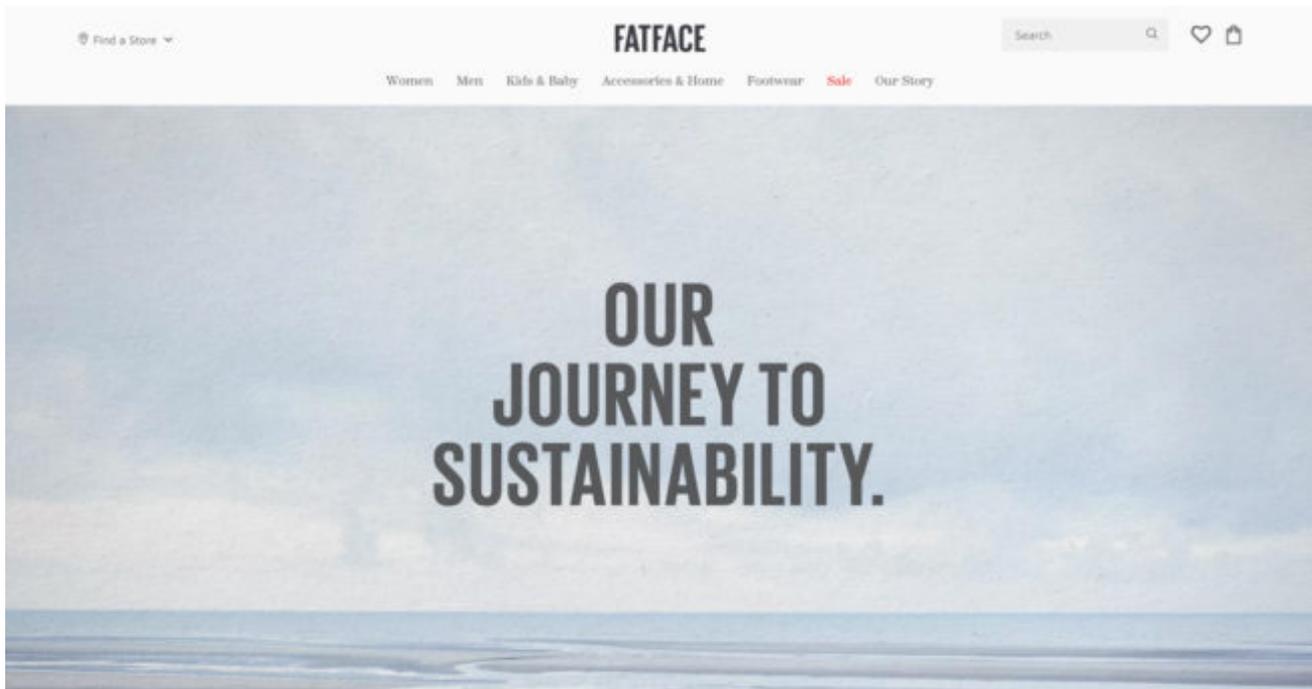


How Apparel Brand FatFace Plans to Offset Its Digital Carbon Footprint

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By Stephen Lepitak March 23, 2022

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British lifestyle and clothing accessory brand FatFace reported sales growth of over 22% during the Christmas buying period, even beating the same five-week period in pre-pandemic 2019 with a 3% increase. And while the brand may be relieved to see its numbers ascend, FatFace is aiming for decline when it comes to its carbon footprint.

While protecting the planet is something consumers would expect to be high on the agenda for most brands right now, there is a direct customer expectation too, with [Deloitte's recent Millennial and Gen Z survey](#) revealing that about 60% in those age groups, the key demographic buyers for FatFace, fear that environmental commitments would become less important to businesses.

In 2021, the brand [released its ESG report](#), claiming that it reduced its carbon footprint by 24% year-over-year as it aims to be carbon neutral by 2025.

This follows FatFace's promise to [reduce carbon dioxide emissions by at least 40%](#) and offsetting the remaining emissions by planting trees and supporting projects that reduce CO2 emissions globally. It has also pledged not to send any waste to landfills, eliminate single-use plastic across the business and become fully dependent on using renewable sources to power its head office and U.K. stores.

The move to digital sustainability

However, with the growth in digital sales and online advertising, there is still plenty work to be done on that side of the business when it comes to offsetting.

“We have some quite ambitious growth targets around expanding our digital footprint, with significant investment across all key customer touch points through digital marketing channels, as well. And a lot of that has been around getting the FatFace brand out there,” said Liam Price, head of ecommerce, of expanding the brands audience, including through sustainable initiatives, in the last two years.

The company began to focus on sustainability in 2008, making it a pillar of its brand values but one it hasn’t much talked about until recent years, according to Price.

“Consumers have been starting to ask as part of their normal, everyday questioning, ‘What are you doing as a brand?’ We sit really well in that marketplace because we’ve had all our initiatives out there for a long time,” he said.

The sustainability drive around digital is run by the brand’s digital agency of record, Incubeta, which has managed FatFace’s paid search, paid social and programmatic across the U.K. and the U.S. for five years as well as execution and strategy for all campaigns.

The sustainability initiative

The agency has begun working with its own clients on a sustainability initiative which FatFace was a test case for, and digital sustainability is still new consideration for the business after just five months of learning about the carbon footprint of things such as the use of Google auctions.

Leading the initiative for the agency is Andrew Turner, chief revenue officer for Incubeta, who explained that while Incubeta remains a digital marketing partner first, the idea is to support its clients to improve their sustainability. (It’s one of four committees within the agency to support clients that also include diversity and inclusion, mental health and wellbeing and charity.)

