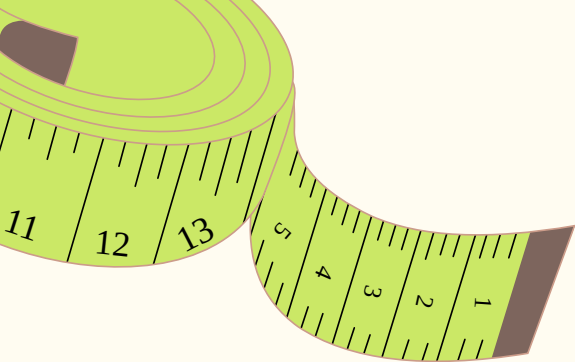




THE FUTURE OF FASHION

**BUILDING YOUR
SUSTAINABLE FASHION
CAREER**



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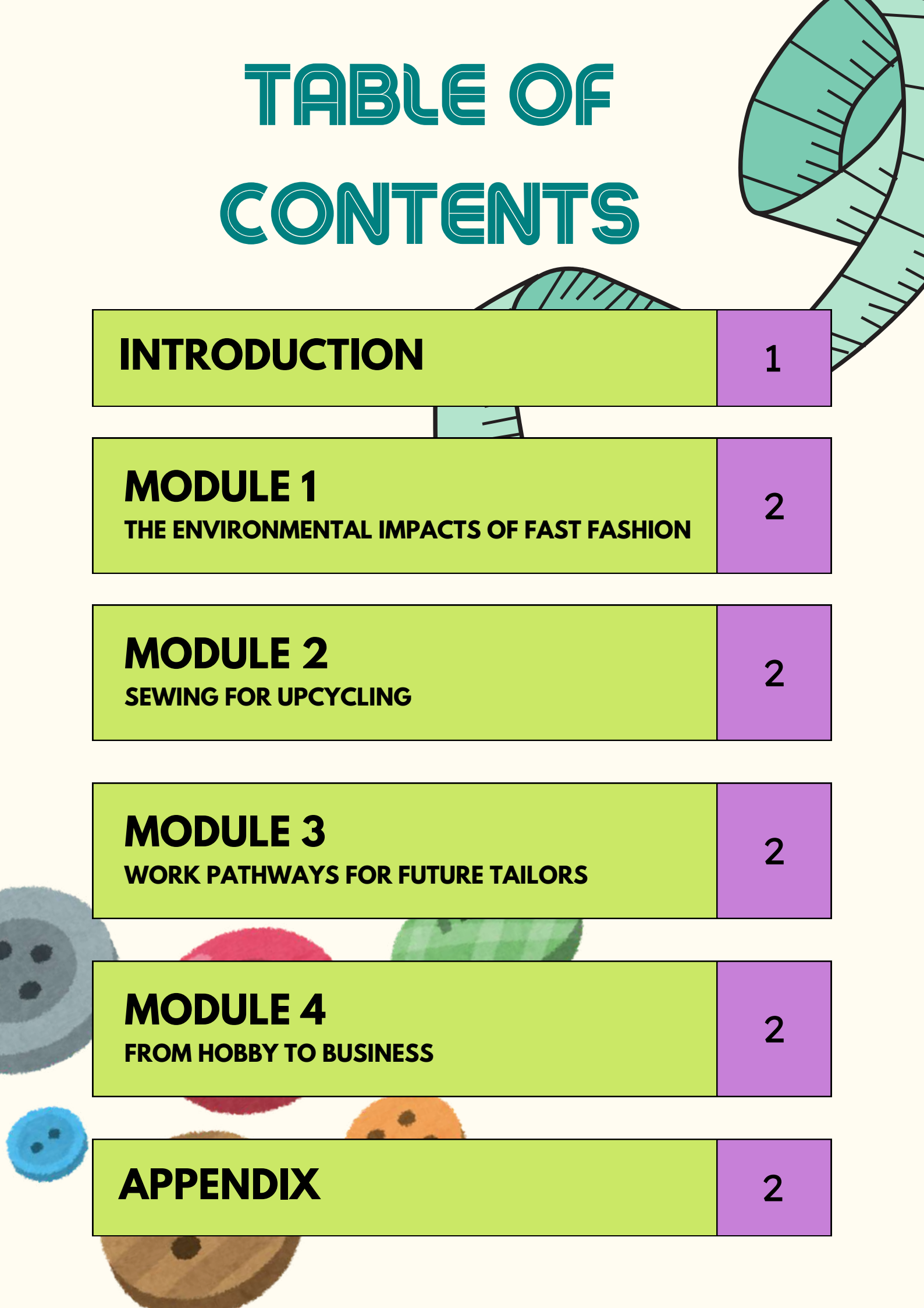


PanOké
PANEUS AVATUJ NOOTERESKUS

ARTETEKKA



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MODULE 1

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF FAST FASHION



CHAPTER 1

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF FAST FASHION

1.1 The Scale of Fast Fashion Waste

The fast fashion industry is responsible for producing approximately 150 million garments annually worldwide. Shockingly, nearly 30% of these garments are never sold, contributing to over 80 million tons of clothing and footwear waste each year. In Europe, approximately 85% of used clothing ends up in landfills or is incinerated, representing a significant loss of valuable resources and materials.

Fast fashion has greatly accelerated excessive consumption patterns. Globally, consumers now purchase 60% more clothing than they did two decades ago, yet keep garments for only half as long. This trend is largely driven by low production costs and the constant turnover of fashion trends. In Spain, for example, each individual consumes an average of 34 garments annually and discards between 10 and 14 kilograms of clothing. However, only 20% of these textiles are currently recycled, far from the 50% target set by the State Waste Management Framework Plan, which is a national strategy established by the Spanish government to improve waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable management across the country.

Similar trends are observed across Europe. In France, the average person discards about 12 kilograms of clothing per year, of which less than 40% is collected for reuse or recycling. The French government has implemented an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme that requires brands to fund the recycling and reuse of clothing, yet challenges remain in scaling up textile recovery.

In Germany, one of the largest textile markets in Europe, individuals dispose of around 5 to 7 kilograms of textiles annually. While Germany has relatively higher collection rates—about 75% of discarded textiles are recovered through donation or recycling bins—only a small portion is actually recycled into new clothing; much is downcycled or exported.

In the Netherlands, efforts are being made to transition to a circular textile economy. Dutch consumers throw away approximately 40% of their clothing into regular household waste, even though separate textile collection systems are available. The government has set a goal to ensure that by 2050, all textile products will be 100% circular.

1.2 Environmental Issues

The fast fashion industry is causing serious harm to the environment. It uses massive amounts of water, pollutes rivers with chemical dyes, emits large quantities of carbon and generates huge volumes of textile waste. These problems aren't just abstract, they're affecting real communities all around the world.

WATER CONSUMPTION

The fast fashion industry consumes approximately 93 billion metric tons of clean water annually. Cotton is particularly water-intensive: producing one kilogram of cotton requires 7,500 to 10,000 liters of water—the amount one person drinks over ten years. Moreover, textile dyeing is responsible for 17–20% of global industrial water pollution, releasing around 72 toxic chemicals into freshwater systems.



CASE STUDY: CITARUM RIVER BASIN, JAVA (INDONESIA)

Over 1,000 textile factories discharge wastewater containing dyes and heavy metals (such as mercury, cadmium and arsenic) directly into the river.

Impacts:

- **Health:** Frequent outbreaks of skin rashes, gastrointestinal infections, and eye diseases, particularly among children.
- **Economic burden:** Residents must purchase bottled water or rely on water trucks, increasing monthly household expenses.
- **Social impact:** Women and children are primarily responsible for fetching clean water, often walking long distances and missing work or school.
- **Agriculture:** Local rice fields, a traditional livelihood, have become nearly sterile due to toxic irrigation water.

CHEMICAL POLLUTION

Textile production uses large quantities of hazardous chemicals—from pesticides in cotton farming to toxic dyes and finishing agents in manufacturing. Cotton cultivation alone accounts for 25% of global pesticide use, contributing to soil degradation and health risks for farmers.



CASE STUDY: KANPUR AND JAJMAU (INDIA)

In this major textile hub along the Ganges River, factories—both small and large—discharge harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde, azo dyes, and solvents into the river.

Impacts:

- Health: High rates of cancer, congenital disorders, kidney and liver diseases, and chronic respiratory conditions.
- Agriculture: Contaminated soils have become infertile, with local farmers losing crops of grains and vegetables.
- Children: Developmental delays and birth deformities likely linked to prolonged chemical exposure.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

The fast fashion industry emits approximately 2.8 billion tons of CO₂ annually, making it the second most polluting industry after oil. Production increasingly relies on synthetic fibres like polyester, which have increased ninefold over the last 50 years. Polyester manufacturing requires 70 million barrels of oil annually. By 2030, the industry's emissions are projected to account for 5-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions.



CASE STUDY: LEÓN, GUANAJUATO (MEXICO)

Heavy energy use in dye houses, ovens and dryers leads to high carbon emissions.

Impacts:

- Air pollution: Poor air quality and elevated levels of PM_{2.5} particles – fine particles small enough to enter the lungs and bloodstream – have increased rates of asthma, bronchitis, and allergies, especially among children and elderly.
- Smog and chemical fog: Persistent chemical odours and haze affect visibility road safety and affects schools.

MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION

Washing synthetic fabrics releases microplastics into waterways,. These fibers make up 35% of ocean microplastic pollution and pose threats to marine life and human health.



CASE STUDY: LAGOS (NIGERIA)

Informal laundries wash large volumes of synthetic clothing, releasing microfibers into waterways.

Impacts:

- Fisheries: Decline in fish larvae and juveniles due to microfiber exposure, reducing fish catches.
- Economic effects: Lower income for low-income fishing communities.
- Health: Microplastics have been found in tap water in neighbourhoods like Makoko, raising concerns about long-term health impacts.

DEFORESTATION

Every year, approximately 70 million trees are cut down to produce fabrics like rayon and viscose. If current trends continue, this number may double by 2034, accelerating deforestation and biodiversity loss.



CASE STUDY: GUANGXI PROVINCE (CHINA)

Large-scale eucalyptus and acacia plantations for viscose production have replaced native forests.

Impacts:

- **Biodiversity loss:** Local wildlife, including birds and pollinators, has disappeared, disrupting ecosystems.
- **Water cycle disruption:** Deforestation has reduced groundwater recharge, leading to seasonal water shortages in villages like Baise.
- **Soil erosion:** The absence of tree cover has increased erosion, damaging rice and vegetable crops.
- **Livelihood:** Families who once relied on forest resources and traditional farming have been forced to migrate to cities.

TEXTILE WASTE

Less than 1% of discarded clothing is recycled into new garments. Instead, around 53 million metric tons of textile waste are either incinerated or dumped in landfills each year. Synthetic fabrics take up to 200 years to decompose, releasing methane, a potent greenhouse gas that accelerates climate change.



CASE STUDY: OUTSKIRTS OF SÃO PAULO (BRAZIL)

Hundreds of tons of used and leftover clothing end up in informal landfills near neighbourhoods like Parelheiros.

Impacts:

- Air pollution: Open-air burning releases toxic substances and microplastics into the atmosphere.
- Water and soil contamination: Leachate from decomposing clothing pollutes soil and underground aquifers.
- Health risks: Residents report increased respiratory illnesses, allergies and skin conditions.
- Social effects: Proximity to landfills creates stigma, lowers property values, and contributes to insecurity.

Each major environmental issue caused by fast fashion—water overuse, chemical pollution, carbon emissions, microplastic contamination, deforestation, and textile waste—has a real and devastating impact on local communities around the world. These examples illustrate how fashion's environmental footprint translates into tangible human costs: worsened health, lost livelihoods, and reduced quality of life.

1.3 Social Issues of Fast Fashion

The fast fashion industry heavily relies on low-cost labor from developing countries, where millions of workers endure extremely poor working conditions. Of the estimated 75 million garment workers worldwide, only 2% earn a living wage that allows them to meet their basic needs. These are some of the most serious social issues related to fast fashion.

UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

Many garment workers operate in dangerous environments where minimum safety measures are not enforced.

A tragic example was the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in 2013 in Bangladesh, which killed over 1,100 people. The building housed factories producing clothing for major international brands, and although structural cracks had been found, workers were forced to enter under the threat of losing their wages.

This disaster exposed the systemic neglect of workplace safety in the industry and led to the creation of international agreements such as the Bangladesh Accord, although many brands still fail to meet adequate safety standards.

CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR

In several regions, children and teenagers work in textile factories for extremely low wages, without access to education and exposed to toxic chemicals or dangerous machinery.

In rural areas of India and Bangladesh, investigations have revealed the use of minors in underground workshops producing goods for fast fashion brands. Many of these children work up to 12 hours a day.

There is also widespread forced labour among adults, especially women, who are subjected to threats, constant surveillance, workplace harassment, and dismissal if they speak out about unfair conditions.

EXPLOITATION DRIVEN BY CONSUMER DEMAND

Purchasing cheap clothing from fast fashion brands fuels this cycle of exploitation. The constant demand for new collections pushes factories to produce more, faster and cheaper.

This creates a system in which the workers are the ones who pay the true cost of low prices, while companies maximize their profits.

This is why it's so important to support sustainable and ethical alternatives, which guarantee transparency, fair working conditions and respect for human rights.

LOW WAGES AND LONG WORKING HOURS

Most garment workers earn wages that are well below a living minimum. In Bangladesh, for example, even after recent raises, many workers still earn less than \$115 a month, while the cost of living is significantly higher.

Additionally, it is common for them to work 10 to 14 hours a day, six or seven days a week, with minimal breaks and no overtime pay. This exploitation persists so that brands can offer cheap clothing in large volumes.

MINIMAL CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Many fast fashion companies outsource production to countries with weak labor laws and minimal environmental protections. This allows them to avoid responsibility for working conditions and the pollution generated.

The supply chain becomes opaque and difficult to audit, so human and labor rights violations are perpetuated without consequences for the brands. Some companies don't even know which factories are producing their clothing.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Investigating the sustainability of popular brands

Choose one of the following fast fashion brands (or another of your choice) and investigate how it deals with textile waste and sustainability:

- Zara (Inditex)
- H&M
- Primar
- SHEIN
- Bershka

You can work individually or in small groups. Use the grid below to organise your research.

RAW MATERIALS AND PRODUCTION	How much water and energy is used in the production process? Does the brand try to reduce it?
WATER & ENERGY CONSUMPTION	What kind of fabrics does the brand use (cotton, polyester, etc.)? Are they sustainable?
WASTE MANAGEMENT	What happens to leftover clothes? Does the brand recycle, reuse, or burn them?
ETHICAL LABOUR PRACTICES	Where are the clothes made? Are workers treated and paid fairly?
RECYCLING INITIATIVES	Are there any programs to collect old clothes or promote circular fashion?

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Record your ideas here!

RAW MATERIALS AND PRODUCTION	
WATER & ENERGY CONSUMPTION	
WASTE MANAGEMENT	
ETHICAL LABOUR PRACTICES	
RECYCLING INITIATIVES	

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Your Sustainable Proposals

Now, present your ideas to improve the sustainability of your chosen brand based on your research.

- How could this brand become more eco-friendly?
- What could they do to be more socially responsible?
- Do you have any other recommendations?

Make it fun!

- Use Canva, PowerPoint, or even create a short TikTok-style video or infographic to present your findings.
- Give your report a catchy title like: “What’s Behing My Hoodie?” or “Fast Fashion: Fast Waste?”
- Share your sustainable fashion tips.

REFLECTION

1. In what ways does fast fashion affect both the environment and the communities where production takes place? Provide specific examples.



2. How do your personal shopping habits relate to the issues presented in this chapter? What actions could you take to reduce your impact?



CHAPTER 2

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

2.1 Sustainable and Natural Fibres

The shift towards natural and sustainable fibres plays a fundamental role in reducing waste and minimizing the environmental footprint of the fashion industry. Traditional textile production consumes vast amounts of water and relies heavily on harmful chemicals, making the exploration of alternative materials essential.

Plant-based fibres such as hemp and bamboo offer eco-friendly solutions. They require significantly less water and fewer pesticides than conventional cotton while maintaining durability, breathability and comfort. Bamboo, in particular, is a highly renewable resource due to its rapid growth rate and ability to efficiently sequester carbon. Brands like Bam Clothing (UK) and Boody (Australia) have embraced bamboo textiles to produce underwear, activewear and loungewear with a lower environmental impact.



Beyond plant-based fabrics, innovative materials like mushroom leather (made from mycelium) and apple leather (made from food industry waste) are emerging as sustainable alternatives to conventional synthetic leather. Mushroom leather is fully biodegradable and grown using agricultural waste, aligning with the principles of a circular economy. Companies such as Mylo have developed mycelium-based leather. Apple leather, made from discarded apple peels and cores, transforms food waste into high-quality vegan leather. Italian brand Frumat produces apple leather, and it's used by companies like Veerah (luxury shoes) and Happy Genie (handbags).



Recycled fabrics, including repurposed polyester and nylon, also contribute to a more sustainable fashion cycle by diverting plastic waste from landfills and oceans. For example, Econyl® is a regenerated nylon made from ocean plastic and fishing nets, and is used by brands such as Patagonia, Adidas and Outerknown.



Wood-bades textiles like Tencel, modal, viscose and lyocell are sourced from sustainably managed forests and require significantly less freshwater than cotton. These fibers are also biodegradable and breathable, offering a viable alternative to synthetic fabrics.

To further promote sustainability, alternative materials such as cork and pine needle fibers are being explored. These can be harvested without cutting down trees, making them excellent options for regenerative textile production. Spanish company Smartech produces pine needle fiber for textile, while brands like NATKINA and Bleed Clothing use cork fabric for accessories and shoes.

2.2 Recycling and Upcycling in Fashion

The implementation of recycling and upcycling techniques is essential to fostering a more sustainable fashion industry. Textile recycling technologies are continuously evolving, enabling the breakdown of used fabrics into raw materials that can be reintroduced into production. Some innovative recycling processes now allow for the separation of dyes and mixed fibers, making it easier to create high-quality recycled textiles.

Upcycling, on the other hand, extends the lifecycle of garments by creatively transforming old clothing into new fashion pieces. By repurposing existing materials, designers can significantly reduce the demand for virgin resources while simultaneously minimizing textile waste. Agricultural byproducts such as orange peels, banana stems, and coffee waste have also been incorporated into textile production, turning discarded materials from the food industry into sustainable fabric options.

Furthermore, ocean waste, particularly discarded fishing nets and marine plastic pollution, is now being collected and transformed into textiles. This initiative not only reduces environmental pollution but also provides a second life to materials that would otherwise contribute to ecosystem degradation.



2.3 The Circular Economy in Fashion

The concept of a circular economy within the fashion industry seeks to move away from the traditional linear model of production and consumption, which typically follows a "take-make-dispose" approach. Instead, circular fashion focuses on designing products that can be reused, repaired, and recycled, thereby reducing waste and conserving resources.

One of the key principles of a circular economy is the reuse of materials. Many fashion brands are now incorporating pre-consumer and post-consumer textile waste into new clothing lines, significantly reducing the reliance on virgin materials. Additionally, repairing and refurbishing garments has gained momentum, with many brands offering repair services or rental platforms to extend the longevity of their products.

Clothing swaps and secondhand markets are also instrumental in reducing waste, as they encourage consumers to engage in sustainable purchasing habits. Instead of discarding old garments, individuals can trade or resell them, thereby keeping textiles in circulation for a longer period. Moreover, ensuring that forest-derived fibers come from certified sources, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), guarantees ethical and sustainable forest management, further promoting a regenerative fashion system.

Principles of circular fashion include:

- Extending the lifecycle of garments through repair and refurbishment.
- Promoting secondhand clothing markets and swap initiatives.
- Utilizing certified sustainable materials to reduce deforestation.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Understanding the circular economy

Pick a fashion brand that applies circular economy principles and create a creative short presentation to show how it works. You can use Canva, PowerPoint, or even record a short TikTok-style video if you like.

Example brands you can explore:

- Patagonia
- Eileen Fisher
- Mud Jeans
- Stella McCartney
- For Days
- Ecoalf
- Nudie Jeans

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

1. What material does the brand use? Are they natural, recycled or biodegradable?
2. Water & energy Efficiency: Do they use eco-friendly production methods? Are they reducing water or energy use?
3. Do they have take-back programs, repair services or upcycle old clothes?
4. Where do they make their clothes? Are the workers paid fairly and treated with respect?
5. How do their practices help reduce pollution, deforestation or carbon emissions?

MAKE IT FUN!

- Add images, short videos or social media posts from the brand
- Give your presentation a catchy title like *"The Life of a T-Shirt"* or *"Trash to Tend"*
- Think outside the box and share one wild idea of your own: *What would you invent to make fashion more circular?*

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Use this grid to record your thoughts!

SUSTAINABLE AND RECYCLED MATERIALS	
WATER & ENERGY EFFICIENCY	
RECYCLING AND REPAIR INITIATIVES	
ETHICAL LABOUR PRACTICES	
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS	

REFLECTION

1. Compare at least two sustainable materials introduced in this chapter. What makes them environmentally friendly, and what limitations might they have in fashion production?



2. How can the principles of a circular economy be applied to the life cycle of a single garment you own?



CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIES FOR ZERO-WASTE FASHION

3.1 Strategies for Zero-Waste Fashion

The fashion industry generates a significant amount of waste during both the design and production processes. To combat this, more designers are adopting zero-waste techniques that minimize or completely eliminate textile waste from the start of the creative process.

One of the most effective methods is zero-waste pattern-cutting, in which patterns are designed strategically to use the entire piece of fabric, leaving no scraps or offcuts. This technique demands precision, innovation and a deep understanding of garment construction, but it can drastically reduce production waste. A leading figure in this approach is Timo Rissanen, a pioneer of zero-waste fashion design, who has also contributed to education and research in the field. Brands like Daniel Silverstein's Zero Waste Daniel (USA) create garments entirely from textile scraps and offcuts collected from NYC garment factories.



