PITCH

VETEMENTS

x

OCEAN PLASTIC WASTE
To briefly introduce myself before we start off today, my name is Maxi Werkle and I am a graduate student from the Amsterdam Fashion Institute. Today I am here to pitch to you, how Vetements can be the polisher of plastic and make trash trendy. I would like to give you a short background story as to how I got thinking of this subject. When I went on a recent trip to Bali, I was confronted with the massive amounts of plastic the island was facing, and the plastic that seemed to fill the oceans, in excess. And while I was concerning myself with this plastic waste, I saw potential to use the fashion industry to tackle this problem and be an active promoter and participant in cleaning the ocean.
To give you an understanding of the extent of the issue, I would like to show you a short video addressing ocean plastic waste and its impact.

(At this point, the video will be shown, for reference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDapFsCE2k0)
I am sure I am speaking for all of us when I say that this leaves us all feeling more than slightly depressed. But it does not have to be this way. There is so much potential that can be derived from ocean plastic, and fashion can be the medium to promote this change. Of course, that is a lot harder than it sounds.

Therefore, I came to you today, to pitch to you, why ocean plastic waste is the next step for Vetements. I might have a solution how you can transform tons of plastic waste into the future of the brand.
Vetements is undoubtedly known to be a very revolutionary brand, ahead of trend, even ahead of the Zeitgeist, challenging brands and society to rethink the way we design, produce, and use.
2017’s “Pile of Clothes” approach aimed to raise awareness to the issue of overproduction and wasteful consuming. At the same time, it opened the door for sustainability - and in this regard, also accountability. To not let this approach seem like a one-off “greenwashing” stunt the fashion industry seems to be taunted with lately, and to include accountable practices into the core of Vetements, it is now time to take the next step in this process.
And that next step should, and can be, Ocean Plastic Waste. This is actually a lot easier than it sounds.
Ocean plastic can surely replace any Polyester and Nylon with the exact same characteristics and performances that the virgin material can. And with recent Vetements collaborations such as with DHL, Umbro and Reebok, Vetements has plenty of products in the collections that are based on exactly these components.
Let us have a look at the groundwork:
1. Vetements has numerous products that are applicable for the use of ocean plastic waste
2. The drive to change the consumers’ mindset from wasteful consumption to valuing a product is already existent
3. Vetement is a trendsetter, a brand that others look up to. And with that I do not only mean fashion, but many creatives industries are trying to follow these footsteps and somehow implement Vetements’ approach to a change of mindset into their practices
To make this into something more than just an idea and to make it a tad more graspable, I drew up an approach of how to specifically introduce ocean plastic waste into the brand and into the product. Erik Liedtke, CMO of Adidas, the brand that got the ball rolling for ocean plastic in sportswear, said: “Footwear is just a sexier place to start, it’s what gets people excited.” Just think about it: how many sneaker blogs and footwear sites have come online in the past 3-4 years? How many online publishers and offline magazines devote entire segments to shoes? On top of that, Net-A-Porter reported that luxury sneaker sales rose by 150%. Footwear is definitely an attention grabber, and definitely gets people talking.
What does that mean for Vetements? Start with shoes.
The Reebok x Vetements Instapump fury was named as one of the most hyped sneaker launches of 2017 by Sneakernews. To make a sneaker, it takes roughly 11 plastic bottles. So rather than using virgin raw material, use recycled ocean plastic.

Vetements has used products as communicators in the past, so make the shoe spread the message, let the shoe be the storyteller.
The shoe can be personalized to the plastic it is made of, for example plastic bottles from Hawaii, Coca Cola crates from California or gigantic ghostnets from the midst of the Atlantic. Give the product a background story that the consumer can emotionalize to, give the shoe value that the buyer will not want to waste and make the shoe more than just a product, make it an investment for their future and our oceans.

So how will that message be brought across?
Connecting with the media and the greater public can be as easy as shifting from the “pile of clothes”, to the “pile of plastic”. If filling store windows with clothes was an attention grabber, fill up Harrods’ and Saks’ windows with plastic waste, that’s going to make an even bigger media splash and really turn heads. You can even animate consumers to bring their plastic to the store and be a part of stopping plastic pollution, because it makes it a lot easier to collect the plastic from a store window than fishing it out of the oceans years later. Of course not everything is this black and white and not all the plastic thrown away ends up in our oceans, but it surely brings across the message.
To make that message heard globally, digital will be the primary channel. The approach can be publicized on Vetement.com and social media, as well as involving consumer generated content that pushes word-of-mouth advertising.
The collection presentation can take place in front of plasticized supermarket shelves, at a beverage market next to batches of crates and on plastic dumps. The media will jump at covering this topic, and once again puts a new twist on the way Vetements approaches fashion.

So now looking at it from a profitable perspective, what is the business opportunity to be derived from this?
Millenials are evolving into the biggest buying power within the next 3 years, the ones that are willing to invest and spend for something they believe in. And luckily for our planet - and if Vetements decides to use ocean plastic waste, also luckily for you - they believe in preserving our resources and supporting those that promote a change for a better consuming. That means, Vetements gives the consumer the value proposition of being the brand that acts accountable towards our oceans, and in return the consumer repays the brand in loyalty, in sales, and a change of mindset on consumption.
Summing up the 3 key takeaways:

1. Ocean plastic has the potential to be a resourceful material, and Vetements has the products that can make use of this material.
2. The consumer is supporting engagement for the planet and a conscious consuming, if done genuinely.
3. This approach has the potential for continuation beyond shoes: once the hype is created about and the message is brought, the material can be further implemented into further product categories and even into collaborations, to extend the reach of ocean plastic across the industry.
Vetements has the ability to create desire for their products, and by adding ocean plastic waste into that equation, value and desire are created for the material as well. Doing good for the environment and doing good economically are not exclusive to one another, and this approach provides an opportunity for both. Vetement can be the driver of this change, the polisher of the image of plastic and the initiator for a more conscious consuming.