

The idea behind VEJA: one foot in design and the other in social responsibility.

VEJA means “look” in Portuguese, means looking beyond sneakers, and understanding how they are made.

VEJA

REINVENTING SNEAKERS



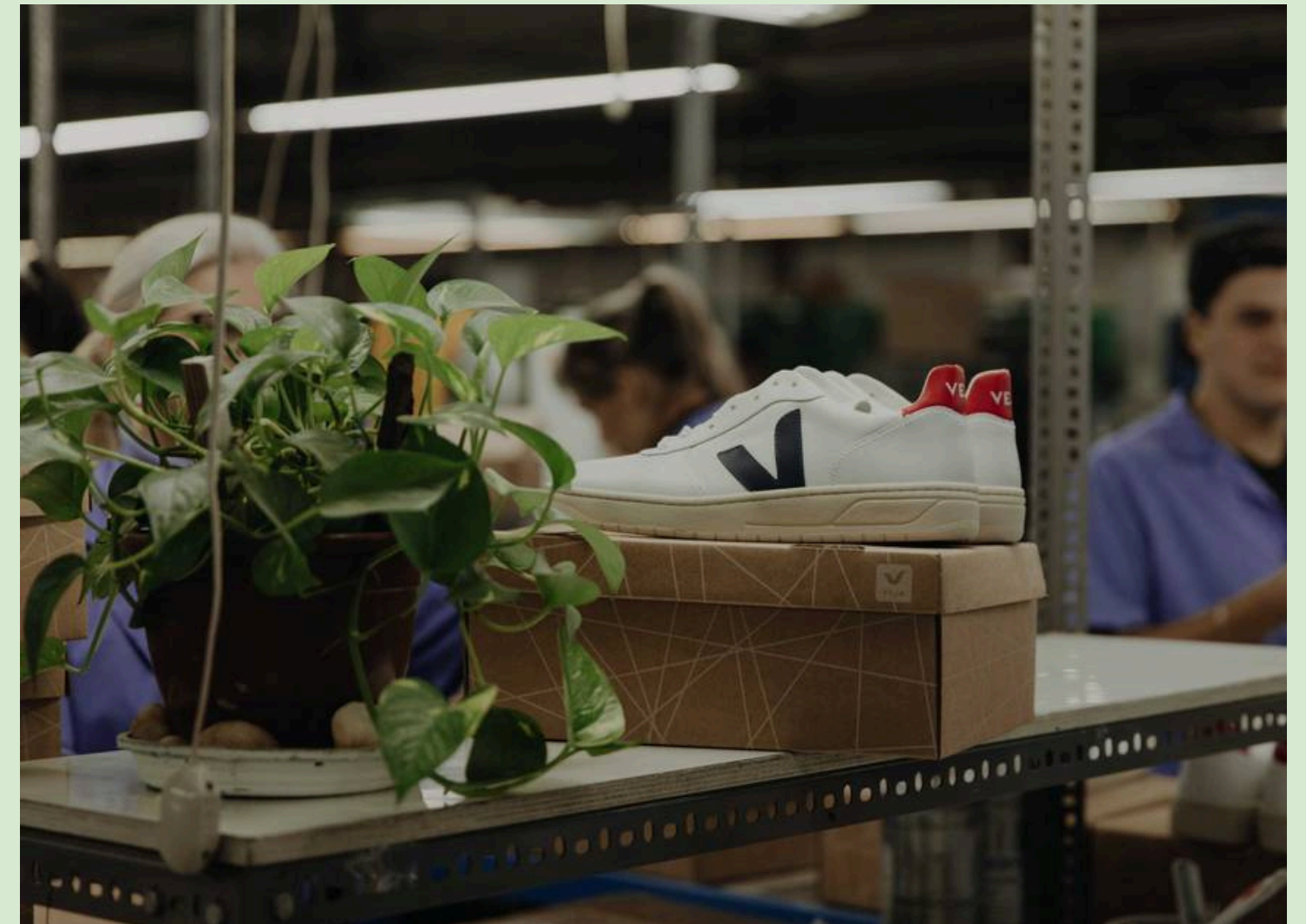
HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

2003: CHINA

25-YEAR OLD SEBASTIEN KOPP & FRANCOIS MORILLION ARE VISITING A CHINESE FACTORY FOLLOWING A SOCIAL AUDIT OF A FRENCH FASHION BRAND.

ON THE SURFACE, THE BRAND PERFORMED WELL, UNTIL THEY ENCOUNTERED THE LIVING QUARTERS. THE ENVIRONMENT WAS CROWDED, DIRTY, AND DOWNRIGHT UNSUITABLE FOR HABITATION. THAT'S WHEN THEY REALIZED THAT GLOBALIZATION HAD GONE WRONG.