Another approach involves the creation of modular garments—versatile clothing pieces designed to be transformed, adjusted or reassembled into different styles. For example, a modular jacket might have detachable sleeves, reversible sides or zip-on extensions, allowing the wearer to change its function and appearance. This not only extends the lifespan of a garment but also reduces the need for excessive clothing purchases. Companies like The R Collective have explored modularity as a core part of their collections.



Designers are also experimenting with techniques like draping, 3D knitting and seamless weaving, where garments are shaped directly on the mannequin or produced to exact dimensions using digital technology, eliminating the need for cutting and thus avoiding waste. Brands like Kniterate and Ministry of Supply use automated knitting machines to create pieces that are made to shape with zero excess material. Unspun, a tech-driven denim brand, uses body scanning and 3D weaving to produce custom-fit jeans with minimal waste.



By embracing these strategies, the fashion industry can move toward a more circular and resource-efficient future, where sustainability is integrated from the very beginning of the design process.

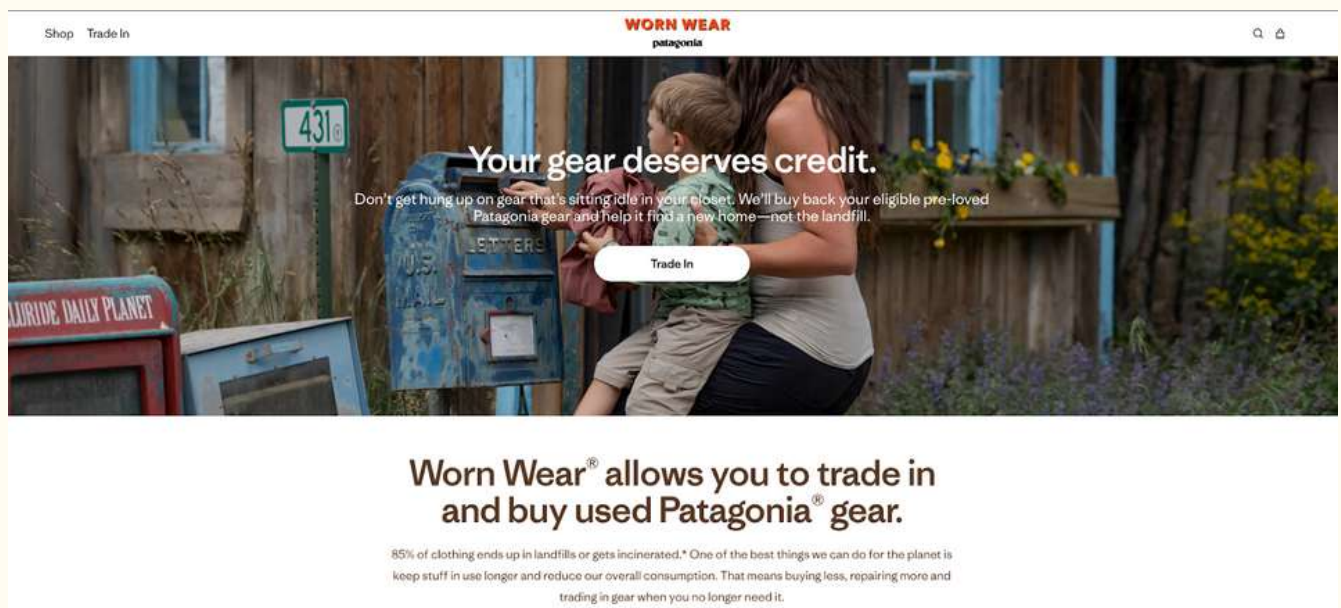
Additionally, designers are experimenting with techniques such as draping, knitting, and weaving garments directly to shape, which eliminates the need for excessive cutting and fabric waste. By embracing these strategies, the fashion industry can move towards a more resource-efficient future.

3.2 Consumer Engagement in Sustainable Fashion

Consumers play a crucial role in reducing fashion waste and accelerating the transition toward a zero-waste industry. Raising awareness about sustainable consumption habits is essential to transform the fashion system and reduce its environmental and social impacts. In recent years, many brands and organizations have implemented education campaigns aimed at informing consumers about the consequences of their purchasing decisions—from the use of unsustainable materials to the social exploitation involved in fast fashion.

These campaigns cover topics such as ethical consumption, responsible garment disposal, clothing repair and the importance of choosing sustainable fabrics. They encourage consumers to rethink their shopping habits, promoting a mindset shift from quantity to quality.

One effective method of consumer engagement is through incentive programs that reward sustainable behaviors. For example, many brands now offer discounts, loyalty, points or exclusive access to customers who return used clothing for recycling or donate unwanted garments to secondhand stores. This not only helps reduce textile waste but also fosters a circular economy.

A screenshot of a Patagonia Worn Wear campaign banner. The banner features a photograph of a woman and a young child standing in front of a rustic wooden building with a blue mailbox. The woman is holding the child, and they are both looking at the mailbox. The mailbox is blue and has a green address sign that says '431'. The banner includes the text 'Your gear deserves credit.' and 'Don't get hung up on gear that's sitting idle in your closet. We'll buy back your eligible pre-loved Patagonia gear and help it find a new home—not the landfill.' There is a 'Trade In' button. Below the banner, the text reads 'Worn Wear® allows you to trade in and buy used Patagonia® gear.' and a small disclaimer: '85% of clothing ends up in landfills or gets incinerated.* One of the best things we can do for the planet is keep stuff in use longer and reduce our overall consumption. That means buying less, repairing more and trading in gear when you no longer need it.'

Shop Trade In

WORN WEAR
patagonia

Your gear deserves credit.

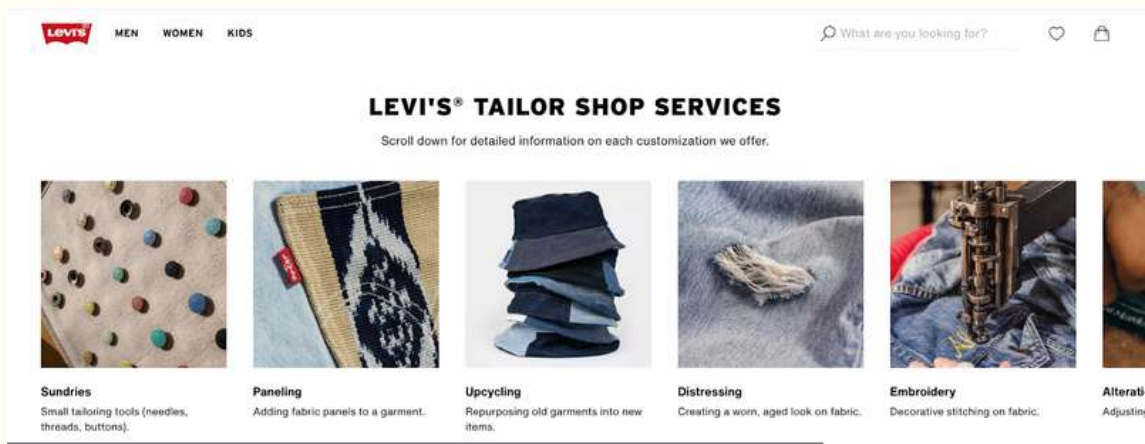
Don't get hung up on gear that's sitting idle in your closet. We'll buy back your eligible pre-loved Patagonia gear and help it find a new home—not the landfill.

Trade In

Worn Wear® allows you to trade in and buy used Patagonia® gear.

85% of clothing ends up in landfills or gets incinerated.* One of the best things we can do for the planet is keep stuff in use longer and reduce our overall consumption. That means buying less, repairing more and trading in gear when you no longer need it.

In addition, repair services have grown in popularity, with companies launching repair workshops, pop-up mending stations, or in-store tailoring services to extend the life cycles of garments. Brands like Patagonia and Levi's have been pioneers in this space, encouraging consumers to mend rather than discard their clothes.

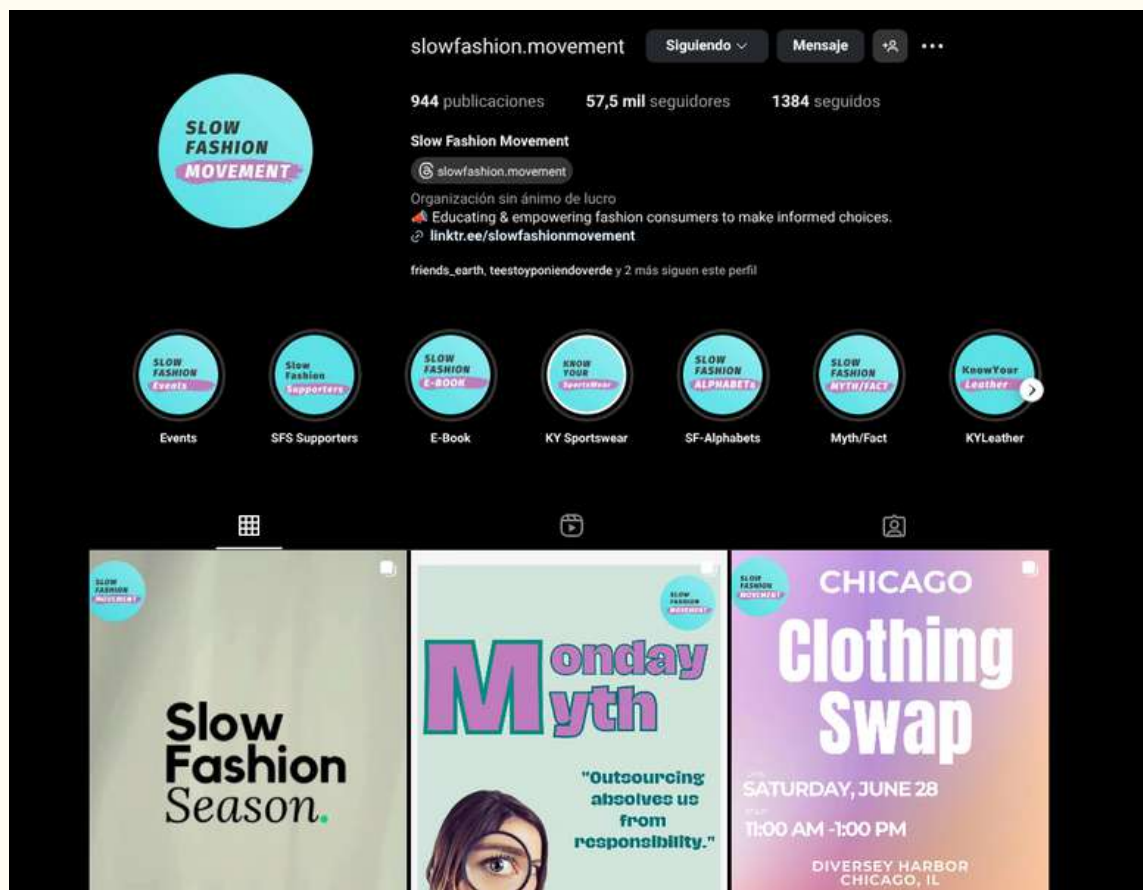


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Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube have become powerful channels for promoting sustainable fashion practices. Influencers, activist and ethical brands share tips on garment care, upcycling and mindful shopping, helping to spread awareness rapidly and build community support. Movements like slow fashion encourage buying fewer, higher-quality pieces that last longer, helping consumers reduce their environmental footprint while supporting fair labor practices.

Beyond individual behaviour, consumers are increasingly demanding transparency from brands regarding their supply chains, labour conditions, and environmental policies. This shift in consumer consciousness pressures companies to adopt more sustainable and ethical business models.

Social media and online platforms have become powerful tools for promoting sustainable fashion. Influencers, activists, and brands use these channels to share tips on how to care for clothes properly, repurpose old garments, and make conscious shopping choices. The slow fashion movement, which encourages buying fewer, higher-quality items, is also gaining traction as more consumers seek to reduce their environmental footprint.



3.3 Sustainable Business Models

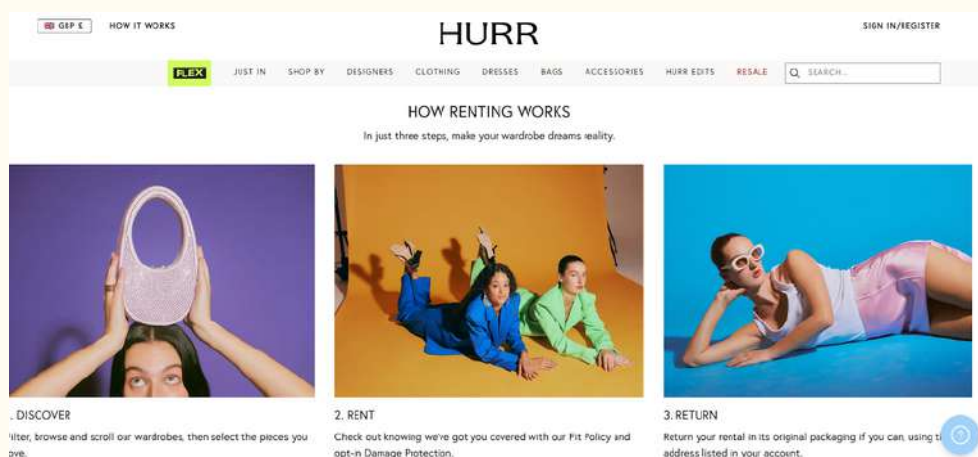
The traditional fast fashion model is inherently unsustainable. It depends on mass production and constant trend turnover, leading to overconsumption, excessive waste, and unethical labour practices. In response, a growing number of alternative business models have emerged that prioritize sustainability, circularity and ethical production.

CLOTHING RENTAL SERVICES

Rental platforms allow consumers to access high-quality garments temporarily, without the need to purchase new items. This reduces overproduction, extends garments lifespans and minimizes textile waste. These services are especially popular for formalwear, maternity clothing and fashion-conscious consumers who seek variety without overconsumption.

EXAMPLES:

- **Rent the Runway (USA):** A subscription-based platform offering designer clothing rentals.
- **HURR (UK):** Focused on circular fashion, with options for peer-to-peer rentals and brand-partnered collections.
- **My Wardrobe HQ (UK):** Combines luxury rentals with resale options.



RESALE, SECOND-HAND AND VINTAGE MARKETS

Vintage clothes have gained popularity, and buying secondhand is one of the most sustainable choices consumers can make. Online and offline resale markets help keep clothing in circulation longer, reducing the need of virgin materials and avoiding textile waste

EXAMPLE SECOND-HAND MARKETPLACES

- **ThredUp and Depop (Global):** Digital platforms that make secondhand shopping accessible and trendy.
- **Vestiaire Collective (Europe):** Specializes in luxury resale, ensuring authentication and product quality.
- **Vinted (Europe):** Peer-to-peer marketplace focused on casual and everyday clothing.



ETHICAL FASHION BRANDS

These brands implement transparent and responsible practices across their supply chains. They prioritize fair wages, safe working conditions, low-impact materials and long-lasting designs. Many also incorporate take-back schemes that allow customers to return used garments for repair, resale or recycling.

EXAMPLES OF ETHICAL BRANDS

- **People Tree (UK):** Pioneers of Fair Trade fashion, using organic cotton and natural dyes.
- **Eileen Fisher (USA):** Runs a circular system with take-back and remanufacturing programs.
- **Veja (France):** Produce eco-friendly sneakers with transparency in sourcing and labour.



LOCAL AND SMALL-SCALE PRODUCTION

Brands adopting on-demand or small-batch production minimize overproduction and reduce transportation-related carbon emissions. This model enables businesses to adjust output based on actual demand, limiting unsold inventory and waste.

EXAMPLES OF ETHICAL BRANDS

- **Tonlé (USA):** Creates zero-waste garments using fabric scraps from the industry.
- **Rebranded (Global):** Focuses on made-to-order pieces and slow fashion principles.
- **Almada Label (Finland):** Uses deadstock and natural materials, producing in limited runs.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Be A Zero-Waste Fashion Designer

Your task is to create a simple zero-waste fashion sketch.

Things to consider:

- Choose a sustainable material for your design.
- Think about how to minimize fabric waste in your pattern.
- Consider how the garment could be reused or adapted over time.

REFLECTION

1. Choose one zero-waste design strategy described in the chapter and explain how it could be implemented in a small fashion brand.



2. How can consumers play an active role in promoting zero-waste practices in the fashion industry?



CHAPTER 4

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FASHION

4.1 The European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan

The European Union (EU) has taken significant steps to promote sustainability in the fashion industry. Through the European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan, the EU aims to minimize waste, enhance recycling efforts, and encourage responsible consumer behaviour. These policies advocate for a shift from a linear economy—where textiles are produced, used, and discarded—to a circular economy, where garments are designed to last, be reused, and eventually recycled into new products.

A major focus of these initiatives is improving textile recycling capabilities. The EU encourages investment in advanced technologies that can efficiently break down used textiles and repurpose them into new materials. In addition, the Green Deal promotes transparency in the fashion supply chain, ensuring that brands disclose sourcing and manufacturing practices to consumers. By increasing consumer awareness and setting clear sustainability standards for businesses, these policies aim to reduce the environmental impact of the fashion sector.

4.2 Industry-Led Sustainability Initiatives

Beyond government regulations, the fashion industry itself has made efforts to embrace sustainability. Organizations such as Fashion Revolution and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition work towards greater transparency and ethical production. These initiatives push brands to ensure fair labor practices, reduce carbon emissions, and use environmentally friendly materials. Some companies have voluntarily adopted sustainability goals in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), committing to responsible sourcing and waste reduction.

Consumers also play a role in driving industry change. As demand for sustainable fashion increases, brands are motivated to adopt better practices, from using organic and recycled fabrics to eliminating hazardous chemicals in production. Industry-led initiatives serve as a bridge between regulatory policies and consumer expectations, helping fashion companies transition toward more sustainable business models.

4.3 The Role of Governments and Consumers

Sustainability in fashion is a shared responsibility between governments and consumers. Governments establish regulations, enforce environmental standards, and provide incentives for sustainable practices. They also fund research into new materials and recycling technologies, helping the industry innovate and reduce waste. However, policies alone are not enough—consumers must make conscious choices to support sustainability.

Consumers influence the industry through their purchasing habits. Choosing sustainable brands, buying second-hand clothing, and reducing overall consumption can significantly impact the fashion sector. The growing trend of circular fashion—where garments are resold, rented, or repurposed—demonstrates how consumer behavior can complement government efforts. The responsibility for a sustainable fashion industry ultimately lies in the balance between regulation and individual choices.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

The Sustainable Fashion Debate

TIME TO DEBATE!

- **Group A:** will defend the position that governments should take the primary responsibility for sustainable practices in the fashion industry.
- **Group B:** Will defend the position that consumers should lead the change.

PREPARATION:

- Research and prepare key arguments supported by facts, policies or real-world examples.
- Prepare counterarguments anticipating the opposing team's points.
- Assign roles: speaker, researcher, note-taker, etc.
- Gather evidence from sources.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR RESEARCH:

- How effective are government regulations like the EU Circular Economy Action Plan?
- Can consumer behaviour alone shift the fast fashion model?
- Should fashion companies be legally obligated to report their environmental footprint?
- What role do taxes, subsidies or education play in changing behaviour?
- Are consumer-led trends like slow fashion and second-hand shopping scalable?

REFLECTION

1. Do you think government policies or consumer behavior has more influence on promoting sustainable fashion? Support your answer with reasons.



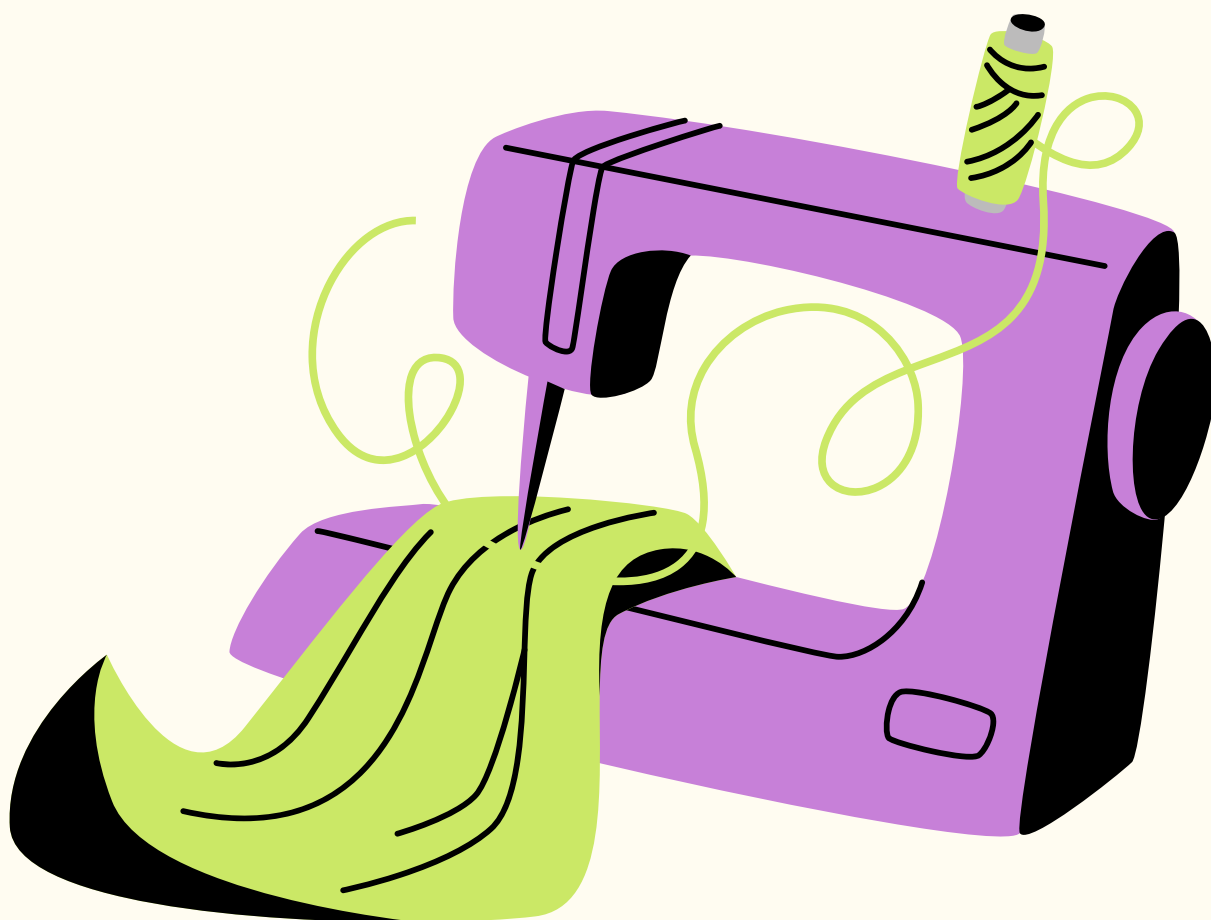
2. Reflect on the role of fashion brands. What kind of policies or initiatives would you implement if you were leading a sustainable fashion company?



