

ReWear Birmingham: Sustainable Clothing Repair and Community Skills

Title page

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Executive summary

ReWear Birmingham is a vision for a clothing repair/alterations shop that includes community sewing workshops and commercial services. Based on a common workshop, it will be able to prolong the life of the garments by mending, adjusting the garments and providing practical tips and advice to the customers.

Target market is the local population, adults in the workforce or households who want to keep clothes that are useful or have value. Accessibility will be facilitated by the online booking, transparency of quotes and convenient collection appointments. There will be repair skills training held at monthly community workshops (with a limited number of subsidised spaces available).

The plan is to have a start-up investment of £10,000, half of which came from the founder and the other half from an investor. Original outlay and monthly operating expenses are £6,650 and £3,350 is kept in reserve. Based on the assumptions, about 183 repairs are needed to effect a monthly operating cash break-even. There will be a limited pilot to first gain some insight into willingness to pay and delivery capacity prior to further investment.

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1. Overview of the business idea

1.1 Business concept and customer value

ReWear Birmingham will offer repairs and alterations – such as seam repair, replacement zips, hemming and visible mending. Customers will provide pictures for indicative quotation and after the garment inspection, the customer will accept the final price. The recommended amount of time for turnaround is 5 working days. The revenue is going to be mainly from repairs and some from workshops. Whereas, the chance is relevant to the barriers found in the research conducted in UK which include lack of repair skills and some of the professional services are unaffordable (Zhang and Hale, 2022).

The value proposition is that it's easy and reliable repair, so customers can keep clothes they already like and love. Staff will not presume that it is cost-effective to repair all clothing and will discuss cost and probable outcome before accepting work (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021).

1.2 Management and proposed legal structure

The proposed legal structure is Private Company Limited by Shares where the investor can join in on an agreed equity. The founder-manager will be responsible for bookings, customer service, promoting the business and monitoring finances. Technical work and quality control will be performed by a part-time repair specialist, and financial administration by an external accountant. Professional advice will verify registration and employment details, insurance, and arrangements with customers' contracts prior to launch (Bocken and Ritala, 2022).

1.3 A contribution to the environment and the community

ReWear will implement a circular approach of increasing the lifespan of garments without the need to sell new ones. This means “slowing” resource, which happens through longer product lives (Bocken and Ritala, 2022). Completed repairs will be documented, but not necessarily assumed to be waste or carbon emissions avoided as environmental benefits rely partly on continued use of repaired clothing and decreased replacements (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

One monthly workshop will be held which will cover basic repairs, two places will be subsidised in each group of 8. Potential community partnerships will be utilised for identification of participants. Appropriate offcuts of fabric and reusable materials will be used in workshops (Diddi and Yan, 2019).

2. Market research

2.1 Market opportunity and evidence limitations

The fashion sector generates over 92 million tonnes of waste every year (Niinimäki et al., 2020). This is not a Birmingham market size estimate, but an existing global estimate, which represents the environmental problem. More to the point, Zhang and Hale (2022) surveyed 300 citizens in the UK and found that barriers to repair include skills, affordability and garment design. These findings indicate that there is interest in an accessible service, although there is not enough paying customer volume locally to indicate that this is the case.

The founder will complete 40 questionnaires with local customers, interview five community partners and compare five repair people in the local vicinity prior to launch. Questions will review actual repair expenditure, what are acceptable turnaround times and willingness to pay for certain jobs. 50 Orders will be tested through a four week paid pilot (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021).

2.2 PESTEL analysis

Factor	Opportunity or risk	Proposed response
Political	Public interest in waste prevention may create partnership opportunities, but funding availability is uncertain.	Explore local initiatives without assuming grant income.
Economic	Customers may repair valuable garments but replace inexpensive items when repairs cost more.	Provide clear quotations and test prices through paid orders.
Social	Emotional attachment can encourage repair, while limited skills can discourage it.	Promote garment preservation and offer practical workshops.
Technological	Digital tools can connect customers with repair specialists.	Use a simple booking system and photographs before investing in a bespoke application.
Environmental	Longer garment use can support resource conservation, but benefits depend on subsequent behaviour.	Track continued use through optional follow-up surveys.
Legal	Customer property, personal information and employment arrangements require careful management.	Obtain advice and establish documented procedures before trading.

Even if a repair is for the environment this may not be the best course of action if there is a replacement option that is cheaper. ReWear will therefore start with clothes that have been used at work, clothing that is well-constructed and everyday wear, and beloved clothing. For

complex repairs, a customer-specific quote will be given to protect the customer's expectations and the labour margins (Rausch and Kopplin, 2021).

2.3 Competition and differentiation

The repair platforms mentioned by Hernandez et al. (2024) are comprised of The Seam, Sojo, brand-owned services, and independent practitioners. They show that digitally co-ordinated repair is already a proven method in their research. Doesn't dictate coverage or pricing of those providers in Birmingham; this is part of the competitor audit at the local level which must be checked at researchonline.rca.ac.uk.

