

Fashion Film: The Role of Upcycling Clothing in Mitigating the Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion

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Abstract

Some aspects of modern living, such as traveling internationally, using disposable plastic products, and even commuting to and from work, are universally acknowledged to be harmful to the environment at this moment. However, when it comes to clothing, the consequences are less visible. Fast-fashion clothing is typically manufactured of lower-quality materials and is less expensive. This is primarily purchased by young people who have a strong desire to look fashionable and be on-trend. Therefore, my study focused on the catastrophic impact of fast fashion on the environment. According to an article, it is possible that by 2050, the total carbon footprint of clothes would have increased by 26%, if the demand for fast fashion continues to expand at its current rate (Chinasamy, 2019). Due to this, the purpose of my research is to educate individuals on the negative impact that fast fashion has on the environment and provide them with information about the environmental benefits of upcycling clothing. Upcycling is a revolutionary method of reusing and recycling discarded and unwanted clothing materials to create fresh new outfits. In line with this, I produced a fashion film to serve as a social initiative to increase awareness by showcasing how upcycled clothing can significantly contribute to reducing the environmental footprint in the fashion industry, and it was effective based on the results of the post-survey.

Keywords: Fast Fashion, carbon footprint, environment, Fashion film, Upcycle Clothing

Introduction

Many individuals today think, "Is she so poor or frugal that she cannot afford new clothes?" as soon as they realize that an individual's clothing is made from upcycled materials. However, what many are unaware of is that purchasing and disposing of clothing causes a threat to the environment. That is why having a basic understanding of the carbon footprint of clothing is essential. Clothes, purchasing habits, and how wardrobe items are handled at the end of their useful lives all impact the environment, which is referred to as the fashion footprint. It is claimed that the fast fashion harms the environment. It is the world's second-largest polluter, following only the oil industry in terms of pollution. Furthermore, as industry expands, environmental damage develops as well.

However, individuals can also estimate their carbon footprint and reduce it. According to the article, upcycling has a positive impact on the environment. It requires much less energy than recycling. It helps to conserve natural resources while also lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the process. When it comes to creating new clothing, cutting, and sewing old clothes and other materials together is more doable than completely tearing old garments apart. It is a lot more efficient and responsible (Assoune, 2020). The environmental benefits of upcycling clothing are immense, and if we all worked together as a team, we could make a lot of difference. Unfortunately, many individuals are unaware of the significant impact that something as easy as upcycling old clothing can have.

Since my study is related to fashion, I believe that artistic fashion film is a great tool to raise awareness about the benefits of upcycling clothing for the environment and inspire people to be creative and make upcycling clothing "the norm." In this case, I selected this as the medium for my project because artistic fashion film is a tool for expression that has no borders. Just like with upcycling clothing, there are no boundaries when it comes to expressing one's creativity. To support my statement, Nick Knight, a British fashion filmmaker and the director of SHOWstudio, was interviewed by Lara Johnson Wheeler. During the interview, Nick Knight stated that he believes fashion film has not yet been defined and will continue to define itself until it does. Because they have the authority to define it, it's an incredibly exciting field for aspiring young filmmakers (Davies, 2021).

Through the utilization of this project, the fashion film would serve as a means of promoting upcycling clothing as a sustainable fashion that may assist in mitigating the negative impact that fast fashion has on the environment. Therefore, I sought to answer the following questions: ^[1] What materials are used to make clothes, and how much of a carbon footprint do clothes have on the environment? ^[2] What is the environmental impact of fast fashion, and how can upcycling clothing help to mitigate it? ^[3] Why do people not stop buying fast fashion? And lastly, ^[4] how can an artistic fashion film be used to promote sustainable fashion?

By doing this, I would like to attain the following objectives: ^[1] to learn more about materials used to make clothes, and how much of a carbon footprint do clothes have on the environment; ^[2] to determine how fast fashion has affected the environment and encourage people to help save the environment by being creative and making upcycling clothes "the norm." ^[3] To figure out why consumers are unable to refrain from purchasing fast fashion; and ^[4] to produce a fashion film that promotes upcycling as a sustainable fashion.

