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INVESTIGATION OF CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS UP-CYCLING FASHION IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Increase of the production of clothing and fabric highly affected on the amount of wastages. As a healing method, Up Cycling fashion has emerged to reduce the wastage and to control the negative impact which occurs towards environment.

This method is vastly expanded and established internationally, but yet, it is still emerging in Sri Lankan context with less aware of people around. Narrow mentality of certain Sri Lankan consumers towards up-cycling fashion is the main reason behind this as they nervous to purchase goods called “Up-Cycled”.

As the main objective in this study is to identify the consumer’s attitudes and awareness towards Up Cycling fashion, I have used both Primary and Secondary research methods to fulfill my target sub objectives too.

Sri Lankan’s attitudes are not positive with the concept. Most of them are price conscious and do not think of the better side of this concept. Hence, this study leads to identify the attitude and awareness of consumers and the future plans of retails to let more people to aware on this.

Key Words: *Sustainable fashion, Up-Cycling fashion, Awareness, Importance, Preference*



Introduction

Fashion industry is rapidly changing due to the technology, design innovations and consumer attention towards fashion and today Sri Lankan fashion retail industry also enjoying the positive macro environmental changes which were occurred in last years such as post war economics, growing middle class, changing consumer behavior mainly due to the Western Culture influences, improvement of industrial facilities & technological advancements (Welagedara & Ranaweera 2015). Accordingly, environmental impact also becoming wide, due to the capacious wastage of fabrics, trims, CO excess, chemicals and dye etc. As Jayasinghe (2010) mentioned, the amount of wastage of fabric and trims is 19,000 to 38,000 tons annually in Sri Lanka from the mills such as TJ, Ocean Lanka, Hayleys Fabrics. Wastage in Ocean Lanka is generally 8% of the production of 2-3 million fabric meters per month. Considering the USA, about 14.3 million tons of textiles were sent to the landfill in 2012, or around 5.7 percent of total municipal solid waste generation, according to the USA Environmental Protection Agency (Stewart 2014). Such wastage is made because fabrics failed to achieve the desired customer standards due to defects, machine faults, experimentations, wrong dyed color, wrong side prints, first bulk of fabric excess etc. When it comes to garments, wastage happens due to the errors in cutting, sewing, pattern making and Cutting edges etc. Aforementioned wastages have potential social and economic impact as it is vastly increased for last decades. To have a relief from above discussed impacts Sustainable fashion has risen up. Ethical Fashion Forum (2015) described “Sustainable fashion represents an approach to the design, sourcing and manufacture of clothing which maximizes benefits to people and communities while minimizing impact on the environment.”

Sung (2015) the object Up Cycling is one of the most sustainable circular solutions since Up Cycling typically requires little energy input and can eliminate the need for a new product from virgin materials. So in my opinion Up Cycling method is risen up as the best solution for this dispute as a slow fashion.

Research objectives

1. Identify What is Up Cycling fashion.
2. Identify the consumer behavior towards Up Cycling fashion. (*Attitudes and awareness forward Up Cycling fashion of consumers who consume general day to day fashion*).
3. Identify the nature of consumers who purposely purchase Up Cycling fashion
4. How to improve positive attitude further towards the same.

Literature Review

Wang (2006) explains Upcycling is the process of converting waste or useless stuff into new, unique materials with the equal or better quality on maintaining or improving the quality or a higher environmental value. The aim of Upcycling is manufacturing useful materials by existing ones to occlude the disposing potentially reproducible materials as wastages. Adding more; definition of upcycling refers to the process of reusing clothing offering, pre- or postconsumer textiles new life by redesigning them into current fashion (Myres,2004).



“Decrease the quantity of landfills and convert them in to fashion in an innovative way” is the revolutionary part in this concept which also supports people to approach purposive choices while contributing to the environmental protection even without knowing it (Daily FT,2011). Williams (2011) stated that, Orsola de Castro is the first who started Up Cycling for industrial scale as he identified it first. And McDonough and Braungart were pioneers in the field of up cycling. (Upcycle Magazine, 2009). In my opinion Up Cycling is a process that discarded materials, garments and trims convert in to innovate designs with better quality and environmentally sustainable. Up-cycling fashion is a sub-category of Slow fashion (Minney, 2012). Birtwistle and Moore (2007) emphasized that humans are guilty to dispose the expensive rather than inexpensive. Therefore, due to cheapness, there is an overconsumption of fast fashion. Myers (2014) explains that Up cycling is a one way to effect on overconsumption, Because Up-cycling is about converting these fast fashion related disposals in to Slow fashion. Stewart (2014) stated that there are three types of producing methods for Up-Cycling, such as, Pre-consumer waste, Post-consumer waste and both wastages together.

