

Upcycled Sustainable Evening Wear for Sri Lankan Women: Inspired by the Elegance of the Turkey Tail Mushroom

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Abstract—Fashion is a captivating aspect of society that attracts both men and women. It allows individuals to express their uniqueness and enhance their attractiveness. This innovative project endeavors to transform the overlooked into the extraordinary, drawing inspiration from the resilience and ecological significance of turkey tail mushrooms. Thriving on decaying stumps and dying trees, these mushrooms not only embody longevity and health in various Asian cultures but also serve as a symbol of the interconnectedness of life and the environment. Motivated by these principles and guided by the overarching theme "Be great with confidence," the project sets out to heal the environment by breathing new life into discarded clothes and fabrics through the art of upcycling.

Inspired by the enchanting beauty of Turkey Tail Mushrooms, designs were enhanced with its intricate curved lines, captivating shapes, and vibrant colours. To infuse this collection with a touch of uniqueness, I transformed these organic curves into delicate ruffles, echoing the mushrooms' graceful contours. Each piece embodies the natural elegance and mesmerizing patterns found in these woodland wonders. The creative process involves the application of advanced techniques such as fabric manipulation, texture development, colouring techniques, and draping techniques. These methods are employed to provide a sustainable and aesthetically pleasing solution for repurposing discarded textiles, turning them into unique and fashionable pieces.

Focusing on the upcoming spring and summer seasons of 2023/ 24, the project introduces a line of evening wear collections for young women aged 25 to 35 in urban areas of Sri Lanka. Notably, this evening dresses are exclusively crafted from upcycled old clothes and fabrics, aligning with the project's commitment to eco-friendly practices and symbolizing a harmonious relationship between fashion and environmental consciousness. It paves the way for potential technological innovations that promote sustainability in contemporary fashion & Apparel industries.

Keywords: Upcycling, Eco-friendly, Fabric Manipulation, Sustainability

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I. INTRODUCTION

Fashion is a captivating aspect of society that attracts both men and women. It allows individuals to express their uniqueness and enhance their attractiveness. To be considered a fashion, a style must be embraced by a sufficient number of people for a considerable amount of time. The fashion industry, while focused on predicting individual clothing choices and desired public image, cannot fully control this societal and cultural trend. Flexibility is crucial in maintaining fashion. Factors such as age, social class, generation, occupation, and geography greatly influence how fashion is perceived in a society (Clothing and Fashion Design Objectives, 2022). Glamour is closely associated with fashion, boosting people's confidence and courage. Fashion also facilitates to happen nonverbal communication between individuals as well. The project mainly deals to develop with developing a sustainable fashion collection that is environmentally friendly through the designs, production and marketing as well (Black, 2012).

This project primarily focuses on upcycling and designing sustainably, offering solutions for discarded old clothes and fabrics. It aims to identify market gap and provide solutions through the clothing line. Under the concept of "Be great with confidence," the objective is to design evening wear dresses for young women aged 25-35 living in urban areas of Sri Lanka. The collection will be presented for the evening wear fashion market in the upcoming spring and summer seasons of 2023/ 24. As the value addition technique for fashion collection, fabric colouring, fashion draping and fabric manipulation techniques were practiced.

II. BACKGROUND STUDY

The Fashion Industry is the second most polluted industry in the world. The textile business extended fast to all the nations with modern technologies. The clothing industry in Sri Lanka generates lots of employments and foreign earnings. Also, it makes the nation's economy strong, producing more goods in relation to its population. According to the Board of

Investment of Sri Lanka (2016, Cordon et al. (2012), a number of well-known international brands, including Victoria's Secret, Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, and Ralph Lauren, are served by Sri Lankan apparel manufactures.

The textile sector of the apparel industry generates significant waste due to fast fashion trends, where consumers buy more apparel but only wear it once. This leads to the apparel becoming waste and taking up space in landfills. Buyers are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of disposing of used clothing. Interest in sustainable and eco-friendly products is growing worldwide, with upcycling being a way to ensure sustainability. Upcycling involves enhancing or changing previously owned clothing into a new product, promoting cyclical fashion. Turkey tail mushrooms (*trametes versicolor*), multicoloured fungi that grow on tree trunks and fallen trees, are eco-friendly and symbolize longevity and health in many Asian cultures. These mushrooms have a unique healing power and contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry.