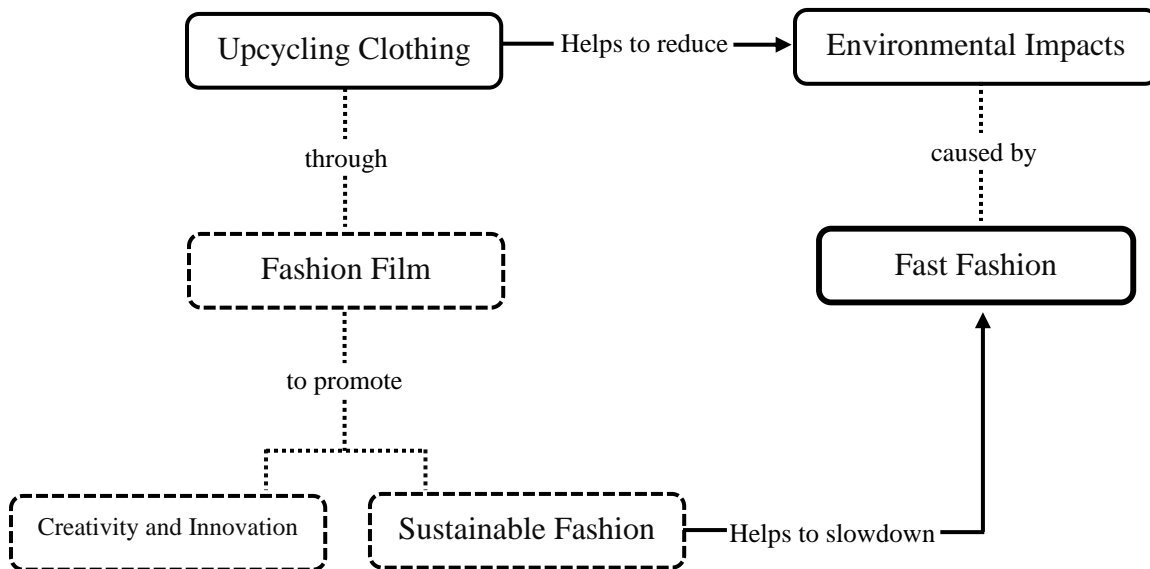
Aside from that, my research/project also incorporated a creative overview and the application of theory. To define the phenomenon, I applied formalist theory. As a critical approach in literary theory, formalism is described as essential techniques that analyze, evaluate, and interpret the underlying qualities of a text. Non-literary elements such as meter and figure of speech are included among these characteristics as well as grammar and syntax. In taking a formalist approach, a text's historical, biographical, and cultural background is given less importance. I produced a good monologue for the fashion film by using this theory and its aspects of analysis and style to catch and maintain the audience's attention throughout the speech.

Visualizing an overall assessment and expected outcome of my multimedia project is provided in the figure shown below. My primary purpose is to inform individuals about the negative impact that fast fashion has on the environment. I used fashion film to showcase how upcycling clothing may creatively transform a used-up product into something valuable again. In line with this, upcycling is one of the most creative design solutions to the environmental problem and the single most effective way to slow down fast fashion. This research's contribution would be beneficial to the environment. The output would help consumers be more mindful when making shopping decisions and consider wearing upcycled or existing clothing for extended periods of time.

Creative Framework

Figure 1

Upcycling Clothing Creative Framework



In terms of research design, I reviewed articles and samples on the negative effects of fast fashion and the benefits of upcycled clothing while developing the study. In accordance with this, I used an online video call to gather information about the subject of this paper to determine their level of awareness regarding the environmental impact of fast fashion. To answer the final question, I utilized a 5-point Likert scale and a set of yes/no questions on Google forms to rank the opinions of those who viewed the fashion film.

