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**SUSTAINABLE SOURCING: HOW COMPANIES ARE
REDEFINING THE TRADITIONAL SUPPLY CHAIN
MODEL**

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ABSTRACT:

Due to growing strains imposed on businesses globally by climate change, scarcity of resources, societal stress to adopt ethical business practices, the old paradigm of take-make-dispose supply chain is increasingly becoming unsustainable. This study explores the way businesses are rebranding their sourcing and supply-chain approaches using sustainable sourcing methods in two organisations: Patagonia, a worldwide leader of textile sourcing sustainability, and Epyllion Group, an extensive apparel manufacturer based in Bangladesh. This study is based on the general question of the next nature: How do companies include sustainable sourcing into their supply chain models, and how do these approaches affect their sustainability in the broad overall?

Based on the theoretical foundation of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM), this research describes how material selection, supplier relationship, visibility, and outsourcing can support the three facets of environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable value generation. Green supply chain management, circular economy, ethical procurement and supply chain transparency are incorporated in the analysis to examine drivers, practices, and barriers of sustainable sourcing in the apparel industry. Based on a qualitative methodology of the case study, the study would utilise secondary data to collect data on the sustainability report of the companies, traceability tools, certifications, and the supply chain disclosures used by Patagonia and Epyllion.

The main conclusions include the fact that Patagonia has installed sustainable sourcing on a large scale: it focuses on organic cotton, recycled fibres and Fair Trade certified; on best-in-class transparency through its Footprint Chronicles and Material Traceability Programme; and on renewable energy, waste-reduction and circular-economy programs. Albeit less established, Epyllion Group is experiencing significant advances in the usage of organic and recycled materials, use of an ISO 14001 compatible supplier sourcing strategy, and employee-welfare programmes, though limited by affordability, complexity of the supplier chain and institutional inefficiencies at the local level.

This thesis concludes that sustainable sourcing ceases to be a marginal CSR activity but a business-level facilitator to competitive advantage, openness and sustainability. The scalability, affordability and traceability of such endeavours, however, are a major concern, especially in emerging-economy situations. Lastly, there are suggestions to industry practice in terms of further capacity building of their suppliers, investment in digital traceability solutions (e.g., blockchain), and participatory multi-stakeholder platforms. It has recommended future studies that should involve longitudinal studies of financial performance, consumer behaviour in the market or digital-technology adoption in the global supply chain.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable sourcing, supply chain management, circular economy, green supply chain, ethical procurement, textile industry

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Abbreviations

BOM	Bill of Materials
CAPEX	Capital Expenditure
CE	Circular Economy
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ETP	Effluent Treatment Plant
GOTS	Global Organic Textile Standard
GSCM	Green Supply Chain Management
GSCPs	Green Supply Chain Practices
H&S	Health and Safety
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IoT	Internet of Things
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
RDS	Responsible Down Standard
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SSCM	Sustainable Supply Chain Management
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership
US	United States
ZDHC	Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As a result of globalisation and less availability of resources, many companies find it necessary to reconsider their supply chain management. Supply chains previously worked in a way that was only about expediency, knocking down prices, and chasing profits, known as the take-make-dispose approach. Many aspects of how sourcing and production impact the environment and society have been neglected by this model (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). Concerns about climate change, resource supply, environmental issues, and responsible actions by businesses are pushing companies to introduce sustainable systems.

Consequently, adopting sustainable sourcing is considered a useful approach to improve the current system of supply chain management. Sustainable sourcing means that social, environmental and economic factors are considered when choosing how to purchase goods or services. It means picking ecologically and socially responsible suppliers and resources and making sure the created value is sustainable (Singhry, 2015). That's why, it serves to protect the environment without affecting the efficiency of businesses.

The model known as the circular economy is also connected, since it follows the steps of the economy as it forms loops, lessens waste and always re-uses materials. By choosing the circular economy, firms substitute the old supply chain process of using, throwing away, and replacing resources with a new model that involves recycling, renovating, reusing, and remanufacturing products (Gosling et al., 2016). As a result, products and resources used in the supply chain can last longer and the overall system can be made safer.

Several global players now have successfully carried out their sustainable purchasing plans. As an example, Epyllion Group in Bangladesh is among the emerging economy firms that are gradually focusing on sustainability to face challenges in the market

(Epyllion Group, 2021). Patagonia and The North Face are good examples of companies putting sustainable sourcing into practice in their supply chains and reaping effects in multiple areas (Patagonia, 2025).

1.2 Problem Statement

Although there has been increased interest in the utilisation of sustainable sources, there are numerous organisations that struggle to implement it. This transformation to a sustainable supply chain may be a challenging task since it may require a substantial amount of funds initially, handling suppliers who can share very little about their products, operating at a location where regulations are not well established, and changing people within the company to adapt to new processes. Moreover, the present study discovered that the tools and support systems are not available in companies to make sourcing a process that aids them in developing over the long run (Thiele, 2024).

One should thus understand how companies can incorporate sustainability into their sourcing and what the effect will be on coming out as being eco-friendly. This knowledge is actually significant to the managers in businesses, individuals in the supply chains, policy makers drawing the rules, ordinary people who purchase things, and researchers who seek to know how such things as the environment, business, and society are evolving.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

This thesis aims to examine how businesses are conducting their supply chains in sustainable operations, namely, how sustainable sourcing assists in enhancing their supply chain sustainability. To conduct this analysis, it will consider the way in which Epyllion Group and Patagonia create and establish sustainable sourcing in the textile industry and scenarios.

The specific objectives are:

1. To identify sustainable sourcing practices and examine how they are incorporated into supply chain strategies.
2. To identify challenges and barriers companies face when implementing sustainable supply chains.
3. To identify and analyze the impact of these practices on environmental, economic, and social outcomes within organisations.
4. To provide recommendations for enhancing sustainable economy integration in supply chains.

1.4 Research Question

To guide the investigation, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How are companies integrating sustainable sourcing practices into their supply chain models?
2. What impact do sustainable sourcing practices have on their overall sustainability performance?

1.5 Methodological Overview

This study entails a qualitative method and the results are carried out through the analysis of reports and practices of Epyllion group as well as Patagonia. These companies were selected because of their good reputation in maintaining the products created using sustainable materials, as well as because of the diversity of the companies and places where they are located.

Company reports, sustainability reviews, and supply chain policies are good sources of data for this purpose. This data is then analysed using thematic analysis, which is searching for the common ideas, patterns, and trends related to the implementation of sustainable sourcing. In addition, this study also looked at the similarities and differences between each company by looking at their supply chain processes, how they monitor

their production progress, and how these considerations relate to environmentally sustainable sourcing practices.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study contribute to the information available on sustainable supply chain management by discussing how companies are changing their typical supply chain management approaches. It helps practitioners by relying on two case studies that demonstrate how sustainable sourcing can be carried out in the textile industry (Akhavan and Beckmann, 2017).

Circular economy would better emphasise the significance of sustainable sourcing in contemporary world. Applying circular economy frameworks promotes the concept of sustainable sourcing, which is characterised by the focus on how a firm may use distinct resources as a source of competitive advantages and drive waste to a minimum amount to create value in the long term and comply with ecological and social objectives in supply chain management. The study contributes to the already existing research on the subject and gives recommendations to managers concerning sustainability and its integration into the supply chain (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014).

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Due to the set of factors that are involved, the results of this study might not be utilized as intended, as they may not be utilized extensively and profoundly. The thesis discusses Patagonia and Epyllion Group as examples; thus, this cannot be effectively generalized to other comparable companies in the textile sector. Since this thesis is examining a few organizations, there might be minimal information regarding sustainable sourcing in other industries and regions. Due to the qualitative research, the study is not in a position to demonstrate every aspect of the quantitative changes and the achievability of the sustainability goals. Also, the data that is released by companies might not include

all the details required concerning what they do. Since the study employs secondary research, it does not give many details of the specific challenges of sustainable sourcing.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis contains five chapters, with Chapter 1 of this study explaining why the research is required, what is expected to be accomplished, and what questions will be answered, and the general ideas that will be used to help guide the study. Chapter two is a literature review that examines what other scholars have written on issues such as eco-friendly supplies, sustainability, and the changing nature of the way supply chain operations are being transformed. Chapter 3 of this thesis describes on the research methodology, the nature of the study under use, cases to be examined, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the outcome of examining the case studies and discusses the core issues and trends that emerged between the companies that it considered. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes and presents the major points, as well as the recommendations to businesses and the prospective research directions about how the essence of managing supply chains can become more sustainable.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) has become a really important topic in businesses because companies are under more pressure to deal with things like the environment, workers' conditions, and the bottom line. Traditional supply chains have long been directed towards work that can assist companies in making more money and running things efficiently, but in the process, they have seldom been able to consider the environment or society. Nonetheless, due to the concerns regarding issues such as climate change, resource consumption, and doing the right thing on behalf of people, business organizations presently find the necessity to adjust their supply chain approaches to become more sustainable (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014). Sustainable sourcing has a central role in this change as it assists companies to choose their suppliers, materials, and their modes of operating in a manner that is more beneficial to the environment and society, and also to do well in the long term.

This literature review looks at some important research and ideas in sustainable sourcing, including how using the sustainable sourcing can help supply chains become more sustainable. This literature review looks at how companies can make their sourcing more sustainable, including the ways the sustainable sourcing helps improve how they run their supply chains. It talks about why companies care about doing this, what problems they face, and how new technology can help them do it better.

2.1 Defining Sustainable Supply Chain Management

Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) is a management process involving the supply chains in terms of environmental, social and economic duties at each stage. It is more than efficient and cost-effective but stresses the importance of sustainable operation and activities as it promotes ethical sourcing, elimination of waste, and resource sustainability. It would assist in companies building a long-term price with a small ecological imprint (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014). Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) is a method of managing supply chains that considers the

environment, society, and economy at every step. Compared to most other supply chains, which are primarily focused on becoming effective and reducing costs, SSCM also examines extending to environmental and social obligations. Companies now realize that there is a need to have sustainable supply chain management, as everything that a business undertakes can find its way into the environment, affecting the communities of the same. Consequently, how sustainable practices surpass the requirement is that they serve as a means of helping companies to generate sustainable value in their assets and enhance a competitive advantage in the market (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014).

Ensuring that the materials used and the suppliers are sustainable is one of the significant aspects of operating a supply chain sustainably. According to Ahi and Searcy (2013), sustainable supply chain management is defined as one that looks at three aspects, including but not limited to effects on the environment, societal responsibility, and responsible practices at the labour level. By putting a premium on such aspects, a company can ensure that its sourcing will help its sustainability process, cause minimal damage to the planet, and that all its supply chains will incorporate moral decisions. The approach to seeking sustainable sources assists firms in preventing potential issues that could arise due to a lack of resources, changes in rules, and a poor reputation.

Besides positively contributing to the environment, Schneider and Wallenburg (2012) note that sustainable sourcing should not be ignorant of employee rights and community growth in the areas of production. With these strategies, organizations can make sure that employees are treated fairly, their working environments are safe, and ensure that the local people are advantaged. The approach towards the collection of materials, in general, assists the business in ensuring that the environment is safe, the beneficiaries will enjoy for an extended period, and that sustainability will be at the core of its activities. Those businesses that consider the issue of sustainability in sourcing earn credibility with their customers, are recognized, and become good role models for their practices.

2.2 Green Supply Chain Practices and Environmental Impact

Using Green supply chain management (GSCM) strategies become necessary for companies that want to cut down on their environmental impact and help achieve sustainability goals. GSCM supports eco-friendly choices in business and results in less damage to the environment overall. It involves employing strategies to reduce waste, reduce consumption of power, and reduce emissions, all of which facilitate a sustainable lifestyle of working. Not only do these perks comply with rules and international sustainability objectives, but they also enable companies to boost their performance in the whole course of their operation (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014).