Table 1: Producing methods for Upcycling

Pre – Consumer waste using	Post - Consumer waste using	Combination of both Pre & Post-Consumer waste
Use the manufacturer waste (waste of fabric, trims, rejects), which were discarded before the consumer use.	Use the discarded materials after consumer used (end use) (Garments that once used then reconstructed into another design).	New innovations with the use of two aforementioned
 		

Methodology

Both Primary and Secondary research methodologies are used to fulfill the aforementioned objectives. As Primary research methodologies, two questionnaires and one interview with a pioneer in Up-Cycling fashion path has done. Questionnaire 1 has designed to fulfill the objective no 01 and published through randomly selected general people around Colombo area, with in their age of 18-38, who are trend seekers and they are very much knowing of the current fashion situation. To get the exact consumers attitudes towards Up-Cycling fashion in Sri Lanka, questionnaire no 2 has distributed among 10 consumers who consume in Up-Cycling fashion retail shops to get the accurate details towards the particular subject to achieve objective no 2. An interview with Mrs. Lonali, the owner at House of Lonali has conducted to fulfill Objective no 1, 2,3 and 4 to get an idea of current situation of Up-Cycling fashion in Sri Lanka.

As Secondary research methodologies, existing research papers, thesis, books, industrial websites, online data, newspapers and magazines used to gather information regarding Up-Cycling fashion to achieve Objective no1.



Research analysis and discussion

Research has clearly conducted towards analyzing the general consumer’s attitude and awareness on up-cycling fashion, as well as the attitude/awareness towards consumers who specifically targets the up cycling fashion with the comments taken from the interviews conducted with industry pioneers who mastered the path of up-cycling method.

When it comes to the awareness of the general respondents,

Below two results 53.5% of respondents are conscious about the concept called Sustainable fashion, but only 48.8% respondents are positively knowledgeable about the importance of it.

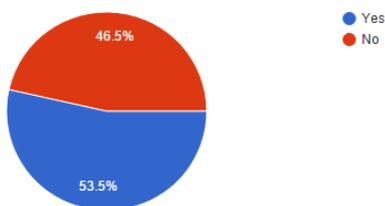


Figure 1: Chart for Awareness of Sustainable Fashion

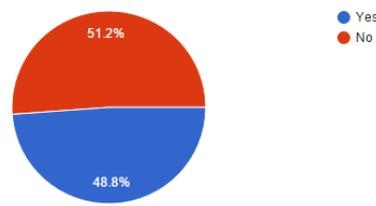


Figure 2: Chart for Aware the importance of Sustainable Fashion

Below figures 3 and 4 amplify that 55.8% of the respondents aware on Up-Cycling fashion, unfortunately only 18.6% respondents know that upcycling fashion existing in Sri Lankan fashion market. Therefore, there is a need to overcome this issue by promoting the concept around Sri Lanka.

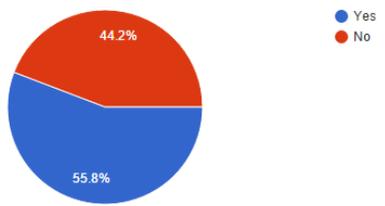


Figure 3: Chart for Awareness of Up-Cycling fashion

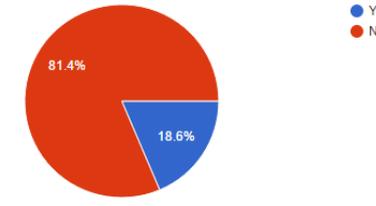


Figure 4: Awareness of availability for Up Cycling fashion in SL

Following Figure 5 result described only 27% aware about Sustainable fashion brands and rest of 73% do not aware about upcycle fashion brands.