IN 2003, COMPANIES HAD ALREADY BEGAN USING THE TERM 'SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,' BUT IT WAS ALL TALK & NO ACTION. DESPITE HAVING LOW CAPITAL, SEBASTIEN AND FRANCOIS MADE THE CHOICE TO STEP UP AND DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.



THE FAIR TRADE WAY

2003: FRANCE

THE YOUNG PAIR OF ENTREPRENEURS BEGAN WORKING WITH TRISTAN LECOMTE, THE FOUNDER OF ALTER ECO, THE FIRST FRENCH BRAND FOR FAIR TRADE. ALTER ECO PRODUCES GOODS BY WORKING DIRECTLY WITH FARMERS AROUND THE WORLD.

AFTER AUDITING THE COOPERATIVES PARTNERING WITH ALTER ECO, THE PAIR SAW FIRSTHAND HOW FAIR TRADE CHANGES THE ECONOMY.

INSPIRED, THE TWO BEGAN IDEATING THE REINVENTION OF THE MOST SYMBOLIC OBJECT OF THEIR GENERATION: SNEAKERS.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

2004: FRANCE

SEBASTIEN & FRANCOIS CALCULATED THAT, WHEN A CUSTOMER PURCHASES A PAIR OF SNEAKERS FROM A BIG BRAND, 70% OF IT'S COSTS GO TO ADVERTISING & COMMUNICATION, LEAVING ONLY 30% FOR PRODUCTION & MATERIAL SOURCING.

THE PAIR THEN DECIDED, IF THEY GAVE UP ADVERTISING, THEY COULD CREATE A SNEAKER 5 TIMES MORE EXPENSIVE TO PRODUCE, BUT SOLD AT THE SAME RETAIL PRICE AS THE BIG BRANDS. THIS ALLOWED THEM TO SOURCE ETHICALLY & ORGANICALLY FOR THEIR RAW MATERIALS & LABOR.



TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

2004: BRAZIL

EQUIPPED WITH A GROWTH MINDSET, THE PASSIONATE PAIR SET OFF TO BRAZIL TO BEGIN PRODUCTION.

SEBASTIEN & FRANCOIS DEDICATED THEIR TRIP TO BREAKING DOWN & RECONSTRUCTING THE SNEAKER FROM RAW MATERIALS TO FINISHED PRODUCT.

BARELY SPEAKING PORTUGUESE, IT WAS A CHALLENGE WORKING WITH THE THE SERINGUEIROS (COMMUNITIES) OF THE AMAZONIAN RAINFOREST, BUT THE TEAM PERSERVERED.

TOGETHER, THEY HARVESTED WILD RUBBER WITHOUT CUTTING DOWN A SINGLE RUBBER TREE. THIS RAW MATERIAL STILL REPRESENTS 40% OF THE VEJA SNEAKER SOLE.



FINDING FOOTING

2004: BRAZIL

CONTINUING THEIR EXPEDITION TO RECONSTRUCT THE SNEAKER, SEBASTIEN & FRANCOIS HEAD TO THE BRAZILIAN NORDESTE.

INSPITE OF THE ARID, POOR CONDITIONS, THE COMMUNITY HERE PROVIDES EXCEPTIONAL ORGANIC, AGRO-ECOLOGICAL COTTON, GROWN WITHOUT FERTILIZERS OR PESTICIDES.

HERE, THE YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS SET A PRECEDENT BY PAYING TWICE THE MARKET PRICE FOR 3 TONS OF COTTON IN THE FIRST CONTRACT.

FOLLOWING THE FAIR TRADE PRINCIPLES, THE TEAM STILL PAYS FOR GOODS IN ADVANCE AT A PRICE SET IN A 3-YEAR CONTRACT WITH THE PRODUCERS.



PRODUCTION BEGINS

2004: BRAZIL & PARIS

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY LED FRANCOIS & SEBASTIEN TO THE PORTO ALEGRE SNEAKER FACTORY IN THE SOUTH OF BRAZIL. HERE, THERE ARE STRONG SOCIAL RIGHTS, REASONABLE WORKING HOURS, AND 82% OF EMPLOYEES ARE UNIONIZED. THIS IS WHERE THE PRODUCTION OF VEJA BEGINS.

THE NEXT STEP FOR VEJA WAS BONNEUIL-SUR-MARNE, IN THE SUB-URBS OF PARIS. HERE, THE TEAM MEETS WITH A SOCIAL REINTEGRATION ORGANIZATION, LOG'INS, THAT WOULD LATER BECOME THEIR LOGISTICS PROVIDER.

THEY BECAME RESPONSIBLE FOR STORING THE SNEAKERS, AND MANAGING THE ONLINE STORE, SHIPPING VEJAS ALL ACROSS THE WORLD AS THE GROUNDBREAKING BRAND GREW TO POPULARITY.