To provide additional information about my project, the multimedia project consists of an audio and video presentation and other elements. It is a 4-5 minute digitally published fashion film that highlights how beautiful the environment may be if upcycling clothing becomes standard practice. In addition to this, the project may help you gain a better knowledge and awareness of the negative environmental impact of rapid fashion and the environmental benefits of upcycling clothing. To make sure that the video process goes as smooth as possible, I utilized the three (3) stages of film production:

Pre-Production

I created a plot concept, treatment, A/V script, and costume design during the project's pre-production phase. Other files, such as the production design list and the production schedule sheet, were used to help with the preparations for the shoot. I anticipated that paperwork, such as permits and letters, would be done during this stage of the production process. Pre-production is primarily concerned with the concepts, their relationship to previous works, and the basic information about the project itself.

Production

When it comes to shooting the sequences, the production crew employed typical filmmaking equipment such as a camera and a drone, as well as a tripod and a gimbal, while the audio were recorded in a professional recording studio. Once the setting has been determined, the scripts are directed to the model to develop the final product, which is fashion film. Because the locations are all outdoors, I used solely natural lighting during the project.

Post-Production

After gathering raw clips, sound files, and a soundtrack, a mixdown was performed to create an A/V output. A large span of time was spent on editing, these include color correction, audio mixing, and arrangement of clips and audio. I utilized Adobe editing programs such as Premiere Pro 2022 (for offline and online editing) and After Effects (for online editing and other finishing touches).

Review of Related Literature

These previously published and related literature on the negative impact of fast fashion on the environment, how upcycling clothing may help alleviate that impact and how fashion film can be used to raise awareness are all discussed in this section.

The Fashion Industry and Environmental Sustainability

In an academic publication of Manchester Fashion Institute, the fashion industry consumes massive amounts of raw materials and accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions. As a result of fast fashion, there is an increased desire for new products, which has led to an increase in the manufacturing of low-cost fibers, fabrics, and clothes. Industry produces in ways that deplete, damage, or pollute natural resources by using harmful substances and/or processes and using resources at a faster rate than they are replenished naturally, putting sustainable practices at risk. Apart from garment manufacturing, delivering the product to the place of sale requires a lot of transportation, which adds to pollution. Moreover, textile and apparel disposal has resulted in textiles accounting for most of the household waste and occupying a significant amount of landfill space (Hatley, 2021). This article contributes to the development of a deeper understanding of the research issue, which will also serve to enhance the study's basis. Table 1 shows the industry's impact on the environment, including water use, pollution, the use and disposal of non-renewable and hazardous materials, and emissions of greenhouse gases.

Table 1

Examples of Non-sustainable Environmental Practices in the Fashion Industry

Water Use & Pollution	Use of Non-Renewable Resources	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Use of Harmful Substances	Plastic Entering the Oceans
Textile production (Including cotton) uses 93 billion cubic meters of water annually. The dyeing and treatment of textiles is responsible for approximately 20 percent of all industrial water pollution on a global scale.	Synthetic fibers require 98 million tons of oil per year. Cotton fertilizers. Chemicals used in the dyeing and finishing of fibers and textiles.	Textile production accounted for 1.2 billion tons of CO2 emissions (equivalent). More than all international flights and ocean liners combined.	Hazardous chemicals and processes harm farmers, factory workers, and the surrounding environment.	500,000 tons of plastic microfibers are shed during the washing of plastic-based textiles and end up in the ocean.