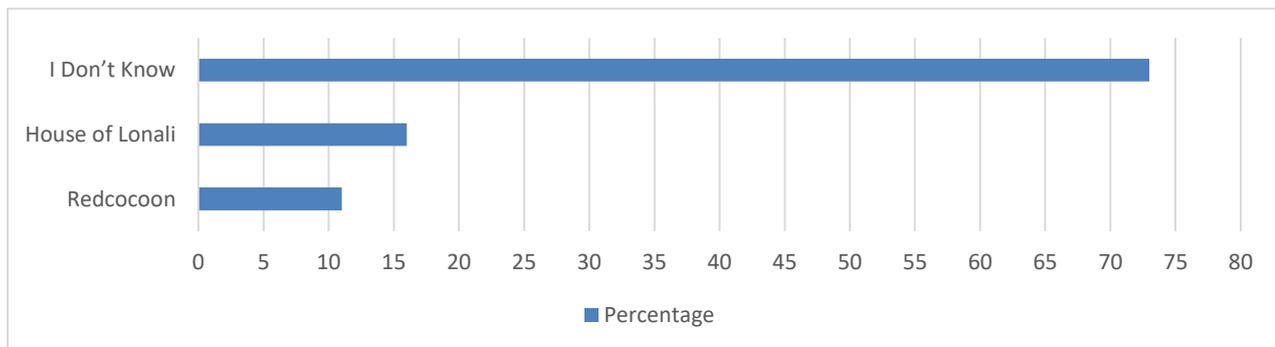


Figure 5: Chart for Awareness of Up Cycling fashion brands



Figure 6 explains what are customer prioritizations while buying cloths. There respondents prioritized Fashion and trend in to the higher level and Sustainability in Lowest level as 1 is for high priority and 5 is for non-priority.

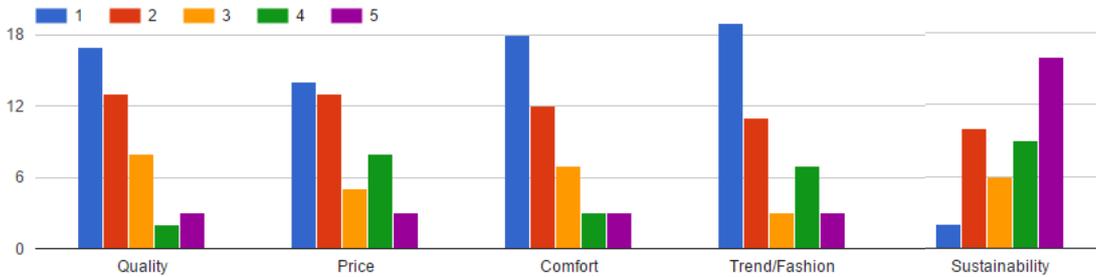


Figure 6: Priorities when buying clothing

When considering general attitudes towards upcycling fashion,

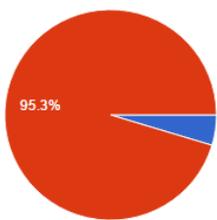


Figure 7: Have you ever purchased an "Up Cycled" clothing?

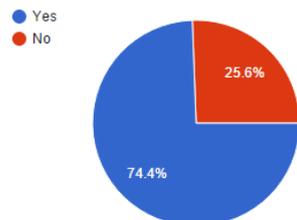


Figure 8: Love to purchase up cycling fashion?

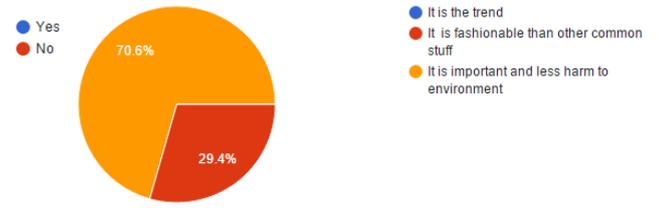


Figure 9: Chart for attitude towards the importance of Up Cycle fashion

Table 2: Most preferred method

CONSUMER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS UP-CYCLING FASHION IN SRI LANKA									
A study on Sustainable Fashion detailing Up-Cycling Sector									
ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DATA COLLECTION (VALUES)						RII %	
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	Different material composed garments (Patchwork)	26	8	16	14	16	20	59%	4
2	Asymmetrical garments	20	26	18	22	8	6	68%	2
3	Decorative garments with wastage of trims	20	18	12	26	10	14	62%	3
4	Crochet or Beeralu outfits with wastage of yarn	10	12	10	10	22	36	45%	6
5	Tie and Dye batik designs with wastage of dye stuff	16	16	12	10	30	16	55%	5
6	Deconstructed tailoring with innovative pattern cutting	16	28	28	14	10	4	69%	1

When comparing above results , it explains that 18.6% respondents knows about upcycling fashion brands available in Sri Lanka, but only 4.7% of respondents have purchased it as its explained in figure 7. Figure 9 explains that 70.6% respondents have the



accurate attitude towards this concept which confirms the findings of the literature review also and only 29.4% are having circuitous attitude towards upcycling fashion. When it comes to the most preferred methods in clothing most of the respondents prefer Deconstructive garments with innovative pattern cutting. Therefore, retailers should concern on that type of garments for their collections and sell their products in order to the customer preference.