1

MODULE 2

SEWING FOR UPCYCLING



CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO UPCYCLING

1.1. What is upcycling?

In this module, we are going to look at some hand sewing techniques you can use, both to make simple repairs and decorate a garment.

But first, what is “upcycling”?

Upcycling is not only about repairing a broken item, but it also involves giving new life and value to it. The finished product should be of higher value or quality than the original. This does not necessarily mean financial value, but it may just be of more worth to you personally.

In practice, this can mean embroidering a design to make your jeans more interesting, attaching patches of other fabric to add colour, or combining two old items to make a new one. The main objective of upcycling in fashion is to create something you will wear and appreciate more, without buying something new.

In this module, we are going to refer to a lot of sewing terms. These terms are in bold, and have been collected in a glossary which you will be provided with. You will also need some equipment to follow along, and you will find details of this in the practical activity section.

CHAPTER 1

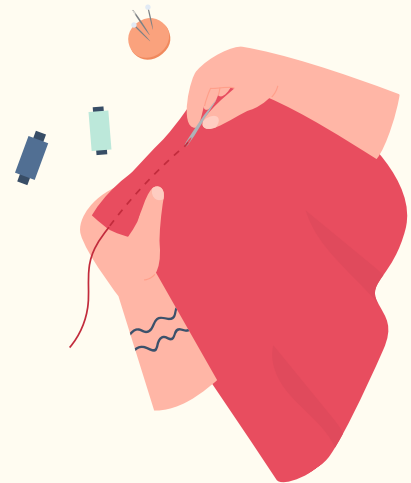
1.2 Hand Sewing Skills

Hand sewing has been used for thousands of years to make clothes. Though it takes longer than using a sewing machine, it is very useful for making quick repairs and creating decoration. You can also be more delicate and precise with hand sewing, which allows you to create small details that cannot be achieved with a machine.

Learning some basics of hand sewing will allow you to upcycle from home, even without a sewing machine.

Let's start right at the beginning. All you will need is:

- Needle
- Thread
- Old pieces of fabric
- Scissors
- Chalk or washable pen (optional)



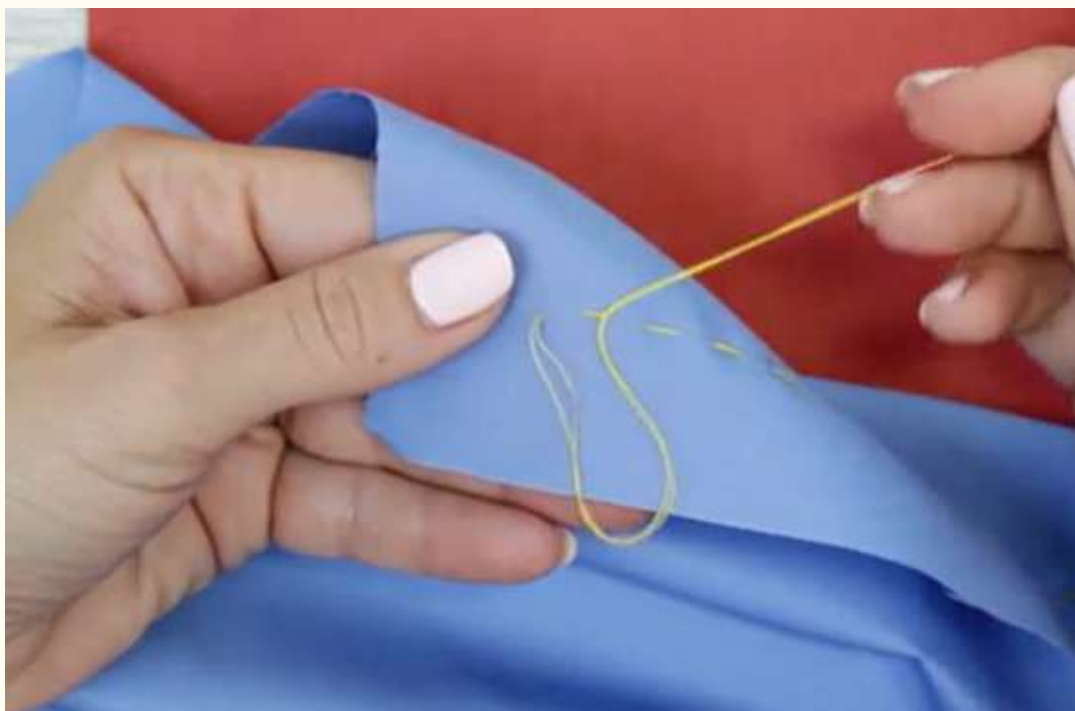
GENERAL TIPS:

- It is always better to have more thread than you think you need. Cut about 2x the amount you expect to need.
- Thread your needle by guiding one end of the thread through. Pull it until the amount of thread is even on each side.
- Pinch the ends of the thread together and tie a knot at the end.
- If you are struggling to thread your needle, try a needle with a larger eye, or a thinner thread. It also helps to wet the thread before threading the needle.
- You can use chalk or washable pens to draw a line to guide your stitching. This helps keep your work in a straight line.

SEWING A STRAIGHT (RUNNING) STITCH:

You can use a running stitch to sew seams, hems and gathers. It is useful for doing basic repairs, for attaching pieces of fabric together and for embroidery.

1. Pierce the needle through the wrong side of the fabric. If your knot pulls through the fabric, tie a bigger knot and try again.
2. Guide your needle through the other side of the fabric. Flip your fabric over and pierce the needle around 0.5cm from the first hole, following a straight line.
3. Pull gently until all the thread is through and you feel resistance from the knot. This is your first stitch!
4. Continue stitching until you reach the end of your fabric.
5. Finish the stitching with a knot. Poke your needle through the wrong side of the fabric, but only pull your thread halfway through. This will create a loop of thread. Weave the needle into the loop and pull until the thread is snugly against the fabric. Repeat this two or three times to ensure your knot stays in place.



1.3 Sashiko and Boro Mending Techniques

Sashiko is a Japanese method of stitching used to repair and strengthen cloth whilst also decorating it. Boro is another method, often used with sashiko stitching, to use fabric scraps to strengthen a garment. The technique originated in farming communities in 19th century Japan, where farmers used scrap fabric to mend clothing and keep warm. Traditionally, white cotton thread is used to contrast on darker fabrics, but you can contrast thread and fabric however you like.

In modern times, it is appreciated as a form of visible mending and is used for aesthetic purposes, not only out of necessity. High-end fashion designers have created items inspired by this technique, such as Issey Miyake, seen on the right.



The method does not use a sewing machine, but hand stitching only, which can be very relaxing once you get the hang of it.

Note: You can buy needles and thread specifically designed for sashiko stitching. In our examples, we have used standard equipment of a long embroidery needle and cotton thread.

You will find instructions for creating a bag using the boro technique in the additional activities section. Go give it a try once you have mastered your hand sewing techniques!

SASHIKO MENDING ACTIVITY

In this activity, we will use the sashiko method to patch up a hole.

MATERIALS:

- Cotton thread. Pick a thread that is thicker than hand embroidery thread, to ensure that your stitching will show on the garment.
- Your piece to be fixed. Make sure that the colour contrasts with the thread you picked. If you do not have an item to fix, you can still practice the method on a piece of scrap fabric.
- Scissors
- Long embroidery needle
- Fabric scraps
- Pins
- Chalk or washable pen

METHOD:

Cut out a patch from your fabric scraps that covers the hole or weakened patch of fabric you want to fix. Ensure that it covers a few centimetres around the edge of the hole or weak patch.

Pin the fabric to the reverse side of the garment, centred over the hole. See the image on the right.

Turn the garment **right side** out again. You may wish to use your chalk or washable pen to mark where the patch is. If you have a specific pattern you wish to stitch, you can also draw this onto your garment.



Thread your needle and knot the end of the thread.

Start on a part of the garment that is still intact, don't start on the weak part of the fabric immediately. This will ensure that you strengthen the weak area.

Bring your needle up through the patch to the right side. Give the thread a pull so that the knot is between the patch and the garment fabric.

Bring your needle up and down through the fabric several times and then pull it through to create your stitches. Loading the needle in this way ensures that your stitches are even. See the image on the right.

Continue doing this until the patch is completely attached.



You can keep your stitches in one line, or get creative with it. For example, you could do rows in criss-crossing shapes to create crosses or stars. Don't be afraid to try something out!

Sashiko is a great, simple, way to upcycle by adding decoration while lengthening the life of a garment.

Once you have tried a basic mend, you can find more sashiko stitch patterns online and in the course resources.

REFLECTION

What is a running stitch useful for?

- Attaching zippers
- Hemming and simple seams
- Making buttonholes
- Adding beads

What can offcuts be used for (select all that apply)?

- Decorative patches
- Making small accessories
- Creating full garments
- Patchwork garment

CHAPTER 2

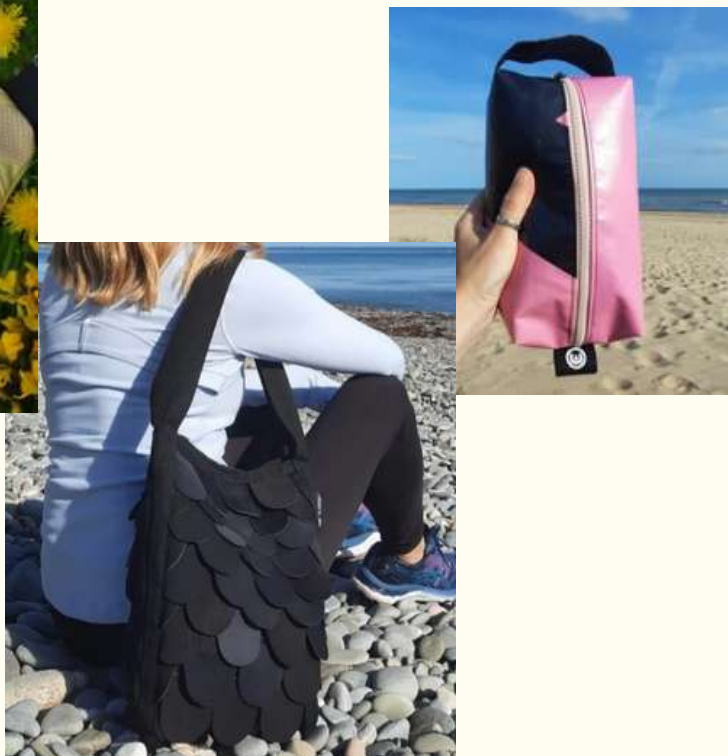
PLANNING AN UPCYCLING PROJECT

In this section, you will learn some key sewing skills. We will look at how to use a sewing machine, how to follow sewing patterns and choose the right materials for a project.

2.1 Examples of Upcycling Projects

Let's have a look at some basic upcycling projects for inspiration.

The exciting thing about upcycling is that you don't have to use conventional materials to make something. The Upcycle Movement in Ireland, for example, makes bags, using a range of fabrics. From old sails, to wetsuits, to deadstock fabric, they demonstrate that once you get creative you can use old materials to make anything you want.



Small items, like scrunchies, sleepmasks and headbands are also very easy to make with scraps of old fabric. They don't require much material, and can easily be constructed from offcuts from other projects.

For example, Slow & Glow from France uses offcuts of designer silks to make scrunchies. And Reused Remade uses discarded hotel linens to make all kinds of accessories. Even small items can make a difference!



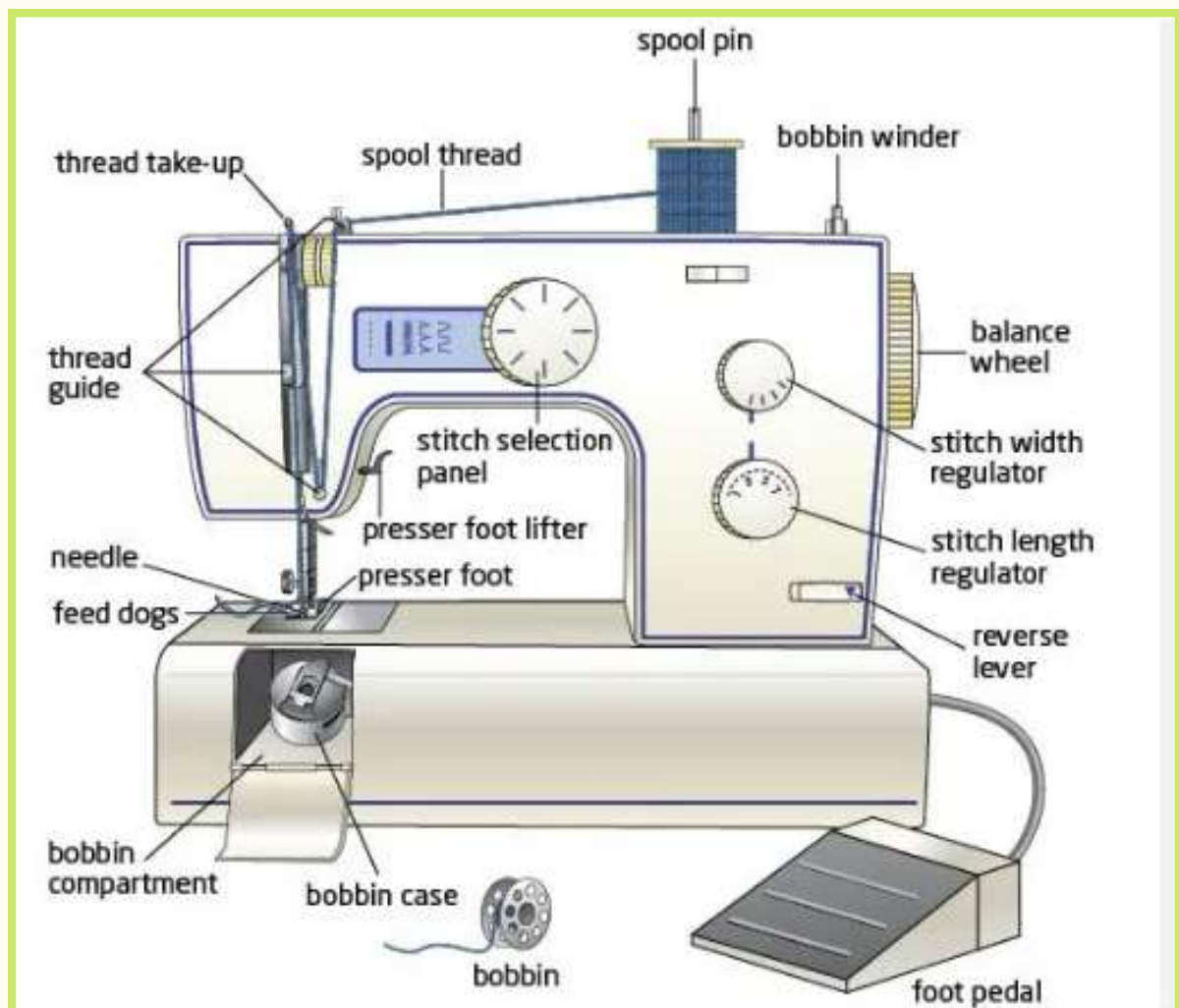
Scraps and offcuts can also be combined in a patchwork to make clothing, or to add decoration. Bear these ideas in mind before you throw away scrap material in future!



2.3 The Basics

Before you can set to making an upcycled item, you need to learn some key sewing skills. Knowing how to use a sewing machine, follow a sewing pattern and pick the right fabrics for your project is essential.

You will get in-person instruction for how to use a sewing machine, and support throughout the practical workshops.



You may want to refer back to this diagram in your workshop to guide you and remind yourself of what each component is. You can find key terms from the diagram explained in the glossary for this module.

Remember that different sewing machine models will vary, so be sure to follow the instructions in your workshop, as they will be tailored to the machine you will be using in this course.

Once you are familiar with your machine, you will need to begin reading a sewing pattern. Following a pattern is important, as it ensures that all your pieces will fit together properly and that the right side of the fabric is showing. You can find definitions of terms from sewing patterns in the glossary, but we will now look at the key steps to follow when reading your pattern.

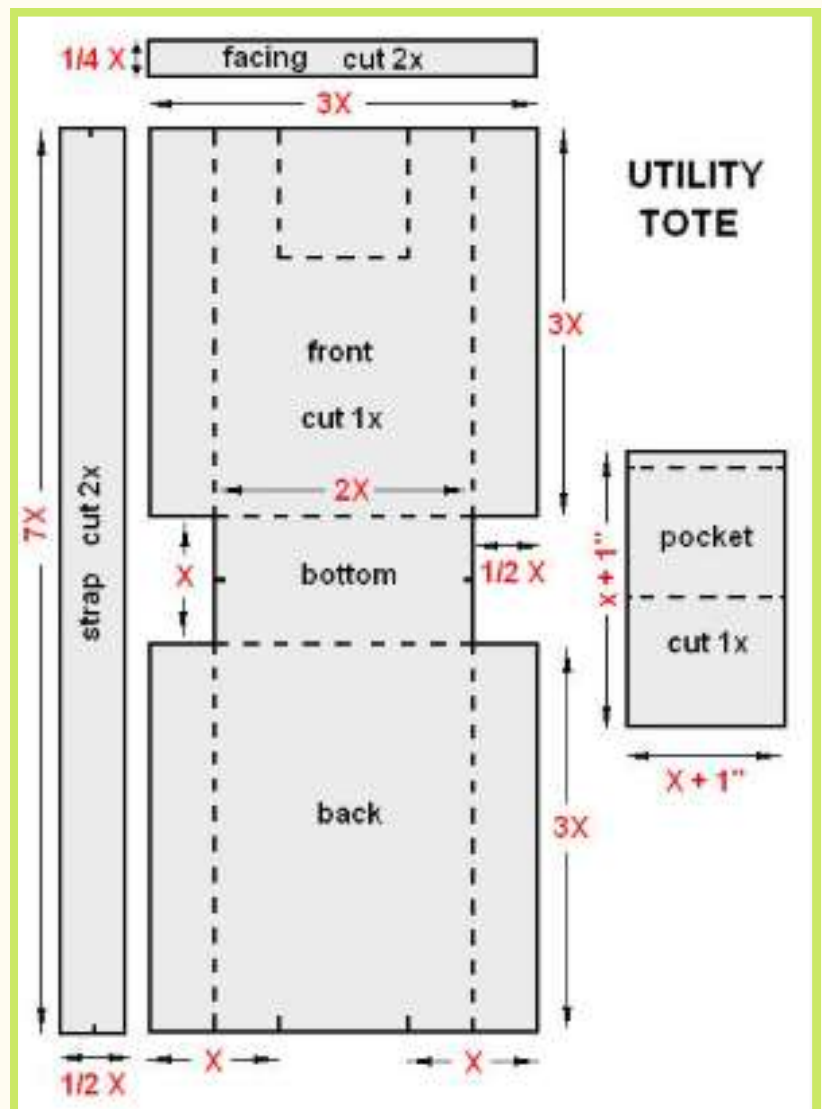
So what is a sewing pattern?

It is a guide to sew an item at a desired size. In a pattern, you will find a set of pieces for you to lay flat to guide you when cutting your fabric. There will also be a set of instructions to follow, explaining the steps to go from fabric to a finished item.

Let's have a look at an example.

In this image, you can see outlines of the shapes needed to create a tote bag. The arrows indicate the direction of the fabric. When you examine your material, you should be able to see a “**grain**”. This should run in the direction of the arrows. This is to ensure that you are sewing with the grain, so that the fabric will lie flat when sewed.

Pay attention to the labelling on each piece. If it says “front”, try to position this piece onto a part of the fabric you would like on show. You should also ensure that if a piece is labelled “cut x2”, that you cut two identical pieces of this size.



The dotted lines indicate the seam allowance. This is the area between the fabric edge and the stitching line on pieces of material being sewn together. Seam allowance ensures that there is space for you to sew, without accidentally making your item too small. Most patterns will account for seam allowances, but before you cut out your pieces, be sure to check your pattern.

When you are upcycling without following a pattern, or designing one yourself, make sure to

Here are some top-tips to make sure you trace accurately:

- Lay the pattern flat on a hard surface. If it is wrinkled, you may need to iron it gently to flatten it out.
- Make sure to use a clear pen or pencil so that the marks don't wear away.
- Label each piece so that you don't get confused about what it is for.
- Use a ruler to check your measurements and get nice straight lines.



Once you have traced your pieces, cut out your tracing paper ones. You can now arrange them on your fabric and begin cutting your pieces to sew with.

Top-tips for cutting out your fabric:

- Attach your pattern pieces to the fabric with pins, or weigh it down so that it doesn't move around when you are cutting. This will ensure you cut accurately. Iron your fabric before cutting to ensure accuracy.
- Use fabric scissors, if possible, as they are very sharp and ensure you get an accurate cut.
- Keep your tracing paper and fabric attached after cutting out, so that you know what each piece of fabric is for. You can also use washable pen or chalk to label your fabric so that you keep track of each piece.
- Make sure your fabric is flat before you start cutting. Any wrinkles or folds will affect your pieces.