GSCM aims at involving environmentally-friendly practices in all aspects of the supply chain. One such area would be picking out, or designing with, resources that are sustainably bought and are not destructive to the environment (Ahi and Searcy, 2013). One of the major components of GSCM is to improve the production of things to reduce energy and emissions. Through the assistance of technologies, companies use less money and make greater efforts to protect the environment.

Fostering the environment through green manufacturing ensures companies can achieve what their customers aim for. With a greater focus on the environment, firms are made to develop eco-friendly goods and services. Therefore, firms that carry out Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) often win over eco-conscious clients. These companies play a role in global sustainability by lessening carbon emissions and using resources sustainably (De Angelis et al., 2018). All in all, GSCM allows companies to be successful financially and environmentally, so it is vital for sustainable development.

Although there are various advantages of practising a green supply chain, there are also some challenges that are encountered by the companies in the practice. In many cases, the high prices of sustainability-related products and methods are what discourages organizations, particularly SMEs, from going green (Tseng et al., 2019). In addition, the environmental and social performance is tough to determine because of the absence of

transparency and dependable information on the supply side, especially in international supply networks (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). Loyalty to the status quo in organizations that fear loss of profits and interruption of laid down also worsens the situation as organizations resist changing their way to green practices. These impediments need a lot of investment, time and commitment from all stakeholders.

Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM), Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and Green Supply Chain Practices (GSCPs) are similar concepts, but again with a variation in the magnitude in which they depend or concentrate. SSCM is an inclusive and organisational practice of focusing on the elements of the environment, social and economic considerations at all levels of the supply chain. It accentuates the goals of creation of long-term value via responsible management of resources, employment of fair labour practices and general sustainability in business activities (Carter and Rogers, 2008). Conversely, GSCM is more detailed in the sense that it targets the environmental factors of the supply chain. It also seeks to decrease the environmental impact of the supply chain activities in environmentally friendly measures to include minimised use of energy, waste management, and use of environmentally friendly materials (Ahi and Searcy, 2013). GSCM adds value by focusing on the realisation of environmental objectives in relation to supply chain management, as there should be sustainability in business operations in this industry. Under GSCM, Green Supply Chain Practices (GSCPs) are what can be done in the execution of these environmental goals. These involve using materials that are sustainable, supplier audits to assess their compliance with environmental standards, minimisation of wastes, recycling and adoption of energy saving technologies of the supply chain (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014).

Although both GSCM and GSCPs entail the implementation of environmental sustainability concepts through the whole supply chain strategy, GSCPs are the practices that operationalise the given strategies. In effect, SSCM represents a larger framework that takes into consideration not only environmental but also social and economic factors, which GSCM narrows down to the focus of decreasing its impact on the

environment, and GSCPs represent the practical actions that are acted upon in the GSCM approach on a daily basis. A combination of all these approaches gives a wholesome way through which businesses can address the issue of sustainability in their supply chains.

2.3 The Circular Economy

Circular economy business is a sustainable reaction to the issues encountered by the environment due to the old-fashioned linear model. Producing, using and discarding goods as the conventional system does causes too much waste and leads to the loss of natural resources. Instead, the circular economy pushes for reusing goods, remanufacturing them and recycling, hoping to limit the negative effects on the environment (Geisendorf & Pietrulla, 2017). Essentially, the circular economy promotes the development of goods that last a long time. Using this way, both the environment and business operations become friendlier to the environment.

Applying the principles of a circular economy faces some challenges in that it requires companies to change their main systems and rules. For a circular economy model to work, businesses need to rethink all aspects of the product process, from planning to when the products are no longer usable (Geisendorf & Pietrulla, 2017). To maintain the movement of the materials, companies may resort to such actions as making hard products, dismantling, and recycling. Along with the benefits of the change to the environment, it also has a beneficial effect on the economy. When the business reduces its dependence on raw materials and reduces expenses related to waste management, it will be able to save money in the long term and stand out among the competitors in the market.

Overall, the circular economy can reduce the overall waste and resource waste problems affecting the world. By applying circular economy ideas and using sustainable materials throughout their supply chains, businesses can be more environmentally friendly, cut costs, and support the growth of a stronger and more lasting global economy. Not only

does this way of operating help the environment, but it also helps businesses to innovate, become more efficient, and attract attention in the eco-conscious market.

2.4 Sustainable Sourcing and Its Drivers

Sustainable sourcing refers to the choice of materials and suppliers based on environmental, social as well as economic sustainability factors. It is presently concerned with the environment and aims to limit environmental degradation with the help of green materials, waste reduction, and responsibly sourced labour. In meeting expectations regarding ethical sourcing through checking on social responsibility in the production of goods and materials obtained through sourcing activities, sustainable sourcing enables the company to enhance resilience in its supply chain in the long run, as well as to match the rising consumer trend of ethical sourcing. Sustainable sourcing practices are associated with the utilization of certified sustainable materials, supplier audits and the principle of a circular economy. The strategy enables organizations to achieve sustainability objectives and improve their image (Ahi and Searcy, 2013). The circular economy principles relate to sustainable sourcing as they focus on the reduction of wastes, the reuse of materials, and the development of closed loops that would prevent excessive consumption of resources and affect the environment negatively, which is part of the process of sustainable sourcing.

Sustainable sourcing assists companies in making sure that resources acquired can be recycled or reused to minimize waste and help to guarantee sustainability in the long run. A company making sustainable procurements will ensure that its suppliers are incorporated in the sustainable world and produce products that can be remanufactured or recycled easily in the circular economy (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). It is eco-friendly and efficient in the supply chain in terms of saving resources and reducing the amount of waste.

Several influencing factors that influence the way organisations implement sustainable sourcing include both internal and external pressures and reasons. As more social and

environmental issues emerge, these aspects play a crucial role in the determination of how a business sources its supplies, chooses suppliers, and manages its supply chain (Gosling et al., 2016). The key drivers in sustainable sourcing include demand fulfillment by consumers, adherence to new standards, and enhanced technologies.

Consumers demand products that are environmentally friendly in large numbers. Green-minded consumers have become more concerned with purchasing products that align with their beliefs as well as values. The awareness of climate change, deforestation, human rights, and unethical business practices is what primarily drives this process of increasing the ethical behaviour of consumers. By doing this, companies that embark on sustainable sourcing in their supply chains can answer this need by producing products that address the needs of consumers. Consequently, companies will be able to improve the image of their brand and gain more loyal consumers, which will put them at an advantage over their competitors (Schulze et al., 2022). When the brand is perceived to take care of the environment and society, then the consumers will be happy with it, and this fact can work in its favor since it increases sales, retains customers, and even grows its market share.

Another factor that is promoting sustainable sourcing is compliance with different rules and laws. The companies have to adhere to more stringent environmental regulations and sustainability standards imposed by governments worldwide, since otherwise they may face penalties and may also be tarnished with an unsuitable image. Such regulations as pollution and waste management, and reductions in pollution pertain to most industries such as manufacturing, transportation, and energy. Those organisations that fall short of these may face a huge fine, and their operating authorities may be withdrawn or prosecuted. The companies implementing sustainable sourcing at an early stage are not affected by the emergence of new regulations and may lose their status (Schulze et al., 2022).

Besides these external factors, technology is also creating an increasingly larger impact in ensuring that the companies are more sustainable as far as their supply chain is concerned. Machine learning, artificial intelligence, and blockchain assist businesses in monitoring the level at which their supply chain is sustainable and ensure that nothing gets out of control as events unfold. Such improvements can help companies in having a more accurate eye on the impact of suppliers on the environment and society, and it will make more things clear and honest (Duan et al., 2024). The use of these technologies in supply chain management not only assists the company to make smarter decisions regarding the origin of their products, but also assists individuals both within and outside the company to have a better picture of where the products are originating, which is significant to ensure the customers are happy. By making it easier to track their products and following important rules for sustainability, companies can reduce problems, get along better with people who care about their activities, and help people believe they are trying to do the right thing for the environment.

Therefore, a variety of factors help explain why companies are increasing their attention on sustainable sourcing, for example, the desire for ethical products, new stringent regulations, and useful technology. By responding to these drivers, companies can help the environment and the communities they do business in, and at the same time, get better known, keep their customers happy, and do well compared to other companies (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012).

2.5 Sustainable Sourcing Practices

Sustainable sourcing can be defined as actions that companies are putting forth to ensure that the products and materials purchased by them can be obtained through a means that is ecologically friendly, socially conscious and economically viable. The specified solutions may help an organization to attain sustainability goals and simultaneously maintain the supply chain robust over the long term (Ambekar et al., 2019). Among some of the greatest sustainable sourcing practices that the companies have applied in this respect, they incorporate:

The material choice used is environmentally friendly, with a focus on the use of renewable resources, recycled, and naturally produced materials in the production process. Organic cotton, bamboo, and recycled polyester are becoming the alternatives used by companies, because these lessen the negative impact on the environment as opposed to the traditional types, such as synthetic fibre or non-organic cotton. The plan helps to minimise the use of water, energy and chemicals in the manufacturing process, besides cutting the emission of carbon. With the incorporation of green inputs, companies will have a positive impact on the eco-friendly products cycle, which means decreased waste and enhanced recycling. The end-game is to come up with products that would consume fewer resources, less ecological footprint and in tandem with the long-term objectives of sustainability (Thorlakson, 2018).

To accomplish an implementation of sustainable sourcing, most of the companies carry out an auditing process and demand that the suppliers have certifications. Examples of these standards include Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance and ISO 14001 standards that ensure that ethical labour legislation and environmentally friendly manufacturing practices are adhered to. Supplier audit is also a control mechanism that keeps the producers responsible in terms of reducing waste, efficiency and accountability in sourcing various resources. Certifications contain a treasure of credibility to customers and other interested parties since the certifications help build confidence in the supply chain operations of a firm amongst such parties. The need for transparency would enable organisations to take action to mitigate the risks of greenwashing and other unethical practices, so that the principles of sustainability would not simply cease at the stage of production, but should extend to their far-reaching systems of suppliers (Ambekar et al., 2019).

Going towards waste reduction and the creation of the circular economy is a radical change in supply chain management. Companies are now being more concerned with the minimisation, reuse and recycling of materials to help in efficient utilisation of resources. The approach suggested in the circles of the economy focuses on the

development of sustainable items that can be fixed, refurbished or disassembled to be recycled, and then be put in trash to avoid landing up in the garbage pocket. This approach reduces environmental waste to a minimal level and also generates cost-saving through materials reuse and recovery. With the ability to increase the product life cycles, companies enhance sustainability and innovation, and react to the customers' desire to have green options. Therefore, those practices lead to the closed-loop system maximising value as well as limiting ecological damage to a minimum (Thorlakson, 2018).

Local Sourcing is another practice that has been taken up by the firms to enhance sustainable supply chain practices. This is supported by the primary reliance on domestic suppliers rather than international suppliers, thereby minimising the transportation length and subsequently the greenhouse emissions of the logistics in long-distance transport. The solution will also be used to sustain economies in the region, build better relationships with local communities, and enhance the traceability of materials. In addition, one may have a chance at sourcing locally and then move to fresher and potentially higher-quality assistance due to the short, extremely routine. It also improves the resilience of supply chains since they will not be dependent on world suppliers who can be brought down underhandedly. Therefore, local sourcing is one of the resources that has not only environmental and economic benefits, but it also testifies to the commitment of a specific company to the preservation of the community and sustainability (Seuring & Müller, 2008).

Some of the solutions to a sustainable sourcing strategy include fair trade and ethical labour practices. The organisations that subscribe to the concept of ethical-entities suppliers guarantee that they are abundantly compensated for unsafe working environments and extra freedom of the workers within their supply chain. This eventually results in social justice, better relations with the providers, and a better business image. The Fair-Trade certifications allow the manufacturers in the developing countries to make fair trade in their nations. The labour developed is ethical in the sense that it makes organisations flee due to the violent forms of labour abuse, including the

cases of child labour and poor working conditions. Moreover, the socially responsible supply chains are also attractive to the existing consumers who are ready to interact with socially responsible brands, which help to advance the human rights and sustainability cause (Ambekar et al., 2019).