Note: Informed by Ellen MacArthur Foundation & Circular Fibers Initiative, 2017

The True Price of Fast Fashion

According to Audrey Stanton (2021), fast fashion is a design, manufacturing, and marketing strategy that focuses on producing large quantities of clothes in a short period of time. To deliver low-cost fashions to the public, garment production uses trend replication and low-quality materials (such as synthetic fabrics). These low-cost, trendy items have sparked an industry-wide tendency toward excessive consumption levels. Unfortunately, this has a serious impact on the environment (Stanton, 2021). To gain a deeper understanding of the environmental impact of fast fashion, Rashmila Maiti stated that fashion production contributes to 10% of the world's total carbon emissions. It depletes water resources and pollutes rivers and streams, while 85% of all textiles are disposed of annually in landfills. Even simple activities such as washing clothes emit 500,000 tons of microfibers into the ocean each year, equivalent to 0 of 50 billion plastic bottles (Maiti, 2021). Furthermore, the Quantis International (2018) research claimed that the three major drivers of the industry's worldwide pollution impacts are dyeing and finishing (36%), yarn preparation (28%), and fiber manufacturing (15%). The report also found that fiber production has the most significant impact on freshwater withdrawal (water diverted or withdrawn from a surface water or groundwater source) and ecosystem quality due to cotton cultivation. While the dyeing and finishing, yarn preparation, and fiber production stages have the greatest impact on resource depletion because of the energy-intensive processes based on fossil fuel energy. Due to this, the global emissions from textile manufacturing alone are expected to increase by 60% by 2030, as shown in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Maiti, 2021). This study provides a more detailed overview of the negative impact of fast fashion on the environment. The hard facts and statistics that are discussed will support my study's ideas to deepen and/or improve the understanding of the environmental impact of fast fashion.

The Rise of Upcycled Clothing

Over the past few years, environmental issues have increasingly gained attention in the general public's consciousness. Fortunately, the upcycling idea has arisen at the right time. As described in an article, upcycling is a collection of processes that are used to bring worn or damaged things, clothes, and materials back to life through transformation into a higher-quality product. In other words, it is the process of creating something new out of something old, but better. As a result, the word "upcycling" literally means "recycling from above" (Duseyau, 2021). It is important to understand that upcycling is not the same thing as recycling. Upcycling is the practice of using the same fabric and transforming it into something new. While recycling requires breaking materials before reassembling them into something new. Although both contribute to the reduction of waste that ends up in landfills. On the other hand, upcycling is considerably better for the environment than recycling. Because it is less expensive, consumes fewer resources, water, and energy (Assoune, 2020). Upcycling creates stylish and unique pieces of clothing while also providing a more environmentally friendly option. Moreover, upcycling can do much more than transform; it can also reinvent a piece of clothing (Duseyau, 2021).

Therefore, instead of throwing it away, think about upcycling and turning it into something practical and stylish. This will benefit the environment, but it will also provide an opportunity to express yourself creatively. These articles provide an overview of what upcycling is. They also help to clarify for the reader what the distinction is between recycling and upcycling, which can be confusing for some people.

The Environmental Benefits of Upcycling Clothes

To obtain a better understanding of the environmental benefits of upcycling clothing, this article explained that upcycling helps prevent waste from going to landfill. Improper waste disposal can pollute soil, water, and air. For example, the fashion industry is constantly creating new trends that contribute to excessive consumption. Fast fashion enables consumers to buy garments, barely wear them, and then discard them. Upcycling is a great solution to recycle garments and produce a new item from the old. Of course, upcycling will not clear landfills. However, it will reduce the amount of waste going into landfill. Thus, collecting unwanted clothes and upcycling them into something unique and original and prevent waste from going to landfill. This ultimately reduces the consumption of raw materials and natural resources (Lucy, 2021). As a result, upcycled clothes will serve as the primary focus of the project to promote awareness about the environmental benefits of upcycling and inspire people to be creative when it comes to clothing. Table 2 shows the environmental benefits of upcycling clothes, including less energy consumption, reducing textile waste, and preventing pollution.

Table 2

Examples of Environmental Benefits of Upcycling Clothes

Less Energy Consumption	Reducing Textile Waste	Preventing Pollution
Upcycling consumes a lot less energy than recycling. It helps to conserve natural resources while also lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the process.	Upcycling is a method that is extremely good for the environment. It saves a lot of resources and prevents more waste from being created by adding value to waste.	Upcycling reduces the demand for additional raw materials, thereby reducing the need for certain chemicals during production. This reduces air pollution, waste in landfills, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and saves our rainforests.

