



Development of a Sustainable Model for Repurposing: A case study of TRAIID

Erin Irick, University of Wyoming, USA

Keywords: Repurposing, Recycling, Sustainability, Second-hand

With the increasing popularity of fast fashion companies such as H&M, TopShop and Zara, comes an overconsumption of fashion products. The fashion industry continuously entices consumers to desire the seasonal “must haves” and fast fashion companies provide them to consumers at low prices (Claudio, 2007). This causes consumers to have an abundance of fashion products in their closets. Many consumers dispose of this clothing while it is still functional. Much of these unwanted clothing items end up in the landfill even though charity shops have provided an option for recycling clothing and textiles for decades. In the United States, consumers throw away almost 21 billion pounds of textiles per year (Council for Textile Recycling, 2016). This is compared with only 350,000 tons in the United Kingdom (Textile Recycling Association, 2016). The UK and Europe are known to be ahead of the curve regarding environmental matters in comparison to the US and this includes textile recycling. So the question is, what is the UK doing differently than the US?

The purpose of this research was to conduct a case study of a UK textile recycling organization to better understand the process in the UK. Comparisons were made between the UK and the US. The organization TRAIID was selected for this study because of the apparent inclusivity of their textile recycling model. It is a sustainable approach to the problem of textile waste including disposal, production and consumption. TRAIID is a non-profit, charitable organization with textile recycling at its core. TRAIID uses any profits it makes from its recycling efforts to fund global projects that support the reduction of the environmental and social impact of clothing. Recently, TRAIID developed their own brand, TRAIID ReMade, which is created completely from donated second-hand clothing. They also offer programs through community engagement to educate people of all ages how to make more sustainable choices with their clothing.

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with the executive management team of TRAIID to learn the intricacies of their textile recycling model. The interviews were transcribed and thematic content analysis was conducted over the transcriptions. Observations were also conducted in the TRAIID retail stores and pop-up shop. As a result of this study a better understanding of textile recycling in the UK was achieved using TRAIID as a benchmark. Comparisons have been made with textile recycling in the US and aspects of their model have

been incorporated into an existing model for repurposing (Irick, 2013). Future research should include a specific analysis of the efficiency of the TRAIID ReMade brand and an analysis of the feasibility of incorporating TRAIID's textile recycling model in the US.

References

Claudio, L. (2007). Waste Couture. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 115(9), pg. 448-454.

Council for Textile Recycling (2016). *The Facts about Textile Waste*. Retrieved on March 31, 2016 from <http://www.weardonaterecycle.org/about/issue.html>.

Irick, E. (2013). *Examination of the Design Process of Repurposed Apparel and Accessories: An Application of Diffusion of Innovations Theory*. Retrieved from ShareOK at <http://www.weardonaterecycle.org/about/issue.html>

Textile Recycling Association (2016). *Valuing our Clothes: The True Cost of How We Design, Use and Dispose of Clothing in the UK*. Retrieved on March 31, 2016 from http://www.textile-recycling.org.uk/downloads/valuing_our_clothes.pdf.