Not only do the practices guarantee that the brands meet the regulatory requirements, but also consumer demands, whose requirement to buy environmentally and socially consistent products is increasing. Through these practices, the businesses will reduce their effects on the environment, boost their brand reputation, and have sustainable supply chains.

2.6 Barriers to Implementing Sustainable Sourcing

Sustainable sourcing has some positive aspects, but lots of difficulties keep it from being used popularly by organisations. Some organisations can hardly switch to sustainable sourcing because it is costly, hence neglecting this route. The study discovered that sustainability is not a common practice, with sustainable materials and other accompanying technologies being too costly (Shaikh et al., 2023). Companies tend to pay more to consume green materials than to obtain normal materials. In addition, it is also expensive for businesses to replace the old ways with sustainable technologies. There are not many other companies with sufficient financial resources to support sustainability at a long-term level, except for big multinational corporations.

Sustainable sourcing is extremely difficult to practice as the effects of supply chains cannot be easily accessed. Businesses can frequently struggle to acquire positive data related to the actions or behavior of their suppliers, and it is difficult to determine whether their decisions regarding the location of purchases align with being sustainable (Shaikh et al., 2023). At other instances, companies do not access credible data regarding the environmental and social activities of their suppliers. There is a greater lack of transparency in global supply chains as materials and products are obliged to undergo many production processes and involve a significant number of suppliers. The

sustainability of materials and products throughout all the production processes is difficult to locate and evaluate, especially when the suppliers are situated and operating in other countries. This causes the companies to fail to source products sustainably occasionally (Cherkaoui and Aliat, 2022).

Organisations are very resistant to adopting new sustainable sourcing practices. Individuals within the organisation may not be willing to experiment with new sustainability practices if they believe they will disrupt the way things are normally done in the organisation or the speed at which things are done. At times, people have reservations about taking on sustainable practices, since they might worry about their effects on profitability. Overcoming this resistance means having good leaders who explain things clearly and everyone in the company being committed to doing the right thing for the environment. It is important for everyone in a company, including top managers and workers, to support sustainable practices if they are going to work well in the organisation. This requires including sustainability in the company's main work practices and displaying the positive outcomes it brings over the long run to both finance and reputation (Shaikh et al., 2023).

In short, although the benefits are clear, several problems, for example, costs, hidden parts of the supply chain, and resistance to sustainable practices have to be addressed for more businesses to take part. Businesses can do this by investing money, improving how the supply chain is monitored, and ensuring that all members of the organisation support sustainability. If these obstacles are solved, businesses can work towards a sustainable future that is good for the environment and their long-term achievements.

2.7 Sustainable Sourcing in the Apparel and Textile Industry

The apparel and textile industry is amongst the most resource-intensive and the largest businesses in the world, characterised by immense challenges with regard to the environment as well as the social environment. With the increasing demand to conduct sustainable practices, businesses in the industry have been looking up to sustainable

sourcing as a means of managing the environmental footprint of the firm, affirming the ethical labour standards, and generating sustainable sources of value within the supply chain. The specificity of this industry is represented by the fact that the complexity of the supply chains, large amounts of water, controlling chemicals, and labour are specific and associated with producing textiles.

One of the issues that should be common in the textile industry is water consumption. The amount of water required by conventional cotton growing and the textile dyeing process also leads to water scarcity in already developed areas where a lot of capitalism is focusing on textiles, especially those found in the emerging economies (Khan, 2016). Sustainable sourcing in the clothes business means turning to water-efficient processes, including the use of organic cotton that does not demand such large amounts of water and pesticides, and utilising waterless dyeing techniques.

The other problem facing the apparel industry is the fact that textile manufacturing employs chemicals in the form of dyes, finishing agents, and solvents that adversely affect workers and the environment. Sustainable sourcing seeks to decrease the amount of toxic chemicals used, thereby taking the form of organic materials and natural dyes. Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) will certify that harmful chemicals are not used in the production of materials, thus improving working conditions, a safer environment, and a significant decrease in environmental effects (Global Organic Textile Standard, 2024).

Sourcing also involves labour practices, which are critical with regard to sustainability. Most of the countries that produce garments have issues concerning low wages, unhealthy working conditions, and exploitation of labour. Of the above considerations, sustainability in the apparel industry places an emphasis on fair labour practices such as provision of safe labour, reasonable salary, and compliance with international working standards. Some general measures that are frequently used in the industry include

Codes of Conduct, Fair Trade certifications and frequent audits to check on the state of labour in international supply chains (Jiang et al., 2019).

In the apparel industry, the circular economy is also becoming an increasingly popular concept to follow. As more people worry about textile waste, corporations are embracing their recycling, reusing, and prolonging garment life practices. One of the best examples of how to implement the circular economy into sourcing apparel products is the Worn Wear program hosted by Patagonia, which invites customers to repair and reuse their products and recycle them (Patagonia, 2025b).

To sum up, an integrated approach to the practices of the apparel and textile industry should pay attention to the concepts of water conservation, chemical management, ethical approaches to labour decisions, and a circular economy to realise sustainable sourcing. These would enable the companies to reduce their environmental footprint and turn more social and foster the development of more sustainable supply chains.

In the modern time sustainable sourcing is an essential part of supply chain management, which can enable firms to reduce effect of business on the environment, care about society, and generate maximum future-economic incomes. Circular economy, green supply and sourcing, which is sustainable, can help businesses gain a competitive edge in the market, improve efficiency and retain their consumers. For sustainable sourcing to be effective, it entails its response to several matters such as expensive first steps, hard-to-detect supply chain problems, and hostile resistance from companies within the organization.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the method of research that was employed to facilitate the achievement of objectives and the solution of the research questions of the thesis. The focus is on determining how companies are integrating sustainable sourcing practices and how these practices are leaving impact on overall sustainability performance. This thesis applies the case study approach, focusing on how Patagonia and the Epyllion Group operate in their respective sectors and regions when it comes to sustainably sourced resources (McBurney & White, 2021). This chapter will explain the research philosophy, plan and overall approach, explaining the choice of methods. It further outlines the ways the data is gathered, including qualitative analysis and states how the obtained data is analysed. To make the study just, it should ensure that ethical concerns relating to consent, confidentiality and information management are addressed.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The pragmatist philosophy, which has been implemented in this study, tackles the crux of solving a problem in the most sufficient manner, which can be applied in the determination of the substantive analysis of the proposed research questions, whether the methods of investigation will be qualitative or quantitative. Pragmatism is also oriented on a technique that will deliver the most useful and practical consequences; in other words, it does not adhere to any tradition of techniques (Creswell, 2014). This type of approach is particularly useful in applied studies, as is the case in this research, because the subject of interest is the portfolio of the real-life practice of sustainable sourcing of corporations, such as Patagonia and Epyllion Group. The pragmatic philosophy is also flexible in gathering and analysing data, applying the use of case study methodology to the level that a researcher can modify methods to meet the criteria of the case in hand. As an example, this can take the qualitative information presented in the company reports, the sustainability audit of the company, and interviews to understand the challenges and approaches of corresponding companies and consider the general implications of viable sustainable sourcing in the business. Thus, the

pragmatist philosophy will render the methodology unified with the aim of having the research done; consequently, they are more aligned with the challenge of real-world practices.

It is common sense that research on sustainable sourcing has been conducted because it is known that rolling out sustainability in the supply chain requires flexibility and cautious situation of knowledge. This is possible because the study has adopted a practical thinking approach and can draw accurate information using case studies and an analysis to discover how these firms can possibly develop themselves to be more sustainable by sourcing.

3.2 Research Approach

This thesis adopts a qualitative research approach in investigating how organisations ensure that their materials are derived from sustainable sources and the impact it has on their performance in terms of sustainability. Qualitative research suits this research as it helps to investigate how organisations are integrating sustainable sourcing in supply chain (Bryman, 2016). By taking into account real examples, it makes people understand the social, environmental, and day-to-day work factors that amalgamate and get the business going. It also helps people identify the major factors that can lead to and prevent decisions from happening in an organisation. Qualitative analysis, being a main type of qualitative technique, helps to create a clear picture of how things operate in a particular situation (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Through this methodology, the research helps to show how companies practice sustainable sourcing, why, and how. Ultimately, the qualitative approach helps to make the findings more meaningful and beneficial to theory as well as real-life decision-making in sustainable supply chain management.

3.3 Research Design

This is a qualitative research design, which utilises secondary research to analyze the two case companies, that is, Patagonia and Epyllion Group. Meanwhile, the case study approach fits literature on business and management research well since it enables scholars to delve into complicated and real scenarios (McBurney and White, 2021). The study seeks to identify various ideal practices applied by companies when it comes to sustainable sourcing by evaluating the approaches of Patagonia, a world-renowned leader in sustainability, and Epyllion, a major company that runs its operations in a developing economy.

In addition, the case study approach will make it easier to conduct a comparative analysis in order to identify the major similarities and differences between the two organisations. It assists in defining the best practices, but also in specifying all the situation-pertinent concerns, in terms of establishing the sustainability concern within supply chains. Through the application of two companies that have contrasting economic origins, the research builds a moderately detailed perception of the provision of sustainable sourcing undertakings that may be applied in scholarly studies and in the policymaking of senior officials. All in all, the design provides depth, relevancy, and useful information on the topic of sustainable supply chains.

3.4 Case Study Selection

The case studies involving Patagonia and Epyllion Group have been chosen since these companies follow a distinctive idea of sustainable sourcing, which can help achieve the goals of the current study. Patagonia is among the old firms that have been able to conquer the forefront of sustainable sourcing, having been the company to consider implementing environmental, social, and economic sustainability in its supply chain. The point that the company decides to use recycled materials, organic cotton and fair trade-qualified goods is a detailed display of the way in which a large organisation can implement sustainable sourcing efforts. In addition, the highlight of Patagonia being

transparent in contrast to the actions taken by such companies, the Footprint Chronicles and Material Traceability Program, can also be instructive as to how businesses could survive and cover their sustainability effort in the environment of multi-faceted supply chains. The specified characteristics make Patagonia an ideal study object to become familiar with what the best results of sustainable sourcing should entail and how the aforementioned best practices employees may be implemented in any alternative sphere.

On the other hand, the reason why Epyllion Group has been chosen is due to its focus on sustainability in the sourcing area in the developing economy. Epyllion Group has documented substantial activities in its utilising sustainable materials into its framework, like organic cotton and recycled polyester, even though the business is located in a place where environmental friendliness is less prevalent. The efforts by the company to create a more sustainable supply chain of textiles in Bangladesh, a developing economy, provide an interesting look into the challenges and opportunities of applying sustainable sourcing in a setting with fewer resources and the presence of regulations. The research will allow for a comparison of how companies with different economic positions responded through the study of the two companies, Patagonia and Epyllion Group.

Patagonia, Inc., a well-known American company that deals with the sale of outdoor clothing and equipment, was established in 1973 by Yvon Chouinard in Ventura, California. The firm is renowned for its steadfastness in doing what is correct, regardless of whether it is environmentally or socially appealing, with sustainability built in every aspect of its operations. The annual turnover of Patagonia is estimated to be 1.5 billion dollars, and the largest online store of Patagonia, [patagonia.com](https://www.patagonia.com), by 2024 will earn 468 million dollars, of which most of the proceeds consist of fashion products. More than 10 countries as well as 16 countries, such as Vietnam, Thailand, China, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh, serve as the production country and material source country to the company (Patagonia, 2025). The nature of the supply chain used by Patagonia is summarised through long-term relationships with suppliers that are aligned with their

commitment to sustainable practices that centre on eco-friendly materials, labour guiding principles of fair labour standards, and environmental protection. Patagonia leads in sustainable sourcing by using organic cotton and recycled material, efforts to decrease water and energy use, and even the program of reuse of worn clothes and repairing of products, Worn Wear. The firm also uses the most sophisticated traceability systems, including isotopic tests, in order to certify that the procurement of materials is ethical and free from forced labour. Patagonia still struggles with several issues besides its success, and such aspects are the necessity to disclose more and the expansion of sustainable practices within its global supply chain.