ReWear suggests a mix of local appointments, transparent quotations and community learning as a way of differentiating. Traditional alteration businesses could complete through experience and existing connections, and self-repair could be a more budget-friendly option for those that are savvy about tools. This is why ReWear should not be competing based on the ability to repair but on a reliable delivery and accessibility. This is to be proven by customer experience and repeat business (Kotler, Keller and Chernev, 2022).

3. Marketing communications

3.1 Segmentation, targeting and positioning

Segmentation, targeting and positioning principles will govern ReWear, taking into account those customers who have a clear practical need to repair clothing: workwear, improved clothing fit or the retention of valued clothing. A second group is community learners. The positioning statement is this: "Local repairs that you can rely on so you can continue to wear the clothes you love." This conveys a benefit without making vague environmental claims (Kotler, Keller and Chernev, 2022). pearson.com

3.2 Promotional activities

The first campaign will involve local search visibility, as well as short repair demonstrations and printed information handed out via willing community partners. Completed work will be displayed in photographs with permission of the customer. Each communication will alert customers to an enquiry form which will include service examples and indicative prices. The consistent messages across channels will assist in the integrated marketing approach (Kotler, Keller and Chernev, 2022).

Workshops will be used as a forum to showcase skills and foster relationships. However, attendance will not be deemed to constitute future purchases of repair. Motivation and obstacles

to community mending are explored by Diddi and Yan (2019), indicating that understanding needs to be investigated rather than assumed. The bookings of workshop, enquiries for repairs and paid conversions will be separately recorded by mdpi.com.

3.3 Marketing objectives and evaluation

First month aims are 150 repairs completed, 6 paying workshop places and acquisition spend under £10 per new paying customer. The target for month 3 is 200 repairs, as long as there are the resources available. These are targets not predictions based on the actual orders in place. Enquiries, conversions, acquisition cost, complaints/repeat bookings will be compared on a weekly basis. The media that attract attention but no productive orders will be allocated less funds (Kotler, Keller and Chernev, 2022).

4. Financial plan

4.1 Funding requirement and sources

An illustrative £10,000 is needed to launch ReWear: £4,000 founder equity and £6,000 investor equity. This offer is to buy the loan without any scheduled repayments during the demand testing period, but with a shared ownership and in the future the repayments. The percentage, valuation and governance rights of the investor are still negotiated. Funding would be dependent on successful pilot results and confirmed quotes – as circular operations have to be financially viable (Bocken and Ritala, 2022).

4.2 The Start-up and first month expenditure

Item	Amount
Sewing machines, tools and workstations	£1,500
Refundable premises deposit	£600
Website and booking setup	£300
Registration and professional setup allowance	£250
First-month shared premises and utilities	£600
Repair specialist: 80 hours at £20, including employment-cost allowance	£1,600
Founder remuneration, including associated cost allowance	£800
Insurance, software and administration	£200
Launch promotion	£300
Repair materials and transaction fees: $150 \times £3$	£450
Workshop consumables	£50
Total initial cash requirement	£6,650
Uncommitted cash reserve	£3,350
Total funding	£10,000

4.3 Revenue, break-even and sensitivity

If it was assumed the average repair is £22 and that 150 are repaired then the repair revenue would be £3,300. There are $3600 - 120 = 3480$ Customers if 6 Workshops are sold at £20 each, which is £120 more, (total revenue is £3,420). The fixed operating cash flow costs per month is £3,500. The first month has an operating cash shortfall of £580 after deducting £450 for repair-variable costs and £50 for workshop consumables.

Jack receives £19 (£22 - £3) for each repair. Cash break-even for the monthly operating Workshop is: £70 workshop contribution

$(£3,500 - £70) \div £19 = 180.53$, rounded up to 181 repairs.

When you remove income or cost from the workshop you get break even at 185 repairs. The operating cash surplus is £370 with 200 repairs and the planned workshop. At 120 repairs, the deficit is £1,150. This calculation does not account for tax, depreciation and distributions to investors.

With an average 20 minutes per standard repair, 200 jobs will take about 67 technical hours and 13 hours for the specialist to go to workshops and quality checks, which are included in the 80 hours. This may not be enough for performing complex tasks. The pilot time records will thus serve to define an appropriate service mix and costs, giving credit to the importance of repair skills and material knowledge (Hernandez et al., 2024).

5. Conclusion

ReWear is a viable alternative to increase the lifespan of garments and to educate the community at the same time. There are still some way to go before they are commercially viable, though customers will have to accept prices that allow for skilled labor. Limited paid pilot and only pay for expansion when there is a need and demand, and repair times and contribution margins can be demonstrated. This relates to the environmental goal and the economic restraint that is needed for a sustainable circular enterprise (Bocken and Ritala, 2022).

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