A sewing pattern will often include suggestions for the type of fabric you should use. Different types of fabrics all have unique characteristics, which make them well-suited to some projects, and not to others. Fabric selection is a key skill for upcycling, as you will need to be able to identify what fabric something is made of, and if it will suit your idea before you can get to work.



One of the beauties of upcycling is that you can get creative and use unconventional materials to make your items - like the examples we saw above. It is still important to be careful with what you select, as using a delicate satin to make a tote bag means your bag won't be very strong, and it will wear out faster than a sturdy cotton or canvas.

You also need to consider fabric types if you are combining different fabrics. Silky, slippery fabric like silk and satin needs different needle size and thread than denim, for instance. This makes it hard to combine certain fabrics. Bear this in mind when selecting what you are going to use, but don't let it stop you from experimenting!



Checking the label can help with this. On the composition label, the first thing you'll notice is a list of fibers, usually displayed as percentages. For example, you might see something like "60% cotton, 40% polyester." These percentages refer to the proportion of each fiber used to make the fabric ([How to read and understand composition labels](#)). You can use this information alongside your knowledge of the characteristics of different fabrics to decide what to make with the material.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY - TEST YOURSELF!

Grab a few items from your wardrobe and try to identify the material without checking the label.

Use this as a chance to get a feel for how different materials feel.

Check the label to see if you were right! This will be good practice for upcycling, as second-hand, older items often have the labels cut out, or the writing on them is washed away. It will help you get a sense of how each material feels, making it easier for you to pick fabrics.

You will find a description of different fabrics commonly used in fashion in the glossary to help you. You can refer to this when you are picking out materials.



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Make a Tote Bag

You will be guided through how to use a sewing machine, and you will get a chance to practice on scrap fabrics. Once you feel confident doing simple stitches on your machine, you will begin selecting materials to make a simple tote bag.

You will be provided a pattern with written instructions, and you will also be able to get support from your instructor.

If you want to make a different style of bag, feel free to experiment! Get some advice from your instructor on how to measure and cut out your pieces.

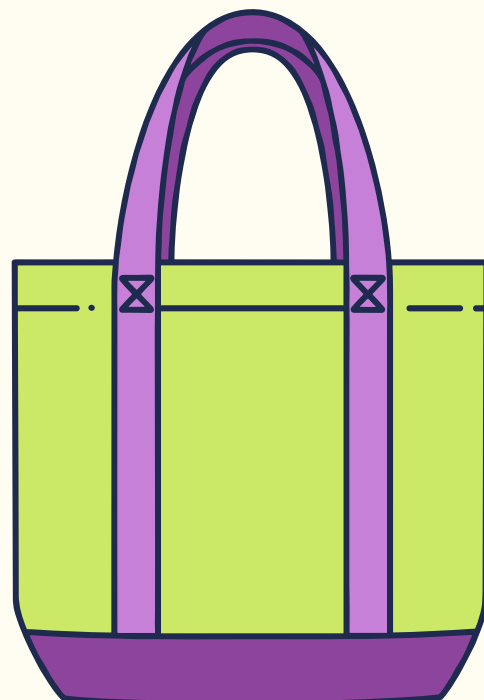
You will have plenty of time to work on this, practicing using your machine, reading the pattern, preparing your fabric and stitching the bag together.

Take your time and enjoy the process!

USEFUL LINKS:

[Sew a Super Simple Tote](#)

[Simple Tote Pattern PDF](#)



REFLECTION

Why is fabric selection crucial for upcycling?

- Because all fabrics react the same
- Because the wrong fabric can make the item weak or unwearable
- To ensure the most expensive material is used
- To avoid patterns

When combining fabrics, what must be considered?

- Only their colours
- Their composition and sewing requirements
- Whether they are both stretchy
- If they come from the same brand

Why do some upcycling projects use unconventional materials like old sails or wetsuits?

- For creative reuse and durability
- Because they're cheaper than fabric
- Only for outdoor wear
- They come pre-cut

CHAPTER 3

UPCYCLING YOUR WARDROBE

In this section, we will look at upcycling clothes for regular use. We will focus on how to make items that you will actually want to wear in your daily life.

Making clothes from old fabrics can be more difficult than using new bolts of fabric. When sewing with new fabric, your pieces can all be cut to the exact shapes from the pattern you are following. If you are upcycling, you can't guarantee that your fabrics will fit your pattern, and you may have to combine fabrics before you can start cutting them to size. This takes some extra thought and creativity, but the results can be fantastic!

This chapter is mainly practical, and you will be working on your project at a series of in-person workshops.

3.1 Examples of Upcycling

Let's take a look at some examples of designers using deadstock clothing and scrap fabrics to make interesting clothing.

3.2 Practical Upcycling Workshop

In this workshop, you will make a wearable garment that you would like to wear in your everyday life. Take inspiration from clothes you already like to wear, considering questions like:

- What do you like about it?
- Is there anything you would like to change about it?
- Is it comfortable?

It's time to consider the type of garment you would like to make. Have a look in your wardrobe. Are there items in there that you don't wear anymore? Do you have a pair of jeans you want to decorate? Could you combine two sweatshirts or T-shirts to make something new?

If you don't have anything to bring to the workshop, don't worry - we will provide plenty of materials for you to work with!

In this workshop, you will either bring materials from home, or use those provided to make a simple upcycled garment. Ideally, you will make something that you would like to wear yourself, but if you would prefer to make something for a friend or family member, that is fine too!

Your instructor will be there to help, guiding you through using your sewing machine and preparing your items to sew. You will have 2 hours to work on your project before showing it to the rest of the group.

USEFUL LINKS FOR INSPIRATION:

[Upcycling a Nike Sweater](#)

[Making a Jacket from a Blanket](#)

[Upcycle Old Hoodies](#)

[Decorating Jeans](#)

[Turning Skinny Jeans into Flares](#)

[Making a Halterneck Top](#)

HoMie REBORN from Australia source “high quality, pre-loved garments and materials to re-develop into one-of-a-kind pieces” ([HoMie REBORN](#)). As you can see, they combine materials with creativity, creating results that are very wearable as sweatshirts and T-shirts. Each piece is completely unique, giving it value as a one-of-a-kind item.



[Farm Rio](#) is a Brazilian brand, that uses upcycling to mix traditional Brazilian styles, designs and colours with upcycled and responsibly sourced materials. They have collaborated with brands such as Adidas and Levi's to create sustainable collections.



Looking at these examples, or other upcycling you have seen, can you think of any items in your wardrobe that you could combine to produce something unique?

REFLECTION

Why is upcycling old clothes sometimes more complex than using new fabric?

- Old fabric can't be ironed
- You need to work with existing shapes and sizes
- New fabric is more colourful
- You don't need patterns for new fabric

What are two benefits of upcycling your own wardrobe?

- You can make clothes exactly to your taste
- It avoids using any sewing tools
- You don't have to buy anything new
- It guarantees a professional look

CHAPTER 4

THE UPCYCLE CHALLENGE

In this section, we will look at some more complex upcycling examples and you will start thinking about a project you would like to make. This will finish on a fun, creative, challenge.

In the previous workshop, you made an item that you could wear yourself in your daily life. In this section, you will get the chance to be completely creative and make a piece of clothing that you might expect to see on a runway.

This chapter is mainly practical, and you will be working on your project at a series of in-person workshops. Let's have a look at some inspiration first.

4.1 Examples from Famous Designers

Let's take a look at some examples of designers using deadstock fabrics and unconventional materials to make interesting clothing.

Dapper Dan's Boutique opened in New York in 1982. Though this was before the modern upcycling movement, clothing by Dapper Dan is one of the first examples of combining deadstock fabrics to make unique items. Dan began taking high-end fashion items from brands such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton and "redesigning them into new fits and styles" for his customers ([An Upcycling Renaissance](#)).



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More recently, high-end fashion houses have begun embracing upcycling. Iris van Herpen used upcycled marine debris to create wearable sculptures in her “Earth-Rise” collection, demonstrating how fashion can be made from plastic waste. This is a great example of how any material can be used to create a piece of art.



4.2 Creative Challenge

Thinking about the examples you have seen, consider the type of garment you would like to make. Try to think outside of the box and imagine your garment being displayed on a runway, or in a fashion magazine.

For this challenge, you will be presented with a range of materials. Some of these will be conventional textiles but there will also be materials that are not often used to make clothing.

There will also be a range of sewing patterns available, for men and women's clothing. These will help you create a base shape for your garment if you need it. You are also free to design your own item completely from scratch.

For this challenge, you will have to combine materials to create your finished product. To succeed in the challenge, you will need to include one material from the unconventional section!

On the next page, you'll find some ideas, demonstrating how unconventional materials can be used. In these examples from the TV show "Great British Sewing Bee", shopping bags, ties, old parachutes and even art canvases were used.

In the first session, you will start by selecting your pattern and materials. Think about how the materials will combine, and begin imagining your final product.

Start with basic questions, like:

- What will my “base” garment be?
- What colours, shapes and patterns should I incorporate?
- How can I use the characteristics of the materials to create shape?
- How can I add to my base to make something more interesting?

If you are struggling, make sure to ask your instructor and classmates for ideas.

Take this as an opportunity to be creative, trying new combinations and ideas. You can use mannequins and pins to try out different ideas and see how they would look in practice before you begin sewing.

After the first session, you will continue working on these ideas. You will have two 2-hour sessions to complete the item, using your sewing machine and with support from your instructor.

INSPIRATION:

[Turning Ties into Clothing](#)

[5 Incredible Sewing Bee Creations](#)

[Memorable Makes](#)

[From Towel to Crocodile Costume](#)

[From Ties to Dress](#)

[A Dress from a Duvet](#)



REFLECTION

What example shows early upcycling with deadstock in NYC?

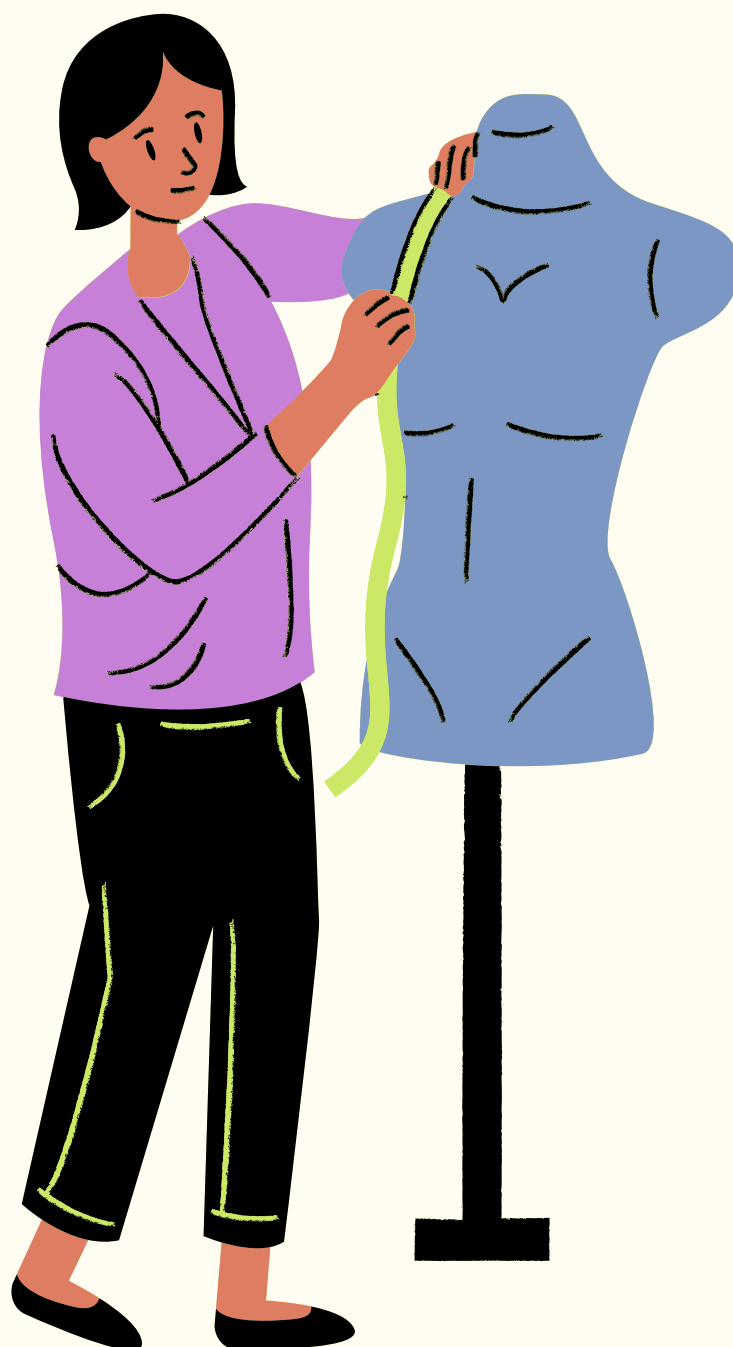
- Iris van Herpen's atelier
- Dapper Dan's Boutique
- Nike headquarters
- Levi's first store

Which of the following is an example of unconventional material use shown in the module?

- Silk used for evening dresses
- A duvet cover turned into a dress
- Cotton sheets for shirts
- Buying brand new leather

MODULE 3

WORK PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE TAILORS



CHAPTER 1

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION

1.1 Professional roles, tools and responsibilities

Today the fashion industry is changing and more and more professions are born with the goal of creating beautiful, quality garments without harming the planet.

From tailoring that reuses materials to designers who create eco-friendly collections, to roles that manage production and communication while respecting the environment and social rights.

These professions combine creativity, technology and passion for the future, and can become your way to build a job with meaning and value. Ready to discover what opportunities await you?



GREEN TAILOR

Responsibilities and skills: The green tailor creates or repairs clothes by focusing on the reuse of materials and sustainable craftsmanship. The main skills include advanced sewing techniques, knowledge of natural or recycled fabrics and attention to the quality of the finished garment.

Tools and technologies: Uses professional sewing machines, manual cutting tools, and sometimes simple pattern-making software (such as Valentina CAD open source). The ability to work with heterogeneous or recycled materials is essential.

Employment sectors: Social tailoring, independent sustainable ateliers, work inclusion projects. Some examples in Italy are Sartoria Sociale “Al revess” and Made in Carcere.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGNER

Responsibilities and skills: The sustainable designer chooses natural, regenerated or recycled materials to design collections. He/she/they have skills in fashion design, basic modelling, and product life cycle. He/she/they are often updated on the principles of “circular design” and designs with durability in mind.

Tools and technologies: Technical drawing software (Illustrator, Procreate), CAD software, platforms for sourcing sustainable materials (e.g. Common Objective), and knowledge of textile certifications (GOTS - Global Organic Textile Standard; OEKO-TEX).

Sectors of employment: Small independent brands, sustainable fashion startups, self-production or capsule collections for ethical companies.

DIGITAL TEXTILE DESIGNER

Responsibilities and skills: This figure develops textile textures and patterns through digital tools, often oriented towards printing on demand, consumption optimization or 3D prototyping.

Tools and technologies: CAD software (CLO 3D, Lectra, Photoshop, Illustrator), rendering engines (Substance by Adobe), technologies for 3D textile printing or digital pigment printing on natural fabrics. It can also operate on NFT platforms or metaverse for digital fashion.

Sectors of employment: Textile departments of fashion companies, freelance studios, digital platforms. Brands such as The Fabricant or DressX are examples of advanced applications.

ETHICAL PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Responsibilities and skills: Manages the production of garments in compliance with sustainability and traceability criteria. In particular, this professional coordinates flows between suppliers, manufacturers and quality, ensuring environmental and social standards. He/she/they has good communication skills, knows and masters CSR standards and uses data analysis for reporting and monitoring activities. He/she/they know the basics of lean production and ecological materials.

Tools and technologies: Uses ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) software for the traceability of materials and production phases, technical data sheets, documentation for certifications, such as GOTS and SA8000.

Employment sectors: Textile companies with ethical supply chains, cooperatives and controlled local productions.

ETHICAL MARKETING MANAGER

Responsibilities and skills: Coordinates the communication of sustainable brands and carries out advocacy and consumer awareness activities, ensuring transparency and authenticity. Enhances supply chain stories, ethical materials and social impact, countering greenwashing. He/she/they know about good communication, storytelling and green digital marketing to engage with people.

Tools and technologies: CRM - Customer Relationship Management, content management, certifications (GOTS, Fair Trade) and responsible communication standards. Uses tools for targeted campaigns and ethical SEO.

Employment sectors: Ethical brands, sustainable fashion startups, agencies specialized in green marketing.

FASHION CSR CONSULTANT

Responsibilities and skills: Supports companies in defining and monitoring social responsibility strategies. Works on ethical supply chains, measurement and reduction of environmental impact, sustainability reporting and regulatory compliance. He/she/they has project management and risk analysis skills together with a deep understanding of European directives (ESG, Green Deal).

Tools and technologies: ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) framework, software for CSR reporting (e.g. GRI Standards, SDG Compass), audits for SA8000, ISO 14001 certifications, and LCA tools.

Employment sectors: Large fashion companies, NGOs, consulting firms (e.g. Deloitte, ERM), international foundations (e.g. Fair Wear Foundation).

1.2 Career Paths Overview

If you are wondering how to become a fashion professional, it is important to know where and how these new professions are sought today. In Italy, Spain, Ireland and Estonia, more and more companies are emerging that focus on those who know how to combine creativity, technology and sustainability.

GREEN TAILOR

In Italy, artisan workshops and circular economy startups are increasingly looking for professionals skilled in eco-friendly textile repair and regeneration. Entry-level roles often begin with apprenticeships, especially for those trained in organic materials, recycling methods, and sustainable craftsmanship. With experience, these roles can evolve into senior tailor or lab manager positions. The demand is especially high for people who understand material recovery techniques and LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) standards for traceability and environmental impact.

In Ireland, artisan labs are growing, especially those that mix traditional skills with eco-friendly digital tools, like CAD softwares (Computer-Aided Design) used by designers and engineers to create 2D and 3D models of physical objects.

Professionals who can combine digital design skills with sustainable practices are well positioned for roles in supervision or product development.

In Estonia, small upcycling businesses are beginning to emerge, often run by young entrepreneurs or creative makers. There's growing space for people who have strong manual skills and creativity, supported by digital tools, to work in semi-independent or entrepreneurial paths within the green fashion and textile sector.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGNER

In Italy and Spain, entry-level opportunities for graphic and product designers interested in sustainability are often found in emerging eco-conscious brands.

These roles can serve as a launchpad for career growth: with experience, designers may go on to lead sustainable product lines or take on creative director roles with a green focus. Some also transition into consultancy, working with major companies such as Inditex or Mango, which have been investing in sustainable practices.

In Ireland, the eco-design sector is expanding, supported by EU-funded programs that promote innovation, research, and sustainable development, particularly in the creative and tech industries.

In Estonia the European Union funds local initiatives to support young eco-designers, especially through regional development projects. These opportunities remain limited and unevenly distributed but at the same time, interesting initiatives are emerging thanks to some innovators like Reet Aus.

DIGITAL TEXTILE DESIGNER

In Spain, institutions like ESDI in Sabadell and other design academies offer solid training in digital printing and textile design using CAD (Computer-Aided Design). Graduates typically start in junior roles but can progress to senior designer positions or become digital product managers. These professionals are in demand at design studios, textile manufacturing companies, and tech-focused fashion startups. In Italy, high-end brands such as Moncler actively seek professionals with digital design and pre-production skills.

These roles often support the re-industrialization phase, helping to translate creative concepts into ready-to-produce models.

Ireland and Estonia are also experiencing growth in digital design roles, driven by the expansion of tech and creative industries. There is a rising demand for profiles that blend aesthetic sensibility with technical expertise, particularly in areas like trend analysis, digital prototyping, and sustainable production planning.

ETHICAL PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

In Italy and Spain, small and medium-sized fashion companies with a focus on sustainability are actively seeking junior professionals to support ethical and responsible production processes. These entry-level roles often involve helping with supply chain transparency, quality control, and material sourcing.

By gaining expertise in compliance regulations, GOTS certification (Global Organic Textile Standard), and LCA (Life Cycle Assessment), individuals can progress to more senior roles such as production manager or CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) project manager.

In Ireland, these skills are supported by training and upskilling programs, many of which are co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and developed in collaboration with universities and local institutions.

Estonia also offers similar roles within emerging eco-friendly businesses, although opportunities are fewer and often concentrated in urban centers. Nevertheless, there is growing interest among young entrepreneurs and innovators looking to integrate sustainability into fashion and textile production.

ETHICAL MARKETING MANAGER

In all four countries, ethical marketing is gaining relevance as consumers become increasingly aware of sustainability and social responsibility. In Italy and Spain, companies are actively recruiting junior professionals to support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) teams, particularly in areas like sustainable branding, content creation, and stakeholder engagement. With experience, these professionals can move into roles where they lead sustainable marketing campaigns and develop communication strategies aligned with environmental and social values. At the senior level, opportunities include becoming ethical marketing directors or working as strategic consultants for larger firms and international brands.

In Ireland, the demand for professionals in green communication is growing, especially within digital and tech hubs. Startups such as GROWN (a sustainable clothing brand) and The Wool Loop (focused on Irish wool innovation) seek communicators who can manage brand storytelling, highlight sustainability efforts, and lead digital campaigns that reflect ethical values.

In Estonia, the sector is still emerging and has fewer job openings, but interest is rising. Most current opportunities are linked to international consultancy projects or collaborations funded through EU sustainability initiatives.

FASHION CSR CONSULTANT

Large companies such as Inditex in Spain, or LVMH and Luxottica in Italy are increasingly hiring junior consultants to support their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies. These entry-level roles often involve helping with sustainability reporting, supply chain audits, stakeholder engagement, and compliance monitoring. With time and experience, junior professionals can grow into more advanced positions, such as senior CSR consultant, project manager, or CSR manager, often leading initiatives tied to ESG goals.

