

“ECO-DRIFT”: THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING

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Abstract

Secondhand clothing is perceived as condemned garments and materials, needless to mention that, they have become a stylistic fashion especially foreign secondhand materials among the people in Nigeria. As Libo (2019) puts it, Secondhand clothing can increase the life of textiles, through the process of reconstruction of such garments and material, which is referred to as secondary fabric treatment. The researcher re-define diverse garments, adopts secondary fabric design, and re-transforms secondhand apparel from the standpoint of upcycling design through studio methodology approach. Redesign necessitates limiting the negative effects while focusing on the beneficial contributions it may make to society. It frequently challenges the original form's rearrangement, modifies a single fabric style, exhibits new effects, and performs more distinct definitions. This paper features transformation of secondhand clothing into more environmentally friendly versions, not only to be inventive but also to protect the environment. The reconstruction secondhand clothing is an important way to combine sustainability, creativity, and social responsibility. Upcycling offers a practical way forward as the fashion industry continues to struggle with its environmental impact, enabling people and communities to make a positive impact on a more ethical and sustainable future.

Keywords: Reconstruction, Upcycling, Secondhand Clothing, Fast fashion

Introduction

The increased production of fast fashion clothing has resulted in an increase in the amount of second-hand clothing exported to African countries. Domestically produced clothing is typically expensive and of poor quality, whereas second-hand clothing imported from Western countries meets African demand by providing affordable, trendy, and high-quality clothing (Fibre2fashion.com). Secondhand apparel is affectionately called as "Okirika" in Nigeria. *Okirika* involves objects that have been valued and worn by past owners, providing a distinct blend of affordability. Exploring Secondhand fashion is not only environmentally friendly, but also an intriguing and sustainable approach to apparel. Secondhand clothing has an impact on the environment and encourages us to adopt sustainable fashion. Inegbedion (2023) notes that, people would sometimes source for secondhand clothing in order to possess gems from popular designers that add a touch of glamour to their wardrobe.

Secondhand fashion can be discovered in market stalls, clothing swaps, or vintage boutiques, secondhand clothing carries its own narrative, narrating stories of former owners and the eras it has traversed. This allure extends to vintage fashion,

pieces that endure the test of time, accumulating value with each passing year. The appeal of secondhand fashion extends beyond economical market finds; it embodies a culture of repurposing, recycling, upcycling and redefining personal style (Inegbedion, 2023). The prohibition of the second-hand clothing trade in Africa is a difficult decision because there is no evidence that, in the absence of second-hand clothing, local apparel production and employment would improve. Up-cycling and repurposing old clothes can make second-hand clothing imports profitable for Africa's textile value chain. Goldsmith (2012) notes that, repurposing of garments through reconstruction or other secondary uses does save energy, water, and carbon emissions as compared to fabric and garment production from “virgin” materials. Increasing the number of textiles that are recycled – whether to be worn again repurposing or in the other ways make useful.

The concept of art reconstruction is linked to a single design of garment materials, its purpose is to promote the aesthetic artistic effect of clothing and secondhand fabric. Xu (2007) affirms that, reconstruction combines with the characteristics of clothing style and makes use of fresh design ideas and craftsmanship to alter the appearance style of the available fabrics while enhancing their

artistic quality. The same or a different material is frequently added to the surface of an existing material to change the original visual effect when adding decorative design to garment material (Xu, 2007). The aim of this paper is to explore secondhand clothing through upcycling and reconstruction, with an artistic appreciation.

