

Social media as knowledge management for fashion upcycling practices: Case study on znstagram account @poppyluclothing

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Abstract

Fashion upcycling has become a significant movement driven by the need for sustainable practices in light of environmental challenges. This study delves into the connection between fashion upcycling and social media, particularly Instagram, as a platform for knowledge management. As awareness of the harmful effects of fast fashion on the environment grows, designers and consumers are seeking innovative solutions. Upcycling, the process of transforming discarded materials into new fashion items, reduces waste and fosters creativity and individuality can be the innovative solution. Instagram acts as a powerful tool for sharing information about upcycling and building a community around sustainable fashion. Through visually compelling content, women entrepreneurs and content creators like @poppyluclothing showcase their creations, share their stories, and educate their followers about sustainability. This research explores how Instagram facilitates knowledge management of upcycling practices, encourages consumer participation, and shapes public perceptions of fashion sustainability. By analyzing Instagram accounts like @poppyluclothing, this study highlights the importance of social media in introducing fashion upcycling as a sustainable and environmentally friendly practice. The findings suggest that Instagram not only amplifies the voices of upcycling content creator; but also serves as a knowledge management tool. Ultimately, this research underscores the potential of Instagram as a knowledge management platform for fashion upcycling and for fostering a more sustainable future in the fashion industry.

Keywords

Fashion upcycling, Knowledge management, Sustainability environment, Social media, Instagram

Introduction

Fashion upcycling refers to the creative process of transforming old, discarded, or unused clothing and textiles into new, fashionable items. This practice involves reimagining and repurposing materials to create unique garments or accessories, often

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with an emphasis on enhancing their aesthetic appeal and functionality. Upcycling can include techniques such as sewing, patching, dyeing, and embellishing, allowing designers and consumers to breathe new life into items that might otherwise contribute to waste [1], [2]. Fashion upcycling plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability within the fashion industry by repurposing existing materials. Upcycling helps divert textiles from landfills, significantly reducing the environmental impact associated with textile waste.

The fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to waste, and upcycling offers a practical solution to mitigate this issue. The practice of upcycling raises awareness about the environmental and social issues within the fashion industry. It encourages consumers to consider the lifecycle of their clothing and the impact of their purchasing decisions, promoting a more sustainable mindset. Many upcycling initiatives are small-scale and community-driven, supporting local artisans and businesses. Upcycling as a practice not only helps to create jobs but also fosters a sense of community and connection to the products being created. Fashion upcycling is a vital component of sustainable fashion, offering innovative solutions to reduce waste, conserve resources, and promote a more responsible approach to clothing consumption. By embracing upcycling, both consumers and designers can contribute to a more sustainable future for the fashion industry [3]–[5].

Instagram plays a significant role as a knowledge management platform in the promotion and sharing of upcycled fashion, serving as a vibrant platform for creativity, community building, and sustainable practices. It's emphasis on visual content allows users to showcase their upcycled fashion creations in an engaging manner. High-quality images and videos can highlight the transformation of materials, making the process of upcycling appealing and inspiring to a broader audience. Users can connect through hashtags such as #UpcycledFashion, #SustainableStyle, and #FashionRevolution, allowing them to share their work, exchange ideas, and support one another. Many influencers and fashion advocates use Instagram to promote upcycled fashion. Their reach can significantly amplify awareness and interest in sustainable practices, encouraging their followers to consider upcycling as a viable and stylish option [6], [7].

Instagram also serves as a knowledge management space for education about the environmental impact of fast fashion and the benefits of upcycling. Creators often share tutorials, tips, and resources that empower others to engage in sustainable fashion practices. For small businesses and independent designers, Instagram provides a platform to showcase and sell upcycled fashion items [8], [9].

One notable content creator who leverages Instagram as a platform for sharing business and fashion knowledge is Maggie Nelson. Specializing in upcycling fashion, Maggie curates and shares a variety of content on her Instagram account @poppyluclothing, showcasing the entire process from material sourcing and redesigning to sewing, and ultimately promoting upcycled products for sale. By strategically using hashtags like #sustainablefashion, #upcycledfashion, and

#slowfashion, @poppyluclothing effectively engages with Instagram users interested in the upcycled fashion trend, fostering valuable discussions in the comments section. Among the various uploaded contents, there are multiple videos featuring upcycled fashion from used tablecloths from thrift shops, received as gifts, or obtained from others. One video in @poppyluclothing has amassed over 1 million views. The comments on several videos showcase discussions between users sharing information about upcycled fashion techniques and promoting environmental sustainability.

