

Design with denim. A process that impacts health and ethics



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ABSTRACT

This is a reflection on the ethical and moral implications of the Sandblast Case, named for the technique used to wear down jeans; the issue also includes the trafficking of children to harvest cotton

used in the manufacture of denim (each pair of pants can be between 75% and 100% cotton). The media scandal has arisen due to the delicate repercussions on the health and lives of both workers in the fashion industry and consumers of the garments, resulting from this production process. Along with the above, there is the indifference and voracity of transnational brands that have no qualms about continuing these practices by hiring workers in a state of defenselessness, as in the case of children, or risking the lives of many.

Keywords: Health, Children, Denim, Sandblast, Trade.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to Zazueta (2010), in 1870, in England, Benjamin C. Tilgman patented the first device to devastate materials by expelling considerable amounts of abrasives through the air that are used to polish surfaces, smooth them or etch them. The machine has been transformed over the years, although its principle of operation remains. In Mexico, it arrived in the fifties with imported equipment, today it is already manufactured in the country by brands such as Isher or Ceroglass. The word *sandblast* comes from the English roots *sand=sand and blast=pressure because* in the beginning, abrasive was natural sand that was thrown under pressure to carry out surface cleaning.

Initially, the *sandblast* had two uses, the first industrial removing oxidation and lamination layers, preparing spaces for coating processes. The second is artistic, as it is a technique used in the field of engraving to polish and draw on glass. Unfortunately, the indiscriminate use of other elements for abrasion has been resorted to, among which are: silica dust, aluminum oxide, silicon carbide, sodium bicarbonate, garnet, glass bead, plastic abrasive, steel shot, corn corn, walnut shell and copper slag, the latter due to its resistance and deformation support values. (Cendoya, 2009, p, 93)

Employees who work in sandblast processes are recommended to protect themselves with special equipment: helmet, safety boots, face shield with plastic visor and metal mesh, long-sleeved gloves, flesh apron, long-sleeved overalls and special respirators. Workers in these procedures must have proven experience in the execution of this activity. (*Procedures...*, 2012)



Sandblast machines are used in various industries: textile, chemical, metalworking, automotive, petroleum, shipping, construction, as well as glass engraving and promotional items. Among the most important risks are: projection of particles, radiation, noise, aspiration or sedimentation of residues on the skin and orifices such as nostrils, eyes, mouth, etc., the consequences of which include serious diseases similar to those suffered by miners. According to the WHO (2000), three types of silicosis can develop, depending on the concentration of silica dust: chronic, accelerated and acute, the latter being the most delicate and the one usually suffered by workers in the textile jeans industry.

1.1 DENIM MANUFACTURING AND ITS DEVASTATION PROCESS

There are numerous published case reports of adverse health effects from occupational exposure to quartz, in addition to silicosis and lung cancer, there are autoimmune disorders: scleroderma, systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, anemia, or skin cancer; In addition, immunological abnormalities such as chronic kidney disease, ataxic sensory neuropathy, chronic thyroiditis, hyperthyroidism, monoclonal gammopathy and polyarteritis nodosa. (Masuda, 1981).

The *Sandblasting* Case has focused on the defense of those who work with this procedure in the production of the so-called "worn jeans". It is not ignored that fashion imposes stereotypes that are sought after and followed by many citizens around the world, particularly if the style is launched by the large transnationals of the clothing and footwear industry. Denim pants, a decade ago, began to be promoted with the fabric already aged, and torn. This absurdity has generated strong consumption trends, especially in the mentality of young people.

The Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations (SETEM) has denounced the health risks, particularly silicosis, involved in the *sandblasting* technique to wear out jeans, banned in the United Kingdom since 1950, in Europe in 1966 and Sweden in 1992, however, it is still used in manufacturing processes of well-known brands in countries such as Mexico, Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, India, Syria or North Africa, and "it is carried out by migrant workers during long shifts in cramped and unhygienic treatment rooms." (Riddselius, 2010). Both in this and in the cotton harvest to make the fabrics, minors, pregnant women, the elderly and the disabled work.

