

Designing and Delivering Sustainable Fashion Design Curriculum : A Case Study of Upcycling Garment Workshop

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, more clothing brands and retailers from retail to luxurious brands are admitting they are responsible for their environmental impacts on sustainable fashion. Consumers' consideration of sustainable and ethical consumption are also getting growing with their interests within unique and refined fashion design products (Lim, 2020). Upcycling is 'Upgrade + Recycling', and it is defined as creation or modification made to the product before it reaches the end of its life with efforts to improve the quality or value than the original components (Sung, Cooper, Ramanathan & Singha, 2017, Heo, 2019). In this sense, it is obvious that upcycling fashion products have more recognized as one of the sustainable creation and consumption because of its exclusivity and product value. Due to the significant roles of higher education toward sustainable development, UK universities are encouraged to embed the elements of sustainable development (Advance HE, n.d.).

2. Methodology

This research aims to find out characteristics of the outcomes from an upcycling workshop delivered to Fashion Design students in the UK University, and to verify its impacts on students. A half-day upcycling workshop was conducted with the aim of building up the first year of fashion students' technical upcycling skills at the Birmingham City University in March 2019. The total number of participants was 28, and observation was used to find out distinctive characteristics. The data were collected within and after the workshop session, and the collected data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The whole research process met with the university ethical clearance procedures to use the participants' data with anonymity.

3. Results

Regarding the garment choice that students brought to the upcycling workshop, 35.7% of the students chose to upcycle a T-shirt followed by 21.4% selecting a trouser. The only 3.5% chose to use some form of outerwear or layering item such as a hooded t-shirt, a jacket or knitted jacket. The fabrics of selected garments were denim, cotton, and polyester. Majority of students who chose T-shirts altered the neckline specifically, and trousers were used for the length of fabric to manipulate around the body. However, using trousers also showed some limitations with a specific length of fabric, not width.

4. Discussion

The given task in the workshop session was to modify a garment in a method which student think their customer profile or target audience would buy. Firstly, students were asked to modify garment applying by draping and modelling, including fabric manipulation such as twisting and pleating on dress forms without cutting garment and cutting into it afterwards. The primarily chosen techniques by students were draping and fabric manipulation into the garment on

dress forms. Students were encouraged to use hand sewing to create shape and garments. This potentially limited the students' output as they assumed they should work with handcrafts; therefore, the full amount of access to the sewing machine is to be recommended to create functional garments. Students showed difficulties to create garments when they reflected their customer profile and target audience. However, this design approach is to be considered as crucial to interpret the design idea and meet the criteria required. For this reason, the comparison between two experimental shapes with/ without considering customer profile would be suggested to find out which outcome could be more creative and productive. Moreover, creating a new fabric first by fabric manipulation techniques such as weaving, macramé, fraying, fringing, and plating etc. is to be considered. In addition, using more than one garment could enhance the amount of fabric available, and give various attempts as well as making an outfit and blend the fabrics. The final outcome was recorded by providing illustration and technical drawing with annotation of the development process, and this allowed students to clearly show what they would have done with the garment to create a design.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the workshop, participating students showed their creativity and ability toward upcycling challenges. It was found that upcycling approach would help students to develop sustainable design ideas and create a new high-valued garment. The findings could contribute to develop an optimized workshop for sustainable fashion courses and modules.

References

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