Sustainability and Business: Can renewable energy and fashion retail go hand-in-hand?

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Background

- The increase in greenhouse gas emissions are leading cause of the climate crisis
- Fashion retailers bear a large responsibility for the emission of greenhouse gases (the fashion industry is responsible for 8-10% of global emissions)
- The application of renewable energy to fashion retail has the potential to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, but it is challenging to implement
- My project aims to address and explore frameworks which companies can use to adopt renewable energy

What are the barriers and best practices to renewable energy implementation in fashion retail?

Internship & Methods

- Nordstrom is a fashion retailer in both the United States and Canada, and specializes in Women’s, Men’s, and children’s fashion.
- Worked with the Corporate Social Responsibility Team and Facilities to increase their renewable energy profile and assist in other sustainability initiatives.
- Collected data via interviews, literature review, and hands on experience

Results

Stakeholder interviewee sentiments

“Reducing energy demand makes it better for the grid and how we demand on the grid... we need to find how to run more efficiently”

“it comes down to is economics every single time.”

“There is a disconnect there about wanting to do something and being able to support it... I think it is important for people...to create an alignment for the vision of what renewables should be”

Table 1. Barriers to renewable energy adoption and relevant best practices. This data was collected through internal company interviews, a literature review, and firsthand experience at Nordstrom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Relevant Best Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Feasibility</td>
<td>• Identify and utilize financial incentives&lt;br&gt;• Join community energy programs (e.g., community solar) (Figure 1.)</td>
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<td>Communication and support internally at the company</td>
<td>• Implement a high-level sponsor for renewable energy implementation&lt;br&gt;• Implement energy efficient measures to operations (ex., energy storage batteries, demand limiting, and load shedding)</td>
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<td>Lack of proper infrastructure</td>
<td>• Procure renewable energy credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Company bandwidth and time constraints</td>
<td>• Implement a high-level sponsor for renewable energy implementation</td>
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Implications

- Provides fashion retailers with the information (Table 1) to develop a streamlined process to adopt renewable energy
- Implementation of renewables lowers Scope 1 & 2 emissions for Nordstrom and other fashion retailers
- Aids Nordstrom in the completion of their science-based targets (Figure 1)
- Adoption of renewables aligns fashion retail companies with international guidance and sustainability standards
- Engages with customer trends of shopping/wanting to shop more sustainably, which improves company financials

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