1.2 PATH FROM COTTON TO DENIM

Regarding the cotton harvest, we must not ignore the trafficking of children for the pinches, especially in various parts of Africa, although there are huge plantations in other countries such as India, Pakistan, China, to mention a few, Only in Burkina Faso, the first cotton producer in the world, 400,000 tons of cotton were harvested in 2011-2012, rising 57% in 2012-2013 with 630,000 tons thanks to the use of GMOs in 100 million hectares. (Zamora, 2013)



The description of the exploitation of child workers and the cynicism of the owners of distributors causes surprise and astonishment, they make them work exhausting days that exceed 8 hours, remunerating them 2 euros a month or 7 euros a year with payment in kind, "the exploitation of children continues in the face of general indifference..." (Kanban, 2011) There are plantations that incorporate children from schools and their only reward at the end of the day is a piece of candy, there are more than 80 million minors who work to be a malleable, submissive and obedient force.

Conscience is the main objective of the campaigns carried out against ignominious practices such as those described by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, however, their efforts fail to stop or combat forces such as SOFITEX or ENDT, the large international agencies that distribute cotton. Undoubtedly, there is a delicate ethical and moral problem here.

1.3 ETHICS, HEALTH AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The indiscriminate exploitation of human hands and the exposure of people to risks as transcendent as health and life, causes reactions of society against such immoral exercises, the first issue in this regard is the ignorance that exists about the origin of the materials with which denim garments are made. nor the techniques for them to acquire the look promoted by fashion designers.

As soon as the problem is perceived and understood, individuals join all the petitions that fight for the prohibition of the *sandblasting* process, thus preventing the proliferation of all the diseases it causes, and with indignation they also demand the fight against trafficking and child exploitation as they know their subhuman living conditions. with the consent of "educated" adults as school teachers.

I agree with the initiatives that call for modifications "in the labor standards of the garment industry" [so that from the most influential leadership] the multiple domain is generated that promotes the restrictions of the *sandblasting* technique in all supply chains, and with deep irritation I join the lawsuits against the infamies committed against millions of children in the cotton pinch (just a sample of what is happening). Nowadays humanity does with its children). This is a task in which we must intervene together with governments, industries, NGOs, human rights defenders and civil society groups, because we are all responsible for making this happen.

[...] Experience teaches us that equality is a myth, that even today there are discriminatory practices, customs, habits, stereotypes and attitudes towards others [...] in this situation, it is evident the importance that education in values has in the development of the person [...] (Porta, 2014, p. 43)

It is clear that there is a problem of lack of governmental and business ethics here, the codes and values of responsibility, respect, dignity and freedom are trampled on a daily basis. Fame, capital accumulation and the search for alternatives to cheapen production have become immoral customs that cost the lives of countless human beings.



2 CONCLUSIONS

Currently there is a Solidarity Committee and the *Clean Clothes Campaign* (Núñez, 2011) is expanding, which is responsible for advising the people affected, as a sign that individuals and society can act in accordance with principles and values that protect the integrity, health and well-being of human beings, "freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance, openness to dialogue, respect for oneself and others are considered ethical values [...] they humanize our lives..." (Evans, 2003, pp. 9-13)

In the same way, there are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Africa and the rest of the world working to challenge the abuse that exists today on defenseless beings, particularly and specifically children, in titanic attempts to recover both compassion and humanitarian sense, because the impudence, falsehood and hypocrisy of great executives surpasses all capacity for astonishment. politicians and cotton plantation owners on this issue of child exploitation.

Finally, I consider very important the social responsibility that comes from my own person to the rest of the inhabitants of this planet. Knowing about this problem commits me and questions both my consumption habits, as well as my possible participation in groups and campaigns that contribute to communicating the problem and being part of its fight and eventual solution.

I am convinced that awareness, ethics and moral actions begin with oneself so that the community can apprehend them and ensure that they transcend, spread and spread to all of humanity.



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