

## Multi-stakeholder perspectives on the challenges and success factors for scaling up upcycling businesses in fashion industry in the UK

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The fashion industry causes serious environmental impacts through its consumption of energy and material resources and its use of chemicals. Alternatives to business-as-usual practices within the fashion industry can effectively address such concerns but will need to involve various actors and operate across a range of scales. Upcycling, the process of deconstructing waste clothing and textiles and reconstructing them into new products represents an alternative that, in theory, reduces waste and increases resource efficiency by extending the lifetimes of products and materials, thereby contributing to reducing industrial energy consumption. Upcycling businesses have the potential to be financially sustainable and can create jobs for disadvantaged people. Despite potential economic, environmental and social benefits, upcycling remains a niche practice. A process of ‘scaling up’, whereby an initially unusual practice becomes mainstream [8], is necessary in the case of upcycling to enable the transition of the fashion industry towards sustainability.

Previous research in fashion upcycling includes a description of the concept and process, reflection on the practice, design guidelines and an exploration of consumers’ purchase intentions. Past studies have paid attention to limited aspects of fashion upcycling businesses and a comprehensive synthesis of viewpoints from the diverse stakeholders involved in the business is lacking. This paper aims to provide such a synthesis, focusing on the challenges and success factors for expanding (or scaling up) British upcycling businesses in fashion industry. Based on ongoing research, it uses semi-structured interviews with seven stakeholder groups in fashion upcycling (design entrepreneurs, in-house designers/ makers, suppliers, distributors, retail salespersons, business managers and consumers). The results show the perceived common challenges and success factors for upscaling fashion upcycling businesses in the UK across roles, and identifies unique role-specific perspectives. The paper concludes with causal loop diagrams linking different system variables (i.e. challenges, success factors, measures of business success) in fashion upcycling businesses.

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