

University of Wales

Trinity Saint David

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Community Engagement Assessment 2

Reflective report

**Best practices in community engagement in collecting and recycling of
household waste in London**

Student Number: 2022689

Module Title: Academic Skills

Module Code: LCBB4000

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Introduction

In my first assignment, I described one of the best practices for engaging the community in collecting and recycling textiles in London and creating new clothes and installations from old clothes. Unfortunately, I did not take part in this project in London, but I did return old clothes to their shops, which is part of this initiative. The main conclusion of this project is that: a new industry is emerging - a textile recycling industry, which could be a new field for capital investment and potential profit. My future plans are to work in this emerging recycling industry of textiles. This research has helped me and expanded my knowledge on this topic through the facts and information I have found. The importance of commitment is crucial because without the help of individuals, private business and local environmental regulations, this a new industry will slow down its development and growth and we will continue to pollute nature with textile waste.

Main Body

Reflective Learning Cycle

Description

This project was implemented by the Swedish company H&M, whose main goal was to inform customers that they can return their old clothes to stores throughout the year, and in return consumers can receive a 15% discount on a coupon for their next purchase. By offering prizes, less ethical and interested consumers are encouraged to return old clothes. The project involved students and faculty from Fashion Colleges in London and other cities, H&M staff, fashion customers, workers from around the world working in recycling factories. Informing the customers in the H&M project took place mainly through the social networks **Facebook** and **Instagram**, through an interesting and fun game for uploading photos and tagging in social networks. Young people are the main customers of H&M and this strategy of the company was in line with the way they communicate on social networks. They are also the largest percentage of consumers of the so-called "fast fashion". ⁽¹⁾

Feelings

I am definitely a fan of H&M, not only because of the good minimalist design, but also because of the environmental policy they pursue. They are one of the pioneers of the idea of a change to circular and renewable fashion. This is just the beginning of this change, as they recycle less than 3% of the total amount of old clothes they collect. But it fills me with enthusiasm, and also a lot of fashion maniacs, because the company can be an example. and for all other clothing manufacturers.

Evaluation

The event was a success, students and consumers were enthusiastic and a lot of old clothes were collected. A little later in the autumn of the same year, H&M released a collection of jeans made from 20% recycled cotton and 80% organic cotton, as a response to the event in London. ⁽³⁾ The negative news is that this process of recycling and implementing new technologies is slow and most textile waste is still landfilled in poorer countries where environmental regulations are lacking.

Conclusion

Many other companies have started to follow H&M's path, such as Patagonia, Decathlon, The North Face, Zara, Reformation and dozens of others. The development of this new textile waste recycling industry is crucial not only for me, but also for customers and workers in the fashion industry. Sharing the values of clean nature and sustainable environmental production concerns all stakeholders in the chain and everyone must make their part of the effort.

Action

H&M has quite ambitious goals for the coming years: by 2030, all the products that H&M produces will come from more sustainable or recycled sources. They are one of the biggest consumers of recycled polyester and in the Conscious Exclusive collection we use Econyl, which is 100% regenerated nylon fiber made from fish nets and other nylon waste. By 2040, H&M will have a positive impact on the climate throughout its value chain, because a true circular business model can only be driven by renewable energy. ⁽⁴⁾

Reflection on personal experience

Develop self-awareness

For me, it is important that my values and interests have a practical application and contribute to the development of society as a whole. Unfortunately, no one stakeholder (private business, private investment funds, European funding programs, local authority, textile industry) engages in Bulgaria with my projects. And that's why I decided to come and try to implement them here in the UK. It is important for me to live in a healthy environment, in a balanced social society and in an environment that supports my creative ideas. I believe that a society prospers when all its members realize their creative potential. This is one of the reasons for the collapse of totalitarian states in the late 80's (Bulgaria also in this group) - people failed to realize their creative ideas, because the structure of these societies is command-and-control - that is, you have no right to any initiative as a free citizen. For this reason, Bulgaria is in a terrible crisis, because people cannot organize themselves around public causes and to solve problems together. The conclusion, which is related to the H&M project - without the involvement and support of all stakeholders for a project or idea, normal and peaceful coexistence in a society and its coping with problems is not possible. The government of a country is not obliged to solve all people's problems, they are obliged to self-organize, share responsibilities and make a plan on how to solve their problems.

To increase employability

In 2018, H&M launched a sustainability program called "Conscious Action", which is still developing today. It is a natural continuation of the Fashion Recycling Week project. In general, this program creates more job opportunities in poorer countries, and more and more recyclable resources are used in production. ⁽⁴⁾

Personal development

One of the reasons I write about the problems in the textile industry is that I would like to work in this field of problems. And as it is known in private business, where there are problems there are opportunities for profit. But I am not so motivated by profit, as much as the opportunity to contribute to solving these serious problems with textile waste.