In Italy, independent consultants in the sustainability field are also supported through European funding and national initiatives. Organizations like the Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society provide networking opportunities, visibility, and resources for emerging professionals looking to work as freelance advisors or develop their own consulting practices.

In Ireland, programs funded by the European Union such as Horizon Europe and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, are helping to expand the CSR sector. These initiatives promote sustainable business models and innovation, opening up new roles for young professionals trained in ESG and sustainability communication.

In Estonia, the development of CSR consulting is still at an early stage. However, cross-border and EU-funded projects are starting to create international opportunities, especially for young consultants with digital and sustainability skills.

1.3 Training and Job Opportunities in each Country

Below you will discover some of the opportunities to enter into the sustainable fashion sector. You will see how in different countries there are different realities, but all oriented towards a more aware and responsible fashion future.

ITALY

The Prato district (Tuscany) remains the most vibrant hub of sustainable fashion in Italy. Known for its long-standing expertise in textile regeneration and circular economy, the area is often cited as a national model for integrating traditional craftsmanship with digital tools and eco-innovation. Local companies and institutions have embraced circular supply chains, particularly in textile recycling, low-impact dyeing, and LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) standards.

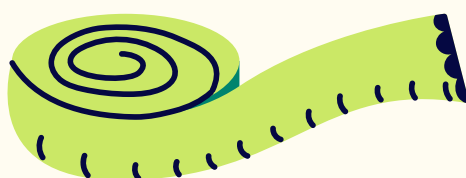
Since 2022, organizations like “Next Technology Tecnotessile” and regional innovation clusters have intensified efforts to provide training focused on recycling, eco-design, and textile repair, especially through hands-on workshops and lab-based modules. These are ideal for people, especially youngsters, aiming for entry roles such as green tailors or ethical production assistants, where manual skills and familiarity with sustainable materials are essential.

In Tuscany, the “ITS MITA Foundation” (Made in Italy Tuscany Academy) has developed a free program for young people aged 18–34 called “Train for Digital.” The course includes modules on CAD Fashion, digital prototyping, and 4.0 technologies for fashion production. It’s built around an internship-based model that helps learners transition into roles like digital textile designers or sustainable designers.

In Naples, the “ITS Campania Moda” offers post-secondary technical diplomas in sustainable fashion, including skills in digital pattern making, fabric innovation, and ethical production. These programs are low-barrier and designed for school leavers or unemployed youth, making them highly accessible.

The “CNOS-FAP network” (Salesian vocational training centers) operates in 16 Italian regions and provides highly practical training, including in tailoring, textile maintenance, and fashion production. Their courses are aimed at unemployed or low-income youth, and prioritize job readiness.

In Turin, the “Piazza dei Mestieri” project offers craft-based courses with apprenticeships, focusing on traditional professions reinterpreted for modern sustainability challenges. Young people can access pathways to green tailoring, textile repair, and sustainable craftsmanship in small-scale labs.



SPAIN

Spain has taken important steps to make sustainable fashion and ethical communication accessible to young people through both public education and private initiatives. One of the most inclusive entry points is through the “Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad”, aimed at young people aged 15-29, including those without high school qualifications. These schools offer practical training in crafts and textiles, often through partnerships with local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This model provides a strong foundation for future roles as green tailors, ethical production assistants, or digital textile designers. A standout training opportunity is the “MODS - Introducción a la Moda Sostenible course”, organized by “Moda Sostenible BCN”. It is free and beginner-friendly, structured in eight interactive webinars. It covers circular fashion, storytelling, and alignment with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), making it ideal for aspiring sustainable designers, ethical marketers, and CSR consultants.

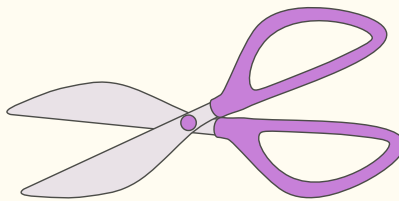
Another key resource is the “Professionalization Course in the Sustainable Textile Sector: from Fiber to Fashion”, by “Asociación Vida Sana”. Available online and free of charge, it explores the full textile cycle from natural fiber sourcing to ethical marketing. It’s an excellent bridge for young people into roles like ethical production assistants, CSR consultants, or green tailors.

For those more design-oriented, the “Sustainable Design” course (FP in Graphic Arts) by “TECH Formación Profesional” offers online training over 6 weeks, with no previous diploma required. It focuses on ecodesign, sustainable materials, and life cycle analysis, helping learners enter sustainable design or ethical marketing roles.

A related course, “Ecodesign: Materials for Packaging Design”, provides in-depth training in bio-based and compostable materials for packaging, particularly useful for young people interested in sustainability communication and branding roles.

There are also shorter, accessible retraining opportunities such as those offered by “ELLE Education”, which include modules on green branding, sustainable luxury, and fashion communication. These are well-suited for ethical marketing managers or CSR communicators in the making.

Lastly, regional public vocational schools (IES) across Spain are gradually introducing medium-level or intermediate Formación Profesional (FP) programs in areas like textiles, graphic arts, and fashion production, many of which now include sustainability modules. Some allow enrollment without a diploma, especially if candidates are over 17. Availability and admissions vary, so it is important to check with the local IES in your area.



IRELAND

Ireland’s green textile sector is rich in tradition and innovation. In County Donegal, heritage crafts like Aran sweater knitting continue to thrive, while in Upperlands, Northern Ireland, traditional linen beetling is being revived by small businesses that integrate sustainable textile practices. One example is Kindred of Ireland, which produces linen garments using eco-friendly methods and seeks to train young apprentices in high-end craftsmanship, ideal for aspiring green tailors or ethical production assistants.

Companies like Kindred of Ireland and Magee 1866 integrate heritage techniques with eco-conscious practices, offering entry-level roles and apprenticeships focused on sustainable materials like Irish linen.

The Irish national apprenticeship system, coordinated by “SOLAS”, offers fully funded “craft apprenticeships”, accessible from age 16, often with only a Junior Certificate (lower secondary school) or even just basic literacy/numeracy. These are ideal entry paths for young people who wish to become Green tailors (via the Bespoke Tailoring Apprenticeship), Garment makers (through the Garment Maker Apprenticeship) or Pattern cutters and sewing machinists.

These dual-training programs (2-4 years) alternate classroom learning with on-the-job experience in tailoring companies and issue an Advanced Certificate (Level 6) on the National Framework of Qualifications.

On the other end of the spectrum, digital innovation hubs such as Dogpatch Labs (Dublin) and Portershed (Galway) support early-stage fashion-tech and sustainable design startups. These are often looking for creative juniors with basic digital literacy, a passion for sustainability, and willingness to learn.

On the public side, many Further Education Colleges across Ireland, such as CDET (City of Dublin ETB), GRETB, or Cork College of FET, offer free QQI-certified courses (Level 4–5) in areas like fashion design basics, textile skills, sustainable product design, digital design and graphics, marketing and communications.

These programs are open to unemployed youth and early school leavers, often supported by SUSI grants or the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). They provide a strong base for becoming digital textile designers, ethical production assistants, or marketing professionals.



ESTONIA

In Estonia, the sustainable textile and fashion sector is still emerging, but Tallinn and particularly the Telliskivi Creative City stands out as the country's most dynamic hub for green innovation, independent design, and circular practices. Located in a repurposed industrial area, Telliskivi houses a range of eco-conscious designers, artists, and startups who experiment with sustainability, upcycling, and responsible production. The area regularly hosts workshops, pop-up labs, and community events focused on ethical fashion, textile repair, and circular design. Many of these are free or low-cost, supported by the "Estonian Design Centre" and creative collectives.

In Estonia there is not a fully developed textile district, but grassroots and entrepreneurial initiatives are now emerging. For instance, accelerator programs and maker spaces, like those at Põhjala Factory, offering short-term training opportunities for beginners in areas like fabric upcycling, pattern-making, and sustainable product design.

In terms of formal education, the “Tartu Vocational Education Centre” (Tartu Kutsehariduskeskus) is Estonia’s largest vocational training provider. It offers free, publicly funded programs in applied arts, textile processing, and fashion design, open from age of 16. These programs are accessible even to those with only basic education, and they emphasize on-the-job education (at least 50% is carried out in companies) together with classroom education.

Similarly, the “Tartu Art School” offers three-year vocational programs for careers such as stylist-decorator or editorial designer. These programs are designed to be flexible and accessible to people with all kind of education (even if it is incomplete). Tuition is generally free for full-time students under 20 and low-cost for adults.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Consider your Career

Phase 1

You will all receive a card with the following questions to answer. Each block of four questions corresponds to one of the 6 professions.

You will answer these questions to reveal which of the professions described in this chapter is best suited to you.

After answering the questions, fill in this personal growth form to consider your career and your future.



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Phase 2

Who are you today?

Describe yourself clearly and honestly, including:

- Age, educational and personal background
- Preferred role
- Skills, tools, experiences

What do you need to get started?

- What skills do you need? (Example: Basic sewing or pattern-making techniques; Use of graphic software such as Illustrator or CAD; Knowledge of sustainable materials and certifications)
- What experiences do you need? (Example: Local workshops or practical laboratories; Free or low-cost online courses; Apprenticeships or internships at sustainable companies)

Where could you start?

- Identify one or more concrete paths suitable for you in your country of residence (Italy, Spain, Ireland, Estonia).
- What is the most accessible opportunity for you today? Which one excites you the most?
- What obstacles do you have to overcome?

Your One Year goal

- Set a concrete goal that you would like to achieve within a year, for example:
 - "Work as an assistant in a social tailoring workshop"
 - "Create a mini-collection of clothes with recycled materials"
 - "Complete a sustainable design course and create a portfolio"
- How will you feel once you have achieved this goal?

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Phase 3

You will now perform a short activity related to one of the professions described in this chapter.

GREEN TAILOR

- Take an old or used piece of clothing (it can also be imaginary).
- Analyze materials, condition, defects.
- Briefly write 3 ideas on how you could recover it or transform it into a new sustainable product (for example: repair, redesign, create accessories).
- Bonus: if you want, make a sketch or a collage that shows the transformation.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGNER

- Draw (even freehand or with simple programs) a mini-collection of 3 eco-friendly garments.
- Briefly explain for each garment: which materials you would use and why (e.g. organic cotton, recycled fabrics).
- Reflect on why these choices are sustainable (waste reduction, lower environmental impact).

DIGITAL TEXTILE DESIGNER

- Design a simple motif or pattern (shapes, lines, colors) inspired by natural elements (leaves, flowers, waves).
- You can draw it by hand and then digitize it, or use basic software such as Canva, Photoshop, or even free online tools.
- Write 2-3 lines explaining your aesthetic choice and the connection with sustainability.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

ETHICAL PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

- Imagine you have to evaluate a product item.
- Create a checklist with at least 5 points to verify:
 - Origin of materials
 - Working conditions in the factory
 - Sustainable certifications
 - Environmental impact (e.g. water use, emissions)
 - Transparency of the supply chain
- Briefly explain why each point is important.

ETHICAL MARKETING MANAGER

- Write a short post (max 150 words) or an advertising slogan that tells the ethical and sustainable commitment of a fashion brand.
- Think of a positive, simple and engaging message.
- You can choose the target (young people, families, environmentally conscious customers).

FASHION CSR CONSULTANT

- Imagine you have to help a company improve its CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).
- List 3 sustainable initiatives that you would suggest (e.g. recycling programs, partnerships with NGOs, staff training).
- For each initiative, write 2-3 reasons why it would be important and how it could be implemented.

REFLECTION

What are the key elements that define a profession in sustainable fashion today?

How does circular design change the way people make and take care of clothes in sustainable fashion?

Why is transparency and traceability important in the production of clothing, and how can it affect consumers and workers?

CHAPTER 2

PREPARING FOR THE JOB SEARCH

2.1 Building an Effective Resume

The Curriculum Vitae is your professional business card, the opportunity to best present your education, the work experiences you have had and communicate your qualities to the recruiter.

It must intrigue and interest your potential employer with the final goal of getting you the job you want. The CV plays a fundamental role in your career and for this reason you must learn to write it correctly.

USEFUL GUIDELINES FOR DRAFTING A CURRICULUM VITAE

A good CV must be:

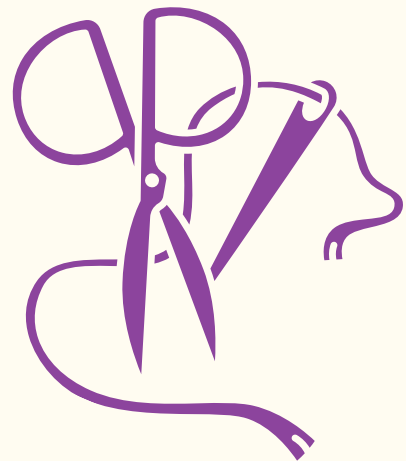
- **CLEAR:** carefully laid out; written neatly; with detached paragraphs highlighted and sentences underlined in bold.
- **PRECISE:** in the information provided (periods of work, company names, educational qualifications); concrete in any results achieved; correct, without spelling errors.
- **EASY TO READ:** that encourages reading, fluent, direct, with use of the first person.
- **CALIBRATED:** customized depending on the company you are applying to and the profile required

A GOOD CV ALWAYS ANSWERS THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- **WHO YOU ARE:** it must highlight your personality and your transversal skills;
- **WHAT YOU HAVE DONE:** depending on whether you have more or less professional experience behind you, it may be useful to focus mainly on the most recent job position, the tasks performed and the skills you have acquired, or focus the content on your educational path;
- **WHAT YOU WANT TO DO:** describe what your professional goals are.

NOTE:

You should update your CV periodically, and adjust it to the roles you are applying to.



INFORMATION TO PROVIDE AND CONTENTS:

1. GENERAL INFORMATION TO MAKE YOU "FINDABLE"

It is advisable to put the useful data to contact you at the top left, an area that is immediately visible to the selector at first glance: surname and name; date of birth; address; telephone and/or mobile number; e-mail address.

In some countries, it is advisable to add a recent and clear photograph of yourself, half-length on a neutral background. Make sure the photo is professional, avoiding selfies, but make sure to smile!

- You should note that in other countries, such as Ireland, it is not recommended to include a photograph of yourself on your CV. Make sure to do some research and check what is expected in the country you are applying in.

Together with this initial information, it is advisable to add a recent and clear photograph of yourself, half-length on a neutral background. Selfies and heart-shaped lips are absolutely forbidden. A smile is better!

2. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

If it is a first time hiring you should highlight your training, while if you already have work experience you will have to include the most recent one in the first part of the CV followed by previous experiences.

For each experience you must provide:

- period of hiring (from/to);
- company name and type or sector of activity;
- qualification or role covered;
- activities and responsibilities carried out.

3. EDUCATION

You must indicate the qualifications obtained and any training and specialization courses:

- School/university education with dates and qualifications acquired (any attendance, even if not completed, if considered significant),
- Professional training through specializations or courses (any licenses or certificates of attendance).

4. COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

You will have to indicate whether specific skills have been acquired and at what level through courses or self-study. The skills section is usually placed at the end of the curriculum, where you can list technical skills (e.g. cutting, sewing, use of industrial sewing machines) and transversal skills (teamwork, precision, punctuality). You will have to cite foreign languages and knowledge of computer programs as separate chapters.

5. EXTRA-PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

You will have to mention extra-professional activities if they enrich the profile, highlighting specific knowledge and skills acquired.

6. PROFESSIONAL GOALS AND AMBITIONS

It is good to include this part in detail in the cover letter; instead, on the CV dedicate only one line of text to your goals, just to make it clear that you know what you want.

7. PRIVACY

Remember to insert and subscribe (sign) the authorization to use your personal data in accordance with the law:

"I authorize the processing of personal data contained in my curriculum vitae in accordance with art. 13 of EU Regulation 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data."

GENERAL TIPS

Remember that to write a good CV it is important to focus only on the important information: the document must not be too long (maximum two pages). Furthermore, it is essential that the text is correct and understandable from a grammatical and syntactic point of view: the presence of typos is often a symptom of little attention and care.

If you are writing your first CV, try to give greater emphasis to your educational experiences (from most to least recent) or any jobs carried out during your studies. If you have volunteer experience, do not hesitate to include it: it will certainly be much appreciated.

Always list all your experiences from most recent to least recent. Personalize the CV based on the job advertisement, in order to provide the most pertinent information to the job position sought. Different job offers may in fact require a different CV model. For example, creative work environments such as agencies may appreciate a less structured and more artistic CV.

Last thing: don't forget to sign your CV!

THINGS TO AVOID

Mistakes are always around the corner, but don't be afraid. In short, here's what you should absolutely avoid when writing your CV:

- using unprofessional photos;
- being confused and imprecise;
- being too long;
- writing untrue things;
- using identical CVs for different offers;
- forgetting important things (even hobbies);
- making grammatical errors;
- writing long sentences;
- using "I";
- not starting sentences with action terms;
- using the past tense to describe the current or most recent job;
- using the present for past jobs;
- using abbreviations or acronyms;
- using professional or technical terminology if it is not relevant to the position sought.

2.2 Preparing for the job interview

If the company finds your CV interesting, it is likely that they will call you for a selection interview. It has the following purposes:

- to ensure that the selector collects some information you to assess whether you could be effectively placed in the vacant company position;
- to ensure that the candidate can assess his/her/their real interest in the company and the proposed tasks.

PREPARATION

Here are some tips on how to prepare for an interview:

- Before your interview, take time to thoroughly reread your CV and cover letter, especially if you wrote them a while ago. This helps you feel more prepared and boosts your confidence;
- Make sure you know the exact date, time, and location of the appointment, and aim to arrive about 5 to 10 minutes early. Being punctual shows professionalism;
- Dress appropriately, in a style that matches the company's environment. Choose something neat, tidy, and neutral if you are not sure about how to dress up;
- It's important to bring all relevant documentation with you, such as your CV, certifications or published work, and to remember the name of the person who scheduled the interview;
- Gather as much information as possible about the company: its industry, mission, values, and the specific role you're applying for. This will help you tailor your answers and show genuine interest;
- Finally, take some time for self-reflection so you walk into the interview aware of your strengths, areas for improvement, and how your skills align with the job. This kind of thoughtful preparation can make a real difference.

JOB INTERVIEW TIPS: WHAT TO DO (AND WHAT TO AVOID)

During a job interview, your attitude, communication style, and authenticity matter just as much as your qualifications. It's essential to present yourself as assertive but balanced; be confident, collaborative, and aware of your strengths and weaknesses, without appearing aggressive or overly submissive. Show that you can turn limitations into opportunities for growth. One key trait that recruiters value is motivation: while technical skills can be learned, genuine enthusiasm and commitment are much harder to teach. A motivated candidate stands out as someone reliable and ready to grow with the company.

Throughout the conversation, stay calm and thoughtful in your responses. If a question seems odd or unclear, don't hesitate to ask for clarification: it might be a way for the interviewer to get a sense of your personality. Be honest about your background and avoid exaggerating or inventing experiences; gaps in employment or changes in your path can be explained with transparency and confidence. When discussing weaknesses, frame them constructively. For instance, being "a bit too detail-oriented" could be reframed as a strong commitment to high-quality work.

Body language speaks volumes. Sit with a straight posture, maintain eye contact, smile, and avoid fidgeting with objects. Non-verbal cues can reinforce your verbal message. Whether your interview is in person, by phone, or online, make sure the environment is quiet and distraction-free, and that all necessary tools (internet, microphone, camera) work well.

There are also some common pitfalls to avoid. Don't monopolize the conversation or drift into personal topics. Be open but professional, and don't be vague or indecisive: knowing who you are and what you want makes a strong impression. Avoid criticizing former employers or colleagues, as this can make you seem negative or unprofessional. Similarly, don't rush into discussions about salary or benefits: these topics usually come later, once mutual interest is established.

Above all, be yourself. Artificial or rehearsed attitudes are easy to spot and can hurt your credibility. Show your best self (motivated, honest, and well-prepared) and you'll already be ahead of the game.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Here is a list of questions and answers that are commonly considered the most difficult in a job interview. The trick is to appear determined and prepared: to avoid hesitation, it is better to have thought about these questions first, on what the best answers are and to have rehearsed everything out loud.

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL OR TRAINING BACKGROUND: WHAT YOU STUDIED, WHAT YOU ENJOYED, AND WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM IT?

Questions relating to your educational and professional background are useful for deepening the level of education, the technical knowledge acquired, the coherence of the study path. Even if you didn't finish school or your studies weren't consistent, your educational background still matters. Recruiters aren't just looking for degrees: they're interested in what you've learned, how you've grown, and whether you have the potential to develop further. Use this section of the interview to highlight your curiosity, what you've enjoyed learning, and any skills you've picked up along the way.

THE INTERVIEW

The interviewer's goal is to find the most suitable worker for a certain job, and his interest is therefore to examine the candidate's knowledge, skills, competences and character traits to understand if he or she could be the right person. This means that you must know how to make it clear to the interviewer that you could carry out the tasks eventually assigned to you while also providing added value for the company. Generally, the interviewer begins the conversation by asking a question or a rather generic invitation, such as "Tell me about yourself", or "Why did you send your CV here?". This way, you will have the opportunity to introduce yourself by choosing the things to say and, normally, starting to talk will ease the normal initial tension.

CAN YOU WALK ME THROUGH ANY WORK OR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES YOU'VE HAD SO FAR?

Arrive at the interview with a clear idea of what you need to tell about your previous experiences. Always start with the most recent experiences and go into detail when there are points of contact with the job opportunity you are interested in, the rest will come naturally!

If you don't have formal work experience, that's okay: you can still prepare a story that reflects your potential. Focus on any real-life situations where you've shown responsibility, teamwork, or commitment. These can come from helping out in the family, volunteering, managing your own time, or learning things on your own.

WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST JOB / WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT JOB?

Whatever the reason, during the interview give a plausible, truthful and positive explanation. Leave everything negative that happened at home.

