

Sustainability Bulletin: July 2022

Your monthly data-led, cross-industry insight into global sustainability progress and consumer priorities to help you make better decisions for your brand and the planet. This month includes how to protect our oceans, biodegradable and disassembly solutions, moves on renewable energy and launches at Milan Design Week

Jennifer Creevy & Martina Rocca
07.05.22 · 8 minutes



Design Boom

WGSN

Innovators call for more action to save our oceans

Innovators raised awareness of marine pollution and the threats facing our seas on World Ocean Day in June, while the United Nations held its Ocean Conference 2022 in Portugal to scale up science-backed and innovative solutions.

The world is in the middle of an “ocean emergency,” according to UN secretary general António Guterres, who said ocean heating reached record levels in 2021. Coastal cities are facing flooding, pollution is creating dead zones and overfishing is crippling fish stocks. Without drastic action, plastic could outweigh all the fish in the ocean by 2050.

Ocean awareness is rising. According to WGSN proprietary data, mentions and interest in microplastics (a major ocean pollutant) across our Fashion, Food & Drink and Beauty Influencer Maps and across Search have risen consistently since 2018. They peaked in March 2022, when scientists found microplastic in human blood.

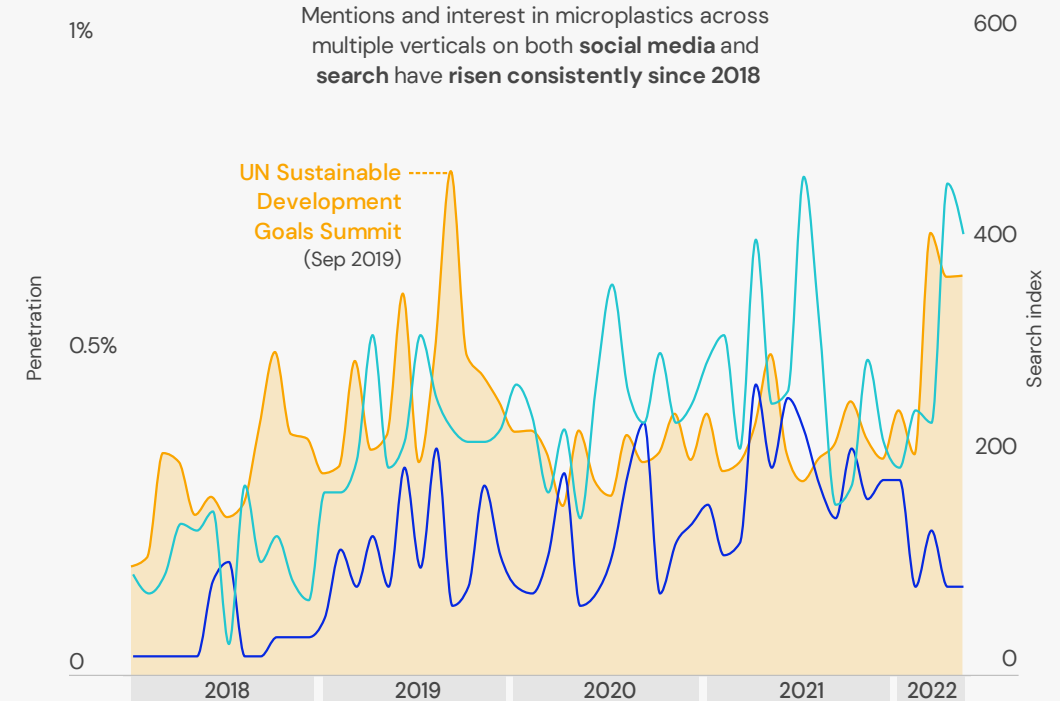
For World Ocean Day, Japanese aquarium Yokohama Hakkeijima created Microplastic Globe, a series of water globes using plastic from the seas, to raise awareness of pollution and its effects on sea life. In fashion, The Nordic Swan is said to be the first eco-label to include details of microplastics release for garments containing synthetic fibres, while in beauty, Awantys Group (Germany) launched the AwyOcean cosmetic packaging made from plastics from oceans. Sustainable aquaculture firm Maine Ocean Farms is exploring alternatives to plastic for fishing gear, including kelp-based ropes.

How you can action this: ensure your supply chain is clean of pollution and actively engage in projects to regenerate oceans.