Self-awareness

I am extremely interested in the problems of protection and restoration of the environment. I have participated many times in actions for cleaning of polluted areas with plastic garbage. For me as a consumer, sustainability and concern for nature are fundamental. When I throw away a garment, I want to know what happens to it next and whether it can be reused or recycled. So I only buy from brands that pursue policy for sustainability.

Professional development

I graduated from an art school in textile design and woodcarving in Bulgaria. In 2014, after years of experiments and multiple hand tests, I made my first industrial prototype of fabric composed of recycled plastic bottles. Two years later I won an international competition for innovation with this material, funded by the Belgian company Solvay Group, which has its own University of Economics and Management in Brussels.

Summer internship and Summer job

The award I received for my textile innovation project was a 10-day course in Economic and Management at Solvay Summer School in Brussels. There I listened to lectures on economics and management by famous entrepreneurs and professors from Belgium. It was an amazing experience and culture sharing.

To be engage with brand

I support H&M with my purchases and the return of my old clothes, because we share the same values and vision for the future. The younger generation of consumers is becoming increasingly concerned about the social consequences of their purchases in connection with human rights violations in the clothing industry, as well as about the life of their old clothes after they are returned to a collection center.

Research chosen career

Although still in its infancy, I think the H&M project is wonderful, not least because it engages students to develop a whole new direction in fashion design. After graduation, perhaps a large number of these students will continue to think, try and contribute their ideas to this new line. It is great that private business engages young people in an

environmental project, because its preservation is not the responsibility of governments and local authorities alone. I myself make manual prototypes for the production of textiles from recycled materials. My participation in a design festival in Germany with some of these prototypes was recorded in the New York Times in 2009. ⁽²⁾

Network – social connectedness

In my opinion, H&M has a very well-established network of consumers who are engaged in many eco-causes. They are informed about this mainly through **Facebook** and **Instagram**, as well as through a personal membership card (I am also a member of this society). All people on the planet must be involved in the protection of nature and species, because nowadays everyone creates some kind of garbage, in which plastics and textiles are always present. This requires good connectivity and organization, mainly at the local level.

Understanding power

What I don't like about H&M's project is that it's too late to engage consumers. Polyester clothing (polyester is a type of plastic that is a by-product of oil production) has been produced since the early 1960s. years of the last century. The program for the implementation of the "Circular Economy" is quite late in time. I think that not only H&M should commit to its obsolete product, but also all manufacturers of all kinds of products - from iPhones to cars and refrigerators. Private companies should be responsible for their obsolete products, their collection and recycling. If this is implemented as an idea, they will not produce so many models with such a short life cycle. I am a supporter of the idea of healthy, quality products that can be used for decades.

Personal growth

What I learned from this H&M project is that in order to be able to realize my own project in the field of textile recycling, I have to reach an agreement not only with an investor, but also to engage the consumers of my product with public benefit causes. Engagement is primarily through sharing values and a common vision for the future. I must clearly describe what the user will gain from my product, as well as what will happen to the product after its aging.

Communication skills

For myself I can say that I can communicate with people of all ages, genders and social status. If a person does not have communication skills, he can develop them. They are extremely important for solving problems and implementing projects, because through them he connects with other people.

Good listening skills

Listening skills are essential because through them we can get feedback on our future projects from our clients. If we can't listen, we will not have quality communication with our future partners and clients. And from there we will not get good results in our work.

Positive attitude

I hope that the idea of the Circular Economy will become a reality in 10 years. Recycled materials are already widely used in H&M. In addition to recycled cotton from textile residues in production, H&M also uses recycled polyester, recycled polyamide and recycled wool in its product lines. "Closed Loop" project is still developing.

Conclusion

This H&M project is just a small attempt to engage the public in solving the global problem of textile waste. We have seen that people are excited about this problem and are ready to cooperate in any way. Sustainability is essential for the fashion business due to the growing awareness of consumers about the damage that this business causes to the environment. Global textile consumption is estimated at over 30 million tons per year, causing serious social and environmental impacts within the supply chain. The demand for minimizing environmental pollution is not only from fashion companies that have suppliers for production, but also from consumers who are willing to be actively involved in the recycling process.

1. A label from the collection and the initiative "Conscious Action" ⁽⁵⁾
2. A box for collecting old clothes in the store of H&M in Wimbledon, London ⁽⁵⁾
3. A label from the collection and the initiative "Closed Loop" ⁽⁵⁾



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