Make clear your desire to take on a more stimulating challenge, underlining the reason why you want to work at the company you are applying for, linking the choice to the realization of your dream.

WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND YOUR WEAKNESSES?

Typically, the candidate is asked 3 weaknesses and 3 strengths. Prepare a speech! Researching the company and role in advance will help you highlight the strengths that truly match what they're looking for.

Don't be afraid to show the less perfect sides of yourself. Sometimes weaknesses can represent the "human side" of each of us but also unexpected resources. If everyone tells you that you are too meticulous and that is exactly what comes closest to what the selector is looking for, it will be better for you to share it with your interlocutor.

HOW DO YOU REACT TO CRITICISM?

Be assertive. Respond that you are only human, and that you expect to make mistakes but also to learn. Share a real example of when you were able to accept constructive criticism and improve from it.

WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF YOUR MOTIVATION FOR THIS JOB?

Appeal to your work ethic, personal vision and your goals. It is best not to mention factors such as money or prestige. Share with the interlocutor what you have self-identified as needs and the goals you have set for yourself: always connect the motivational levers to these two elements.

ARE YOU APPLYING TO OTHER COMPANIES?

More than a difficult question, this can be a great lever. Being in demand is a very attractive quality. Show selectivity in choosing the positions you apply for.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE THAT OTHER CANDIDATES DO NOT HAVE?

This is the perfect opportunity to talk about your greatest strengths and the results you have achieved. There is no need to brag, but don't be shy about promoting yourself. Answer with confidence and honesty, and don't forget that many of these characteristics can also be verified during the interview.

ARE THERE ASPECTS OF THE POSITION THAT DON'T APPEAL TO YOU?

Summarize the key points of the Job Description (i.e. the description of the duties indicated in the job offer) with the interviewer. Focus on the ones that appeal to you the least and immediately evaluate how you can address them in light of the positive aspects that you will emphasize.

TELL US ABOUT A MISTAKE YOU MADE AND WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM IT.

Answer this question honestly, but avoid mentioning embarrassing or overly personal episodes. Focus on what you learned and how you grew as a result of the mistake.

WHAT KIND OF SALARY DO YOU EXPECT? HOW MUCH WOULD YOU LIKE TO EARN?

Make sure you have studied what the market standard is. You don't have to give a specific figure, but feel free to state that you expect at least the minimum, or more, based on your qualifications.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

Answering "no" shows a lack of interest, so have at least one question ready, related to the position or the company. Some suggestions are: How do the shifts work? Is there training? Always ask when the feedback will be and what the next step in the selection process will be.

THE CLOSING

Once the interview wraps up, say goodbye politely and avoid insisting on immediate feedback. It's enough to ask whether you'll be contacted and within what time frame. If you already know of any limitations that might prevent you from accepting the job (like availability or logistics), it's best to mention them right away.

Usually, the company will follow up within the stated time either with a job offer, an invitation to another interview, or a polite rejection. If the answer is negative, don't take it personally. It's simply a matter of fit for that role. The experience still helped you grow and gain visibility.

During the interview, it's a good idea to ask how the selection process works and when you can expect a response. This helps reduce uncertainty and lets you plan any follow-ups more calmly.

If you haven't heard back after the agreed time, it's totally acceptable to reach out and ask for an update.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Assessing your CV

At this point you should proceed to a self-assessment of your curriculum by asking yourself the following question: “Does the curriculum clearly and quickly highlight my strengths?”. You will then have to reread what is written in two stages.

First stage: check readability. The form must be functional to the content and facilitate rapid access to useful information for those examining the application. Quickly reread the CV and try to answer the following questions:

- Can the examiner quickly access the information he/she/they are interested in?
- What information emerges from my CV: skills, profile, experience?
- Is the text easy to read?
- Can the different parts that make up the CV be clearly distinguished?
- Are the strengths highlighted with correct use of space?
- Have I managed to stimulate the examiner to continue examining my application?

Second stage: checking the content. Now read your CV carefully, focusing on the content and asking yourself the following questions:

- Are my strengths, in relation to the offer I am responding to, sufficiently highlighted?
- Does the CV highlight my skills so that they coincide with the needs of the offer?
- Are the results achieved with the jobs I have recently carried out highlighted?
- Have I limited myself to a theoretical description of my role?
- Is the choice of presentation (chronological or thematic) the one that best highlights my strengths?
- Is this CV convincing or does it raise doubts and hesitations?

If the document answers the questions above, you will have written a satisfactory CV.

COVER LETTER IN SELF APPLICATION

The curriculum vitae is often accompanied by a cover letter that introduces and explains the reasons for sending it.

The letter must not exceed one page in length and must briefly indicate the reasons why you are interested in the specific job and the reasons why the company should consider your application.

The letter will serve to help the company contact understand the type of work you feel suited to as well as your availability for an interview. You can underline the most significant elements already expressed in the Curriculum.

In particular, you must indicate:

- Why you chose that company. You will gather information on the company you intend to apply for so that you can realistically motivate your choice;
- Why the company should consider you. You will illustrate your professional project and highlight what you think you can offer the company and why you feel suitable for the indicated role;
- What you could do together. You will match your motivations with the company's needs by indicating your expectations and availability to accept specific contractual forms, to do an internship, to work shifts or evening and/or holiday hours, to travel, etc.;
- How to deepen mutual knowledge. You will indicate the objective for which you wrote the letter, that is, to obtain an interview to further explore what is reported in the curriculum.

Once you've finished your letter, be sure to choose an appropriate title, such as "SelfApplication_Role You Are Applying For_YourName_YourSurname" and send it to the HR email address, if one exists.

MOCK INTERVIEW EXERCISE

Practise using these example questions to prepare for interviews.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- Why did you decide to send your CV to this company? What struck you about us?

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

- Can you tell me about your school and/or training background? Which subjects were you most passionate about and why?
- Did you attend extracurricular courses, did you train independently or do you have any certifications?
- What foreign languages do you know and at what level? Do you often use computer programs?

WORK OR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

- Have you had any work experiences, even informal ones (volunteering, odd jobs, helping out in the family)? Tell me about the most significant ones.
- What type of activity have you done? Did you learn anything that you think would be useful today?

MOTIVATION AND GOALS

- What motivates you to apply for this role? What are your short-term professional goals?
- What do you think you can offer this company that other candidates cannot?
- What aspects of the job we are offering you do you like the most? Are there any that you are less convinced by?

SOFT SKILLS AND ATTITUDE

- What are, in your opinion, your main strengths? And three aspects that you are still trying to improve?
- How do you react when you receive constructive criticism or negative feedback? Can you tell me an episode?
- Do you prefer to work in a group or alone? Why? Have you ever faced conflicts in a group? How did you manage them?

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND AWARENESS

- Tell me about a mistake you made in the past. What did you learn from that situation?
- Have you ever had moments in which you felt demotivated? How did you overcome them?

EXPECTATIONS AND AVAILABILITY

- Have you already sent your CV to other companies? What type of offers are you interested in?
- What is your work availability? Would you be open to shifts, business trips or initial internships?
- Do you already have an idea of the financial expectations?

CLOSING

- Do you have any questions for me about the role, the company or what will happen after this interview?
- When would you be available to start, if our proposal were to be successful?

REFLECTION

What are the characteristics of a good resume (CV) and why is it important to customize it for each job offer?



How can you best prepare for a job interview and what mistakes should you avoid during the interview?



What are some difficult questions that can be asked during an interview and how should you answer them to make a good impression?



CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDIES: SUCCESS STORIES

3.1 Profiles of Industry Professionals

Entering the sustainable fashion industry can seem challenging, especially for those without traditional backgrounds or networks. This chapter looks at the career paths of some inspiring designers who have turned their personal experiences and difficulties into innovative and meaningful work. It also offers practical advice for those starting out, focusing on how to gain knowledge, build connections, and create a strong presence even with limited resources.

Through these examples and tips, readers will understand how determination and authenticity can help transform obstacles into opportunities in the world of ethical and inclusive fashion.



PATRICK MCDOWELL

Patrick McDowell was born in 1995 and spent his childhood in a working-class suburb of Liverpool, where he learned to recycle old jeans to make bags. It wasn't out of ecological vocation but rather out of economic necessity.

Raised between evening classes and markets, at 15 he participated in the Young Apprentice program, reaching the finals, before moving to London to study at Central Saint Martins. After internships at Burberry and collaborations with Pinko and Chanel, he founded his own brand in 2018, focusing on a made-to-order model that rejects mass production, opting for limited numbered collections, sometimes made from scraps of musical instruments or historical pieces.



McDowell talks about a time when he was “just a 20-something person wondering whether all of this is the right thing to do,” showing how impostor syndrome and uncertainty are part of the journey even for those who stand out. His strategy is based on continuous innovation: collaborations with material startups such as Ecovative (mycelium), Circ and Huue, local production in England and the opportunity to transform waste into high fashion, maintaining beauty and technical rigor.

His career demonstrates that sustainability can arise from difficult circumstances and grow with an empathetic and performing vision, also recognized by the Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design.

JEANNE FRIOT

Jeanne Friot, born in 1995 in Paris, is today recognized as one of the most important emerging figures in contemporary inclusive and sustainable fashion. She is a designer who has built her creative practice around a strong personal and political commitment, deeply influenced by her identity as a lesbian woman. This experience is reflected in her collections, which convey messages of struggle, inclusiveness and visibility for the LGBTQ+ community, becoming a form of resistance and activism through fashion. She therefore immediately expressed her creativity as a form of personal resistance.

After training at the École supérieure des arts appliqués Duperré, Friot worked as a designer for several fashion houses such as Balenciaga, APC, Maison Kitsuné, and Wanda Nylon. These experiences allowed her to refine her technical and creative skills and to develop a sensitivity towards social and environmental issues.



She launched her brand in 2020, offering fashion that challenges gender conventions and promotes sustainability through upcycling and the use of deadstock materials. Her motto, *"No gender, no carbon, no hatred"*, reflects her vision of a more equitable and conscious fashion. Her collection *"Red Warriors"*, presented in January 2023, was a strong political and personal statement, inspired by anti-fascist punk warriors and the trans movement, with pieces that conveyed inclusivity and commitment. Again, her show *"Résistance"*, presented at Paris Fashion Week 2025, reflects the strength that comes from complex emotional experiences: Friot said she woke up "depressed" by transphobic hatred and that the show was "my way of saying, 'We love you; you will always be visible'".

The strategy that combines on-demand production with 95% made in France, using deadstock materials from LVMH or other major brands, demonstrates how sustainable and inclusive fashion is also a concrete act of identity affirmation. Friot mixes activism, personal politics and fashion, demonstrating that design can be both aesthetic and profoundly transformative.

BETHANY WILLIAMS

Bethany Williams is a British fashion designer born and raised on the Isle of Man, a rather isolated geographical and cultural context that initially limited her access to resources and educational opportunities. Growing up, she experienced socio-economic hardship, which made her aware of the inequalities and challenges that many people face on a daily basis.

After completing an art foundation course on the island, which allowed her to explore a new creative direction despite the lack of traditional art training, she decided to move to the mainland to study Critical Fine Arts Practice at the University of Brighton, where she explored social and environmental issues related to art and fashion. This transition was not without its challenges: leaving her family environment and integrating into a more competitive university context represented a significant personal challenge.

In 2017, she obtained a master's degree in Fashion Design (Menswear) at the London College of Fashion, and in the same year she founded her brand. Here she transformed her personal experience and the difficulties she encountered into a drive to create a sustainable fashion model that included the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

She developed collaborations with organizations such as San Patrignano, an Italian recovery community for people with addictions, where women in recovery transform waste materials into high-quality fabrics. This synergy demonstrates her desire to use fashion not only as an aesthetic product, but as a means of social inclusion.

She also collaborated with Making for Change, a British program that offers tailoring training and job opportunities to women prisoners, a project that reflects her attention to people experiencing situations of social marginalization. Despite her success, Bethany has often highlighted how the path has been marked by obstacles related to the lack of immediate access to financial resources and a consolidated network, common difficulties for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Her tenacity and vision have been decisive in overcoming these barriers, making her emerge in the sustainable fashion scene.

Her work has been recognized with the Queen Elizabeth II Award for Design in 2019⁵, the British Fashion Council/Vogue Fashion Fund Award in 2021, and the title of Leader of Change at the Fashion Awards 2022.

Bethany Williams thus embodies a successful figure who comes from a context of hardship, using fashion as a tool for social change, sustainability, and inclusivity, and becoming an inspiring role model for young designers from difficult backgrounds.

3.2 Lessons learned from career paths

Entering the sustainable fashion industry may seem like a daunting journey, especially for those just starting out, perhaps without a traditional background or established networks. However, the stories of professionals like Patrick McDowell, Jeanne Friot and Bethany Williams demonstrate how personal determination and the ability to transform one's challenges into opportunities are essential to building a meaningful career aligned with the ethical values of sustainability.

A first element that emerges is the importance of cultivating one's authenticity and learning to deeply know one's values. McDowell, who comes from a background of economic difficulty, has made sustainability and creative reuse the hallmark of his work, showing how one's personal story can become a driver of innovation and positive impact in the industry. It is essential to develop that emotional resilience that allows one to face moments of doubt, insecurity and failure without losing sight of one's goal. McDowell has spoken openly about moments in which he had to overcome impostor syndrome and the fear of not being good enough, but the ability to persevere and learn from those obstacles has been the key to his success.

From these stories, it also emerges that sustainable fashion is not only technical but also responsibility towards the environment and towards others. Bethany Williams, who grew up in a context marked by social difficulties, has based her work on the idea of social and community responsibility, integrating collaborations with refugees and people in marginal situations into her projects.

Sustainable fashion becomes a way to become drivers of social change that is more respectful of what surrounds us, since it is a resource to be valued and not exploited. These stories make it clear that our own characteristics and the very life situations in which we live are real resources. Economic and social difficulties, however difficult, are part of our lives and make us who we are. But be careful, they do not define us. We are always free to change and become who we really want to be. Friot's experience shows how it is possible to use one's vulnerabilities as a source of creativity and innovation. In the world of sustainable fashion, which often intertwines with social and political issues, being authentic and courageous in pursuing one's vision can open unexpected doors and build a loyal and passionate audience.

Finally, we must not forget that sustainable fashion is a business, in which it is important to choose sustainable and innovative entrepreneurs who respond to both one's values and market needs. Focusing on limited production, made-to-order, and upcycling not only reduces the environmental impact but builds a story of authenticity and quality that can attract aware and loyal customers. This approach is also a way to differentiate oneself in a market often dominated by fast fashion.

3.3 Practical tips for entering the sustainable fashion industry

These opportunities can help you build a network of contacts, a fundamental tool. You could participate in events, even virtual ones, such as conferences, sustainable fashion fairs or discussion groups on social platforms, to meet professionals and colleagues with whom you can exchange ideas and receive advice and support. Often, access to job opportunities depends more on the network built than on the CV alone.

While you do this, work on your personal portfolio is essential. Even those starting from scratch can begin to experiment with small upcycling projects or create sustainable garments using recycled materials. Documenting this work, perhaps through social media or a blog, helps create an online presence that attracts the attention of industry professionals and potential clients. Jeanne Friot, for example, has built her reputation also through sharing projects that tell a personal and collective story of sustainability. No less important is developing soft skills such as the ability to effectively communicate one's vision, flexibility in working in interdisciplinary teams, and time management. In the sustainable fashion sector, which combines creativity and responsibility, these skills can make the difference between a project that remains just an idea and one that finds concrete realization.

Finally, the most valuable advice we can give you is to start from what you have inside: your stories, passions and beliefs, without fear of encountering difficulties. The path will also be made of mistakes, but it is precisely in those moments that the strength to innovate and leave an authentic mark is built.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Creating My Own Responsible Fashion Journey

INTRODUCTION

Read the stories of Patrick, Jeanne and Bethany, or other people in the sustainable fashion industry who inspire you.

Focus on their personal challenges, values, creativity and sustainability.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

With paper and markers, each answer and illustrate answers to these questions:

- What is a difficulty or obstacle that I have faced or that I fear?
- What are my values or passions that I could transform into a strength?
- How could I use creativity to make sense of these difficulties?
- What does “sustainable fashion” or “sustainability” mean to me in my life?

SHARING AND GROUP WORK

In small groups, share your answers and create an imaginary profile of a young sustainable designer who combines the elements that emerged from each.

You can give a name, write a mini bio and draw some elements of the brand or style that this character represents.

CREATIVE PRESENTATION

Present your creation with a short story or a mini-presentation (even theatrical or visual).

CONCLUSION

- Have a collective discussion on what you have learned from the real and imaginary stories.
- Reflect on how one's personal history, with challenges and passions, can become a unique and precious resource.

REFLECTION

What practical strategies are recommended for those who want to start a career in sustainable fashion without experience or a network?

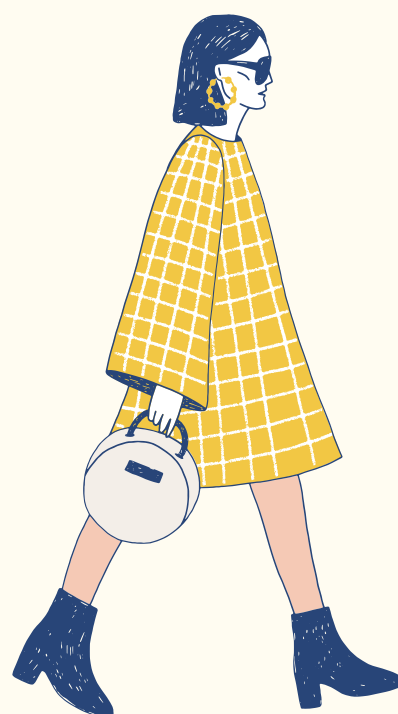


How can personal stories and challenges become valuable resources on the path to a sustainable fashion career?



MODULE 4

FROM HOBBY
TO BUSINESS



CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE SUSTAINABLE FASHION MARKET

1.1 Overview

Understanding the sustainable fashion market is an essential first step before launching a business in this sector. This chapter explores the current landscape of sustainable fashion, including market size, consumer trends, and available opportunities. Before diving into specific business planning, it's important to have a clear picture of the industry you're entering and how sustainability is reshaping the fashion market. Sustainable fashion has been growing rapidly in recent years, with the global market valued at approximately \$8.06 billion in 2024 and expected to grow at a CAGR of 8.2% over the next decade.¹ This growth is driven by increasing consumer awareness of environmental and social issues, regulatory developments, and a shift in purchasing patterns toward more ethical and sustainable options.



1.2 Current Market Trends

CONSUMER AWARENESS AND BEHAVIOUR

Today's consumers, particularly younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z), are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impacts of their purchases. Research shows that 57% of consumers in some markets now consider sustainability important when buying fashion items, although there remains a gap between stated intentions and actual purchasing behaviour.

According to recent studies:

- 90% of Gen Z consumers believe companies have a responsibility to address environmental and social issues²
- 60% of consumers are willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact³
- The second-hand clothing market is projected to double by 2026, reaching \$82 billion

However, challenges remain. Price is still a primary consideration for many consumers, with 70% citing cost as a major factor in purchasing decisions. The "say-do gap" between consumer intentions and actions remains significant, with only about 30% of those who express concern about sustainability regularly making purchase decisions based on these values.

BUSINESS MODEL TRENDS

A business model is the framework that defines how a company creates, delivers, and captures value for its customers while generating revenue. In the context of sustainable fashion, business models are particularly important as they determine not only financial viability but also environmental and social impact throughout the product lifecycle.

While Chapter 2 will explore these models in greater depth, several approaches are currently showing promise in the market:

- Circular Fashion Models: Rental, resale, repair, and upcycling businesses that extend product life cycles
- Direct-to-Consumer Sustainable Brands: Offering transparency and ethical products with a clear sustainability mission
- Sustainable Fashion Marketplaces: Platforms that curate and sell products from multiple sustainable brands
- Subscription Services: Providing regular deliveries of sustainable fashion items
- Service-Based Models: Offering repair, customization, or styling using existing wardrobe items

Each of these models addresses different aspects of sustainability while fulfilling different consumer needs.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

The regulatory landscape for sustainable fashion is evolving rapidly, with significant implications for new businesses:

- The EU's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)⁶ establish new standards for products sold in the EU market
- The New York Fashion Act⁷, if passed, would require fashion retailers with more than \$100 million in revenue to map their supply chains and disclose environmental and social impacts
- The UK's Plastic Packaging Tax⁸ and upcoming Extended Producer Responsibility regulations affect packaging choices
- The Green Claims Directive ⁹ aims to reduce greenwashing by requiring substantiation of environmental claims
-

New entrepreneurs should monitor these developments, as they not only create compliance requirements but also potential opportunities as larger companies seek innovative solutions to meet new standards.

1.3 Consumer Behaviour in Sustainable Fashion

Understanding consumer behaviour is crucial for any fashion business, especially in the sustainable segment where purchasing decisions are influenced by multiple factors beyond style and price.

Research from the systematic literature review reveals that sustainable fashion consumption is influenced by various determinants that can be categorized as either barriers or drivers.

MAIN BARRIERS

- **High Price:** Sustainable garments are commonly associated with higher prices compared to traditional options
- **Scepticism:** Low trust toward sustainability claims and perception of greenwashing
- **Knowledge and Stereotypes:** Consumers might perceive sustainable garments as less stylish or of inferior quality
- **Limited Availability:** Difficulty in finding sustainable options in traditional stores
- **Habits and Inertia:** Consumers' tendency to continue shopping at familiar stores

KEY DRIVERS

- **Quality, Comfort and Aesthetics:** Consumers primarily value functional product attributes (comfort, fit, feel) and aesthetics (style, design, color)
- **Benefits and Value:** Perceived benefits, emotional value, and price-value relationship
- **Self-Expression:** Products that enable status attainment or self-transformation
- **Social Influences:** Subjective norms and social media influence from peers and influencers
- **Corporate Transparency:** Clear information about sustainability practices

CONSUMER PURCHASE JOURNEY

The purchase journey for sustainable fashion is complex, with consumers placing different emphasis on sustainability attributes:

- Awareness: While environmental concerns exist, they typically play a secondary role in purchasing decisions. Most consumers prioritize traditional attributes like price, quality, and style first.
- Consideration: As the review shows, "consumers primarily focus on other attributes, such as price, comfort (e.g., fit, feel), and if it is in fashion (e.g., style, design, colour)" rather than sustainability features.
- Purchase: The decision is significantly influenced by product quality and aesthetics. As Niinimäki (2010) highlighted, "quality and aesthetics are essential in fashion purchases, and sustainable attributes can add value only when the garment is already attractive."
- Post-Purchase: Experiences shape future purchase behaviours, with positive experiences influencing subsequent sustainable consumption decisions.

