

Reuse, rent & recycle: The many lives of Petit Bateau apparel

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Yasmine Arsalane
Head of Customer
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Petit Bateau is one of the most famous French children's clothing brands. And this year, the brand is celebrating its 130th anniversary (which is quite an achievement).

"We do business almost everywhere in Europe—in more than fifteen countries—both online and in-store. Petit Bateau is popular in Asia, particularly in Japan, which is our second-largest market after France. We have achieved this growth with a community of ultra-committed employees," shared **Yasmine Arsalane, the brand's Head of Customer Experience.**

With 3,000 employees around the world, Petit Bateau has integrated sustainability and positive social impact into its global strategy.

Over the years, the brand has shown its resilience by transforming itself and adapting to change. Now Petit Bateau is taking on a new kind of transformation by encouraging its customers to give used clothes a new lease of life through the company's second-hand rental or reselling schemes.

With Petit Bateau's high-quality clothing, implementing a sustainable business model makes sense; its garments are designed to be worn, lent and passed on (almost) endlessly.

A global culture of social responsibility

Retail is one of the world's most polluting industries, and consumers are increasingly interested in the environmental impact of the products they buy. "When you work in the retail sector, and in the textile industry in particular, you have no choice but to be aware of the impact you have," explained Yasmine.

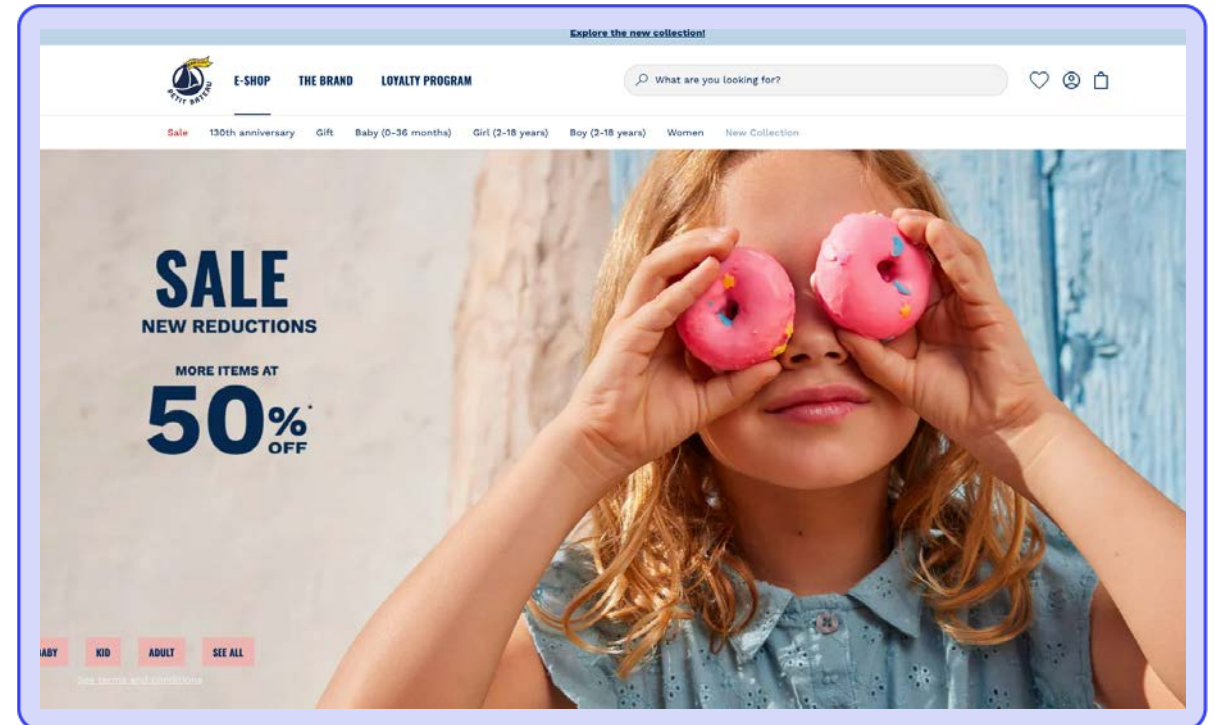
For several years, Petit Bateau has committed to limiting its CO2 emissions. The brand also strives to promote a more responsible culture among its customers through the "Changer demain" programme, which is designed to help build a more sustainable future for the children of tomorrow.

"Sustainability has been at the core of our business for 130 years. It's the cornerstone of how we design our products," said Yasmine. "We want them to tell a story, to be passed on; we want our clothes to live several lives."

"The idea is to move from the classic linear model to a circular approach. This means we as a company need to produce responsibly, while creating experiences and journeys for our customers that make it easy for them to return their products for reuse."

– Yasmine Arsalane Head of Customer Experience, Petit Bateau

Petit Bateau homepage



Working towards a circular economy

In recent years, second-hand and circular business models have exploded around the world. Consumers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their purchases and are striving to reduce their carbon footprint by looking for more sustainable and also affordable alternatives. To meet this emerging demand, the team at Petit Bateau is trying to create the best way for its customers to move seamlessly from buying to renting.

Right now, Petit Bateau provides its customers with two choices: buy a new eco-designed product or join a second-hand network by exchanging, donating, selling, or buying back second-hand clothing. Customers can also rent clothing from their recently launched clothing rental service. And when clothing items are no longer wearable, Petit Bateau recycles them by reusing the fibres to make new clothes.

An omnichannel customer experience

Customers can purchase second-hand clothes in stores, as well as on the brand's website. The rental service is only available online via a non-binding subscription.

"Our customers can buy new and second-hand items in the same purchase," said Yasmine. "If you want to get customers to change their behaviour, you have to think about the simplest, most practical customer experiences that will facilitate positive change."

The cornerstone of Petit Bateau's positive-impact strategy is getting children and their parents to reconnect with nature. "We partner with Water Family, an organisation that works directly with schools and children to raise awareness about how to protect the environment and our oceans," said Yasmine.

Employee training to boost positive impact

Petit Bateau employees are offered several types of training: first to help them understand the positive impact of the brand and second to learn the new way of doing things.

"All employees go through the same Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) training, which is decisive in getting employees on board. It helps raise awareness about our environmental initiatives and how we need to change our habits both at work and in our personal lives," said Yasmine.

The brand's goal is to make ambassadors of its employees, so that in stores, a manager might talk about Petit Bateau's

impact and CSR strategy to customers. The retail industry also provides specific training courses on sustainability. The one offered by the Water Family, the "Étincelle" or "Spark" programme aims to raise awareness among all employees.

Setting objectives and measuring impact

Petit Bateau is aiming to receive B-Corp certification by 2025. That means it will have to meet strict criteria on social and environmental responsibility, as well as transparency. Yasmine said: "It brings a structured framework to support our ambitious goal to reduce the energy and water that our factories consume by 95%."

Everyone can do their part when it comes to the environment. Brands have an opportunity to lead by example by putting a positive impact strategy in place, while consumers can play their part by choosing the products offered by these brands.

To conclude, Yasmine insists that brands must be able to measure their impact on society and the impact of a circular business model. "Operational data is key," said Yasmine. "We must use it to our advantage to achieve our objectives. That's why it's so important to set clear objectives, because the roadmap that Petit Bateau has chosen is very ambitious."