As Wan and Wong (2015) puts it, reconstruction is the process of making new clothes from previously worn garments or preformed finished products. Reconstruction, according to the Echoic design award 2017, is a type of up-cycling that entail manufacturing new clothes out of waste from previously worn garments or prefabricated finished clothing products. This method entails dismantling clothes and then reassembling the leftover materials into new designs. Reconstructing clothing can extend the life of a textile, minimize needless textile production, lessen landfill pressure, and reduce natural resource demand. Designers can repair old and undesirable garments to create something new and attractive through the reconstruction process. (see Fig 1)



Fig 1: Reconstructed Dress
Source: wellsew.co

Fig 1 shows that, fabric reconstruction gives the original fabric a new lease on life. Libo (2019) buttressed the above, the primary performance of fabric reconstruction is the inventive fabric texture. The arrangement and accumulation of unit pieces are the fundamental means by which the aesthetic visualization of cloth texture is demonstrated. This organization can be regular or erratic (Libo, 2019). Sustainable consumption rates are crucial since the Earth's natural resources are limited and will eventually run out. As a result, upcycling and reconstruction will eventually become a requirement rather than a choice.

Upcycling is defined as the reuse of discarded items in order to create a product of higher value than the original (Ngack, 2011). McDonough and Braungart (2013) stated that upcycling is “optimizing the materials, ingredients, and process pathways in such a way that waste is converted to raw materials for nature or some other industry”. The term “upcycling” has been used in many industries over the last two decades, but it is still trying to find its place in the fashion industry. The first step in the upcycling process is to collect, the second is to reprocess, and the third is to resell to consumers. Designers and manufacturers could take previously sold products and reprocess them into something even more valuable, allowing retailers to resell it at a higher price the second time around and upcycle it. Through this process, upcycling can now add value and profit.

Fast fashion is swiftly producing a large number of textiles that can be recycled in various ways in the world of fashion. Myers (2014) explains that, textiles can be dismantled and reassembled into new clothing, used as stuffing and rags in industry, or shredded and reformed into new clothing. These procedures prevent textile from ending up in landfills and incinerators. Zhi (2022) continued by pointing out the numerous environmental advantages of repurposed items. Clothing that has been upcycled requires a lot less raw materials, which lessens the damaging effects that fashion production has on the environment. Upcycled clothing has environmental advantages such as lowering water consumption, chemical and carbon emissions, and landfill contributions. Upcycling is defined in this study as the technique of repurposing garments by giving pre- or post-consumer textiles a new life by reworking them to fit current trends.

Methodology

Studio Exploration

The design process was altered to create two life cycles for a single fashion product in order to achieve the psychological and functional utility of the product. Additionally, the process of design itself included plans for how one life would change into another. For the purpose of designing a product with an extended life cycle, a thorough investigation of long-term fashion trends is essential. A designer can use practical and easy-to-implement techniques to change a product from its first to second life. Additionally, secondary fabric treatment of clothing was adopted, focusing on the selection and

composition of fabric colors, fabric kinds, and pattern, which may have a significant impact on the texture of the finished product. In this exploration, the second-hand garments may undergo slight alterations or a comprehensive makeover so that the original cannot be recognized. Janigo (2011) categorises reconstruction into three different levels: high (complete transformation), medium (structural changes with top applied details), and low (top applied details). In the low level (22%), the garment's structure was not changed; however, design details were added or top applied. In the medium level (48%), some garment re-construction or tailoring was completed, and design details were also added or top applied. In the high level (30%), the end use or structure of the garment was fundamentally changed, with design details added or top applied.

Reconstructing garment design (1)

Materials: Four pairs of second-hand jeans trouser (₦2400), threads (₦50), black ribbons (₦400), scissors (₦200) and zip (₦100).

Modifications: Cut a pair of jeans into strips; arrange them diagonally in a pleat; then attach them to a simple liner. Ribbons should be affixed to the fabric's upper edge.

Value Based Price: ₦7000

Reconstruction Level: High level, which suggests that 30% of the garment's structural components were utilized. The structure of the garment was fundamentally changed with design details added. There was a complete transformation of the outlook.

Reconstructing garment design (2)

Materials and Prices: Secondhand Corset (₦2000), two and half yards of lining (₦500), two and half yards of chiffon net (₦2200)

Modifications: To reshape the corset to meet the size of the dance dress, cut and remove a few strings. Gather the chiffon net with running stitches and pleat it with the corset.

