The Lifecycle of Jeans

Like any mass produced item, jeans go through a distinct lifecycle. Although the style and specific production methods have changed over the course of a few decades, the general process has remained the same. From research and development, all the way to the final disposition, jeans have continued to follow this path.

Jeans first appeared in the 1860’s, during the American gold rush. People fashioned pants from heavier tent fabric so they would stand up to the strain of mining. Eventually, they became a commonly worn article of clothing, and wear generally accepted by the 1950’s.

Some aspects regarding the marketing of jeans changes frequently. Because of the constant change of popularity and opinion, because jeans appeal to almost all ages and both genders, the marketing has to adapt to fit the people’s different wants and needs. However, one aspect has remained the same, even throughout all companies - durability. The main marketing aspect of jeans has always been surrounding durability. Another marketing necessity is affordability. A vast majority of companies produce jeans with the motive of not being too expensive. Television advertisements are the most common way of marketing jeans. The type of commercial, depending on men’s jeans or women's’ jeans, can vary greatly. Men’s jeans commercials often display men doing physical work, or playing rugged sports, attempting to display the durability and comfort of their jeans. On the other hand, women’s jeans commercials very often pertain more to fashion and affordability.

Jeans begin their life as fabric. The fabric is typically made from cotton, which must be farmed. The production of cotton requires land for farming space, fertilizer to feed the plants, pesticides to keep them from being harmed, and human labor for harvesting. The raw cotton is then shipped to a factory where machines spin and weave it into cloth. The cloth is then bleached and dyed using a multitude of chemical processes. Once the cloth is ready, the jeans begin being crafted, combining aspects such as buttons and zippers, with the handwork of those who sew the pants together. The jeans are then often given a specific visual finish through bleaching or mechanical treatment such as sandblasting or stone grinding. Once they are finished production, they are packaged into boxes and shipped to whatever outlet has bought or produced them.
From that point on, the remaining lifecycle of a pair of jeans lie in the consumer's hands. Depending on the person, garment care can vary in many aspects. A huge issue surrounding the production and maintenance of jeans is the water usage involved. In the beginning stages, about 1,800 gallons of water are needed to grow the cotton used to make a pair of jeans. In recent years; however, businesses who specialize in this product, such as Levi Strauss & CO, have made an effort to reduce the water consumption and even advise their customers to do the same when washing. Some consumers have started to freeze their jeans as an alternative to reduce their water consumption.

As for the final disposition of jeans, they are a very recyclable product. Because they are such a durable article of clothing, they can be donated to the less fortunate after their first owner. Even when they are no longer of use, they can be used to make new jeans. Companies such as Levi Strauss claim to be eco friendly. Their jeans are made with 17% of recycled denim and natural dyes.

References


http://www.levistrauss.com/sustainability/planet/