Epyllion Group is a leading textiles and garment manufacturing organisation located in Bangladesh that mainly caters to the international fashion and garment industry. Epyllion was set up in the year 1994 and has grown to be one of the primary manufacturers in the region that manufactures woven garments, knitwear, and home textiles. The company is a supplier of big international retailers based in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East, with a great emphasis on export markets. It is estimated that the revenue of Epyllion exceeds 100 million dollars annually, which demonstrates the large presence of the company in the textile manufacturing industry. Epyllion has gone a long way to ensure that sustainability is applied in its supply chain (Epyllion Group, 2021). The organisation is interested in greener resources like organic cotton and has gone to the extent of relying on energy-saving resources in the manufacturing processes. Epyllion equally practices under equal effort, and with that in place, Epyllion has a reduced amount of waste, as well as on an environmental aspect, adopting efficient energy technologies that are used and operated within the manufacturing plant and waste management system. Epyllion is a major textile exporter and the leading manufacturer of textile products in the world, based in Bangladesh. The company has also made some commendable efforts on sustainability, considering the hamper encountered in the manufacturing of conventional products that most corporations face in countries with underdeveloped economies. Another priority of Epyllion is sustainability, as it not only cares about the materials but is also concerned with the aspect of ethical labour, which

itself is able to give fair pay and safe working conditions to its workers. This is attributed to their commitments towards fair sourcing and manufacturing, which have helped Epyllion to realise global provisions of sustainability, such as the certification of environmental and social responsibility.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The primary source of data collection in the study is secondary data; as it is shown in table 1, data has been collected by pages published by the company on sustainability, sustainability reports published by both Patagonia and Epyllion Group. These sources were enlightening about the sustainability practices which the companies are practising with regard to their sourcing practices, environmental activities and overall hiring processes. Such documents permitted the study to assess the extent of the commitment of the companies to sustainable sourcing without actually speaking with the employees or managers, and hence gave a picture of the same (Kruger and Mitchell, 2022). Otherwise, these secondary materials helped in learning about the broader sustainability systems upon which the functioning of the companies is operated because they are critical in determining how sustainable sourcing is integrated in their supply chain management. The following sources of secondary data are used in this study:

Both companies, Patagonia and Epyllion Group, release yearly reports describing their work and successes in sourcing products responsibly. These reports show the sustainability aims of the companies, their sources of materials, and how they perform in terms of the environment, society, and economy (Trochim, Donnelly and Arora, 2016).

By reading these case studies, it can understand both the best practices and the obstacles faced by companies when engaging with sustainable sourcing.

Information released by the companies, including sustainability results, data on their supply chain, and compliance with codes, is reviewed to determine their place in the industry and how they are working towards sustainability.

Table 1: Secondary Data Sources (Source in Appendix A).

Company	Source of Data	Elements Analyzed	Data Type	Key Focus Areas	Year
Patagonia	Patagonia Sustainability Report	Sourcing practices, use of recycled materials, energy efficiency, ethical labor practices	Public Report	Environmental impact of production, resource management, sustainable sourcing practices, social responsibility	2024
Patagonia	Patagonia Footprint Chronicles	Supply chain transparency, environmental and social impact of products	Online Transparency Tool	Detailed supply chain journey, environmental costs, labor practices, and sourcing impact	2024
Patagonia	Patagonia Material Traceability Program	Traceability of raw materials, sustainable sourcing standards	Program Documentation	Materials' journey from raw to finished product, focus on ethical sourcing and transparency	2024
Epyllion Group	Epyllion Group Sustainability Report	Sustainability efforts, sourcing of organic cotton, energy-saving measures	Corporate Sustainability Report	Efforts to reduce environmental footprint, sourcing sustainable materials, energy efficiency, waste reduction	2024
Epyllion Group	Epyllion Group CSR Report	Social responsibility, labor practices, fair wages, health & safety	Public Report	Ethical labor standards, workplace safety, community development, employee welfare	2024
Epyllion Group	Epyllion Group Environmental Management System	Environmental impact, waste reduction, water usage, certifications	Internal Environmental System	Monitoring environmental performance, water conservation, energy-saving initiatives, and waste management	2024

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data gathered through the secondary sources are measured by studying them by thematic analysis, like other technique utilised in the qualitative research tools to identify, examine and document common themes emerging in the data analysed (Braun

and Clarke, 2006). This methodology is very appropriate in the given research since it will enable a systematic process of examining similarities and differences in the practices of sustainable sourcing of two companies used in the case study. Thematic analysis brings out themes that have been portrayed, causes that lead to such problems and the results obtained through sustainability initiatives and thus makes sure that the intended meaning is obtained. The actions entail the following.

3.6.1 Data Familiarisation

The initial stage is to dive into the ample data, including company reports, sustainability reports, and other published reports. At this point, the researcher gets familiarize with the reports of both Patagonia and Epyllion Group, and the common ideas that can be detected include environmentally friendly materials, responsible labour policies, and waste minimisation targets. This gives it a platform to be studied further.

3.6.2 Searching for Themes

After setting up the codes, they are sorted out into themes. A broader theme can be sustainability drivers, strategy of implementation, impediments to implementation, technological integration, and quantifiable benefits. As an example, the attention of Patagonia to recycled materials might be a component of an extended theme of eco-innovation, whereas the attempts of Epyllion to respond to ethical labour might be part of a social sustainability theme.

3.6.3 Reviewing Themes

This step includes the review of the emerging themes and revising them to be a good representation of the data. Duplications or weak themes are sharpened, which makes them consistent and clear. This would be essential in building a strong analytical framework that would be in tandem with the objectives of the research.

3.6.4 Defining and Naming Themes

It has elegant themes that are specified and include descriptive names that represent them. The consideration of each theme in responding to the research questions is stated. An example of such a theme is concerned with the realization of developed practices of both companies through the embracement of new environmentally friendly innovations, and another is on the problems encountered by companies in the less developed economies (McBurney and White, 2021).

3.6.5 Writing the Analysis

The last one incorporates the themes into a logical narrative. The results are contrasted between the two case companies in order to bring into light similarities, differences, and contextual forces. This summary enables the research study to exhibit the ways towards sustainable sourcing in developed and developing environments, in addition to maintaining a balanced insight into a sustainable supply chain management approach.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are vital when dealing with secondary data in research. Since the study uses collected public data, there is no physical interaction with participants, thereby avoiding issues with informed consent. By using accurate and well-referenced data, researcher can stay ethically upright and not be accused of plagiarism or confusing the information (Mcburney and White, 2021). It is important to the researcher that the information about Patagonia and Epyllion Group is reported honestly and that any discussions are clear for everyone. The truth in the research is preserved by avoiding any untrue or misleading representation of data. Besides, the study recognises the good points as well as the difficulties of the companies' sustainable buying, giving an objective view of both aspects. It makes the research more reliable and also shows respect for the organisations taking part and the main principles of ethical research.

Secondary analysis has been used as the main method to gather data in this study; it is observed that reports published by the company on sustainability, sustainability reports by Epyllion Group, and publications of that kind were gathered. These sources were informative in the sustainability practices that the companies engage in, concerning their sourcing practices, environmental activities and hiring processes. The documents enabled the study to assess the degree of dedication to the process of sustainable sourcing of the companies without engaging the employees or managers directly in conversation; this, in turn, gave an objective view of the same. In addition, the secondary sources aided in acquiring information on the broader sustainability systems that oversee the functioning of the companies, as they are also necessary to evaluate how sustainable sourcing is manifested in their supply chain management. Application of such data has also led to the reduction of research to proven publicly available information whose acquaintance is crucial in the exploration of the practical aspect of sustainability in the supply chains of business corporations.

4 FINDINGS

The chapter aims to synthesise and critically assess the sustainable sourcing policies of Epyllion Group and Patagonia and give a synthesised and broad picture assessment of its success, issues and general fashion with regards to the conventional supply chain model. The chapter seeks to present these various approaches to sustainable sourcing through the search for practices employed by the two companies, but these approaches include material selection, ethical labour conditions, environmental degradation mitigation and supply chain visibility. Besides, the findings highlights the challenges which the two companies are facing, such as supply chain limitations of resources, global supply chains, and customer perception. This comparison study imparts in this chapter some valuable lessons on the direction towards the future of sustainable sourcing in the apparel industry, indicating where the company, which happens to have an interest in adopting this strategy, should start.

The thematic analysis has been done according to the method described in Chapter 3. Patagonia and Epyllion Group have sustainability reports, annual benefit corporation reports, and corporate disclosures, which were analysed. The Results below shown in table 2, therefore, present findings under 13 thematic areas.

Table 2: Thematic Synthesis Table.

Theme	Operational definition	Patagonia – key evidence	Epyllion Group – key evidence	Barriers / risks surfaced	Implications for the supply chain model
Material selection (organic & recycled)	Prioritising inputs with lower environmental/social footprint (e.g., organic	Early adopter of 100% organic cotton in ranges; recycled polyester/wool/down	Increasing use of organic cotton and recycled polyester ; adheres to	Higher cost, variable availability/quality; recycling infra gaps (esp.	Shifts BOM design; requires supplier development and long-term contracts;

	cotton, recycled fibres)	integrated at scale; alignment with GOTS/Fair Trade/RDS	GOTS/OEKO-TEX	developing markets)	supports CE loops and reduces virgin input dependency
Supply chain transparency	Public visibility into tiers, sites, and impacts	Footprint Chronicles with product-level disclosure; Material Traceability Program	Building internal reporting ; third-party audits initiated	Multi-tier opacity; data reliability; weaker local regulatory regimes	Transparency becomes a market differentiator; requires digital traceability and verified data layers
Traceability (source-to-shelf)	Ability to verify origin/attributes of materials	Trace-back to farm/facility for priority materials; risk screening and intervention	Traceability improving but not yet end-to-end	Subcontracting; fragmented systems; audit fatigue	Enables risk management (e.g., forced labour/deforestation); foundation for credible claims
Ethical labour practices	Policies, monitoring, and worker outcomes across tiers	Supplier Code of Conduct; Fair Trade Certified™ factories; worker empowerment programs	ILO-aligned Code; H&S training, welfare programs via foundation	Subcontractor oversight; uneven enforcement capacity	Embeds social performance into sourcing; requires capacity-building and remediation pathways
Energy & climate	Decarbonisation of ops/supply through	Commitment toward 100% renewable energy across	Energy-efficient machinery/lighting , early	Grid constraints; capex burden in	Reduces cost/volatility long term; needs buyer co-

	efficiency and renewables	ops; supplier engagement	solar exploration	supplier base	investment/financial instruments
Water & chemicals	Reducing water use and hazardous chemistry in textiles	Water-saving tech; restricted substances alignment; product/material choices that reduce water/chemicals	Water-saving measures in mills; wastewater treatment efforts	Textiles are water-intensive by process; infrastructure variability	Requires process innovation (dyeing/finishing), shared ETPs, and strict ZDHC-style conformance
Waste management	Prevention, reduction, recycling across operations	Store-level zero-waste targets; repair-driven waste avoidance	Reduce–Reuse–Recycle program in factories; supplier engagement	Municipal recycling gaps; secondary markets underdeveloped	Drives upstream design changes; may need consortium solutions for scale
Supplier engagement & governance	Partner selection, capability-building, and compliance	Long-term partnerships; robust audit + remediation; certifications embedded	Rigorous vendor selection; regular audits , third-party checks; ISO 14001 orientation	Audit quality variance; compliance cost for SMEs	Move from audit-first to improvement-first models; shared training/toolkits
Consumer engagement & demand	Educating and mobilising customers for sustainable choices	Deep transparency storytelling ; consumer	Building awareness; less mature external storytelling	Price sensitivity; “say–do” gap	Demand-shaping is strategic; pricing/benefit communication

		programs (repair/reuse)			n essential in value segments
Cost & affordability trade-off	Managing sustainability premiums vs. price points	Accepts premium pricing backed by loyal, values-driven segment	Competes in price-sensitive markets; tighter margins for upgrades	Passing through costs risks volume; under-investment risks credibility	Requires TCO framing, phased roadmaps, pooled buying, and blended finance
Technology for assurance	Digital tools to monitor/verify sustainability	Data systems for product footprints and material tracking	Exploring tech to enhance traceability & reporting	Interoperability; supplier digital readiness	Enablers for scale transparency; prerequisite for credible claims and due diligence
Scalability across tiers & regions	Extending practices beyond Tier 1, across geographies	Broader scale but still challenged at depth of tiers	Earlier-stage scaling; more acute local constraints	Tier-n visibility; variable enforcement; capacity gaps	Phased, risk-based rollouts; anchor-supplier models; regional hubs
External validation & certifications	Independent standards to signal performance	Fair Trade, GOTS, RDS, additional material/chemical standards	GOTS, OEKO-TEX; targeting more	Certification fatigue/cost; scope differences	Portfolio approach: few high-value standards tied to salient risks

