



R-Strategies in the Outdoor Industry

New Tools, New Barriers, New Solutions

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Outline *2

- **Tools which work to Scale?**
(R3 Reuse, R4 Repair, R8 Recycle)
- **Circular Strategies which Hit the Wall**
(R2 Reduce, R7 Repurpose)
- **From Niche Experiments to Viable Walls**
(R0 Refuse, R1 Rethink, R6 Remanufacture)





Tools which work to Scale?

R8: Recycle – Plastic Bottles to Performance Fleece

Example: Polartec® Power Air™ with Recycled Content

What? Fleece fabric made from 100% recycled polyester, including post-consumer plastic bottles.

Impact: 50%+ of Polartec's fabric line now uses recycled content.

Used by brands like Patagonia, The North Face, and Adidas.

Why it's unique: No virgin polyester > entirely closed-loop for a high-performance material.

Source: <https://www.polartec.com/news/polartec-releases-100-recyclable-and-lighter-power-air-fabric>





Tools which work to Scale?

R8: Recycle – Old Wetsuits to Yoga Mats

Example: Suga's Wetsuit Recycling Program

What? Neoprene wetsuits → yoga mats.

Partnership with surf schools and dive shops to collect old wetsuits.

Impact: 10,000+ wetsuits recycled in 2025.

Non-toxic, durable mats with a textured grip (from wetsuit material).

Why it's unique:

First brand to turn wetsuits into a new product category (not just downcycling).

Source: <https://www.sugamats.com/recycling?srsIid=AfmBOoq1Pw->





Circular Strategies which Hit the Wall

- R2: Reduce – Zero-Waste Manufacturing

Example: Tentree's "Earth-First" Production

What? 100% of fabric scraps repurposed into new products. No landfill waste from cutting rooms.

Impact: 100M+ trees planted (via their "10 trees per item" model).

Challenge: Limited to simple designs (complex patterns = more waste).

Source: <https://phitcetera.com/blogs/news/tentree-an-earth-first-lifestyle-brand?>





Circular Strategies which Hit the Wall

- R7: Repurpose – Climbing Rope → Bags

Example: Evolv's Upcycled Rope Bags

What? Retired climbing ropes → durable duffel bags. Partnership with gyms to collect used ropes.

Impact: 1,000+ bags made in 2025. High demand from climbers (nostalgic + sustainable).

Barrier: Labor-intensive (hand-stitched in small batches).

Source: <https://www.evolvsports.com/climbing-accessories?>





Circular Strategies which Hit the Wall

- R5: Refurbish – Ski Boot Revival

Example: Tecnica's "ReBoot" Program

What? Old ski boots → like-new condition. Full disassembly, part replacement, and re-heat-molding for custom fit.

Impact: 30% cheaper than new boots. 90% of components are reusable.

Challenge: Consumer hesitation: "Is refurbished as good as new?"

Source: <https://www.sportaktiv.com/ski-und-schuh-mit-zweitem-leben-nachhaltige-initiativen-fuer-das-wintersport-material>





From Niche Experiments to Viable Walls

- R0: Refuse – PFC-Free Waterproofing

Example: Nikwax's PFC-Free DWR

What? Non-toxic, water-based waterproofing for jackets and tents. No PFAS, no fluorocarbons.

Impact: Adopted by 500+ brands (2026), including Fjällräven, Rab, and Big Agnes.

Biodegradable and non-bioaccumulative.

Source: <https://nikwax.com/en-gb/product-tag/pfc-free/>





From Niche Experiments to Viable Walls

R1: Rethink – Lease-to-Own Gear

Example: Vaude's Rental Service

What? Vaude offers rental options for tents, backpacks, and sleeping bags in select regions (e.g., Germany). Customers can test gear before buying or rent for short-term adventures.

Impact: Reduces overconsumption by allowing users to try before they buy.

Gear is refurbished and re-rented if returned, extending product lifespans.

Challenge: Logistics (cleaning, tracking, and restocking).

Source: <https://secondhand.vaude.com/pages/mieten>





From Niche Experiments to Viable Walls

R6: Remanufacture – Backpacks from Waste

Example: Topo Designs' "Re:Topo" Line

What? Old backpacks + fabric scraps → new limited-edition bags. Hand-cut and sewn in Colorado.

Impact: 1,000+ backpacks remanufactured in 2025. Each bag is unique.

Scaling barrier: Small-batch production = higher costs.

Source: <https://topodesigns.com/collections/all>





Key Takeaways

Theme	Success	Challenge	Opportunity
Tools to Scale	Geartrade (Reuse), Patagonia Mobile Repair (R4)	Consumer trust in refurbished gear	Mobile repair, peer-to-peer platforms
Hit the Wall	Evolv Rope Bags (Repurpose), Tentree (Reduce)	Labor-intensive upcycling, design limits	Automated sorting, modular designs
Niche → Viable	Nikwax (Refuse), Vaude Rentals (Rethink)	Logistics, cost	Lease models, algae-based materials





Emerging Trends

R9: Recover – Energy from Old Wetsuits

Example: Patagonia's Wetsuit Recycling Program → Old wetsuits → rubber crumbs for playground surfaces. 10,000+ wetsuits recycled in 2025.

R1: Rethink – Subscription Gear

Example: The North Face's "Gear Renewed" Subscription → Rotate seasonal gear (e.g., ski jacket in winter, rain shell in spring).

R7: Repurpose – Tent Fabric → Tote Bags

Example: Big Agnes' "ReTent" Bags → Damaged tent fabric → limited-edition totes.



Thank you !

