

ChopValue: circular homeware for sustainable shoppers

CASE STUDY | Mar 22, 2022

ChopValue is a manufacturer that rescues discarded chopsticks from restaurants and transforms them into trendy and affordable homeware treasures. How is its circular business model meeting eco-conscious consumer demands while also catering to the burgeoning home improvement market?

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LOCATIONS:
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EXPERTS

Coro Strandberg

HIGHLIGHTS

- 01** ChopValue resonates with eco-conscious shoppers with its circular business model, repurposing chopsticks into attractive home goods that reflect natural interior design trends
- 02** Pandemic lockdowns changed peoples' relationships with their living spaces, causing many to rethink home design and interiors
- 03** A growing number of eco-conscious consumers – Gen Yers and Zers in particular – want green home goods and second-hand options at an affordable price

DATA

- **Six in ten** consumers say they are willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact
- **50%** of consumers want companies to make more affordable products that are better for the environment
- **72%** of consumers say it's important that brands use natural ingredients and take a proactive approach to protecting the planet

SCOPE

ChopValue is a manufacturer that repurposes single-use chopsticks from restaurants, using them to produce quality homeware. The result is a minimalist, raw wood look reminiscent of Vogue's nature-inspired interior design trends to watch for 2022. With nearly eight in ten people globally saying sustainability is important to them and six in ten willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact, ChopValue offers green home goods that resonate with environmentally-minded consumers. [1] And as 25% of Americans are spending 50% or more time at home than they were in 2019, people are redesigning their living spaces to align with changing aesthetic preferences and practical needs. [2]

As the world's first circular economy franchise, ChopValue is challenging current production set-ups with its net-zero carbon footprint model. If widely adopted, the benefits of a circular business model are clear – it has the potential to close the emissions gap and help limit global warming, while also presenting a yield of up to \$4.5 trillion in economic benefits to 2030. [3] "The circular economy is a relentless driver of innovation that can transform businesses into a positive force for the planet and create customer movements, where environmental consumers become brand amplifiers," says Coro Strandberg, sustainability consultant. [4]

Since launching in Canada in 2016, ChopValue now has locations in over ten countries, expanding to the UK in November 2021 under a partnership with Everton FC player, Tom Davies – through which it plans to open multiple microfactories across the UK and Ireland. In 2021, the company was certified as 'Best for the World: Environment' in

their first year as a B Corp, named alongside leading reputable environmentalist brands like Patagonia and Rubicon. As people begin to demand a more proactive approach to the fate of the planet, what can ChopValue's circular manufacturing process and business model tell us about regenerative mindsets?



CONTEXT

BIOPHILIC HOME IMPROVEMENT IS POPULAR

As the pandemic kept people shut indoors and as virtual and hybrid working became the norm, peoples' relationships with their living spaces changed. In 2020, 74.2 million Americans completed a home remodel job to upgrade living spaces, a 20% increase year-on-year. [5] With so much time spent inside, people are looking to upgrade their living spaces while also reconnecting with nature through redecoration – biophilic and sustainable design/materials appeared in Good Housekeeping's top five interior design trends for 2022. While indoor plants do the trick for many, brands like Moooi offer wallcoverings adorned with plant and animal life, while furniture brand CB2's Spring 2022 Brazilian Rhapsody collection uses natural materials and organic textures. Aligning with this trend, ChopValue's upcycled chopstick products – from chopping boards and coasters to tables and shelves – appeal to the mindsets of sustainable homebodies and the 72% of consumers who say it's important that brands use natural ingredients and take a proactive approach in protecting the planet. [1]

SUSTAINABILITY DRIVES PURCHASING DECISIONS

When it comes to home décor, 49% of consumers agree that growing environmental concerns have influenced their furniture purchases. [6] People are increasingly turning away from mass-produced goods and towards unique, sustainable products made with natural materials that promise longevity. This environmental emphasis is particularly evident among younger people, with 67% of Gen Zers and 71% of Yers saying that climate should be a top priority to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. [7] Against this backdrop, ChopValue exists in a lucrative niche where the home improvement boom and earthy design trends collide with sustainable values. Elsewhere, circular brands

like Notpla, which turns seaweed into sustainable packaging, and gender-fluid fashion brand Orange Culture, which transforms textile offcuts into new product elements, are offering the recycled products that young environmentalist consumers are after.

FAST HOMEWARE AND SECOND-HAND SUSTAINABILITY

Many people are reliant on fast homeware from big brand retailers, and there's a growing interest in brands that can stylishly curate every aspect of your life, including your home. This however raises sustainability concerns, and has led many people to look for rental and resale options when it comes to furniture – 74% of consumers globally agree that they need to consume less to preserve the environment and 50% believe furniture brands aren't doing enough to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste. [8][9] To meet this growing concern, brands like Harth and John Lewis launched rental furniture platforms in 2021, while independent retailers, like Rosemary and Peach and Scene by Chloe, are advancing the second-hand furniture resale market – one that is expected to hit \$16.5 billion by 2025. [10]



There are several homeware brands transforming waste into valuable products

ChopValue | Twitter (2019)

INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

REPURPOSING WASTE MATERIALS

Brands have the opportunity to drive sustainable futures by repurposing and upcycling materials to produce new products. Cities offer many sources of waste that can be cheaply scavenged and creatively reprocessed into new products, including post-consumer waste, demolition and construction waste, and single-use utensils – like chopsticks. Alongside ChopValue, there are several furniture brands transforming waste into valuable homeware; Mater utilizes ocean debris, Groundwork upcycles paving stones and school chalkboards, and Native Trails reuses copper engine coils. And with 50% of consumers wanting companies to make more affordable products that are better for

the environment, the use of waste materials can drive down manufacturing costs. [11] "Consumers really don't want to pay more for something with environmental benefits," says Strandberg. [4]

RENTAL AND REUSE

With 67% of consumers expecting organizations to advertise responsibly and not encourage excess consumption, many are adopting resale and rental programs. [9] These markets uphold eco-conscious consumption trends at a low cost to brands, enabling them to reuse products from past seasons. For example, IKEA has launched a buy-back scheme enabling people to give their used furniture another life, while Pottery Barn introduced Pottery Barn Renewed, a program that restores and resells imperfect homeware. Given that 70% of consumers globally would purchase pre-owned, repaired, or renewed products and 84% of those who have already tried them plan to continue doing so, implementing easy-to-use rental programs will help facilitate the growing consumer demand for alternatives to fast homeware.

SUSTAINABLE STORIES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

With 65% of consumers expecting CEOs to do more to reduce carbon emissions and make business supply chains more sustainable, a brand's environmental initiatives are more important than ever. [12] Circular brand initiatives exist – IKEA, for example, is going fully circular within the next decade – but actively sharing authentic sustainability stories and increasing consumer awareness through media and marketing are key. "There's a general concern among consumers that we're over-consuming," says Strandberg. "But people haven't connected their concerns to the available marketplace solutions." [4] By utilizing social media to bolster sustainability credentials through storytelling, brands can appeal to the 61% of people familiar with the circular economy who gain information from social platforms and the 45% of Gen Zers that engage with climate action content through social media. [13][14] These sustainable consumer sentiments, along with the fact that 2020 saw a record-high number of consumers shopping for home goods online, suggest that digital eco-stories can have a significant impact on shopping behaviors. [5]

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SOURCES

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5. Comscore (December 2020)
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