INFORMATION CHALLENGES

One significant challenge in sustainable fashion is information asymmetry - consumers often lack the knowledge to assess sustainability claims, leading to:

- Confusion about what "sustainable" actually means
- Scepticism toward company environmental claims
- Difficulty evaluating sustainability across brands
-

Successful sustainable fashion businesses address these challenges by:

- Making information transparent and accessible to consumers
- Creating clear narratives around key sustainable themes
- Using technologies like product passports (QR codes) to increase traceability
- Leveraging digital tools and social media to increase consumer awareness
- Addressing negative stereotypes about sustainable fashion
-

Through the understanding of these consumer behaviour patterns across all consumption phases (purchase, use, and disposal), sustainable fashion businesses can better position themselves to meet market needs while promoting truly sustainable consumption practices.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Market Analysis

OBJECTIVE: DEVELOP A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR POTENTIAL MARKET SEGMENT WITHIN SUSTAINABLE FASHION.

- Identify a specific area of sustainable fashion that interests you (e.g., upcycled accessories, organic cotton clothing, vintage resale, etc.)
- Research at least three existing businesses in this segment
- For each business, analyze:
 - What products/services they offer
 - Their pricing strategy
 - Their sustainability claims/certifications
 - Their target customers
 - Their marketing approach (social media presence, message, visuals)
- Identify potential gaps or opportunities in the market
- Summarize your findings in a one-page market analysis

OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION:

- What needs are not being met by existing businesses?
- What price points are underserved?
- What sustainable practices could be improved upon?
- What customer segments are being overlooked?

EXPECTED OUTCOME:

A brief market analysis that helps identify a potential business opportunity within sustainable fashion, based on real market research.

RESOURCES NEEDED:

- Internet access for research
- Template for market analysis (provided in workshop)
- Notebook or digital document for recording findings

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Market Analysis Template

Business Aspect	Business 1	Business 2	Business 3
Products/Services			
Price Range			
Sustainability Claims			
Target Customers			
Marketing			
Approach			
Strengths			
Weaknesses			

REFLECTION

Which consumer segment is most likely to prioritize sustainability features when making fashion purchases, even at a higher price?

- Price-driven consumers
- Conscious consumers
- Practical consumers
- Aspirational consumers

What is a significant challenge when marketing sustainable fashion products to consumers?

- Consumers don't care about sustainability at all
- There is too much regulation of sustainability claims
- There is an information gap between consumer knowledge and sustainability claims
- Sustainable fashion is always more expensive than conventional fashion

CHAPTER 2

BUSINESS PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION

2.1 Overview

Business planning is the foundation of any successful enterprise. For sustainable fashion entrepreneurs, it provides a roadmap that balances creative vision with practical business considerations while integrating sustainability principles. In this chapter, we explore the essential components of developing a sustainable fashion venture that aligns with both your entrepreneurial goals and sustainability values.

Understanding Business Models vs. Business Plans

Before diving into specifics, it's important to understand two key concepts:

- **Business Model:** The fundamental structure of how your business creates, delivers, and captures value. It answers the question "How will my business work?" and defines your revenue sources, customer relationships, and key activities.
- **Business Plan:** A detailed document that outlines your business strategy, including market analysis, operational details, and financial projections. It answers the question "How will I execute my business model successfully?"

Typically, entrepreneurs first determine their business model (the approach they'll take) and then develop a business plan (the detailed roadmap for implementation).

2.2 Business Models for Sustainable Fashion

Several business models have proven successful in sustainable fashion, each with different approaches to combining sustainability with profitable operations. Understanding these models can help you choose or adapt one that fits your skills, resources, and vision.

SLOW FASHION BRAND

The slow fashion model focuses on creating durable, timeless pieces with sustainable materials and ethical production. These brands typically produce limited collections with high-quality materials, emphasizing longevity over trends.

Key characteristics:

- Small-batch production to minimize waste
- High-quality, durable materials
- Timeless designs that won't quickly go out of style
- Transparent supply chains
- Often higher price points reflecting quality and ethical production

Example: Patagonia focuses on creating long-lasting products using sustainable materials and offers repair services to extend product life.

Sustainability impact:

:Reduces overproduction and waste, encourages consumers to buy less but better quality.

Business considerations:

Requires strong brand storytelling to justify higher prices and fewer new releases. Quality control is essential.

UPCYCLING BUSINESS

Upcycling businesses transform existing garments, textile waste, or other materials into new fashion items, adding value through creative design and craftsmanship.

Key characteristics:

- Uses existing materials rather than new resources
- Each piece may be unique or part of small batches
- Often requires strong design and crafting skills
- Story behind materials can be part of marketing
-

Example: Urban Renewal by Urban Outfitters creates new designs from vintage and deadstock fabrics.

Sustainability impact: Diverts waste from landfills, reduces demand for new materials, educates consumers about creative reuse.

Business considerations: Sourcing consistent materials can be challenging. Production is often labour-intensive and difficult to scale.

FASHION RENTAL

Rental businesses offer temporary access to fashion items rather than ownership, allowing customers to enjoy variety without accumulating unworn garments.

Key characteristics:

- Inventory of items available for short-term rental
- Digital platform for browsing and booking
- Cleaning and maintenance processes
- Subscription or per-rental pricing models

Example: Rent the Runway provides rental services for designer clothing.

Sustainability impact: Increases utilization of garments, reduces individual consumption, encourages quality over quantity.

Business considerations: Requires significant upfront investment in inventory. Logistics of cleaning, repairing, and shipping are complex.

RESALE PLATFORM

Resale businesses facilitate the buying and selling of pre-owned fashion items, extending product life cycles and providing affordable access to quality items.

Key characteristics:

- Digital marketplace connecting buyers and sellers
- Authentication services for luxury items
- Curation and quality control
- Commission-based or inventory-purchase business models

Example: ThredUP operates an online consignment and thrift store for women's and children's apparel.

Sustainability impact: Extends product lifecycles, diverts items from landfills, provides affordable access to quality fashion.

Business considerations: Requires technological infrastructure and may face trust issues regarding item quality and authenticity.

SUSTAINABLE FASHION MARKETPLACE

These platforms curate and sell products from multiple sustainable brands, making it easier for consumers to discover ethical options.

Key characteristics:

- Careful vetting of brands for sustainability credentials
- Aggregation of multiple brands in one shopping destination
- Education about sustainability practices
- Commission-based business model
-

Example: Wolf & Badger showcases independent, ethical, and sustainable designers.

Sustainability impact: Increases visibility of sustainable brands, makes sustainable shopping more convenient, educates consumers.

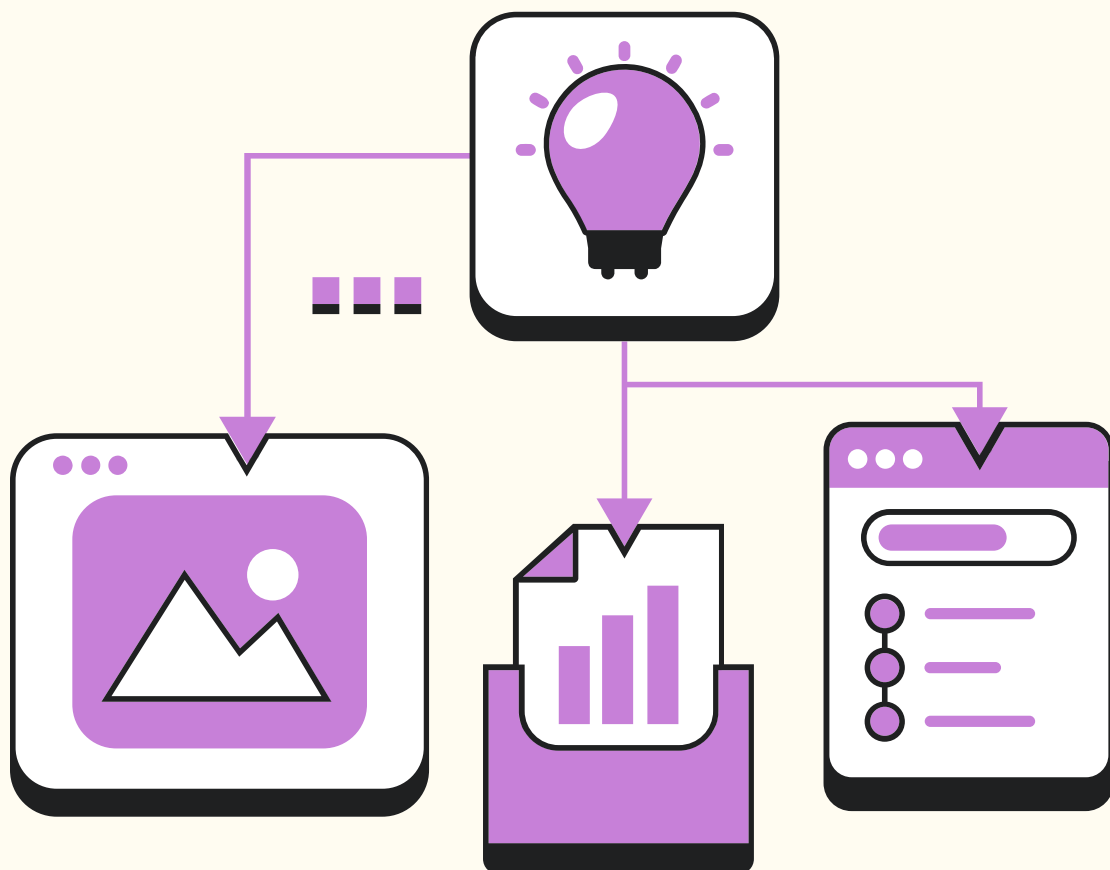
Business considerations: Requires establishing clear sustainability criteria and building relationships with multiple brands.

CONCLUSION

When choosing a business model, consider:

- Your personal skills and expertise
- Available resources and startup capital
- Local market needs and gaps
- Your sustainability priorities
- Scalability goals

Many successful sustainable fashion businesses combine elements of multiple models or evolve their model over time as they grow and learn.



2.3 Creating a Sustainable Fashion Business Plan

Once you've chosen a business model, you'll need to develop a business plan that outlines how you'll implement it successfully.

WRITING YOUR SUSTAINABILITY MISSION

Your mission statement is a concise declaration of your business's purpose and values. For a sustainable fashion business, your mission should address both fashion goals and sustainability commitments.

An effective sustainable fashion mission statement:

- Identifies what your business does (products/services)
- Explains how sustainability is integrated
- Communicates the impact you want to make
- Is concise (typically 1-3 sentences)

EXAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS FROM SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABLE FASHION BRANDS:

"We create timeless clothing from recycled materials, reducing textile waste while offering accessible style options for conscious consumers."

"Our accessories celebrate traditional craftsmanship while supporting fair wages and sustainable materials, creating positive change in the fashion industry one piece at a time."

WHEN WRITING YOUR OWN MISSION STATEMENT, START BY ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS:

- What specific products or services will you offer?
- Which sustainability aspects are most important to your business?
- What change do you want to create in the fashion industry?
- Who are your primary customers?

Your mission statement will guide business decisions and help communicate your value to customers and partners.

BUSINESS PLAN COMPONENTS

A sustainable fashion business plan should align with the industry's projected growth to \$8.25 billion by 2023 and include these key elements:

- **Executive Summary:** A brief overview of your concept, mission, target market (noting that 62% of consumers will pay more for sustainable brands), and goals
- **Business Description:**
 - Your unique sustainable fashion concept
 - Mission and core values emphasizing ethical production
 - Customer pain points you're addressing
 - Your specific sustainability commitments

MARKET ANALYSIS:

- Current size and growth of your target segment
- Customer profiles of eco-conscious consumers
- Analysis of competitors
- Your distinctive sustainable value proposition

PRODUCTS/SERVICES:

- Descriptions of your sustainable offerings
- Eco-friendly features and materials
- Ethical production processes (3-6 months for development)
- Relationships with ethical suppliers (1-2 months to secure)

MARKETING STRATEGY:

- Sustainable branding approach
- E-commerce platforms (Shopify, Etsy, Depop)
- Promotional tactics including sustainable influencer partnerships
- Pricing strategy reflecting fair wages and sustainable materials

OPERATIONS PLAN:

- Business structure and launch timeline (6 months to 2 years total)
- Ethical sourcing and production methods
- Transparent sustainability practices
- Team roles and responsibilities

FINANCIAL PLAN:

- Initial startup costs
- Revenue projections and expense forecasts
- Break-even timeline
- Funding requirements (crowdfunding, impact investors, angel investors)

SUSTAINABILITY ROADMAP:

- Phased sustainability implementation goals
- Measurement and transparency methods
- Certification strategies and timelines

Your business plan should be realistic yet ambitious, with sustainability integrated throughout rather than treated as an afterthought. For sustainable fashion ventures, emphasize your education in sustainable materials, community engagement through forums, and plans to start with a focused product line to test market response before scaling.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Business Model Canvas

OBJECTIVE: CREATE A SIMPLE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS FOR YOUR SUSTAINABLE FASHION BUSINESS IDEA.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Business Model Canvas template (provided in workshop)
- Sticky notes or notecards
- Pens/markers
- Reference materials about your chosen sustainable fashion segment

INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete each section with specific details for your sustainable fashion business
- Use sticky notes to fill in each box during the workshop activity
- Consider sustainability aspects in every section of the canvas
- Start with Value Proposition and Customer Segments as your foundation
- Review how all components connect to create a viable business model

Expected Outcome: A completed Business Model Canvas that provides a visual overview of your sustainable fashion business concept, helping you identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas needing further development.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Business Model Canvas

VALUE PROPOSITION

What problem are you solving? What need are you fulfilling?

- Write 3-5 key value propositions for your sustainable fashion business
- Consider both fashion value (style, quality) and sustainability value (environmental, social impact)

◦

CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

Who will buy your products/services?

- Identify 2-3 primary customer segments
- Describe their characteristics, needs, and sustainability values

◦

CHANNELS

How will customers find and buy from you?

- List 2-3 primary sales channels (e.g., online shop, markets, wholesale)
- Note how customers will discover your brand

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

How will you interact with customers?

- Describe how you'll build relationships with customers
- Consider how sustainability affects these relationships

REVENUE STREAMS

How will you make money?

- List your primary products/services and their pricing approach
- Consider additional potential revenue sources

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Business Model Canvas

KEY RESOURCES

What assets do you need?

- List the physical, intellectual, human, and financial resources needed
- Highlight resources specific to sustainable fashion

KEY ACTIVITIES

What will you do daily?

- Identify the most important activities to make your business work
- Include sustainability-related activities

KEY PARTNERS

Who will you work with?

- List essential partners and suppliers
- Include sustainability certifiers or organizations

COST STRUCTURE

What are your main costs?

- List major cost categories
- Note costs specific to sustainable practices

KEY PARTNERS	KEY ACTIVITIES	VALUE PROPOSITION	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS	CUSTOMER SEGMENTS
Who are your key partners?	What key activities does	What value do you deliver to the	What type of relationship does	For whom are you creating value?
Suppliers	Production/Making	What problem are you solving?	Personal assistance	Who are your most important
Manufacturers	Marketing	What need are you fulfilling?	Self-service	Characteristics
Certification bodies	Sustainability practices	Which customer needs are you	Communities	Sustainability values
Retailers	Distribution	What sustainable benefits do you	Co-creation	Buying habits
Recyclers	Sourcing	What makes your offering unique?	How does sustainability affect	Price sensitivity
	KEY RESOURCES		CHANNELS	
	What key resources does		Through which channels do	
	Physical assets		Online shop	
	Intellectual property		Markets/fairs	
	Human resources		Social media	
	Financial resources		Wholesale	
	Sustainable materials		How do customers discover your brand?	
COST STRUCTURE				REVENUE STREAMS
What are the most important costs				For what value are customers willing
Fixed costs (rent, equipment,				Primary products/services
Variable costs (materials,				Pricing model (fixed, dynamic)
Sustainable practice costs				Payment methods
Which key resources/activities				Additional potential revenue

REFLECTION

Which of the following should be included in the "Sustainability Roadmap" section of a sustainable fashion business plan?

- Detailed financial projections for the next five years
- A complete list of all potential competitors
- Short and long-term sustainability goals and measurement methods
- The founder's personal biography and fashion experience

Which business model focuses on transforming existing garments or textile waste into new fashion items?

- Fashion rental
- Slow fashion brand
- Resale platform
- Upcycling business

CHAPTER 3

MARKETING AND BRANDING FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION

3.1 Overview

Marketing and branding are essential elements for sustainable fashion businesses, particularly for new entrepreneurs trying to establish themselves in a competitive marketplace. Effective marketing helps you connect with your target audience, communicate your unique value proposition, and build lasting relationships with customers. For sustainable fashion businesses, marketing also involves educating consumers about your sustainability practices and the impact of their purchasing decisions.

In this chapter, we'll explore how to develop a brand identity that authentically communicates your sustainability values, create effective marketing strategies on a limited budget, and engage with customers in ways that build trust and loyalty.

3.2 Building Your Sustainable Fashion Brand

Your brand is more than just a logo or visual identity—it's the complete experience customers have with your business. It encompasses your values, personality, visual elements, messaging, and how you interact with customers. For sustainable fashion businesses, your brand should clearly communicate both your fashion aesthetic and your sustainability commitments.

CORE BRAND ELEMENTS

- **Brand Purpose:** Why your business exists beyond making money
 - What change are you trying to create in the fashion industry?
 - What sustainability problems are you addressing?
 - How does your business reflect your personal values?
- **Brand Values:** The principles that guide your business decisions
 - Identify 3-5 core values (e.g., transparency, craftsmanship, inclusivity)
 - Consider how these values manifest in your products and operations
 - Ensure your values align with sustainability principles
- **Brand Personality:** How your brand would act if it were a person
 - Choose adjectives that describe your brand (e.g., playful, sophisticated, minimalist)
 - Consider how your personality appeals to your target audience
 - Ensure consistency across all brand touchpoints
- **Visual Identity:** The visual elements that represent your brand
 - Logo and variations
 - Color palette (consider the environmental associations of colors)
 - Typography
 - Imagery style
 - Packaging design
- **Brand Voice:** How your brand communicates in writing
 - Tone (formal/informal, serious/playful)
 - Language style
 - Key messages about your sustainability practices

STORYTELLING IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Storytelling is particularly important for sustainable fashion brands because your story helps customers understand your sustainability journey and the impact of their purchase.

Effective brand stories typically include:

- **Origin Story:** How and why you started your sustainable fashion business
 - Personal motivation
 - Sustainability "aha" moment
 - Journey to creating your first products
- **Material Stories:** The journey of your materials from source to product
 - Where materials come from
 - How they're transformed
 - Environmental benefits compared to conventional alternatives
- **People Stories:** The individuals involved in creating your products
 - Artisans and their skills
 - Working conditions
 - Community impact
- **Impact Stories:** The positive change your business creates
 - Environmental impact (e.g., waste diverted, emissions reduced)
 - Social impact (e.g., fair wages, skill preservation)
 - Customer testimonials about the difference your products make
 -

When crafting your brand story, be authentic, specific, and transparent. Avoid vague sustainability claims, and be honest about both your achievements and the challenges you're still working on.

CREATING A VISUAL BRAND ON A BUDGET

As a new entrepreneur, you may have limited resources for professional branding services. Here are some budget-friendly approaches:

- **DIY Logo Creation:**
 - Use tools like Canva or Looka for basic logo design
 - Start simple—a wordmark (stylized text of your name) can be effective
 - Ensure your logo works in black and white and at small sizes
- **Photography:**
 - Learn basic product photography using your smartphone
 - Create a simple lightbox using white paper and natural light
 - Develop a consistent editing style using free apps
- **Social Media Templates:**
 - Create a set of templates for consistent social media posts
 - Establish a signature colour palette and stick to it
 - Use free stock photos from sustainable sources when needed
 -

Remember that consistency is more important than complexity. A simple, consistent brand is better than an elaborate but inconsistent one.

3.3 Digital Marketing for Sustainable Fashion

Digital marketing is particularly valuable for sustainable fashion startups due to its cost-effectiveness, targeting capabilities, and ability to educate consumers about sustainability. The key components of a basic digital marketing strategy include:

Website Essentials

Your website is often the first in-depth interaction customers have with your brand. Key elements include:

- **Homepage:** Clear introduction to your brand and products with sustainability highlighted
- **About Page:** Your story, values, and sustainability commitments
- **Product Pages:** Detailed information about materials, production, and impact
- **Sustainability Page:** In-depth explanation of your practices and certifications
- **Contact Information:** How customers can reach you with questions

Website best practices for sustainable fashion:

- Include sustainability information for each product
- Use authentic photography rather than stock images when possible
- Optimize for mobile viewing
- Include clear calls to action
- Ensure fast loading times
- Consider accessibility for all users

Budget-friendly website options include template-based platforms like Shopify, Squarespace, or WooCommerce with pre-made themes.

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Social media is essential for building community around your sustainable fashion brand. Different platforms serve different purposes:

- **Instagram:** Visual platform ideal for showcasing products, behind-the-scenes content, and sustainability stories
- **Pinterest:** Discovery platform where users save fashion inspiration
- **TikTok:** Video platform for creative, authentic content that can reach younger audiences
- **LinkedIn:** Professional platform for B2B relationships and industry networking
- **Facebook:** Community-building and events, with an older demographic

For sustainable fashion startups, focus on 1-2 platforms where your target audience is most active rather than trying to maintain a presence everywhere.