Through the concept “Be great with confidence” is focus to heal the environment from discarded old cloths and fabrics. Trying to give longevity from them. It is focus to presenting the designs through fabric manipulation, texture development, colouring technique and draping techniques using discarded Denim and Cotton fabrics. Market research has found that, the huge demand for the eco-friendly sustainable design for the knish market,

A. Origin of Denim, Types, and Environmental Impact

Denim is traditionally a durable cotton fabric characterized by a diagonal twill weave, combining an indigo-dyed warp with a natural weft, originally developed as “serge de Nimes” in France (Brydson, 2014). This sturdy textile gained prominence during the 19th-century American Gold Rush, becoming synonymous with blue jeans, especially through Levi's heritage (Barth, 2016). Over time, denim evolved beyond 100% cotton and classic indigo blue, now including blends with synthetic fibers and a broad color palette (Kawamura, 2018).

Various types of denim exist, such as raw (unwashed), washed (stonewashed, acid-washed), stretch (with elastane), selvedge (woven on shuttle looms), and organic denim, which focuses on sustainability by using certified organic cotton and ethical production (Fletcher, 2014; Organsk®, 2023). Denim finishing techniques like enzyme wash, stone wash, acid wash, dirty wash, and laser wash alter texture, softness, and color, offering diverse aesthetic effects while increasingly adopting eco-friendly methods to reduce water and chemical use (Smith & Jones, 2020).

Despite denim's popularity and versatility, its environmental impact is significant, particularly due to water consumption, chemical treatments, and synthetic fiber blends that reduce biodegradability. 100% cotton

denim is breathable but heavy and stiff, softening with wear, while stretch denim offers comfort through elastane blends but poses sustainability challenges (Fletcher, 2014; Miller, 2019).

B. Upcycled Clothing Brands and Competitor Analysis

Upcycled clothing brands contribute significantly to sustainable fashion by repurposing discarded garments into new, stylish pieces that reduce waste and support ethical production. In Sri Lanka, brands such as Nakota Tuwa, House of Lonali, and The Pigeon Island lead by incorporating recycled materials and empowering local artisans, while also promoting environmental awareness (Nakota Tuwa, 2023; House of Lonali, 2023; Pigeon Island, 2023). Internationally, brands like Urban Outfitters, Re/Done, Wolf and Badger, and Collina Strada exemplify the growing global movement towards upcycling by reworking vintage items and prioritizing eco-friendly practices (Urban Outfitters, 2023; Re/Done, 2023; Wolf and Badger, 2023; Collina Strada, 2023). Emerging brands such as Fanfare, RE. Statement, and 4Kinship showcase innovative techniques like patchwork, embroidery, and appliqué, emphasizing unique, limited-edition fashion with sustainability at its core (Fanfare, 2023; RE. Statement, 2023; 4Kinship, 2023). These brands collectively highlight the expanding role of upcycling in fashion as both an ethical and creative strategy addressing environmental concerns.

C. Upcycling and Fungi-Inspired Fashion Collections

Upcycling, a term first introduced by Reiner Pilz in 1994, refers to transforming waste materials into higher-value products, unlike recycling which often results in material degradation (Pilz, 1994). During WWII, the British government's “Make Do and Mend” campaign (1942) promoted garment reuse amid fabric rationing. Upcycling re-emerged in the late 1980s–90s due to economic hardship and has since evolved into an ethical response to fast fashion's environmental and social impacts (Fletcher, 2014).



Figure 1: Pasr upcycling fashion collections: (a) Moschino 2015 FW, (b) Dolce & Gabbana 2021 SS, (c) Miu-Miu collection.

Many designers have embraced upcycling. Harlem's Dapper Dan in the 1990s reworked luxury goods into signature hip-hop pieces (Day, 2019). Prada's Re-Nylon recycles ocean plastics and textile waste into luxury nylon (Prada Group, 2020). Miu Miu's Upcycled line repurposes vintage dresses into exclusive designs (Miu Miu, 2021). Designers like Tom Ford, Moschino, and Alexander McQueen have reimagined denim and embroidery using patchwork and reclaimed materials (Ford, 2015; Moschino, 2015; Burton, 2017). Fungi have also inspired sustainable fashion. Rahul Mishra's 2021 couture mimicked fungal growth to symbolize nature's resilience (Mishra, 2021). Iris van Herpen's "Roots of Rebirth" used pleats and lace resembling mushroom gills and mycelium (Van Herpen, 2021). Alexander McQueen's AW22 collection embraced mushroom-like textures and colors (Burton, 2022).

These practices highlight a shift toward sustainability, blending ecological awareness with artistic expression. Upcycling and biomimicry now stand at the forefront of innovative, responsible fashion.

III. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The textile industry in the clothing sector generates a significant amount of waste. Fast fashion has caused a major issue in the textile business that has been building for a while. They buy more apparel as a result of the expanding fashion industry trends, but they only wear it sometimes. The apparel becomes waste after being worn only once and begins to take up space in landfills. Buyers are also worried about the environmental impact of disposing of used clothing.

