand that uses conscious materials, treats their workers fairly, but appropriates their designs from cultures and communities that have been punished by history does not deserve to be labelled as ‘sustainable’.

What about you? Are you going to expand your meaning of sustainability?

#EXPANDSUSTAINABILITY