Note: Informed by Alex Assoune, 2020

Fashion Film as a Medium

Nick Knight, a British fashion filmmaker and the director of SHOWstudio, was interviewed by Lara Johnson Wheeler. During the interview, Nick Knight stated that fashion film is a very interesting and unique medium that is quickly displacing fashion photography as the most effective way to represent fashion today. Since the internet has replaced magazines and newspapers as the platform through which people experience imagery, it is needed to communicate fashion in a way that is appreciative of this. The most effective method to express some clothing is to observe it in motion, in the way it was intended to be seen (Wheeler, 2018). Along with this, he also believes that fashion film has not yet been defined and will continue to define itself until it does. Because they have the authority to define it, it is an exciting field for aspiring young filmmakers (Davies, 2021). Since the study is related to fashion, I decided to utilize fashion film as the medium for the project since artistic fashion film is a tool for expression that has no borders. Just like with upcycling clothing, it also has no boundaries for expressing one's creativity.

Promoting Sustainable Fashion

Based on the journal article, fast fashion customers need to be educated and inspired about sustainable fashion to persuade and shift their habits in a more ecologically responsible way. The goal of promoting sustainable fashion is to raise consciousness and understanding about the issue, which includes spreading awareness and knowledge (Miller, 2020). Not to mention the sustainable fashion campaign reduces carbon, waste and water footprints by 82%. This article is essential to the study since it expresses the same idea as my project. The project's primary goal is to increase public knowledge of sustainable fashion and why it is important and relevant today. Once customers are informed and aware of the environmental damage caused by fast fashion, they are more inclined to change their purchasing habits and encourage their friends and family to do the same, such as upcycling clothing.

Review of Related Works

This section of the paper mentioned several films relevant to the project. The works discussed provide an in-depth examination of what makes these works beneficial in terms of creating an effective fashion film about reducing the environmental impact of fast fashion through upcycling clothing.

Vivienne and Tamas decided to use warmer, more saturated colors throughout the film to create a friendly atmosphere and build compassion with the viewers. Green was also frequently used in fashion films, primarily because it represents nature and hope. This soothes the audience's eyes while also serving as a nice counterpoint to the brighter, more saturated colors that are being utilized in the video. From the very beginning to the very end, the predominant color scheme in this video was red. The combination of saturated colors and calmer colors truly enhanced the video's aesthetics and gave each scene a unique feel. Therefore, this video is relevant because it inspires the project's color palette.

Figure 2

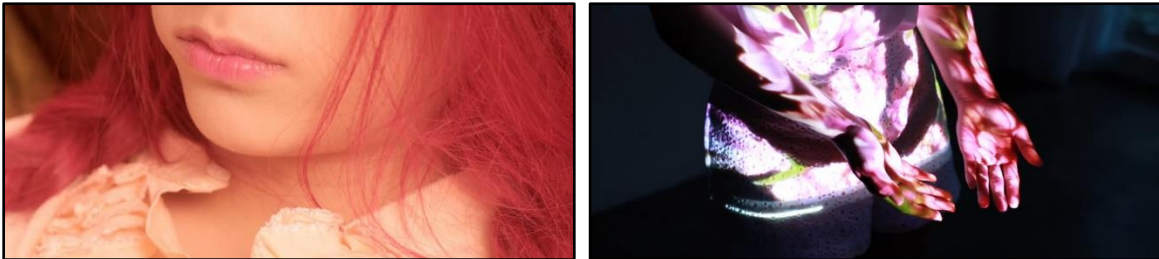
Vivienne and Tamas, (2019) Glamour Fashion film, Bokod, Hungary



The video begins with a monologue by the group's youngest member, Krystal. As soon as she begins to speak, her voice attracts attention, and the film proceeds to provide the audience with a view of the current circumstance she is in. The gentle swishing sound and the calmness of her voice are enough to compel someone to pay close enough attention to watch the film until the very end. The project's message was conveyed through this type of narration.

Figure 3

F(x), (2013) "Pink Tape" The 2nd Album Art Film, South Korea



Dr. Christina Dean, a pioneering environmentalist, and the originator of Redress, speaks during the Redress Design Award runway show in Hong Kong last 2018, she advocates for a brave new world. Kate Morris, the winner of the 2018 competition, talks about her creative process and where she gets her inspiration from, while the previous winner Angus Tsui shares his thoughts on the great opportunities that upcycling, and recycling materials provide to creators. In relation to the project, this video served as inspiration for the ideas created by the clothing designer for the fashion film.