4.1 Sustainable Sourcing at Patagonia

Patagonia, a world leader in terms of adherence to sustainable practices among apparel companies, has been on the frontline when it comes to embracing environmentally and socially responsible practices within its supply chain. Commitment to sustainability involves either selection of materials, a chain of sustainable supply, fair labour standards, and reduction of environmental impact in the company (Patagonia, 2024a). Even so, despite the pace setting by Patagonia, they have also been challenged by several issues; primarily, those of being transparent to its supply chain, which is complex. This section will analyze critically the sustainable sourcing programs Patagonia in a process in which strengths and weaknesses are identified and what achievements it had made and what it has achieved so far.

4.1.1 Material Sourcing

The selection of the materials is one of the cornerstones of Patagonia's sustainability model. The company has been performing up to the standards that it sets in terms of utilising environment-friendly materials to ensure its environmental impact is minimal. The sourcing of materials that Patagonia uses can be narrowed down to four broad categories:

It was Patagonia became one of the first clothing companies to use 100 per cent organic cotton in its products. Organic cotton cultivation does not imply using synthetic pesticides or fertilisers that hurt ecosystems and soil properties. The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certifies the organic cotton produced by Patagonia and thus, it can be assured that the cotton it uses is subjected to environmentally sustainable status (Patagonia, 2024). The GOTS certification will also ensure that the production processes incorporate the social standards of the workers such as fair wages as well as safe conditions. Such application of sustainable cotton has been used to minimise water use and foster soil preservation, an aspect that is known to counter the drawbacks of

traditional cotton cultivation, characterised by excessive pesticide misuse (Patagonia, 2024b).

The other important aspect of Patagonia material sourcing is that it uses recycled polyester. Patagonia uses recycled polyester mainly in the form of plastic bottles and discarded clothing to recover waste in landfills and cut down the use of virgin polyester, which is synthetic polyester made of petroleum. The company has a major carbon footprint and resource reduction by making use of already-used materials (Patagonia, 2025b). Also, Patagonia has come up with the idea of a recycled version of wool and down, which also helps the company to achieve its model of a circular economy. It is a great feat, considering the environmental price of producing virgin fibres.

Beyond the use of organic and recycled materials, Patagonia is a priority to fair trade certified materials so that the raw materials incorporated in Patagonia products have been selected by farms as well as suppliers that build on ethical labour and environmental practices. The Fair-Trade certification ensures that employees in the supply chain are paid fairly, work in healthy conditions and are sustained by the community improvement programs (Patagonia, 2025a).

The strategy employed by Patagonia to use sustainable materials has its limitations. The most significant issue is how to scale the sustainable practices in the full supply chain. There is a danger of losing quality and purity in the choice of organic cotton and recycled polyester, and its small share of the world textile market is still insufficient to fully satisfy the list of inquiries into sustainable fabric usage (Patagonia, 2024c). Also, recycled materials are not easily available, especially in developing nations since recycling mechanisation is mostly unavailable.

4.1.2 Supply Chain Transparency

One more sustainability pillar of Patagonia is that it practices transparency. The firm has devised initiatives such as the Footprint Chronicles and the Material Traceability Program

to provide consumers and other interested parties with a wide knowledge of its supply chain processes.

In 2007 Patagonia Footprint Chronicles was initiated so that a consumer is able to track the environmental and social impact of a given product throughout its lifecycle. The thought process behind this action is to break the maze in the chain of supply and make the action more answerable to the company. Under the Footprint Chronicles, Patagonia reveals comprehensive information on where they source the materials, how it is made and employee policies in their factories.

The Patagonia Material Traceability Program has ensured that all the raw materials used in the products are traceable to the origin. This initiative is especially important when it comes to making sure that such materials as organic cotton or recycled polyester adhere to necessary environmental and social requirements. The program assists in ensuring suppliers meet the high ethical sourcing and environmental sustainability criteria in Patagonia (Patagonia, 2024a). It also gives detailed information regarding the supply chain so that Patagonia is able to determine the possible risks and make adjustments when there is a need.

Although Patagonia's moves towards supply chain transparency are commendable, complete transparency is and will always be a difficult feat to achieve. The company has a large, multinational supply chain with hundreds of suppliers and as a result, monitoring all the links of the supply chain is not an easy task. Despite the valuable information, available on the Footprint Chronicles, it is criticized as limited as has now been shared still necessitates the lack of granular data that will offer a complete picture of the information. Additionally, the quality and precision of the data provided to customers can be hard to confirm particularly in areas where regulatory devices are weaker. To increase the openness of its supply chain, Patagonia needs to invest in the development of traceability systems and cooperate with independent third-party auditors to make sure the given information is credible.

4.1.3 Ethical Labor Practices

Another important aspect of the sustainable sourcing policy of Patagonia is its ethical treatment system of labour. The company has come up with the Supplier Code of Conduct highlighting the lowest standards of labour practices that should be followed by all the suppliers. They are by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, and the conventions include the matters of child labour, forced labour, and discrimination at work.

The cooperation of Patagonia with Fair Trade Certified 0 factories implies that workers in its supply chain are paid fair wages, they work in safe and magnified conditions and they become the beneficiaries of community development projects. The firm is among the greatest purchasers of Fair-Trade Certified apparel in the universe as some of its merchandise holds the Fair-Trade certification (Patagonia, 2024c). Patagonia engages in worker empowerment programs in order to do more than just ensure that the labour standards are adhered to. The company cooperates with the suppliers to ensure that it gives the workers a chance to train and develop them in order to enhance both their technical and soft skills. It is part of the approach which can help to build long-term relationships with suppliers and develop more resilient and ethically responsible supply chain.

Patagonia's Supplier Code of Conduct sets out the company's commitment to ethical business practices and sustainable sourcing (Patagonia, 2024d). It requires all suppliers to have fair labour practices, such as not employing children or forced labour, having safe working conditions, and being fair with wages. It is expected that suppliers abide by local laws and regulations, extending to the strict environmental standards of Patagonia. The importance of reducing impact on the environment by encouraging responsible waste management, resource conservation, and sustainable production practices is highlighted in the Code. Suppliers must respect the rights of workers to freely associate and unionise, as well as have non-discriminatory practices within, at all levels (Patagonia, 2024). Patagonia's commitment goes to promoting transparency through their supply chain,

encouraging suppliers to share the operation and/or sustainability efforts. The company anticipates that the firms it sources from will improve and sustain ethical, environmental, and social responsibility guidelines and enhance a fair and sustainable global supply chain.

Although the activities of Patagonia in terms of ethically conscientious labour activity are conspicuous, Patagonia will have a serious issue trying to maintain a continued high standard for all its suppliers. It is one of the key issues because global supply chains are rather complicated, and it is hard to keep an eye on labour conditions in all factories (Patagonia, 2024a). Despite the fact that Patagonia cooperates with suppliers, there is the risk of subcontracting and an informal labour market resulting in exploitation-based working conditions. To reduce these risks, Patagonia needs to ensure further improvement of its auditing procedures and improve relations with suppliers.

4.1.4 Environmental Impact Reduction

Patagonia has achieved a lot when it comes to reducing environmental impact, it has concentrated on renewable energy, waste management and conservation of resources. To ensure environmental reduction, the company has incorporated the initiatives in all its business activities including design, manufacturing, packaging and retail business.

Patagonia has pledged 100% renewable energy use in all company operations (manufacturing facilities across the planet and retail stores). And the company has made big investments in renewable energy, mainly sourcing electricity from solar and wind power. Patagonia has installed solar panels in some of its facilities, such as its main distribution centre (in Nevada), and they also work with local utilities to buy renewable energy from wind and solar farms. In addition to its own operations, Patagonia works with delivery vendors and encourages the use of renewable energy in its own processes in terms of logistics, further reducing its carbon footprint. These efforts form part of Patagonia's overall sustainability strategy, which is aimed at minimising the

environmental impact and expenditures of Patagonia transitioning to a low-carbon economy (Patagonia, 2025).

Patagonia includes waste reduction into their sustainable sourcing practices, and give preference to using recycled materials in their production processes. The company uses recycled polyester and wool and makes sure the waste from post-consumer garments and plastic bottles is reprocessed into great fibres, reducing the need for virgin materials. The strategy supports the goals of Patagonia, which include sustainable sourcing and a decrease in environmental impact through the reduction of demand on natural raw materials and a reduction in landfills. Also, another interesting fact about Patagonia is that it deals with suppliers which share similar waste reduction processes, which guarantees that waste management is built into the supply chain of the supplier. And through close attention to the origin of recycled material, Patagonia can engage in a more sustainable textile business so as not to rely heavily on virgin material and propagate a circular business model of the sourcing stage of its operations (Patagonia, 2025).

Although Patagonia has made much effort regarding reduction of environmental impact, there are several challenges that the company encounters along its journey to attaining sustainability. As an example, the complexity of converting all of its worldwide supply chains towards 100% use of renewable energy is awfully difficult, especially in areas where renewable energy facilities are few. Patagonia needs to stay innovative in ways that can help minimise its environmental impact even further, including waste management, renewable energy usage, and recyclability product design.

4.2 Sustainable Sourcing at Epyllion Group

Epyllion Group is a textile and shirt manufacturer and a large company operating in the textile and garment industry in Bangladesh, which deserves much as far as integrating implementation of sustainable sourcing practices in its supply chain is concerned. Sustainability is one of the issues that the firm has taken a keen interest in the way they

tend to operate as a firm since the world is increasingly becoming concerned about the environment they consume, as well as, the ethical production of clothing products. This part is the analysis of sustainable sourcing practices of the Epyllion group in the aspects of the origin of material or goods, the provision of its supply chain, working on the labour, and environment, and also the challenge towards achieving the practice by a company.

4.2.1 Material Sourcing

One of the primary concerns of the sustainability plan of Epyllion Group is material sourcing. There has also been an effort by the company to phase out the traditional sources of materials and replace them with a more sustainable source of raw materials with respect to the trends in the world textile industry. The primary components of the Epyllion material sourcing plan are outlined below:

Epyllion Group makes use of organic cotton and other environmentally friendly fibres in garment manufacturing. Organic cotton is produced using no synthetic pesticides, or fertilisers and it also lowers the environmental burden of the traditional cotton crop. Furthermore, Epyllion has resorted to increasing the use of post-consumer waste products in recycled material including recycled polyester made from post-consumer waste including plastic bottles. It not only aids towards cutting on the demand for virgin materials but also aids towards cutting on the waste through reprocessing of discarded materials into valuable fibres (Epyllion Group, 2024). Recycled polyester has played a crucial part in the efforts of the company in minimising the use of resources and reducing the adverse effect of the production of polyester, as it is highly energy-consuming and dependent on fossil fuels.

