

University of Wales

Trinity Saint David

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Assessment 1

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

Fashion Recycling Week in London

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Introduction

Case study

Swedish fashion retailer H&M teamed up with London College of Fashion's Centre for Sustainable Fashion, to launch the first nationwide **Fashion Recycling Week** which ran from the end of August to the beginning of September in London. Giant garment collecting box was being located in the Covent Garden Piazza, during the week customers who donate their unwanted clothes to any store could redeem double discount vouchers for their next purchases. Also Passers-by were encouraged to get active on social media to win in-store vouchers valued at £250.

Students were challenged to create new clothing models from old clothes brought in by customers and thought-provoking installations that were displayed on H&M windows in eight key cities in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The idea of the initiative is to reuse and recycle 97% of clothing and textiles collected in new products such as car insulation and new clothing to stay in the fashion cycle. ⁽¹⁾

Analysis of the project

Background and Objectives

The textile industry is important to us and provides us with clothes, shoes and many other amenities from everyday life, but precisely because of its widespread use, it ranks 4th among the most polluting areas after agriculture, the energy industry and transport. The manufacturers of the so-called "Fast fashion" anticipate trends years ahead to succeed in production and change their collections every few months. The low price most often goes hand in hand with the low quality. By lack of ethics we mean the real price that someone else pays, and this is not the end user, but the workers and people living near the factories. The price is also polluted nature and tons of clothes that we throw in the landfill, most of which cannot be decomposed for more than 40 years, as they have not yet been invented and introduced good technological solutions to this problem.

Sustainability issues are crucial for the fashion industry. In pursuit of low production costs, clothing companies have benefited from lower environmental awareness and a freer environmental regulatory system in developing countries. But there are companies like H&M that are aware of the problems and are trying to find solutions. One of these initiatives is that they provide a collection service for old clothes in their stores around the world. All customers need to bring them, and H&M will make sure the clothes are recycled or reused. A continuation of this project is the initiative of H&M, students and teachers from fashion schools in London and other cities in the UK.

Students from the fashion schools were provoked to interpret British cities and create new installations and garment using old clothes donated from fashion customers. The aim of this initiative was to reduce waste in the fashion industry achieving a "closed loop" system. ⁽²⁾

Community Engagement

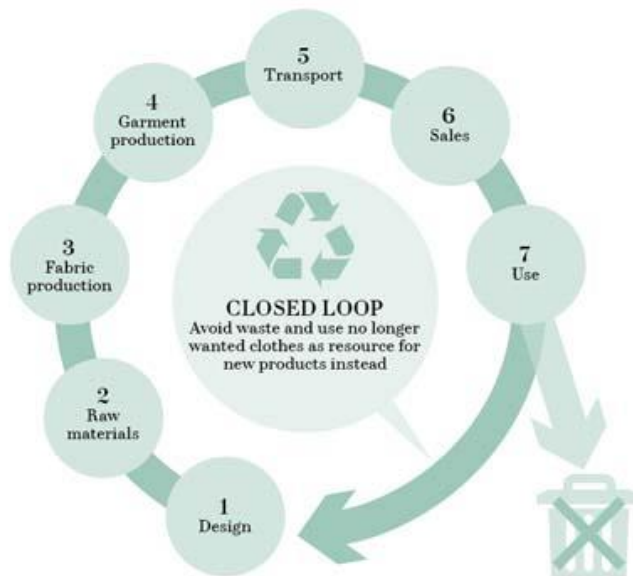
This initiative includes students and their teachers, UK and London fashion customers, H&M staff and thousands workers into the factories.

The benefits for society will be a significant reduction in textile waste, informing and encouraging customers to be more responsible for their purchases, as well as creatively provoking students from fashion and design schools to invent new clothes using old ones. This initiative enables students to explore sustainability, both conceptually and industrially. Their work shows creative approaches to encourage people to value clothing as a valuable resource rather than another short-term pleasure. Second year students from the London College of Fashion's Creative Direction course and Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF) were divided into groups to interpret each city, including Manchester, London and Edinburgh, to engage customer awareness of the extended life of clothes after donating them. Customers could earn £ 250 to spend in stores by posting their guesses on the number of clothes on **Instagram** used in each installation and posting a photo of the window **tagging@hm** window and the hashtag **#CloseTheLoop**. ⁽²⁾

The H&M clothing collection initiative is a global incentive to reduce waste in the fashion industry. This is an example of the idea of a "circular economy" and to close the cycle, as

H&M seeks to redirect and give new and extended life to unwanted clothes or to recycle them. This is the future of fashion and the first steps of H&M from a linear business model to a circular one.

A chart showing 'close the loop' for textiles in fashion ⁽⁶⁾



Katarina Midby, Sustainability Manager at H&M UK & IE, added: “We recycle less than 3 % of the clothing and textiles we collect into new products such as clothing, car insulation and, most importantly, new clothing, closing the chain in fashion.” (Fashioncapital.co.uk, 2021) ⁽³⁾

Benefits for all stakeholders

This is an amazing opportunity for students to show their creative ideas to people through the windows of a world-famous fashion company, and to think innovatively, creating new clothes from old ones. According to H&M, once delivered to the store, the old clothes of the customers are sent to one of the seven sorting plants around the world. Here, they are sorted into three streams that will be re-worn and resold as second-hand goods, reused as fabrics or upholstery or recycled to become new fabric and potentially new items.