IV. AIM & OBJECTIVES

The main aim in this project to create an evening wear collection for spring and summer 2023/ 24 for young women who are aged 25-35 in Sri Lanka with evening wear fashion collections inspired by Turkey Tail Mushrooms using fabric manipulation, texture development, and colouration and draping techniques as value-added elements to this project.

The project focuses on providing a sustainable solution for discarded old clothes and textiles under the concept "Be Great with Confidence." To achieve this main objective, the following sub-objectives have been established:

- Identify the market gap through customer and market surveys in the niche market, followed by data analysis.
- Study current fashion trends and garment categories, incorporating new technological developments in contemporary society.
- Develop concepts and designs based on inspirational analysis, identifying unique approaches in design.
- Create and finalize six product designs through the selected design approaches.

V. METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to explore various aspects of the fashion industry, including its conceptual underpinnings, prevalent challenges, market dynamics, target demographics, notable brands, seasonal trends, and emerging techniques (Black, 2012). Information sources for fashion developments were consulted include including academic journals, industry reports, fashion magazines, and online resources. Inspiration analysis involved delving into the inspiration behind the design concept, and analysing its structural elements such as colours, patterns, lines, shapes, forms, and textures. Visual references were collected from diverse sources, including nature, art, culture, and contemporary trends, to inform the design development process.

Furthermore, trend analysis identified current and future fashion trends through a thorough examination of fashion forecasts, trend reports, and industry insights. This involved studying consumer preferences, cultural influences, technological advancements, and socio-economic factors shaping the fashion landscape. Additionally, questionnaires were administered to young women aged 25-35 in urban areas of Sri Lanka to gauge their preferences, behaviours, and attitudes towards fashion, providing valuable insights into consumer preferences.

A comprehensive study and analysis of fashion trends and garment categories was conducted by gathering information from diverse sources, including fashion websites, magazines, journals, social media platforms, and fashion-related literature. The collected data was carefully examined to extract relevant insights and emerging trends, which served as a foundation for the design development process.

A. Selected Techniques to develop the fashion Collection

Fabric manipulation involves altering fabric's appearance and structure to create three-dimensional effects that enhance both function and aesthetics, promoting comfort and accentuating body movement. Common techniques include smocking, tucks, shirring, gathering, applique, quilting, and patchwork (Kawamura, 2018).

Texture development refers to the dynamic creation and modification of a fabric's surface qualities, such as smoothness, roughness, opacity, and stiffness. Texture influences the visual and tactile experience of garments and can affect perceived body shape and size (Fletcher, 2014). Colouring techniques add hues to textiles through dyes and pigments, using various methods such as tie-dye, shibori, ombré, and batik. Different dye types acid, reactive, sulphur, vat, among others offer distinct properties like colour fastness and solubility (Smith & Jones, 2020).

Draping is the technique of shaping fabric directly on a dress form to create flowing, three-dimensional

garments. It requires skilful manipulation of fabric weight and fall, executed either planned from sketches or spontaneously based on the material's behaviour (Barth, 2016).

Ruffles are decorative fabric trims created by gathering or pleating, adding texture and movement to garments. Historically, ruffles have symbolized wealth and femininity, evolving from Renaissance and Victorian fashion into modern interpretations. Types of ruffles include classic, asymmetrical, layered, circular, shirred, pleated, and ruffle collars, each offering unique aesthetic effects (Brydson, 2014; Kawamura, 2018).

B. Conceptual Approaches & Design Development

Drawing upon the identified inspiration “Turkey Tail Mushrooms (*trametes versicolor*)” (Fig.1), key design elements such as lines, shapes, and textures were developed. This involved synthesizing visual references and conceptual ideas into cohesive design elements that formed the basis of the collection. Rough sketches were created to translate these ideas into visual representations, allowing experimentation and iteration.

Storyboarding and mood boarding were employed to visually articulate the design direction, aesthetic vision, and thematic elements of the collection. These visual tools facilitated communication and alignment among stakeholders. Feasibility designs were developed by translating 2D sketches into feasible designs, considering material availability, production techniques, and market viability.

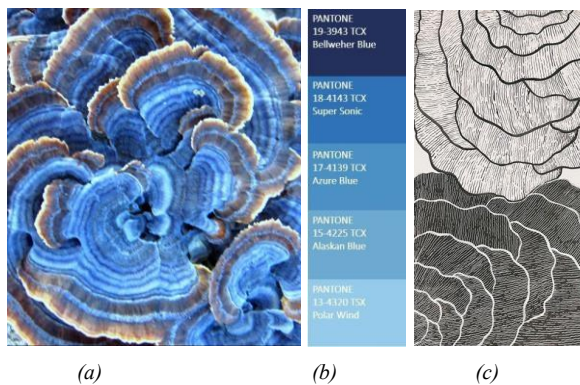


Figure 1: Inspirational analysis: (a) Turkey Tail Mushrooms (*trametes versicolor*), (b) Selected colour scheme, (c) Concept developments.