Microplastics' social media penetration and search index

Food & Drink, Beauty and Fashion Influencer Map

● Fashion penetration ● Non-fashion penetration ● Search index



WGSN Search and Social data

“Awareness on the microplastic pollution issue is known, but the mounting evidence showing microplastic particles and fibres in food chains, ecosystems, the atmosphere and in our bodies indicates many products we use and consume could pose a threat to health. Tackling microplastics needs to start at the product design stage. In garments, this means looking at the make and finishing stages of plastic-based fibre, yarn, fabric and garments, through to wearing, laundering and end of life. Building alliances between all parties involved in the supply chain alongside environmentalists and policymakers is the only way to fast-track progress to reduce microplastic impact”

– Helen Palmer, Head of Materials & Textiles, WGSN

Milan Design Week showcases circular concepts

Designers explored new regenerative and circular concepts, challenging conventional ways of production and consumption.

As discussed in [Milan Design Week 2022: Key Ideas](#), regenerative and circular themes emerged across several projects at the event. Designers used new approaches to work in symbiosis with nature, harnessing solar and wind energy to create products. This approach will lead to a new economic reality in which nature will determine new production and consumption rhythms.

To promote the Solar Biennale taking place in Rotterdam in September 2022, Dutch cultural institution Het Nieuwe Instituut presented Solar Energy Kiosk, a juice bar operated through solar energy. It slowed down or stopped when the weather got cloudy, making the interdependent relationship between production and nature evident.

As part of the WaterSchool exhibition by Studio Makkink & Bey, Dutch textile designer Alik van der Kruijs presented Made By Rain, a garment created using a self-developed technique she calls "pluviagraphy". Coated with a water-sensitive layer, the garment is placed under rain, with water drops designing the ornamental pattern.

How you can action this: shift from a sustainable to regenerative mindset, adopting more sustainable energy supply across the supply chain. Embrace circular practices, challenging linear production and consumption.



Made by Rain

Alik van der Kruijs's Made By Water shows how nature and humans can work in symbiosis in the creation of commercial products while respecting ecological needs

Renewable energy given a boost

Environmentalists have praised US President Joe Biden's decision to invoke the Defense Production Act to kickstart the renewable energy sector. Brands and manufacturers across sectors are also stepping up investment.

By invoking the Act, Biden is guaranteeing manufacturers the government will purchase heat pumps and insulation. Some heat pumps could also be sent to Europe, which is suffering acute energy challenges in the wake of war in Ukraine. Climate activist Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, has been pushing for this since the war broke out and hailed the move as a “breakthrough”.

In the Netherlands, the government has stated it plans to ban fossil fuel boilers and make hybrid heat pumps the standard for heating homes from 2026.

According to the International Energy Agency, the global energy crisis has highlighted the key role of renewable energy, but it is too early to assess the potential impact of new targets because of the Ukraine war. It also said annual renewable capacity additions broke a new record in 2021, increasing 6% to almost 295 GW, despite pandemic-related supply chain challenges.

Brands such as Mexico's Bimbo are stepping up renewables and MAS Holdings, a textile manufacturer South Asia, said two of its Indonesian factories have switched entirely to renewable energy.

How you can action this: Biden's move has given renewable energy a boost. Design in renewable sources to manufacturing processes to ensure businesses are fit for a sustainable future.



Heat pumps are a key part of US President Joe Biden's renewable energy strategy

Design for disassembly breaks new ground

US footwear brand Nike has introduced a trainer designed to be disassembled for ease of recycling, touted as a global first.

The Nike ISPA Link (an acronym from its circular design philosophy Improve, Scavenge, Protect, Adapt) features three interlocking modules connected without glue, while the midsole is made up of pegs that fit into openings engineered into the upper. The design eliminates the need for glue, which makes recycling challenging.

Nike will follow this up in early 2023 with its next disassembly iteration, the ISPA Link Axis, which will replace the traditional cut-and-sew method (used for the Link) with a recycled polyester Flyknit upper designed to fit over the outsole, eliminating seams.

The move comes as other sectors are also seeking to design for disassembly. In beauty, Chinese company MYC's Refill Me! Mascara, finalist in the Make-Up & Nails Packaging Technology category at Cosmopack 2022, is a high-end case created to be refilled and reused. The easily separated components were designed to facilitate recycling. Australia's POC Sports designed the Myelin, a bike helmet that breaks into separate components at its end of life for recycling.

How you can action this: use creative design techniques to allow for disassembly. Seek new technologies to enable these processes and clearly explain to consumers how recycling works.



Nike outlined 10 principles in its Circular Design Guide, an open-source workbook to share learnings and insight with the wider design community

Brands step up fully biodegradable products

As more consumers across all demographics are opting for sustainable choices, brands and innovators are improving fully biodegradable product and packaging options.

According to First Insight, consumers across generations, from Baby Boomers to Gen Z, are willing to spend more for sustainable products. Fully biodegradable products are on the up as brands seek sustainable solutions.