CONTENT IDEAS FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION BRANDS:

- Behind-the-scenes of your production process
- Material spotlights explaining sustainability features
- Styling tips to maximize versatility of pieces
- Care instructions to extend product life
- Customer spotlights and testimonials
- Educational content about fashion sustainability issues
- Transparent posts about your sustainability journey and challenges

EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing remains one of the most effective digital channels, allowing direct communication with interested customers. Key elements of an email strategy include:

- **Welcome Sequence:** Introduces new subscribers to your brand and sustainability mission
- **Regular Newsletter:** Updates on new products, sustainability initiatives, and educational content
- **Abandoned Cart Emails:** Reminds customers of items left in their shopping cart
- **Customer Care Emails:** Instructions for product care to extend lifespan

EMAIL MARKETING TIPS:

- Segment your list based on customer interests and behaviours
- Focus on value-add content, not just sales messages
- Include sustainable care tips with purchase confirmations
- Be transparent about production timelines, especially for made-to-order items

CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing involves creating valuable, relevant content that attracts and engages your target audience while establishing your expertise. For sustainable fashion brands, content marketing can educate consumers about sustainability issues while building your brand reputation.

Content formats to consider:

- Blog posts about sustainable fashion topics
- Video tutorials on styling or garment care
- Downloadable guides (e.g., "How to Build a Sustainable Wardrobe")
- Podcasts discussing industry issues
- Webinars or live sessions on sustainability topics

When developing content, focus on answering customer questions and providing genuine value, rather than simply promoting your products.



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

OBJECTIVE: CREATE A BASIC MARKETING PLAN FOR YOUR SUSTAINABLE FASHION BUSINESS IDEA.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Marketing plan template (provided in workshop)
- Notes from previous business model activity
- Internet access for research
- Pen and paper

INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete each section with specific details for your sustainable fashion business
- Use sticky notes to fill in each box during the workshop activity
- Consider sustainability aspects in every section of the canvas
- Start with Value Proposition and Customer Segments as your foundation
- Review how all components connect to create a viable business model

Expected Outcome: A completed Business Model Canvas that provides a visual overview of your sustainable fashion business concept, helping you identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas needing further development.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Target Audience Definition**
 - Create a detailed profile of your ideal customer
 - Include demographics, interests, values, shopping habits, and sustainability concerns
 - Give your customer persona a name and find or sketch an image to represent them
- **Brand Messaging Worksheet**
 - Craft your brand's mission statement (1-2 sentences)
 - List 3-5 core brand values
 - Write 3 key messages about your sustainability practices
 - Develop a tagline that captures your brand essence
- **Marketing Channels Selection**
 - Identify 2-3 primary marketing channels based on where your target audience spends time
 - For each channel, note:
 - Why it's appropriate for your audience
 - What type of content you'll share
 - How often you'll post/update
 - How you'll measure success
- **Content Calendar Creation**
 - Create a simple one-month content calendar
 - Include different types of content (educational, promotional, behind-the-scenes, etc.)
 - Note which sustainability topics you'll highlight each week
 - Consider how to repurpose content across different platforms
- **Marketing Budget Allocation**
 - Create a small-scale marketing budget for your first six months
 - Allocate resources across different channels and activities
 - Include both paid and non-paid marketing efforts
 - Identify low-cost or free marketing opportunities

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

EXAMPLE MARKETING PLAN

Week	Theme	Instagram	Blog	Email	Other
1	Material Spotlight	3 posts about sustainable materials	Guide to sustainable fabrics	Welcome email with brand story	
2	Behind the Scenes	3 posts showing production	Interview with maker		Local market participation
3	Styling Tips	3 posts showing versatility	Ways to style one piece	Styling newsletter	Pinterest board creation
4	Customer Stories	3 customer features	Customer interview		Social media contest

REFLECTION

What type of content is particularly important for sustainable fashion brands to include in their marketing?

- Celebrity endorsements
- Discount offers and sales promotions
- Stories about materials, production processes, and impact
- Comparisons highlighting competitors' weaknesses

Which social media platform is most effective for showcasing visual content like sustainable fashion products and behind-the-scenes production?

- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Reddit

CHAPTER 4

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND PRICING STRATEGIES

4.1 Overview

Financial planning and pricing are often challenging areas for creative entrepreneurs, but they're essential for building a sustainable business that can continue to create positive impact. This chapter covers the fundamental financial concepts and pricing strategies you need to understand as a sustainable fashion entrepreneur, with a focus on practical approaches that work for small-scale businesses.

We'll explore how to plan your finances, determine appropriate pricing for sustainable fashion products, and manage the unique financial challenges that sustainable practices can present. By the end of this chapter, you'll have the basic tools to develop financial projections and pricing strategies that reflect both your business needs and your sustainability values.



4.2 Financial Essentials for Sustainable Fashion

UNDERSTANDING STARTUP COSTS

Before launching your sustainable fashion business, you need to identify and plan for your startup costs. These typically include:

- **Fixed Assets:** Long-term investments such as:
 - Equipment (sewing machines, cutting tables, etc.)
 - Computers and software
 - Furniture and fixtures
- **One-time Costs:**
 - Business registration fees
 - Website development
 - Initial branding and design
 - Opening inventory
 - Deposits for workspace
- **Working Capital:**
 - Operating expenses for first 3-6 months
 - Materials for initial production
 - Marketing costs
 - Emergency fund
 -

Sustainable fashion businesses may have additional startup costs related to:

- Sustainability certifications
- Sourcing of eco-friendly materials
- Development of sustainable packaging
- Education or training in sustainable techniques
-

Create a detailed list of all potential costs, researching realistic figures for each item. Add a 10-20% buffer for unexpected expenses. This total represents the minimum investment needed to launch your business.

BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

As a business owner, you should understand three essential financial statements:

- **Income Statement** (Profit & Loss): Shows revenue, expenses, and profit over a specific period
 - Revenue: Money earned from selling products/services
 - Cost of Goods Sold (COGS): Direct costs of producing your products
 - Gross Profit: Revenue minus COGS
 - Operating Expenses: Overhead costs like rent, utilities, marketing
 - Net Profit: What remains after all expenses
- **Cash Flow Statement:** Tracks actual cash moving in and out of your business
 - Cash Inflows: Customer payments, loans, investments
 - Cash Outflows: Supplier payments, rent, salaries, etc.
 - Net Cash Flow: Difference between inflows and outflows
 - Ending Cash Balance: Available cash at period end
- **Balance Sheet:** Snapshot of your business's financial position at a specific point
 - Assets: What your business owns (inventory, equipment, cash)
 - Liabilities: What your business owes (loans, accounts payable)
 - Equity: Assets minus liabilities (owner's stake)

For sustainable fashion startups, cash flow is particularly important to monitor, as there may be upfront investments in sustainable materials or ethical production that take time to recover through sales.

CREATING A SIMPLE FINANCIAL PROJECTION

A basic financial projection helps you plan for the future and identify potential issues before they arise. For a new sustainable fashion business, create projections for at least the first year, broken down by month:

- **Sales Forecast:**
 - Estimate monthly sales by product category
 - Consider seasonality and growth as you build awareness
 - Start conservative—it's better to exceed projections than fall short
- **Expense Projection:**
 - Fixed costs (rent, insurance, subscriptions)
 - Variable costs (materials, production costs)
 - One-time expenses (equipment purchases, special events)
 - Marketing expenses
- **Cash Flow Projection:**
 - When you expect to receive payments
 - When you need to pay suppliers and other expenses
 - Identify months where cash might be tight

Many sustainable fashion businesses operate on a pre-order or made-to-order model to reduce waste and manage cash flow. If you adopt this approach, your projections should account for the timing difference between receiving customer payments and paying for materials and production.

FUNDING OPTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION STARTUPS

Most sustainable fashion businesses start with limited funding. Common funding sources include:

- **Personal Savings:** The most common startup funding source
- **Friends and Family:** Investment or loans from personal connections
- **Crowdfunding:** Platforms like Kickstarter or Indiegogo to pre-sell products
 - Works well for sustainable fashion with a compelling story
 - Requires significant preparation and marketing
- **Microloans:** Small loans from organizations supporting small businesses
 - Some focus specifically on sustainable or ethical businesses
 - Often come with business support and mentoring
- **Grants:** Non-repayable funds for businesses meeting specific criteria
 - Some are available specifically for sustainable businesses
 - Highly competitive and often have strict requirements
- **Sustainable Fashion Incubators:** Programs providing funding, mentorship, and resources
 - Examples include Fashion for Good and Remake's Incubator

When seeking funding, emphasize both the commercial potential and positive impact of your business. Investors and lenders increasingly recognize the value of sustainable business models.



4.3 Pricing Your Sustainable Fashion Products

Pricing is one of the most challenging aspects of sustainable fashion. You need to cover your higher costs for sustainable materials and ethical production while remaining accessible to your target market. A well-considered pricing strategy is essential.

UNDERSTANDING PRICING COMPONENTS

Your pricing should include:

- **Material Costs:** The total cost of fabrics, trims, and other materials
 - Sustainable materials often cost more than conventional alternatives
 - Include shipping and import fees for materials
- **Labour Costs:** Fair payment for all workers involved in production
 - Your own time (often undervalued by new entrepreneurs)
 - Contract manufacturers or artisans
 - Pattern makers, sample sewers, etc.
- **Overhead Costs:** Business expenses not directly tied to products
 - Studio/workspace rent
 - Utilities
 - Equipment maintenance
 - Insurance
 - Website hosting
- **Marketing and Sales Costs:** Expenses related to selling your products
 - Photography
 - Social media advertising
 - Packaging
 - Shipping materials
 - Platform fees for online marketplaces
- **Profit Margin:** The amount added to cover business growth and risk
 - Typically 20-50% for sustainable fashion
 - Allows for reinvestment in the business
 - Provides buffer for unexpected costs

PRICING FORMULAS

Two common pricing approaches are:

- Cost-Plus Pricing: $(\text{Total Cost per Item}) \times (\text{Markup Percentage}) = \text{Retail Price}$

Example:

- Material cost: €20
- Labor cost: €25
- Overhead allocation: €5
- Total cost: €50
- Markup: 100% (2× multiplier)
- Retail price: €100
- Keystone Pricing: $(\text{Wholesale Cost} \times 2)$

Example:

- Wholesale cost: €50
- Markup: 100% (2× multiplier)
- Retail price: €100



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Create a Basic Financial Projection

OBJECTIVE: CREATE A SIMPLIFIED FINANCIAL PROJECTION FOR YOUR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF BUSINESS OPERATION.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Financial projection template (provided in workshop)
- Calculator or spreadsheet software
- Information about potential products and their costs
- Notes on potential startup expenses

INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete each section with specific details for your sustainable fashion business
- Use sticky notes to fill in each box during the workshop activity
- Consider sustainability aspects in every section of the canvas
- Start with Value Proposition and Customer Segments as your foundation
- Review how all components connect to create a viable business model

Expected Outcome: A completed Business Model Canvas that provides a visual overview of your sustainable fashion business concept, helping you identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas needing further development.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

INSTRUCTIONS

DEFINE YOUR PRODUCTS AND PRICING

- List 3-5 products you plan to offer
- For each product, calculate:
 - Material costs (research actual costs of sustainable materials)
 - Labour costs (including your own time at a fair hourly rate)
 - Overhead allocation (15-20% of combined material and labour costs)
 - Target retail price using the cost-plus or retail markup method
- Create a simple product pricing table

ESTIMATE MONTHLY SALES

- Project sales for each product month by month
- Start conservatively with growth over time
- Consider seasonality if applicable
- Calculate monthly revenue based on these projections

LIST STARTUP COSTS

- Equipment and tools
- Business registration and legal fees
- Initial inventory
- Website setup
- Branding and marketing materials
- Other one-time expenses

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

INSTRUCTIONS

DEFINE YOUR PRODUCTS AND PRICING

- List 3-5 products you plan to offer
- For each product, calculate:
 - Material costs (research actual costs of sustainable materials)
 - Labour costs (including your own time at a fair hourly rate)
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ESTIMATE MONTHLY SALES

- Project sales for each product month by month
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- Consider seasonality if applicable
- Calculate monthly revenue based on these projections

LIST STARTUP COSTS

- Equipment and tools
- Business registration and legal fees
- Initial inventory
- Website setup
- Branding and marketing materials
- Other one-time expenses

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

PROJECT MONTHLY EXPENSES

- Fixed costs (rent, subscriptions, insurance, etc.)
- Variable costs based on your sales projections
- Marketing expenses
- Other regular expenses

CREATE A SIX-MONTH CASH FLOW PROJECTION

- Starting cash (your initial investment)
- Monthly cash inflows from sales
- Monthly cash outflows from expenses
- Calculate monthly net cash flow
- Track cumulative cash position

ANALYSE YOUR PROJECTION

- Identify months with negative cash flow
- Calculate when you expect to break even
- Note any financial challenges and potential solutions
- Identify ways to improve your financial position

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Build a Marketing Plan

EXAMPLE SIMPLIFIED CASH FLOW TEMPLATE

Month	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opening Balance	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Inflows						
Sales Product A	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Sales Product B	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Sales Product C	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Total Inflows	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Outflows						
Materials	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Labor	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Rent	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Marketing	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Other Expenses	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Total Outflows	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Net Cash Flow	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__
Closing Balance	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__	€__

REFLECTION

When calculating the retail price for a sustainable fashion product, which of the following should be included in the cost calculation?

- Only the cost of materials
- Materials, labour, overhead, and profit margin
- Materials and competitor prices
- Only what the market will bear regardless of costs

Why is cash flow projection particularly important for sustainable fashion startups?

- It's required by law for all fashion businesses
- It helps identify periods when cash might be tight due to upfront investments in sustainable materials
- It's only important for businesses seeking venture capital funding
- It's less important than profit projections

CHAPTER 5

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES

5.1 Overview

Understanding the basic legal requirements for your sustainable fashion business is essential for operating ethically and avoiding potential pitfalls. While creative entrepreneurs often focus primarily on design and production, neglecting legal considerations can lead to significant problems down the line.

This chapter provides an introduction to the fundamental legal aspects of running a small sustainable fashion business, from choosing a business structure to understanding intellectual property rights. The goal is not to make you a legal expert, but to help you recognize when legal considerations are important and when to seek professional advice.

Legal requirements vary significantly by country and region, so this chapter focuses on general principles while encouraging you to research specific requirements in your location.



5.2 Legal Considerations for Sustainable Fashion

BUSINESS STRUCTURE

One of the first legal decisions you'll make is choosing a business structure. Common options include:

- **Sole Proprietorship/Sole Trader:**
 - Simplest structure with minimal registration requirements
 - No separation between business and personal assets
 - Owner has full control but also full liability
 - Suitable for small-scale, low-risk operations
- **Partnership:**
 - Shared ownership between two or more people
 - Can be general (all partners share liability) or limited (some partners have limited liability)
 - Requires partnership agreement defining roles and profit sharing
 - Good option when combining different skills and resources
- **Limited Liability Company (LLC) / Limited Company:**
 - Creates legal separation between business and personal assets
 - Offers liability protection for owners
 - More complex and costly to establish and maintain
 - May provide tax advantages depending on location
 - More credibility with customers and partners

For most sustainable fashion startups, a sole proprietorship is the simplest starting point, with the option to transition to a more complex structure as the business grows. However, if your business involves significant risks or multiple owners, consider a structure that provides more protection or clearer governance.

BUSINESS REGISTRATION AND LICENSING

Depending on your location, you may need to:

- Register your business name
- Obtain a business license or permit
- Register for tax purposes (sales tax/VAT, income tax)
- Obtain specific permits for manufacturing activities
- Register with industry-specific regulatory bodies

For sustainable fashion businesses that sell internationally, you'll need to understand import/export regulations, customs duties, and international shipping requirements.

SUSTAINABILITY CLAIMS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Making sustainability claims about your products comes with legal responsibilities. To avoid accusations of greenwashing and potential legal issues:

- **Be Specific and Accurate:** Make only claims you can substantiate with evidence.
- **Avoid Vague Terminology:** Terms like "eco-friendly," "green," or "sustainable" without specific context may be considered misleading.
- **Understand Certification Requirements:** If using terms like "organic," ensure you meet legal definitions and certification requirements.
- **Document Your Claims:** Keep records of material sources, production methods, and any certifications.
- **Update Claims When Necessary:** If your materials or processes change, update your sustainability claims accordingly.

Many countries have regulations specifically addressing environmental marketing claims. For example, the EU's Green Claims Directive provide guidelines for making and substantiating environmental claims.

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

As a sustainable fashion entrepreneur, you'll likely enter into various agreements:

- **Supplier Agreements:** Contracts with material suppliers, specifying quality standards, sustainability requirements, delivery terms, and payment conditions.
- **Manufacturing Agreements:** If outsourcing production, contracts outlining specifications, quality standards, labour practices, timelines, and costs.
- **Customer Terms and Conditions:** Policies covering purchases, returns, exchanges, and warranties.
- **Collaboration Agreements:** Contracts for partnerships, collaborations, or freelance assistance.

Even for small businesses, having written agreements helps prevent misunderstandings and provides protection if things go wrong. For sustainable fashion specifically, your contracts should include clear language about sustainability standards and ethical requirements you expect from suppliers and partners. While simple agreements can be created using templates, consider consulting a legal professional for important contracts, especially those involving significant financial commitments or intellectual property.



5.3 Intellectual Property in Fashion

Understanding intellectual property (IP) rights is particularly important in fashion, where designs and brand identity are central to your business value.

TYPES OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IN FASHION

Trademarks: Protect your brand identity, including:

- Brand name
- Logo
- Slogans
 - Distinctive packaging

Trademarks prevent others from using similar marks that might confuse consumers. Registration provides the strongest protection, though in some jurisdictions, you gain some rights through use alone.

Copyright: Automatically protects original creative works, including:

- Prints and patterns
- Original artwork on garments
- Photographs of your products
- Website content and marketing materials

In most countries, copyright protection arises automatically when you create the work, though registration may provide additional benefits.

Design Rights: Protect the appearance of products, including:

- Shape and configuration
- Patterns and ornamentation
- Surface decoration

Design protection varies significantly by country, with some requiring registration and others providing automatic protection for limited periods.

Patents: Rarely used in fashion but may protect:

- New technical processes
- Innovative materials
- Functional features

Patents require a formal application process and are generally only worth pursuing for truly innovative technical developments.

IP CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION

As a sustainable fashion entrepreneur, consider these IP strategies:

- **Protect Your Brand:** Your brand represents your sustainability values and quality standards. At minimum, conduct a trademark search before finalizing your brand name, and consider trademark registration as your business grows.
- **Respect Others' IP:** Be careful not to infringe on existing designs, especially when upcycling branded items or creating designs inspired by others' work.
- **Document Your Process:** Keep records of your design development process, including sketches, prototypes, and dated digital files, which can help establish your ownership if disputes arise.
- **Consider Open Source Approaches:** Some sustainable fashion businesses choose to share certain designs or techniques to promote sustainability throughout the industry.
- **Address IP in Contracts:** When working with freelancers, ensure your agreements clearly state who owns the resulting intellectual property.

For most small sustainable fashion startups, focusing on trademark protection for your brand name and logo should be the priority, with other IP protections becoming more relevant as your business grows.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Compliance Checklist

OBJECTIVE: CREATE A PERSONALIZED LEGAL COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST FOR YOUR SUSTAINABLE FASHION BUSINESS IDEA.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Compliance checklist template
- Internet access for research
- Notes on your business concept

INSTRUCTIONS

Business Structure Research

- Research the business structure options available in your country
- List the pros and cons of each for your specific business
- Note registration requirements and costs
- Identify which structure seems most appropriate for your current stage

Local Requirements Investigation

- Identify the specific business licenses needed in your location
- Research tax registration requirements
- List any industry-specific permits or regulations
- Note important deadlines and renewal periods

Sustainability Claims Assessment

- List all sustainability claims you plan to make about your products
- For each claim, note what evidence you would need to substantiate it
- Research any relevant certifications for your sustainability claims
- identify potential risks of greenwashing and how to avoid them

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Compliance Checklist

INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

Brand Protection Plan

- Conduct a basic trademark search for your proposed business name
- Note steps needed to protect your brand as you grow
- List any intellectual property concerns specific to your business
- Create a simple IP protection strategy

Contract Needs Identification

- List all the types of agreements your business is likely to need
- Note key terms to include in each type of agreement
- Identify which contracts are priorities to develop first
- Research where to find templates or professional assistance

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Compliance Checklist

EXAMPLE COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST FORMAT

Business Structure & Registration

- Research business structures
- Select appropriate structure
- Register business name
- Apply for business ID/tax number
- Register for sales tax/VAT collection
- Obtain business license
- Set up business bank account

Sustainability Compliance

- Research regulations for sustainability claims
- Document evidence for each sustainability claim
- Investigate relevant certifications
- Create transparency policy
- Establish process for updating claims when needed

Intellectual Property

- Conduct trademark search
- Protect business name and logo
- Document original designs
- Create policy for respecting others' IP
- Plan for future IP protection needs

Contracts & Agreements

- Develop customer terms and conditions
- Create supplier agreements
- Draft manufacturing contracts if needed
- Prepare collaboration agreements
- Set up privacy policy for website

REFLECTION

What is the primary purpose of a trademark in a sustainable fashion business?

- To protect the specific designs of garments
- To prevent others from copying production techniques
- To protect the brand name, logo, and identity
- To establish copyright over marketing materials

What is an important consideration when making sustainability claims about your fashion products?

- Making broad, general claims about being "eco-friendly" is recommended
- Claims should be specific and supported by evidence
- It's better to exaggerate sustainability benefits to stand out
- Sustainability claims don't need to be updated if your processes change