This article aims to explore the dynamic relationship between Instagram as a knowledge management for fashion upcycling practice focusing on how these elements contribute to environmental sustainability and effective communication. By examining current trends, consumer perceptions, and successful case studies, this research highlights the potential of digital platforms to drive positive change in the fashion industry.

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of the content and interactions among Instagram users on the account @poppyluclothing. Specifically, the study focuses on four video upcycling posts from this account and the conversations in the comments section. The data collected was analyzed using semiotic analysis by Charles Sanders Pierce to understand how the content conveys knowledge related to fashion upcycling practices. Three videos were chosen due to their significant viewership, with an average of 11 thousand views, 3000 likes, and 2000 comments for each content. The selected videos are video on September 21, 2024; August 2, 2024; and May 4, 2024. Additionally, the analysis includes examining interactions in the comments section and collecting various comments that demonstrate the exchange of information through Instagram.

Results and Discussion

Results

Upcycling is a viable strategy in fashion production, involving the use of discarded materials to craft high-value products and extend their productive lifespan. Instagram serves as a valuable platform for knowledge sharing, particularly in the realm of fashion upcycling. The Instagram account @poppyluclothing showcases a range of fashion upcycling works. With 568 thousand followers and 238 posts, @poppyluclothing gained traction after the first upcycling content was shared on February 10, 2023. The Instagram account @poppyluclothing offers engaging videos and strategic use of hashtags and sparked conversations among Instagram users, leading to inquiries about fabric and clothing sizes, which the content creator diligently addressed in the comments section.

The first video on September 21, 2024, showed valuable insights into fashion upcycling as an environmentally friendly and cost-effective alternative for obtaining new clothing. The dynamic editing style beautifully showcases the process of creating garments from

used blankets. Additionally, the captions underline the creativity of fashion upcycling, placing it on par with the products of established garment companies. The importance of sustainability is highlighted by using hashtags such as #sustainablefashion, #upcycledfashion, and #slowfashion. The underlying message of the content is that engaging in upcycled fashion contributes to environmental conservation and helps to counter the negative impacts of fast fashion. In the comments section, 1,163 comments were discussing the pros and cons of the content. The comments section serves as a platform for gathering and organizing feedback from Instagram users.

The second video on August 2, 2024, addresses the sustainability issues, particularly the detrimental effects of fast fashion on the environment. Many clothing companies continue to mass-produce low-quality clothes with short lifespans, leading to extensive clothing waste that ends up in landfills. @poppyluclothing emphasizes the need for community voices to urge the government to take decisive action, as clothing companies prioritize profits over sustainable practices. Additionally, the content demonstrates the transformation of curtains into dresses to showcase upcycling as a form of resistance against the practices of fast fashion companies. In the comment column of this video, 6648 comments revolve around various themes. These include discussions about the adverse effects of fast fashion, conversations about fashion upcycling, and feedback from Instagram users towards @poppyluclothing. The primary function of knowledge management here is to disseminate information about the negative impacts of fast fashion.

The third video on July 24, 2024, offers advice to William Sonoma, a company, on the topic of sustainability. @poppyluclothing suggests that companies can help reduce waste by finding additional uses for their products. For instance, she proposes that William Sonoma could include clothing patterns in their tablecloth products, allowing buyers to repurpose the tablecloths into other useful items instead of discarding them. This demonstrates @poppyluclothing strong commitment to sustainability and her efforts to inspire fellow Instagram users to prioritize environmental conservation. The video has garnered 971 comments in its comment section.

The fourth video on May 4, 2024, showcases an innovative approach to repurposing a tablecloth obtained from a follower. The tablecloth, acquired at an estate sale, carries sentimental value as it once belonged to a deceased individual. This video emphasizes the positive impact of repurposing belongings, highlighting how it breathes new life into items and enhances their utility. Additionally, the notion that utilizing such items serves as a means of honoring the original owner, effectively prolonging their legacy. Notably, repurposing also aligns with sustainable practices by curbing wastage. There are 2449 comments on this video account. This interaction demonstrates the collection and organization of information related to fashion upcycling.