Epyllion Group observes different international environmental standards when sourcing its material. The company follows the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) of organic cotton so that its sourcing activity complies with strict environmental and social standards. Also, Epyllion adheres to OEKO-TEX Standard 100 which is a certification that

confirms the safety of the textile and whether it contains any such substances (Epyllion Group, 2015). Such certifications allow the business to stay credible in the international market and emphasize sustainable sourcing where customers are becoming conscious of the environmental and social aftermath of their buying behaviour.

Although Epyllion is trying to mobilise sustainable resources, scaling-related problems face these practices. Even organic cotton is more sustainable, but it is also less prevalent than the conventional one, and the production is usually more expensive, usually. In addition, the usage of recycled polyester does not escape controversy itself. High-quality recycled materials are usually scarce and there is the story of environmental degradation due to recycling activities. Besides, the idea of sustainable materials may be a substantial hurdle to a company that is yet to realise its profits in a fairly price-sensitive market, including the global textile industry. Epyllion should find solutions to such challenges by collaborating with players in the industry who can enhance the accessibility and affordability of green materials.

4.2.2 Supply Chain Transparency

Epyllion Group has a supply chain management within the framework of sustainable sourcing. It has a large distribution of suppliers in Bangladesh and other regions in Asia and it concentrates on making sure that their supply chains have high sustainability. Some of the main features of the supply chain practices of Epyllion include the following ones:

Epyllion Group chooses its suppliers according to the rigorous standards of sustainability. The company gives preference to supply organisations that meet the environmental and social requirements and this is to see to it that they only respect the ethical sourcing standards of the company. Epyllion cooperates closely with suppliers to achieve sustainability in production activities where they are advised to make minimal consumption of energy and waste products, and that the employees are fairly used. This process of supplier selection forms part of the wider strategy of Epyllion, to make sure

that its supply chain is able to fit the demands of the internationally known certification of sustainability of components, such as the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System certification.

To review and make checks on supplier compliance Epyllion performs regularly the audit of the operations of suppliers. Such audits enable the evaluation of environmental and social consequences of the activities of suppliers and guarantee their compliance with the sustainability requirements of Epyllion (Epyllion Group, 2024). Third-party audits are also carried out by the company collaborating with other parties, thus further improving the aspect of transparency and accountability in the supply chain.

Although the supply chain management of Epyllion correlates greatly with the sustainability objectives, there is an issue associated with the aspects of the transparency and traceability of the supply chain. The supply chain in Bangladesh, where Epyllion is based, has been notorious and at times obscure which creates a challenge to companies in as far as compliance with sustainability requirements is concerned. Also, audits are a critical component of supplier performance monitoring, but their efficiency may be restricted by local regulations and the capacity of third-party auditing companies. Epyllion needs to improve in its auditing process to enable the local auditors and invest in creating technologies that can improve the traceability of the supply chain.

4.2.3 Labor Practices

Among the fundamental factors to consider in making the Epyllion Group sustainable is the issue of labour. The company has also been very keen on ensuring that the supply chain of workers is handled fairly and ethically. The promise is displayed in the labour rules and regulations of the company, training and welfare programs.

Epyllion Group purchases Bertin Dowide, as established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and has strict policies related to labour in accordance with international standards and specifically as proposed by the International Labour

Organisation (ILO). The company has no tolerance for child labour and forced labour, and the company is ethical in all its supply chain. The Staff deserve a good amount, good working situations and decency. Besides, there is a great emphasis on the safety of the workplace, where they conduct regular training sessions that sensitise employees on the risks that are present in the workplace and how they can avoid these accidents or mishaps. In addition to that, the company is monitoring the suppliers and ensuring that they are not only in adherence to the local labour laws and the Wizard group code of conduct but also exemplify equality and responsibility.

In addition to the labour policies, Epyllion also has high spending on training & development programmes to enhance the performance of the staff. Programmes accept students with both technical skills, like production efficiency and quality control, and soft skills like communication and teamwork etc. Through the ongoing training, Epyllion will enhance the performance and flexibility of employees to any changes in the industry. The company is of the opinion that as individuals develop their skills, it not only develops personalised workers but also makes the organisation productive. Besides, proper training enhances long-term sustainability as employees are skilled and motivated, which will help make the supply chain more resilient in the end (Epyllion Group, 2024).

The Epyllion group has also been socially responsible by witnessing the inclusion of worker welfare programs. Such programs involve the use of affordable healthcare services, which protect the health of the employees and minimise absenteeism. The company is also a practitioner of community development through the scholarships and learning opportunities it offers to the children of workers. Besides that, family support services like financial aid and recreational centres instil a feeling of insecurity and belongingness among the employees. The focus on worker welfare helps Epyllion build and maintain loyalty as it enhances the significance of job satisfaction, as well as increasing social sustainability. This kind of programs represent how the company is devoted to the balance between business and employee as well as community welfare.

Although Epyllion has stuck to its moral principle of business labour practice, the company experiences difficulties in the maintenance of the same labour practice throughout its supply chain. Although Epyllion has sound policies, the ability to use them to implement them at the supplier level can be uneven, especially in those countries with weaker means of enforcement of labour laws. Also, the high level of subcontracting at the company is a threat that it will not be able to comply with its labour standards since subcontractors will also be unlikely to implement the same ethical principles as direct suppliers. Epyllion should keep on improving its connections with suppliers and put resources in surveillance frameworks that will guarantee all levels of the inventory hold on applied working standards.

4.2.4 Environmental Initiatives

Epyllion Group has gone through a lot to ensure that it minimises its environmental impact by implementing a number of strategies to boost energy efficiency and other activities which improve the process of waste management and water conservation.

Epyllion Group believes in energy efficiency as one of its sustainability initiatives. The firm has procured new energy-saving devices and lighting in its manufacturing operations, which has gone a long way in saving the energy being used in terms of manufacturing. In addition to these, Epyllion is moving towards exploring renewable sources of energy, more specifically, solar power, which can be used to reduce fossil fuel dependence. The adoption of cleaner means of energy will enable the business to reduce its carbon footprint and, consequently, the harm to the environment. Besides the environmental protection benefits, the practices also create a source of cost savings, which can be redirected into other sustainability measures. The notion of a strategy and also environmentally, which is part of the operations of Epyllion, becomes an aspect played by energy efficiency.

Another area of major concern to Epyllion Group is waste management. The company adheres to the principle of reduce, reuse and recycle to deal with materials during the production cycle. There are attempts to reduce the waste in the initial stages, and in the event of the creation of waste, it is removed responsibly through the use of environmentally friendly means (Epyllion Group, 2025). The materials that can be recycled are reclaimed, whereas those that cannot be recycled are heavily addressed to minimise the destruction of the environment. Moreover, Epyllion is also promoting a profitable culture among its suppliers who are engaging in similar activities to ensure that it has a sustainable supply chain outside its organisation. Such a team-based strategy assists in distributed accountability and defines that the process of eliminating waste is incorporated in the whole business ecosystem of the organisation.

The subject of water conservation is particularly relevant to the textile industry, and Epyllion has placed this as a prime priority. This has been combined with water-saving technologies in which the company has introduced technologies involved in its production that do not consume a lot of water, but also do not lower the quality of the products. It further expects the suppliers to travel the same way to achieve sustainable use of water in the supply chain. In addition, Epyllion invests in waste water treatment plants, such that 3 the water that comes out of its operations is well treated and sent back into the environment. In addition to its internal activities, it works with local communities to ensure that there is responsible water management. These programs indicate its business interest to balance the needs of industries, ecology, as well as the social responsibility of Epyllion.

Epyllion has been doing very well in adopting environmental projects, but the company has quite a number of challenges in attaining its sustainability objectives. An example is the textile industry which is found among the greatest users of water and although activities have been undertaken to lessen the use of water, the manufacturing activities in Epyllion still consume a lot of water. Moreover, although the waste management plans have proved to be effective, the firm needs to intensify more on its recycling practices,

particularly in areas where recycling is underdeveloped. Epyllion should also be a pioneer in implementing water-saving technology-related innovations and recycling waste.

4.3 Comparative Analysis

This section critically compares the sustainable sourcing performance of Patagonia and Epyllion Group in five main dimensions, viz., material sourcing, supply chain transparency and traceability, ethical and labour practices, environmental impact, and consequences that are currently experienced by both companies. The comparison throws light on the equivalences, variations, and general success of their sustainability strategies.

4.3.1 Approach to Sustainable Sourcing

Both Patagonia and Epyllion Group focus on sustainable sourcing being a part of the underlying supply chains. Although both companies place value on environmental and social responsibility the approaches differ on the scale of material use, supplier choice and improvement rates.

One of the most complete material sourcing processes in the industry is the sourcing approach in Patagonia. Organic cotton, recycled polyester, and wool are used in the company, and they are among the fundamental elements that ensure the entire environmental impact of its products is minimised (Patagonia, 2024). Patagonia is a company that uses organic cotton, which does not require toxic pesticides and fertilisers and recycled polyester is made of post-consumer waste, including plastic bottles. Such attention to environmentally friendly materials is not positioned only as a marketing gimmick, but it is also an extension of the Patagonia sustainability mission.

Epyllion Group, in turn, will also be committed to utilising sustainable materials and, in particular, organic cotton as well as recycled polyester. Compared to Patagonia, Epyllion

lags a long distance in terms of investment in sustainable materials; however, the commitment it has at present is impressive. Epyllion has not completely transformed to such materials and materials yet; it remains at the scaling stage, which is negatively influenced by its price and its supply chain capacity, particularly in the country where it operates and has its presence, Bangladesh (Epyllion Group, 2024).

Table 3: Sustainable Sourcing Comparison.

Aspect	Patagonia	Epyllion Group
Material Sourcing	Prioritises organic cotton, recycled polyester, and wool.	Focus on organic cotton and recycled polyester.
Supplier Engagement	Partners with Fair Trade certified suppliers and high sustainability standards.	Focuses on suppliers with sustainable practices but faces compliance challenges.
Scale of Adoption	Significant adoption of sustainable materials across all products. Patagonia now uses preferred materials across 86% of Patagonia products by weight by fall 2025 and recycled polyester in 98% of the polyester-based fabrics by weight per year within the same period in Patagonia.	Growing adoption but still developing across the supply chain.

In table 3, it is shown that Patagonia is a leader in the sourcing of materials, having a wider scope of use of sustainable materials in its product lines. Epyllion has challenges regarding scaling and cost, especially where customers are sensitive to price.

4.3.2 Transparency and Traceability

Traceability and transparency play an important role in verifying the credibility of sustainability claims. Both companies have been developing a better experience in making the supply chains more visible, however, Patagonia has advanced more (Patagonia, 2024).

Patagonia has had a long track record of leading the way on transparency by providing consumers with detailed information on the environmental and social impact of specific products via its Footprint Chronicles. This is one of the initiatives undertaken by Patagonia in its attempt to create an elevated level of transparency beyond most of the businesses in the apparel industry. Patagonia has a Material Traceability Program through which it ensures that every single material that goes into its products can be traced to its origin, thereby giving full responsibility for the practice.

The Epyllion Group has been making an effort to make an impact on transparency, but has made no distinguishable impact. Its current activity is related to the internal improvement reporting systems, which would track the performance of its sustainable efforts in its internal supply chain. Although the modifications to Epyllion to make it more traceable are a healthy step in the right direction as far as it goes, it is behind the curve and does not allow for easy access to the people at large, like Patagonia, for example.