When considering the general details of the exact consumers who consume Up-Cycled products in Sri Lankan context, most of them are in their age of 18-25 and they are Graduates/Postgraduates in their education level, who lives around Colombo area. Most of them are involve with fashion or Apparel industry with their income of 60,000-100,000(LKR).

Figure 10 emphasizes the reason for willing to buy Up-Cycle fashion, 62.5% purchase because it's fashionable and unique, only 37.5% purchase because its environmentally friendly.

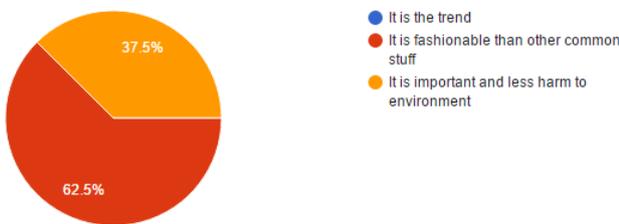


Figure 10: Why do they love to purchase

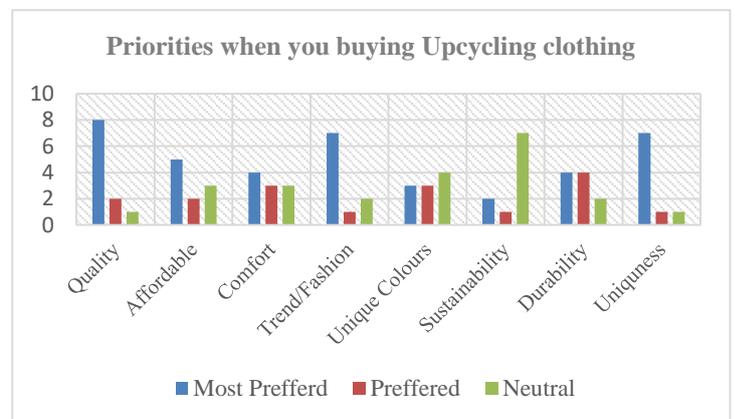


Figure 11: Prioritization when purchasing Up Cycle fashion

Even consumers know the importance of Up-Cycling fashion, still the exact consumers too firstly attract to the outer appearance of the item not the sustainability of the product. Lonali also emphasized that *“they don't see the good side of the concept, if my fashion pieces are look nice and uncommon they buy it instead of they don't want to know the story behind that or whether it's Up cycled or not”*. And furthermore Lonali added her experiences, *“most of customers are price conscious rather than sustainability, so they would not spend much on upcycling but on another popular brand name which is not considering sustainability at all”*.

As in the Figure 12, 75% of the respondents willing to purchase Up Cycling fashion items which are made of Pre-Consumer waste.

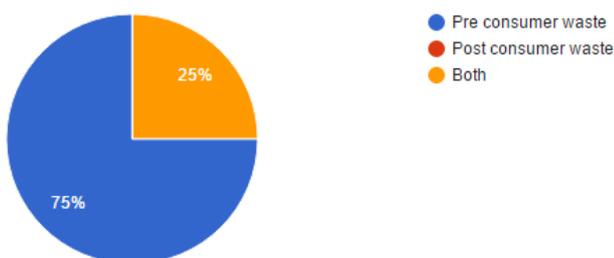


Figure 12: Preferred method of wastages

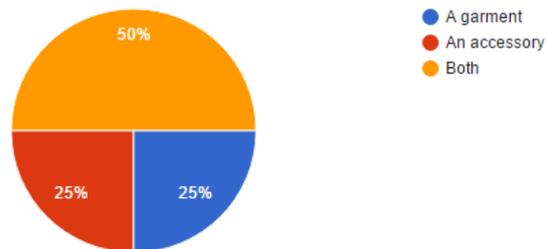


Figure 13: Preferred Up-Cycled category



Table 2: Preferred methods of Current Consumers

QUESTIONNAIRE 02 - CONSUMER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS UP-CYCLING FASHION IN SRI LANKA									
A study on Sustainable Fashion detailing Up-Cycling Sector (Current Up-cycle fashion Consumers)									
ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DATA COLLECTION (VALUES)						RII %	RANK
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
1	Crochet	2	3	0	0	5	0	62%	4
2	Decorative garments with trims	0	0	3	3	0	4	42%	6
3	Deconstructive	7	3	0	0	0	0	95%	1
4	Different material compose	2	2	3	3	0	0	72%	3
5	Tie and Dye	0	0	0	7	3	0	45%	5
6	Asymmetrical	5	0	3	0	2	0	77%	2