Table 1. Screenshot videos from @poppyluclothing

Video 1	Video 2	Video 3	Video 4

The analysis of four posts from the @poppyluclothing account reveals a notable dissemination of explicit knowledge in the form of discussions on sustainability, upcycling to minimize waste and the process of creating upcycled fashion. The original knowledge shared by @poppyluclothing was further enriched through collaborative input from other Instagram users in the comments section. This illustrates how Instagram facilitates knowledge management by enabling the collection, organization, dissemination, and reuse of information. The shared knowledge is particularly intriguing as the comments also delve into the depth of sustainable issues, indicating that users engaging with this hashtag possess substantial knowledge about sustainability and the adverse impacts of fast fashion practices.

Discussion

The fashion industry is known for its dynamism, but it also has significant environmental and social impacts. Embracing sustainable fashion practices, such as using eco-friendly materials, ethical production processes, and waste reduction strategies, can help alleviate these negative effects. Additionally, sustainable practices can address the issue of textile waste and contribute to job creation in green industries. With the increasing demand for sustainable products, there will be a need for skilled labor in areas such as organic farming, eco-friendly textile production, and sustainable design. This shift has the potential to empower local communities, particularly women who often play a vital role in the textile supply chain. Promoting upcycling and sustainability on Instagram demands a strategic approach that harnesses the platform's visual appeal and community engagement features. Instagram serves as a powerful knowledge management platform, enabling widespread communication and knowledge exchange, making it an ideal complement to knowledge management. Additionally, Instagram effectively supports the management of various types of knowledge and seamlessly integrates a social collaborative dimension into this activity [10]–[13]. This is the content showcased on the @poppyluclothing account, focusing on fashion upcycling. The account serves as a platform for sharing, gathering, organizing, and repurposing information among Instagram users. Discussions in the comments section cover topics such as sustainability, the adverse effects of fast fashion, and the practice of fashion upcycling.

This is in line with a study from Leonard & Kiana that highlights how Instagram provides women entrepreneurs with the opportunity to connect with a wider audience, collaborate with other entrepreneurs, and receive valuable feedback from customers [8]. This feedback loop helps to enhance customer loyalty, brand identity, and reputation, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the business. In essence, Instagram serves as a valuable knowledge management tool for women entrepreneurs. The upcycling fashion content posted on the Instagram account @poppyluclothing carries a message of resistance against the harmful environmental impact of fast fashion practices. Fast fashion contributes significantly to textile waste, which is challenging to recycle. By promoting fashion upcycling, individuals are taking a stand against the commercialization of clothing perpetuated by major companies. While the content may not explicitly oppose fast fashion, it aims to raise awareness among Instagram users about this critical issue. This is evident through the consistent use of hashtags such as #sustainability, #slowfashion, and #upcycledfashion in every post. By employing these hashtags consistently, the Instagram algorithm will curate sustainability-related content for the account @poppyluclothing, potentially reaching a broader audience. This strategic approach is intended to ensure that content on sustainable upcycled fashion reaches and resonates with a wider community of Instagram users. In essence, the use of hashtags serves as a means to engage third-party entities, such as the Instagram algorithm, in directing like-minded users to participate in the same discourse [14].

Conclusion

Fashion upcycling has emerged as a vital practice within the global movement towards sustainability, particularly in the fashion industry, which is notorious for its environmental impact. Instagram, as a leading social media platform, plays a crucial role in this transformation by providing a space for individuals and brands to showcase their upcycled creations, share ideas, and build communities centered around sustainability. Integrating sustainability into the fashion industry is not just a trend; it is a necessity for the health of our planet and future generations. The fashion sector is one of the most resource-intensive industries, contributing significantly to environmental degradation and social inequality. By prioritizing sustainable practices—such as ethical sourcing, waste reduction, and eco-friendly materials—brands can minimize their ecological footprint and promote a more responsible approach to consumption.

The role of digital platforms such as Instagram in driving this transformation is significant. Instagram serves as a hub for sharing knowledge about upcycling practices, encouraging consumer engagement, and shaping public perceptions of fashion sustainability. An analysis of Instagram accounts like @poppyluclothing sheds light on the impact of social media on consumer behavior and the promotion of eco-friendly choices. The insights indicate that Instagram not only amplifies the voices of upcycling advocates but also functions as a crucial tool for sharing knowledge. It provides a platform for brands to exhibit their sustainable practices, connect with mindful

consumers, and disseminate information about the importance of sustainability in the fashion industry. As we move forward, it is essential for all stakeholders—brands, consumers, and policymakers—to collaborate and leverage digital platforms to drive the sustainability agenda in fashion.

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