INNOVATION FOR GOOD

2005: BRAZIL & PARIS

AFTER LAUNCHING THE FIRST OF THE VEJA SNEAKERS, SEBASTIEN & FRANCOIS DECIDE TO DEVELOP LEATHER SNEAKERS, TANNED WITH VEGETAL COMPOUNDS RATHER THAN CHEMICALS.

AT THE SAME TIME, IN THE FACTORY AT SAO PAULO, THEY BEGAN TO DEVELOP A NEW KIND OF FABRIIC CALLED B-MESH, MADE ENTIRELY FROM RECYCLED PLASTIC BOTTLES COLLECTED THROUGHOUT BRAZIL.



THE GROWTH SPURT

2015: FRANCE & BRAZIL

TEN YEARS AFTER VEJA'S LAUNCH, THE TEAM HAS GROWN TO 60 PEOPLE WITH OFFICES IN BOTH BRAZIL AND FRANCE.

AT THIS POINT, VEJA SELLS TO OVER 50 COUNTRIES GLOBALLY, AND HAS SURPASSED 2 MILLION PAIRS SOLD.



CHOOSING TRANSPARENCY

2009: BRAZIL & PARIS

THE MEANING OF ‘VEJA’ IS “LOOK” IN PORTUGUESE; IT IS THE ROOT OF THE COMPANY. THE BRAND’S MISSION IS TO ENCOURAGE CONSUMERS TO LOOK BEYOND THE SNEAKER, SEE HOW IT IS MADE & WHO IT COMES FROM.

IN 2009, SEBASTIEN & FRANCOIS DECIDED THAT THEY COULD LIVE OUT THIS HONORABLE MISSION MORE, INSPIRING THEM TO RETHINK THEIR SUPPLIERS.

THE TEAM MADE THE SWITCH TO BANKS WITH NO BRANCHES IN TAX HEAVENS, AND EDITED THEIR POWER SUPPLIER TO ENERCORP, WHICH PROVIDES GREEN ELECTRICITY FROM SMALL INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS.



OPEN BOOK

2009: BRAZIL & PARIS

AGAIN STRIVING TO LIVE OUT THEIR MISSION IN FULL, FRANCOIS & SEBASTIEN MAKE THE DECISION TO POST VEJA'S LIMITS ON THE COMPANY WEBSITE.

THEY FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SHOW THAT, WHILE THEY HAVE A GREAT PRODUCT AND A POSITIVE IMPACT, THEY STILL FACE SHORTCOMINGS AND HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE.

THIS TREANSPARENCY DRIVES THE TEAM TO DO A LITTLE BETTER EACH TIME, IMPROVING THE CONSISTENCY OF THEIR PRODUCT STEP BY STEP, AND STAYING FAITHFUL TO WHO THEY ARE & WHY THEY STARTED.



HISTORY OF THE BRAND

KEY TAKEAWAYS

VEJA WAS FOUNDED IN 2004 BY FRANCOIS MORILLION & SEBASTIEN KOPP. THEY LAUNCHED VEJA IN 2005 WITH MINIMALIST CANVAS SNEAKERS CRAFTED FROM ORGANIC COTTON & RUBBER FROM BRAZIL.

FROM THE GET-GO, VEJA DIFFERENTIATED ITSELF BY OMITTING ADVERTISING EFFORTS AND ALLOCATING MAORITY OF COSTS TO SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS & FAIR TRADE PRICING.

VEJA WAS ABLE TO ADAPT & GROW OVER TIME UTILIZING SEVERAL AVENUES. FIRSTLY, PARTNERING DIRECTLY WITH PRODUCRES OF ORGANIC RAW MATERIALS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM. THE BRAND PRE-FINANCES ABOUT 50% OF HARVESTS UTILIZING FAIR TRADE PRINCIPLES.

ADDITIONALLY, THEIR PRODUCTION IN BRAZIL EXPANDED INTO PARTNERSHIPS WITH SOCIAL REINTIGRATION ORGANIZATIONS, LIKE LOG'INS, EMPLOYING DISBALED OR SOCIALLY EXCLUDED INDIVIDUALS.

IN TERMS OF PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION, VEJA EXPANDED FROM CASUAL CANVAS SNEAKERS INTO RUNNING SHOES, BAGS, AND OTHER SMALL LEATHER GOODS PRODUCED FORM THEIR INNOVATIVE VEGETABLE-TANNED LEATHER.

IN SUMMARY, VEJA'S RISE STEMS FROM INVESTING IN ETHICS RATHER THAN ADVARTISING, AND ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY THROUGH TRANSPARENT SOURCUNG, FAIR TRADE PERTNERS, AND A MINIMALIST DESIGN.

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