

# Sustainability Strategies in Industrial Supply Networks

## Introduction

Many industrial companies increasingly participate in a wide range of sustainability activities in their supply network. Yet, the question why companies facing similar external pressures choose different strategies for implementing sustainability in their supply network has hardly been discussed so far.

This poster reports on a part-time PhD research among fashion/clothing companies that is conducted within Saxion in cooperation with the University of Twente from 2007 up till now. The main research question is: "How are the innovation characteristics of the 'focal' company and its supply network (innovation power) related with the sustainability strategies towards the supply network by these companies?"



Business Social Compliance Initiative  
is one of the social initiatives many  
fashion/clothing companies join

## Research Strategy

First a *literature review* was conducted to develop a theoretical conceptual framework.

As second method a *survey* was conducted in cooperation with the Dutch sector organization for Fashion and Textiles, MODINT.

The survey was used to test with empirical data how the innovation characteristics of the focal company are related with the sustainability strategies/activities found.

The third method used will be *case studies* to analyze more in depth the decision making process concerning sustainability strategies in relation with the innovation characteristics.

## Results

The *literature review* has identified an innovation approach as a possible route. The implementation of sustainability in industrial supply networks can be seen as a system-innovation and therefor innovation theories and approaches were integrated in the new conceptual framework that was published in the Journal of Cleaner Production in 2011.

After analysing the results of the *survey* a statistically significant relation was found between the level of innovation power of the "focal" company and the participation in initiatives concerning the social aspects in the supply network. This conclusion supports the proposition defined.

For participation in environmental initiatives the relation with the level of "innovation power" was not significant. The summarized results of the survey will be published as a chapter in an edited collection.

The results of the case studies will be available during 2013.

## Publications

Van Bommel, H.W.M. (2011)  
*"A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Sustainability Strategies in Industrial Supply Networks from an Innovation Perspective"*,  
Journal of Cleaner Production 19:895-904

Van Bommel, H.W.M. (2013)  
*"Innovation Power of Fashion Focal Companies and Participation in Sustainability Activities in their Supply Network"*,  
chapter 5 in the edited collection "Sustainability in Fashion and Textiles", Greenleaf Publishing  
(to be expected in February 2013)

**Ir. H.W.M. van Bommel**  
Senior Lecturer/Researcher  
Sustainable International Business  
[h.w.m.vanbommel@saxion.nl](mailto:h.w.m.vanbommel@saxion.nl)