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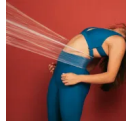
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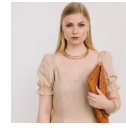
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3 sustainable businesses entrepreneurs talk purpose & profit

BY [TEAM ZERRIN](https://zerrin.com/author/team-zerrin/) ([HTTPS://ZERRIN.COM/AUTHOR/TEAM-ZERRIN/](https://zerrin.com/author/team-zerrin/))
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Many factors – environmental and social, are shaping our fashion and lifestyle industries today. The pressing threat of climate change, an increase in the discerning consumer base. Not to mention, the demands for companies to do more than maximise profits are growing. With this topic on our minds, we chatted to three prominent Asia-based brands – Dorsu, SOJAO and Matter Prints. We asked them to go beyond the buzzwords of ‘mission-driven’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘ethical’, and learn about how they combine purpose and profit in their businesses.



Sustainable fashion business Dorsu creates ethical basics from deadstock cotton jersey fabric in Cambodia

The brands

Cambodia-based [Dorsu \(https://shop.zerrin.com/collections/dorsu\)](https://shop.zerrin.com/collections/dorsu) creates versatile essentials from deadstock fabric from the garment manufacturing industry and has become a leader in ethical fashion with a global consumer base.

[SOJAO \(https://sojao.shop/\)](https://sojao.shop/) is a Singapore-based luxury bed sheet brand that supports marginalised organic cotton farmers by selling 100% GOTS-certified organic linens. The brand was founded in January 2018 and offers accessible price points for its sustainably-made products.

[Matter Prints \(https://matterprints.com/\)](https://matterprints.com/) source heritage prints and styles and reinterprets them in a modern manner, making rural artisan production sustainable and encouraging its customers to value provenance.



Singapore-based artisanal label Matter Prints interprets print stories to tell a story about where and how clothing is made

Setting foundations, prioritising relationships

For Matter Prints and Dorsu, a long-term approach to scaling operations has helped each company maintain integrity while ensuring business feasibility. Matter Prints prioritises supply chain impact and long-term partner relationships. They then select collaborators based on the criteria such as product integrity, social and environmental impact and management robustness. “You have to decide which parameters are most important to you, guided by the impact you want to achieve as well as your available resources,” says Farisia Thang, Content Creator at Matter Prints. “These frameworks keep you aligned to your why.”

“**You have to decide which parameters are most important to you, guided by the impact you want to achieve as well as your available resources**” – Farisia Thang

Acting Dorsu CEO Ellen Tirant characterises their company's approach as “the long game”. This means sacrificing short-term profits to build a foundation of integrity. “I look at it more like the responsibility of a company that employs people in an industry that is traditionally exploitative,” she says. She adds that the fast-fashion, trend-driven cycle doesn't align with Dorsu's ethics.

Educating consumers, changing attitudes

Priscilla Tan, SOJAO's Founder and CEO, sees SOJAO as a way to make ethically-made products financially accessible in the Asian market. Especially because she believes “conscious consumerism is still a relatively new thing” in Asia. SOJAO is helping to redefine what luxury means. Additionally, she says it attributes to being inclusive and contributing to closing the global income inequality gap. Beyond operating a clothing company, Ellen views Dorsu's mission as part of the changing attitudes towards clothing consumption and production. Particularly in the context of Cambodia's “destructive” garment industry. “It's incredibly important to us to offer an alternative to the ‘norm’ when it comes to clothing production and employment for women,” she says.

“**It's incredibly important to us to offer an alternative to the ‘norm’ when it comes to clothing production and employment for women.**” – Ellen Tirant



Sheets by bedding and homeware business SOJAO are made from 100% GOTS certified organic cotton

The human processes

Farisia explains that Matter Prints is also sensitive to other variables that affect production processes. “Serendipities of weather, celebratory customs, and harvest cycles all affect artisans,” she says. Farisia also places emphasis on honouring this human process. It is an important part of preserving the cultural heritage and story of each textile and piece.

Ellen characterises ethical fashion as treading a fine line between “operating sustainably with a higher cost” and “pricing out people who genuinely want to take action”. She believes this is contrary to the concept of being ‘ethical’. With this in mind, she says, Dorsu prices its clothing accessibly. However, also ensuring that its products are durable enough to be a long-term investment.

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Photo credit: Matter Prints

“There is so much beauty and humanity in the ecosystems of craft and the relationships in rural production,” says Farisia. “While difficult, it is also almost an antidote to the urbanised factory approach of modern industry.”

– by Veena McCoole

[Read Veena's posts here. \(https://zerrin.com/search?q=veena+mccoole\)](https://zerrin.com/search?q=veena+mccoole)



Veena is a freelance writer, travel enthusiast and lover of croissants and coconuts. She's half Irish and half Thai, lives in Singapore and studies English at Yale. She has recently invested in reusable straws to do her part to make the planet a better place!

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