One of the goals of Fashion Recycling Week is to change people's behavior and habits when it comes to health care and clothing. Customers are an extremely important part of this event and the success of the campaign depends on them. As one of the world's largest fashion retailers with more than 3,600+ stores worldwide, H&M claims that through initiatives like these, it will be able to "close the chain" in fashion by recycling unwanted clothing to create recycled textile fibers new products. ⁽⁴⁾

The company has already produced a recycled denim collection 'Close the Loop', which became available in September 2015 thanks to the active participation of customers Fashion Recycling Week in London. The items in the collection were made of 20% recycled cotton from collected clothes and 80% organic cotton.

Tools and platforms for community engagement

Creative arts such as fashion creation, social media platforms, and the company's storefronts in several cities in the UK are ways to engage the community in this H&M project. These tools are practical, friendly, efficient, fast and cost effective. The way in which H&M's announcement of the initiative reaches customers is through the social platforms **Facebook** and **Instagram**, as well as through information on various websites and fashion magazines.

This initiative has an older history and began in 2013, when customers were invited to bring all kinds of unwanted and worn clothing and textiles, of any brand and in any condition, in any H&M store. In this way, they ensure that less clothes go to landfills and in return receive vouchers to be used at H&M. I personally have also taken advantage of this campaign and received a discount voucher, which is why I am a customer of H&M.

The long-term goal is to keep no clothes in the landfill, as well as to save natural resources. By recycling just one T-shirt, 2 100 liters of water can be saved - imagine the impact of 1,000 tons of clothes collected during Recycling Week. Nothing is too torn, worn or used for a second life and even after Fashion Recycling Week in London the initiative to collect old clothes continues in the company's stores.

The intelligent goal of social media engagement is to identify the target audience, which in this case is quite diverse by age, as the company offers different in style and quality

clothing. Social media makes it easier for people to communicate and the information reaches a wider range of people. Above all, the project builds values and makes the idea of a "Circular Economy" viable and accessible to people. It engages the community in their passion and makes it fun and interesting, thus attracting many social groups.

Financial Assessment

The global demand for textiles is more than 30 million tons per year and this causes a very harmful impact on the social and environmental environment in the world. But with projects like H&M's Fashion Recycling Week in London and a well-thought-out plan for investing in recycling and reuse of textiles, there is an opportunity to influence the entire fashion sector so that all manufacturers join forces towards a preserved environment. Fast fashion has created a second-hand fashion industry through its single use, as well as a new recycling and marketing industry, where there is a huge annual turnover for capital investment. Which is good for investors on the one hand and for people looking for a livelihood in poorer countries where textile waste is stored. Recent studies also show that consumers are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products on the market and this will indirectly increase recycling investment.

Outcomes

As I wrote above, through this project, the fashion giant aims to raise awareness that people can return their old clothes to 3,600 stores around the world that will be recycled. This project grew into another the following year - **World Recycle Week in London**, and its goal was to collect 1,000 tons of clothes from customers around the world in its 3,600 stores to create recycled textile fibers for new products. Annually about 90 million textile waste ends up in landfills and green technologies for textile waste processing have not yet been invented and introduced. But with the help and assistance of citizens, the idea of zero percent waste is likely to become a reality soon. As the fashion industry has a huge impact on the global environment, the social and environmental awareness of consumers is growing, which has a direct impact on joint consumption. Consumers understand whether the supply chain is sustainable and how many natural resources will be used with the least carbon dioxide emissions in the environment. I think that the desire of citizens to return

their old clothes is not so much due to the shopping discount vouchers they receive, but to the fact that they also want to contribute to the protection of the environment with their actions. The result is the sharing of values and the active participation of private business, citizens and students in this project. Therefore, it is a strategy that benefits everyone, namely consumers, private businesses, employee and the environment.

Conclusion

Fast fashion companies must encourage consumer participation in recycling and take responsibility for the collection of their products after purchase, because they are responsible for millions of tons of textile waste. This project to return old clothes, launched by the Swedish Company H&M led to the "Conscious Action of All Stakeholders". The company has created more job opportunities in less developed countries through this enterprise. H&M has ambition program to use only recycled and other sustainably sourced materials by 2030. Concerns about the environmental impact of clothing production are important because the Earth is unable to maintain the current level of clothing production and disposal due to depletion of natural resources and rapid replenishment of landfills. ⁽⁵⁾

The benefits of using these recycled materials include saving energy and water, as well as greatly reducing the use of chemicals. This directly affects the health of many people - both consumers and people working in factories and those living near landfills.

Recommendation

As a loyal customer of H&M and a fan I would recommend:

- Even more active involvement of students from colleges and universities of fashion in the process of designing new clothes created from old ones and creating such a sustainable line in their collection.
- More investment from H&M for innovation in textile waste recycling technologies.
- This recommendation is not related to Fashion Recycling Week, but I think that global fast fashion manufacturers like H&M should be more responsible to the people who sew the clothes and not allow children to be exploited in the process.

- Greater transparency and responsibility in the production of fabrics for the company's clothes, as well as promotion of green technologies
- Introduction of the term "Green Fashion" among consumers, as this concept and a new line includes only new clothes made from recycled old ones.

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