Value Based Price: ₦7000

Reconstruction Level: Low level suggests that 22% of the garment's structural components haven't changed. Design elements were incorporated or put on top.



Plate 1: Secondhand jean trousers (Before reconstruction) Researchers' collection 202



Plate 2: A Party dress (After reconstruction) Researchers' collection 2022



Plate 3: Secondhand Corset (Before reconstruction)
Researchers' collection 2022



Plate 4: A Ballerina dress (After reconstruction)
Researchers' collection 2022

Result and Discussion

By granting the above clothing a second life (see Plate 1 to 4), it diminishes the need for new production, consequently reducing the carbon footprint associated with manufacturing. Secondhand shopping is an environmentally friendly alternative to rapid fashion, providing people with a simple yet significant method to make a positive impact on the environment. Plate 1 combines with the characters of clothing style and utilizes new design thought and craft to further change available fabric appearance style. Through the method reconstruction, the texture and style of the existing fabrics are changed to create a new visual effect and exhibit new features as shown in Plate 2. The reconstructed garment forms a three-dimensional or semi-stereoscopic texture effect on the surface of the fabric. The reconstruction and upcycling of second hand clothing is sometimes called an eco- efficiency approach. The studio exploration reveals that, 'Eco drift' recontextualises and transforms secondhand clothing into couture-inspired dresses.

Alluring Sustainable Fashion

Secondhand purchasing is at the forefront of the sustainable fashion movement, aligning with waste reduction principles, ethical behaviors, and promoting a circular fashion industry. The rise of conscious consumers has catalyzed an industry movement toward more sustainable and ethical practices, propelling secondhand fashion into the spotlight. The allure of secondhand fashion, according to Inegbedion (2023), goes beyond its environmental benefits; it's a celebration of distinctive style and historical significance. This explains why, Afrocentric designs have been infused into high-end creations displayed at the African Fashion and Music Festival with the Osun Collection and the Ankara Festival in Los Angeles by designers like as Asake Agoro of Asake Oge, a Nigerian living in New York, who have embraced the appeal of sustainable fashion. Fashion, as most people know, is a form of expression that goes beyond simply covering one's body with garments. At events like the Lagos Fashion Week 2023, even political figures have graced the runway, such Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who has championed the beauty of sustainable fashion.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendation

Findings

From the studio exploration, upcycling has demonstrated a partial reduction in textile waste. The cost of sourcing secondhand materials was significantly lower than new materials, making upcycled products more affordable without compromising quality. Hence, the ECO-DRIFT movement has the ability to permanently alter the fashion industry in the direction of a more sustainable ecosystem through persistent innovation, advocacy, and teamwork.

Conclusion

Reconstruction and upcycling of secondhand garments represent new fashion trends and give the garments a second life. The extended life of a product allows designers to create unconventional and innovative designs in comparison to an obsolete fashion product. Upcycling fashion can address multiple social causes at once, such as saving natural resources and ethical animal treatment, global labor issues, and environmental pollutants. Fashion can have special meanings related to the genealogy of its textiles, such as where it came from and who wore it before. Both of these concepts, as well as the inherent nature of an upcycled garment, can be motivators for consumers to purchase. These outfits are typically one-of-a-kind, patchwork combinations, and the use of multiple fabrics, cuts, and media combined with a skilled designer's artistic eye can transform them into works of art. The labels can take on the role of a storyboard that conveys not only a message and a concept, but also a narrative about the legend, story, and history of the clothing.

Recommendation

Secondhand shopping should emerge as a beacon of sustainability, style, and individual expression as the world grows more cognizant of its environmental impact. Its ability to weave tales, encourage sustainable practices, and reframe fashion as a force for good remains the secret sauce. As a result, designers, influencers, and common people should join the campaign to entice secondhand fashion to burgeon, promising a more sustainable and stylish future for the world of apparel.

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