Table 4: Comparison of Transparency and Traceability.

Aspect	Patagonia	Epyllion Group
Transparency Initiatives	Footprint Chronicles offer detailed insights into product impacts.	Limited transparency, working on internal reporting systems.
Material Traceability	Full traceability of materials through the Material Traceability Program.	Efforts in progress but face challenges in full traceability.
Supply Chain Monitoring	Extensive audits and supplier monitoring to ensure compliance.	Audits in place but limited by resource constraints and subcontracting.

Table 4 illustrates that, Patagonia wins on gratuity and traceability, which is a potent program to facilitate the ability for the consumer to trace materials sourced and the impacts on the environment. Epyllion is a rather new character and not visible.

4.3.3 Ethical and Labor Practices

Another aspect of focus by the two companies is on ethical labour practices. Patagonia is a corporation with a long history of adherence to fair labour, whereas Epyllion Group is also taking hopeful strides in this direction, but there are problems to overcome.

Supplier code of conduct guarantees that the suppliers of Patagonia comply with the highest ethical labour standards (fair wage, safe working conditions and no child and forced labour). There are also Fair Trade Certified 10 factories and Patagonia uses them, therefore, the employees receive fair wages and people may obtain also some community development (Patagonia, 2024c).

Epyllion Group has also developed a Supplier Code of Conduct which is in line with International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions. There are however challenges within the company to make sure that its suppliers abide completely by these standards, particularly on smaller subcontractors (Epyllion Group, 2015). Even Epyllion is on the path of accepting certifications like Fair Trade, yet does not reach the same level of certification and visibility as Patagonia.

Table 5: Comparison of Ethical and Labor Practices.

Aspect	Patagonia	Epyllion Group
Labor Standards	Adheres to Fair Trade, ILO conventions, and extensive supplier audits.	Adheres to ILO conventions, with a Supplier Code of Conduct in place.
Certifications	Fair Trade Certified™, Responsible Down Standard (RDS), and GOTS.	Working on acquiring similar certifications, fewer certifications.
Supplier Audits	Extensive audits to ensure compliance with labor standards.	Audits in place but inconsistent compliance from subcontractors.

Patagonia has the best ethical production under its belt including strong certifications and wide-ranged supplier tracking as it is shown in table 5. As a company that is being

proactive, Epyllion is experiencing some difficulties with subcontractors and complete compliance in its global supply chain.

4.3.4 Environmental Impact

Patagonia and Epyllion share very ambitious goals regarding the reduction of their environmental impact but have the parts of strategies and change of practices.

Patagonia is the first company that can be characterised by energy efficiency: the company utilises renewable energy not only in its production facilities but also in its retail outlets. The other example of how the company contributes to the circular economy is that of the Worn Wear program that assists customers to repair, reuse and recycle their Patagonia equipment. The waste reduction procedures of Patagonia are the zero-waste initiatives in the retail stores and the commitment to minimising the waste produced during packaging.

Epyllion Group has been using energy-efficient ways although they have not shifted completely to renewable energy. The company works on enhancing efficiency in energy consumption in their factories and reducing waste by making recycling activities. Epyllion has already gone far in the way of water consumption, which is so problematic in the textile sector, however, it experiences some limits as the process is inherently water-consuming.

Table 6: Comparison of Environmental Impacts.

Aspect	Patagonia	Epyllion Group
Energy Efficiency	Committed to 100% renewable electricity in owned & operated facilities; reached 100% in the US and 76% globally by 2019	Energy-efficient practices in place, but not yet fully renewable.
Waste Management	Zero-waste stores and Worn Wear program for recycling.	Waste reduction strategies in place but less extensive than Patagonia's.

Water Conservation	Implements water-saving technologies across operations.	Water conservation efforts are growing but limited by textile processes.
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Patagonia does more work to reduce its environmental effects, especially in renewable energy and waste management (demonstrated in table 6). Epyllion is also on its way but has an uphill task regarding the adoption of renewable energy, and reduction of waste especially of high magnitude.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This chapter going to examine how the activities of sustainable sourcing of Patagonia and Epyllion Group are consistent with the major sustainability models, such as the Theory of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM), Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, and even Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies as well as practical implications. These models provide an understanding of how to interpret the net advantages of the sustainability of the two firms.

5.1.1 Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) Theory

The principle of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) aims at the integration of the environmental, social and economic goals of the supply chain to reduce the negative consequences and maximise the value. Patagonia and Epyllion equally share certain similarities inherent in the fact that both corporations apply the ideas of SSCM, though the very methods are different in their size and maturity.

Patagonia has over the years been among the spearheads as regards implementing the practice of SSCM. The agenda of environmental sustainability of the company may be observed in the fact that it purchases organic materials, has the usage of renewable energy, and recycled material and cut down waste. Patagonia has integrated social responsibility into its supply chain by partnering with Fair Trade Certified™ factories and by adopting the standards of international organisations like the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on labour standards. The economic impact also shows that the sustainable practices in Patagonia will in the long run influence growth as it creates a good brand image that pulls customers who are environment conscious.

The implementation of the SSCM concepts by Epyllion Group is comparatively recent but growingly noticeable. The firm relies on organic and recycled raw materials, conforms to

environmental standards such as ISO 14001, and collaborates with its suppliers in order to practice sustainability. Nevertheless, as the provider of the Epyllion present in Bangladesh, one will have to deal with different challenges regarding the scale-up of SSCM practices, especially on the subjects of supply chain transparency and resource involvement. Nevertheless, Epyllion also shows how emerging-market firms can start applying the principles of SSCM with their supply chains, even though the obstacles in their way are somewhat higher than those of established ones such as Patagonia.

5.2 Practical Implications

The following section discusses the implications in a practical sense of the findings of the sustainable sourcing of Patagonia and Epyllion Group. Some likely implications include best practice in the industry, policy changes and the driving force of sustainability, which is consumer awareness.

5.2.1 Industry Best Practices

Sustainable sourcing plans of Patagonia and Epyllion Group imply the consideration of the following best practices, which might be adopted by other organisations operating in the apparel industry:

Comprehensive Supplier Engagement: Both companies also suggest that much thought must be put in saying that one should choose a supplier that will adopt higher environmental and ethical practices. Among the largest lies action undertaken by Patagonia and its relationship with Fair Trade Certified production organisations, where the status quo has known face in dealing with ethical perspective in the sourcing mechanism. One of the ways through which the company can improve its supply chain practice is the concept that Epyllion is advanced, where the selection of suppliers is pegged on sustainability. The same action should be practised by other companies, not just by using certifications to know recurrent compliance, but also by making the suppliers stay as capacity-building measures to ensure compliance continuity.

Patagonia can boast of superior supply chain transparency services; they involve the utilisation of footprint Chronicles and Material Traceability Program services. The programs not only contribute towards the prevention of ignorant decisions by the consumers but also provide the aspect of accountability in the supply chain. It is recommended that business invests in a traceability program (i.e. blockchain) and provide consumers with a clear understanding of how their products affect the environment/social impact.

Worn Wear Repair, Reuse, And Recycle is one of the Patagonia programs, which act as an example of moving towards a circular economy. Business firms may embrace similar models in order to minimise the amount of waste, maximise the life of products, and minimise new resource consumption. More so, the adoption of the circular economy in business can enhance resource utilisation and make the business environmentally friendly.

Patagonia completely reducing its carbon footprint by energy consumption and utilising renewable energy and waste management schemes are a solid model that could be thought of as an example by other organisations wanting to minimise their impact on the environment. The introduction of renewable solutions to energy and, a better waste management system can also be a game changer in lowering the operational cost and increasing sustainability.

This chapter has drawn a comparative difference between sustainable sourcing between Patagonia and Epyllion Group. Patagonia is an industry leader that promotes the use of organic and recycled materials, has high transparency in the supply chain, undergoes Fair Trade certifications, and conducts numerous actions to derive the minimum negative impact on the environment. Epyllion Group is new to sustainable sourcing, which has to some degree managed to create sustainable materials, ethical labour practices, as well as environmental initiatives which have however come with difficulty in scaling these practices in its supply chain.

Although both companies can boast their enthusiasm about sustainability, Patagonia is ahead of its rivals in scaling and efficiency, given that it used the mentioned practices to a considerable degree many years ago. Epyllion, nevertheless offers a useful blueprint of what organisations in emerging economies can do to start incorporating sustainability in their processes even when fraught with economic scarcity and complicated supply chains.

6 CONCLUSION

The conclusion chapter of this thesis summarises the important ideas that arose out of the review of sustainable sourcing practised by Patagonia and Epyllion Group. This chapter gives a concluding thought on the current practice of sustainable sourcing in the apparel industry, by assessing their practices in material sourcing, supply chain transparency, labour treatment, environmental cost/reduction, and difficulties encountered. By the lessons gained in the case studies, practical recommendations can be given to the companies and the industry to help them source more sustainably, which is elaborated in the chapter as well.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study has analyzed the role of sustainable sourcing into corporate supply chains and their effects on environmental, social, and economic performance by comparing Patagonia and Epyllion Group. The results show that despite their endeavors to institutionally entrench sustainability in their sourcing and production policies, the scale, institutional environment, and the level of maturity result in significantly different consequences of these efforts by both companies.

Patagonia has positioned itself as a leader in eco-friendly material sourcing in the world arenas of apparel sales. Instead of traditionally cultivated cotton, it has applied 100 per cent organic cotton with Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certification, has increased recycled polyester, wool and down usage. These have significantly decreased the reliance on virgin petroleum resources as well as decreasing the pesticide and water utilization and this is in line with the concept of the circular-economy. The environmental and social sustainability of the sourcing model by Patagonia is strengthened by its Fair Trade and Responsible Down Standard (RDS) certifications.

This has also been a case with Epyllion Group, a company in Bangladesh that operates in the resource-starved textile industry and has started to introduce organic cotton and

recycled polyester to meet the expectation of the purchaser especially Europe and North America. The ISO 14001 and the OEKO-TEX Standard 100 certification of the company reflects the progress of the company in environmental and chemical compliance. Nevertheless, the large material prices, short supply of sustainable fibres within Turkey, and a lack of infrastructures limit the scale. This comparison shows that the level of market maturity, the ability of the supply-chain, and the institutional backing is very important in the determination of sustainable adoption of materials.

Patagonia has come up with one of the most progressive transparency systems in the clothes industry. Programmes including The Footprint Chronicles and the Material Traceability Program has made consumers and other stakeholders have access to product-level data about environmental and social impacts. These systems increase accountability, trust among the stakeholders and the authenticity of the brand. However, 100 percent transparency of hundreds of suppliers is still difficult, particularly in the less highly regulated regions.

Epyllion has embarked on the transparency process by auditing suppliers, conducting the third-party checks, and the development of new in-house reporting systems. However, the visibility of the company to the tier-one suppliers is also less because of such subcontracting, disjointed information systems and lack of regulations in Bangladesh. Results of the comparison suggest that transparency is highly related to institutional capability and consumer-motivated exertion; Epyllion has to struggle with institutional limitations inherent to young economies, whereas Patagonia has to deal with high scrutiny in developed countries.

The ethical labour standards are also enforced in both companies through the supply chains, which are aligned with the ILO Conventions. Supplier Code of Conduct employed by Patagonia does not allow child and forced labour and provides fair wages and safe working conditions. Its relationships with Fair Trade Certified 0: The worker-

empowerment programs and its allies with Fair Trade Certified factories depict a comprehensive approach to social responsibility.

Epyllion has a similar set of codes of conduct with the spending in health and safety trainings, worker welfare, and community development by the Epyllion Foundation. But it is difficult to have consistency in compliance throughout all levels because of subcontracting and a lack of enforcement systems. This result indicates that although the principles of ethical sourcing can be shared on the global level, the depth of implementation depends on the institutional capacity of enforcement and the structure of the local labour markets.