New Zealand eco-footwear startup Orba Shoes claims it created the world's first biodegradable eco trainers, which are designed to fully decompose at end of life. The Ghost trainer breaks down into individual composite parts. Meanwhile, London-based design agency Morrama unveiled a concept for a Covid-19 test that is biodegradable and fully recyclable. The ECO-FLO test was devised to help cut down on the amount of single-use plastic generated by the pandemic. In Australia, atmico offers biodegradable phone cases.

In the drink industry, US-based company Cove is testing what it claims is the first water bottle made entirely of biodegradable material. Researchers at the Rutgers School of Public Health developed a biodegradable coating that can be sprayed onto food, helping products stay fresh longer.

In beauty, Remilia Hair has a keratin hair serum in biodegradable capsules, while South Korean skin, hair and bodycare brand Kocostar created biodegradable sunscreen capsules.

How you can action this: ensure biodegradable options are robust and give consumers clear guidance.



Remilia Hair's Cosmocap hair serum is biodegradable and cruelty free

Action points

1

Design to be regenerative, not just sustainable

With the climate crisis facing a critical point, sustainability isn't enough. Design to be regenerative and help restore the environment as well as create products that consumers value

2

Prioritise ocean solutions

Innovations that help our oceans to thrive are not as widespread as needed. Consider the effects of your supply chain and post-consumer life of products on the ocean. Plastic and microplastic issues should be front of mind

3

Lead on recyclability

Creating products and packaging that is easy for consumers to recycle is a must. Whether biodegradable, compostable or designed for disassembly, ensure your designs are fit for purpose

4

Tap into renewable sources

Drive renewable energy sources throughout your business and with your suppliers. Partner with experts and innovators to create a business that is fit for the future

The Sustainability Bulletin is created by WGSN’s team of global experts

Europe

Jennifer Creevy, Director of Food & Drink
Sarah Housley, Head of Consumer Tech
Helen Palmer, Head of Materials & Textiles
Martina Rocca, Strategist, Insight
Alan Ruggiero, Head of Analytics
Megan Bang, Strategist, Beauty

Americas

Angela Ringo, Senior Strategist, Interiors
Maria Alejandra Pascua, Senior Customer Experience Specialist & Trend Specialist

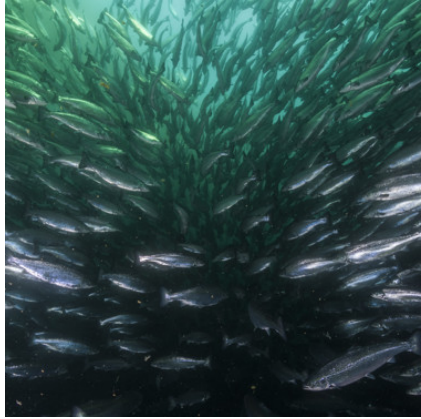
Asia-Pacific

Alison Ho, Consumer Researcher
Anastasia Sinjiashvili, Production Lead
Qian Sun, Localisation Editor
Ellice Solomon, Production Assistant
Yianni Giovanoglu, Specialist Client Services

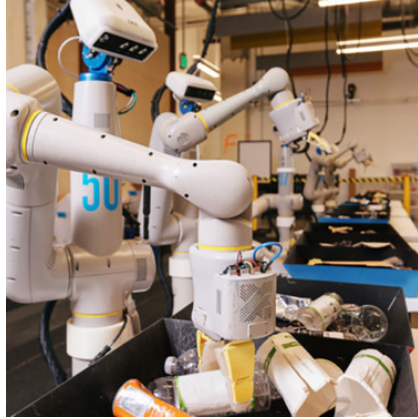
Methodology

- WGSN uses AI and real-time social listening tools to identify trends, keywords and sentiments on social media. We capture intelligence from millions of posts by analysing text-based data in post captions and hashtags
- Social data and analyses are based on posts containing all words related to “microplastics” including mentions, keywords and hashtags from accounts in our WGSN Food & Drink, Beauty and Fashion Influencer Map
- WGSN also uses proprietary search index to identify trends and keywords on what topics and areas people are engaging with worldwide. We capture intelligence from millions of searches by analysing text-based data and by understanding its evolution over time
- Index: refers to the use of a benchmark indicator as a reference to show continuous increase of a trend vs a specific value; in this case, search data penetration from the beginning of 2018
- Data was collected from January 1 2018 to May 31 2022
- Year-on-year growth refers to the percentage growth of the index compared to the same period from the previous year

Related reports



Intelligence: Aquaculture



Intelligence: Advancing Recycling



Sustainability & Innovation: Reframing Sequin & Sparkle



Intelligence: Ocean-Safe Formulations



Milan Design Week 2022: Key Ideas