Figure 4

Kate Morris, (2018) Redress Design Runway Show, Hong Kong



This video advertising used recycled clothing to promote sustainable fashion. Although this video is only one (1) minute and thirty (30) seconds long, it is strong enough to convey the message that the H&M Conscious Foundation wants to communicate. My project's goal is like this: short but powerful enough to leave an impression on viewers.

Figure 5

H&M, (2015) H&M Conscious: Sustainable fashion through recycled clothes, Sweden



With loads of beautiful scenery, Spanish fashion brand Zara has unveiled its spring-summer 2016 campaign. The shots, which Italian American photographer Mario Sorrenti captured, featured models Lineisy Montero, Frederikke Sofie, Julia Bergshoeff, and Vanessa Moody posing with sparklers and colored powder in front of a beach or open field as a setting. This video is related to my project because the camera shots, movement, and angle are quite like this.

Figure 6

Zara, (2016) Spring-Summer Campaign



Results and Discussion

Preliminary Survey Results

The issue is the sole focus of this preliminary survey. As a result, not many people are aware of the challenges or harmful consequences that emerge from fast fashion. The data gathered was generally unfavorable because most of those interviewed could not afford to shop from fast fashion businesses as frequently as they would want. One of the main reasons they gravitate toward fast fashion is that it is inexpensive, and many of them can only afford to shop from those stores. The interviewees stated that fashion is an essential element of their lives and seek out-trend pieces. Although they sincerely wish to support more sustainable clothing, they are hampered because they believe they lack the skill to upcycle clothes and do not have the time to do so due to their hectic schedules. They also mentioned that some of their purchases are influenced by others. This provides support to my analysis of why consumers are unable to refrain from purchasing fast fashion. To support this statement, my interviews revealed that nine (9) out of ten (10) respondents claimed they were unaware of the environmental impact of fast fashion. This issue has been a concern for a long period but has received little attention because customers are blinded by trendy and reasonably priced clothing and are unaware of the full cost of their wardrobe.

Post-Survey Results

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate how well the project has succeeded in introducing upcycling as a viable option for sustainable clothing production. For this, I used a 5-point Likert scale and yes or no questions to rank people's judgments about the project.

Conclusion

Since new fashion trends are continuously emerging and costs appear to be reasonable, the temptation to own the most up-to-date clothes may become overwhelming. However, people are not conscious of the enormous impact that fast fashion has on the environment, which everyone should be aware of and be educated about. On the other hand, I found out that upcycling clothing is one of the most environmentally friendly methods to discard them, based on the data I gathered from credible online sources. It has multiple environmental benefits, including reduced waste, decreased pollution, and water and energy savings. Therefore, to inform individuals, I produced a fashion film to showcase how upcycling clothing may creatively transform a used-up product into something valuable again. Due to this, the purpose of my project was to serve as a social initiative to raise awareness, and as a result, I carried out a post-survey to determine how effective it was in achieving that goal. The results showed that the project was successfully attained.

Recommendations

Research Topic

Those who will read this paper in the future I wished them well and hoped that they would finish their paper with such a strong sense of accomplishment that they would be grateful for all the time and effort they put into it. However, to do so, you must be attentive about the time allotted for data collection and analysis to provide reliable results for your topic. Therefore, always bear in mind the value of time. In addition, you must remember that the purpose of your thesis is to alleviate the burden of a specific problem in society. That way, you will not become disoriented during your research.

Creative Process

The budget is indeed important in production. Again, it dictates the amount of equipment, crew, and locations that can be used in a production. However, this does not imply the film's overall quality. My study concluded that the storyline is one of the driving elements in a fashion film. The future filmmaker may not have the largest budget, but how they use that budget wisely, with a compelling story at its core, will make a difference. Aside from that, there are bound to be problems in production, therefore, it is best to plan to avoid them getting worse. When it comes to filming, it's also essential to make connections. Someone with good work ethics and professionalism will be more likely to receive help, encouragement, and support, whether financially or in other forms of support.

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