Renewable energy, waste cutdowns, and the repair-reuse program of Worn Wear were all initiatives by Patagonia to attain significant positive environmental impact. By 2019, it was 100 per cent renewable electricity in the United States and 76 per cent in its international business. All these activities help in reducing the carbon footprint and expenditure of resources by the company.

Environmental performance. This is an area where Epyllion is recording incremental performance, encouraging gains. The firm has implemented power-saving equipment, water-saving systems and garbage-processing in its production points. Its capacity to minimise water intensity and increase recycling, however, is limited due to the technological shortcomings and the lack of countrywide recycling facilities. Nevertheless, the advancement of the firm shows that even where there is little available, there is a possibility of environmental improvements as long as the management is committed to the changes.

Sustainable sourcing has reinforced the brand equity of Patagonia, and it can charge high prices, and consumers are highly loyal to the company of environmentally-conscious patrons. The company illustrates that being sustainable can be long-term competitive as opposed to a cost expense.

Epyllion, on the other hand, is under a very price-sensitive export business where profit margins are low. Although the sustainability efforts raise the cost of production, the costs also contribute to the fact that it allows the company to attract the attention of more buyers worldwide who want ethically produced clothing. In this regard, therefore, sustainability is less a marketing distinction and more of a strategic requirement to remain competitive globally.

The comparative analysis highlights that the two companies follow the three pillars of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and Triple Bottom Line (TBL), but the level of integration is quite different. Patagonia is an advanced model of the entire system that is strategically aligned through environmental stewardship, social justice, and economic sustainability. Epyllion is an example of an adaptation model, influenced by external buyer demands, continuous enhancement, and restrictions of contexts in development and governance.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The relevance of the results of this thesis to the use of sustainable sourcing in the apparel industry is that its contribution to the field is expanding. Nevertheless, they also present several shortcomings that can be bridged by future studies to refine theoretical knowledge and practice. These recommendations are directly oriented, as they are in connection with the topics covered in the literature analysis, such as Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM), the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), transparency, consumer behaviour, and the circular economy.

The initial suggestion of possible research in the future relates to the economic aspect of sustainable sourcing. In the literature of SSCM and TBL, it has been determined that sustainability needs to indicate a compensation between social, environmental, and economic performance (Carter and Rogers, 2008). Though the thesis has shown that Patagonia can attain brand loyalty practices, as well as premium-pricing practices by relying on its sustainable sourcing, and Epyllion can maintain its competitiveness by not

falling short of buyers' expectations concerning consumer interaction practices, there is less empirical evidence regarding the long-term financial benefits of these practices.

New literature ought to pay attention to both longitudinal studies following the monetary consequences of sustainable sourcing across time. This may involve providing comparative studies on companies that have totally adopted the concept of sustainable sourcing and those that continue to use the traditional way of doing it. These studies would take the terms like profitability and market share, shareholder value, stamina, and if any problems in the market make the economic situation turn against the businesses, turn against one another. They can also examine the question of whether the early adopters (e.g., Patagonia) are financially stable or not; this can not be established so easily by late adopters. By linking the sustainability spirit to actual financial impacts, an answer to the question of whether sustainable sourcing, so far a dilemma in the literature over experienced between a lasting financial advantage and reputation marketing without actual benefit, someday can be given.

The second recommendation is about consumer participation in the promotion of sustainable sourcing. In the literature review, it has been indicated that consumer awareness and behaviour are motivators that can lead firms to practice more sustainable business behaviour (Ahi and Searcy, 2013). On the basis of this research, the conclusion can be drawn that the green-conscious community of Patagonia customers helps the company in its sustainability efforts, while in Bangladesh, Epyllion has a tough job of penetrating consumers, where a low price is always a higher priority than any social responsibility.

The research in future should therefore further probe into the consumer behaviour in different cultural and economic terms. It could be carried out through cross-national comparative research to collect information on the willingness to pay a premium on the sale of apparel that is sustainably sourced from the development country/emerging country of origin. The other approach to be monitored is through experimental research

where, under actual purchasing behaviour, the connection between transparency mechanisms (such as traceability apps, impact labelling or sustainability rating) can be analysed.

A further concern is that the emergence of the disconnect between say and do also needs more analysis, as consumers are making loud declarations of being passionate about the future but struggling to translate it to their clicks. The dynamics discussed here may help future studies to guide companies to design better targeted strategies to persuade consumers' expectations related to the sustainability sourcing, and therefore also support the demand-side sustainability leveraging.

Transparency and traceability were also aspects of sustainable sourcing that were poorly or not properly practised in this thesis. Literature over the years has argued that visibility to different levels of the supply chain is a prerequisite to accountability and how much one can trust a particular stakeholder (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). Despite Patagonia's work to improve this over time on things like Footprint and the Material Traceability Program, this doesn't guarantee end-to-end visibility. At the same time, Epyllion has low scores on subcontracting problems and a weaker institutional management quo, which could assure operating supporting in terms of transparency of international purchases.

The relation between this development and one's future research is in the connection between new digital technologies, such as the technology of blockchain, artificial intelligence, and even applications around the Internet of Things (IoT) and how they can contribute to transparency. One of its applications is blockchain technology, which has the potential to create a record of the products and their close relationship to their raw materials and finished garments, and create an indelible, real-time stream of information.

Although studies have demonstrated their viability for low-income and inherently complex supply chain problems, research on their cost- and effectiveness-related viability in such supply chains is lacking. The prospective research would be able to develop pilot projects in the apparel supply chains and draw conclusions about the technological and organisational barriers to implementation. A research work like this would not only benefit the theoretical deliberations over transparency but also would offer feasible options to escape from the present constraints that all the leaders are facing globally and also in the emerging markets.

The other dominant theme regarding the literature review was CSR because the studies emphasised the importance of social responsibility measures in enhancing legitimacy and trust among stakeholders (Farmer and Hogue, 2020). The procedures used in this thesis determined that Patagonia implements ethical labour standards by means of fair trade certification and supplier codes of conduct, whereas Epyllion commits to training and welfare strategies and has difficulties with compliance among subcontractors. This shows a lack of knowledge on how CSR initiatives in labour practices lead to sustained improvement activities across the various supply chains.

The question the following research needs to address is how comparable labour-oriented CSR initiatives can be extended to Tier 1 suppliers, or even further, in a country where informal labour markets are widespread. This may be accomplished through comparing outcomes of buyer-directed code of conduct to joint programs with governments, non-governmental organisations, and unions. The other question to consider is the connection between CSR activities and worker empowerment: are welfare and training programs indeed associated with better long-term needs of employees, or are they mere symbols? These studies would enhance the existing theoretical connection between CSR and social sustainability, besides providing practical information on the issue in firms grappling with compliance of suppliers within the complicated supply chains.

Additional studies to do are the scaling of circular economy practices in the apparel industry, as well as ensuring their effectiveness. It is also unclear how to execute the overhaul activities, such as reverse logistics, product take-back programs, and textile recycling processes on a profitable basis, especially in the new-age economies where the infrastructure is not well-developed.

Another opportunity would be in exploring the consumer aspect of the circular models, such as willingness to repair products, or reuse or buy second-hand goods. Integrating the supply chain and consumer insights, a follow-up research project can determine the ability of circular economy patterns to transform niche-level practices into the customary practices throughout an industry to develop curriculum and practices implemented.

Lastly, this thesis concludes that institutional contexts are significant in the way they influence sustainable sourcing. Patagonia has the advantage of competing in a highly controlled sector where there is consumer demand, and Epyllion has the advantage of operating in an emerging economy where institutional enforcement of labour and environmental standards is not as strong, promoting consumer demand. The literature regarding the institutional theory emphasises the presence of the coercive, normative, and cognitive pressures, which define the production of the firm's behaviour (Johnsen, Howard and Miemczyk, 2018). However, further comparative studies are required to comprehend the role of the institutional settings in mediating the use of sustainable sourcing practices and their effects.

Subsequent research thus ought to take comparative and multi-national inquisition to analyse the impact of institutional environments on sustainability paths. It is possible that a study on how emerging-market firms navigate between international buyer needs and local limitations, or on the extent to which the policies in government control or the international trade agreements influence adoption rates, would be carried out. These comparative efforts would enlighten the institutional theory by illustrating how companies react differently to external pressures with regard to their setting.

Therefore, it can be said that the gaps identified in this thesis refer to the promising areas of future research that are completely based on the themes of the literature review. Work on the financial long-term costs of sustainable sourcing, consumer behaviour of sustainable purchasing, digital technologies in transparency, and CSR labour programmes will all support the build-up of a more holistically viewed sustainable supply chain, and to the future of the circular economy will be studied comparably. The active fusion of these future research directions would not only advance further theoretical debates, but also be in a position to provide at least some practical guidance to companies, policymakers and consumers, who try to make environmental sustainability the normative feature of the world's clothing supply chains.

In conclusion, two approaches to treat sustainable sourcing can be seen in Patagonia and Epyllion Group, and each of them has its strengths, doubts, and opportunities. The example of sustainability at Patagonia can be followed in the whole sector, and the experience of sustainability with the Epyllion demonstrates that being in the new markets does not mean an organisation cannot be sustainable. The overall extrapolation onto the world of apparel determines the need to emphasise the notion of transparency, collaboration, and a trade-off of sustainability and affordability. The phenomenon of increasing awareness of products, which are greener with regard to nature, has enhanced consumer demand; therefore, firms that are sensitive to sustainability have a high likelihood of gaining the upper hand in terms of competitive advantage. However, issues of sustainability on a considered level, with a supply chain that is potentially taxing to operate upon, and costs were also raised. The various stakeholders play various roles in dictating the future of sustainable sourcing to the clothing industry, and these include the role played by policymakers, companies and consumers. Further discussion of the cost dimension of sustainability and what sustainability means, the potentials offered by technology in the area of supply chains, cost transparency, consumption behaviour, and capability in discovery and recognition processes of supply chain sustainable development appears to be the way forward for sustainability in the context of business research.

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Appendix A: Key Secondary Data Sources

A.1 Epyllion Group Documents

Year	Title / Source	Type of Document	URL / Access Information
2024	<i>Epyllion Group Communication on Progress Report.</i> Epyllion Group.	Annual CSR / Sustainability Communication	https://epyllion.foundation/show/sustainability
2024	<i>Sustainability – Epyllion Group.</i> [Online] Epyllion Group.	Sustainability Webpage	https://www.epylliongroup.com/sustainability.php

A.2 Patagonia Documents

Year	Title / Source	Type of Document	URL / Access Information
2024	<i>Material Traceability – Patagonia.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	Webpage detailing material traceability programme	https://www.patagonia.com/our-footprint/material-traceability.html
2024	<i>Responsible Purchasing Practices – Patagonia.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	Webpage outlining responsible purchasing guidelines	https://www.patagonia.com/our-footprint/responsible-purchasing-practices.html

2024 b	<i>Responsible Purchasing Practices – Patagonia.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	Duplicate citation retained for cross-reference in thematic coding	https://www.patagonia.com/our-footprint/responsible-purchasing-practices.html
2024c	<i>Supply Chain Environmental Responsibility Program – Patagonia.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	Webpage outlining environmental performance standards	https://www.patagonia.com/our-footprint/supply-chain-environmental-responsibility-program.html
2024 d	<i>Annual Benefit Corporation Report: Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	Annual sustainability and impact report	https://www.patagonia.com/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-PatagoniaShared/default/dw2f8292a3/PDF-US/Patagonia-2023-2024-BCorp-Report.pdf
2024 e	<i>Environmental Responsibility – Patagonia.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	Webpage describing materials and environmental initiatives	https://www.patagonia.com/environmental-responsibility-materials/
2024f	<i>Patagonia Outdoor Clothing & Gear.</i> [Online] Patagonia.	General corporate webpage with supply chain and business	https://www.patagonia.com/where-we-do-business/

		footprint information	
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