Figure 3: Design developments

C. Final product Development

Denim fabric was selected as the main fabric type to construct the six design outfits. Denim fabric with different thicknesses was used to get final desired appearance. Initial sample product experiments were conducted to test fabric manipulation works, garment accessory settings, and construction techniques. Feedback from these experiments informed further design refinements.

The final designs were then launched as a product brand, incorporating elements of sustainability, innovation, and consumer appeal. The launch strategy encompassed marketing, promotion, and distribution channels to maximize brand visibility and market reach.



Figure 4: Front looks of the range development



Figure 5: Back looks of the range development

VI. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The customer survey results offer valuable insights into the preferences and behaviours of target customer as young women aged 25-35 in urban areas. With a vast majority falling within this age group, it's clear that our collection should be tailored to their tastes and needs. The data reveals a strong preference for clothing, with a significant willingness to invest in quality pieces. Despite varying income levels, consumers and prioritise factors beyond price, such as uniqueness and fashion trends (Black, 2012). Notably, the survey highlights a high receptiveness towards upcycling garments, indicating a growing awareness of sustainability among consumers. Preferences for fabric types and alternative evening dress styles gives ideas to develop the fashion collection. The use of preferred fabrics and styles will further enhance the appeal of it. Additionally, insights into garment styles and colour preferences offer opportunities to create appealing and on-trend designs.

Highlighting the uniqueness, fashion-forward trends, and sustainability of our products in marketing campaigns will attract the target customer. Additionally, showcasing the commitment to quality and craftsmanship can help build brand loyalty. Overall, these findings provide a solid foundation for shaping the design and marketing strategies of the evening wear collection. By aligning these preferences and values, gives ability to develop a compelling product range that resonates with the target audience and positions our brand as a leader in sustainable fashion.

These six eveningwear looks present a range of sophisticated and contemporary styles suitable for various formal occasions. Figures 4 and 5 display the final front and back illustrations of the six designs, while Figure 6 showcase live modelling of the completed fashion collection.

According to Figure 6(a), exudes timeless charm with its blue hues and elegant ruffled sleeves, while the asymmetrical design elements and contrasting fabric panels add a modern twist. In Figure 6(b), a knee-length dress with a patchwork pattern of blues is elevated by delicate ruffled detailing, adding elegance and texture. Figure 6(c) presents a stylish option with its knee-length silhouette, patterned design, and



Figure 6: Live modelling for final six looks (a-f)

flattering fitted waist, making it an elegant choice for any evening outing. Similarly, Figure 6(d) offers a chic asymmetrical design with blue patchwork and flutter sleeves, highlighting the figure with its fitted waist and versatile knee-length cut. Figure 6(e) combines elegant and modern elements with an asymmetrical top featuring ruffled detailing and a patchwork pattern,

paired elegantly with flared pants adorned with white lace at the hem. Lastly, Figure 6(f) offers a unique take on denim, blending casual and formal with its off-shoulder design and layered, ruffled sleeves, paired harmoniously with flared jeans featuring additional ruffled elements for a contemporary look. Each ensemble showcases sophistication, elegance, and individuality, making them perfect choices for special evening events.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Drawing inspiration from the turkey tail mushroom, my upcycling concept for the Spring/Summer 2023/24 collection is designed to inspire both designers and consumers. The focus is on breathing new life into unused materials, providing an eco-friendly and sustainable solution for repurposing old clothes and fabrics.

Through techniques such as fabric manipulation, texture development, innovative colouring methods, and draping, these discarded materials are transformed into striking designs aimed at young urban women aged 25 to 35 in Sri Lanka. Women are naturally attracted to unique, standout pieces, and although upcycled garments are often more expensive, their superior quality justifies the price. Consequently, demand for such sustainable evening wear remains strong.

This Spring/Summer evening wear collection has a high potential for success, not only strengthening the brand's identity but also making a bold statement within the Sri Lankan fashion industry.

For this turkey tail mushroom-inspired Spring/Summer collection to achieve success, several strategic measures must be implemented. These include continuous market research to stay informed about evolving trends and to understand the daily needs of the target audience, enabling timely adaptation of designs to align with their preferences.

Market research plays a pivotal role in identifying emerging trends and consumer demands. Collecting feedback through both online and offline surveys, as well as conducting market testing, will provide valuable insights into how effectively the designs meet customer expectations.

Further research into colour trends, suitable materials for reuse, and innovative techniques will help enhance the quality, durability, and appeal of the collection. This not only ensures greater customer satisfaction but also fosters stronger loyalty to the brand. In the long term, such efforts can pave the way for potential technological innovations that support sustainability in the contemporary fashion and apparel industry.

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