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Andrew Turner, chief revenue office for Incubeta

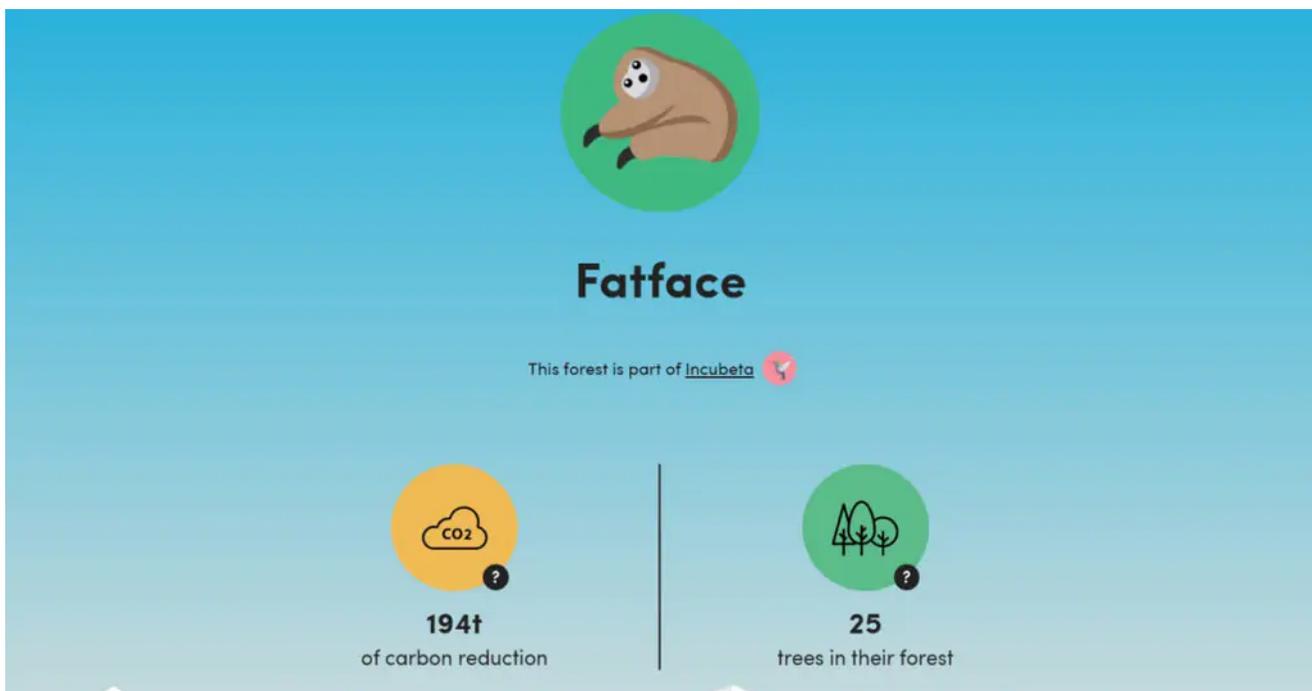
“The aim was [that] the members of those teams would focus on those key pillars and to try and drive positive change from within the organizations across those four really important areas,” Turner said.

The sustainability group initially focused on the agency itself, including talking to staff about making more sustainable choices, waste management and measuring its own carbon impact before rolling that out to three launch clients—the other two being Lounge Underwear and fashion brand Ganni. All three brands included sustainability as a pillar of their businesses.

“Powering the internet is comparable with the airline industry and from reading that fact, it knocked us back a little bit as it’s probably fair to say the internet is a bit of a silent contributor. That set us off on a bit of a journey to start a process to better measure the carbon impact of the ads that we are running for our clients,” Turner said.

Once Incubeta had determined a way to calculate that impact, it decided to raise awareness with clients and look at offsetting, working with b-to-b platform Ecologi and making a commitment to clients to offset the carbon generated by their brands through their digital marketing during the lifespan they work with the agency.

Offsetting includes the option to plant trees or do specific projects related to solar- or wind-powered energy, building schools or regenerating parts of the [Amazon rainforest](#).



So far, the brand has seen 25 trees planted. *Incubeta*

So far, the brand has seen 25 trees planted, according to [its Ecologi profile](#), with a carbon reduction of 194 tons.

Outlining the need for media

“It’s bringing sustainability to the forefront of our client conversations as opposed to it being a [one-off] or a side project. I can certainly see a place where media sustainability becomes a metric in media plans and we reach a place where that’s actually a consideration when buying

media. When we have media getting approved by clients, the impact of said digital media [could become] an optimization tactic in itself,” said Turner, who envisions it becoming a performance factor alongside the bottom line for companies.

It’s right that we are starting to look at this area and we need to look at the full funnel in marketing skills to make sure we are assessing it end to end.

Liam Price, head of ecommerce at FatFace

He also said that return on investment is not tracked within the results, adding that the initiative has been introduced to help brands generate a “halo effect,” believing that their younger audiences will be attracted by their intentions to “be better.”

And while the project for FatFace is still in the experimental stages, it has meant the company is asking its other partners what their plans are for offsetting in other parts of the business.

“This is how things start, that trickle effect,” Price said. “It’s right that we are starting to look at this area and we need to look at the full funnel in marketing skills to make sure we are assessing it end to end.”

After undertaking the project on a trial basis with three clients since 2021, Incubeta now intends to roll out the offer to all its existing and future clients, committing to add a further 15 to the plan this year.