Most of the consumers are prefer Pre- Consumer waste products. Its further reinforced by the statement of Lonali, “Their mentality is the main issue, because Sri Lankans fear to purchase something called Up Cycled. Even my collections are made of Pre-Consumer waste, they asked” whose shirt is this and so”. As the above results most preferred Accessories as they are affordable and nice. This situation proven with Lonali’s interview too, because she said, it’s easy to sell accessories specially clutches because it’s nice and affordable. Mostly youngers preferred accessories as they don’t earn much for living, middle aged executives are preferred clothing because its affordable. Most preferred method for clothing is the Deconstructive garments with innovative pattern cutting and then Asymmetric garments and different material composed garments. This result is same much as the preference by the general people around Colombo. So the retails would concern on this category for clothing for making a higher demand for Up Cycling.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

Up-cycling fashion is internationally quite popular method in sustainable fashion and attracted consumer’s positive attitudes towards it. But does Sri Lankan consumers have accepted the same attitude towards this?

Therefore, this study focused on investigating Sri Lankan consumers’ awareness and attitudes towards Up-Cycling fashion and investigating about the nature of Sri Lankan consumers who already consumes up-cycling fashion in Sri Lanka. With aforementioned comprehensive literature surveyors, questionnaires and interviews, following conclusions can be recapitulated.

When it comes to the general respondents’ awareness and attitudes towards Up-Cycling fashion, they do not aware on this topic and the importance of it much, therefore retailers and designers of up-cling fashion should use the correct marketing methods to promote this concept within Sri Lankan consumer market. But this study reveals that people are aware about up-cycling fashion more than sustainable fashion.



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This explains that higher portion of people do not know up-cycling fashion is a major category of sustainable fashion. The fact that, the designers should convey to the consumers is “if you buy up-cycling fashion, you are one of those who help to make the earth a better place”. And most of them are not prioritized Sustainability when they are purchasing fashion items. In the other hand purchasing ability is very hard even most of love to purchase, hence the demand for upcycling fashion is high. Because,

- Most of Sri Lankan consumers are not knowing the availability of upcycling fashion within Sri Lanka. (Not aware on the Up-Cycling brands)
- Some are having trouble with purchasing upcycling fashion, might be due to price tags as it is cost high and reachability problems due to fashion retail shops only can be found in Colombo and its suburbs.

Considering current situation of the exact consumers for Up-Cycling fashion, most of are in their young age (18-25), graduates/postgraduates and earn 60,000-100,000(LKR) and geographically, who lives around Colombo. This research has found out that the consumers (mostly youngsters) prefer up cycled accessories than a garment, because its affordable and looks nice. Therefore, to improve the current situation owners at Up-Cycling retails should concern on the accessory category while demanding on garments with their most preferred methods such as, Deconstructive garments with innovative pattern cutting, Asymmetric garments and different material composed garments.

When it comes to consumer attitudes towards this concept, they are aware on this method has a strong importance which carries with but their attitude in purchasing is very less, as most of them are love to purchase Up-Cycling fashion because it's fashionable than other common stuff. And unfortunately even exact consumers for Up-Cycling fashion do not prioritize sustainability as a factor when they about to buy or choose a particular dress. But they do concern about outer appearance, price, trend and quality. And also most of them are preferred Pre- Consumer waste products than Post-Consumer waste. As they step aside when they heard up-cycle instead of having a further look on that dress. Because mentally they believe that up-cycled cloths are made by the garments which previously wore by someone else, which is completely in-correct.

To get rid of that wrong mentality, the truth about the inside story of up-cycling fashion should clearly convey to the consumers probably through marketing tactics, social networks and other communication medias. Online stores would be very helpful at this point to convey this concept island wide. Online stores are the best ways to reach beyond Colombo boundary. In my opinion it's better to have the workshops and other advertising methods involved with Government and the well-established industries in Sri Lanka. And also for expanding the market it is better to manufacture Pre-consumer waste products, especially accessory items to make more profits.

Even though this research investigated the consumer attitudes towards Up-Cyclin fashion, below mentioned research areas can be recommended for further researches.

- Investigate the market for Up-Cycling fashion in Sri Lankan context
- Study the attitudes and awareness of the Foreign people towards Up-Cycling in Sri Lanka
- Investigate the Consumer attitudes towards Up-Cycling fashion considering urban cities in Sri Lanka.



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