

## Redesigning Fashion: An Analysis and Categorization of Women's Clothing Redesign Behavior

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**Introduction/Significance.** While many Western consumers donate their used clothing to charities such as Goodwill, large amounts end up in municipal solid waste streams (Chen & Burns, 2006). Redesigning used clothing – requiring deconstruction and reconstruction beyond basic repair and alteration – could transform textile waste into raw materials for new fashion items. Our research goals were to add a longitudinal element to previous research which engaged female focus group participants in a collaborative redesign project (Janigo & Wu, 2015), to further understand motivations for redesigning used clothing, and to identify common psychographic and behavioral characteristics of redesigners. We also aimed to further study the demand for a service or business involving consumers in redesigning their used garments and to determine the conditions under which redesign of used clothes might be most successful.

**Theoretical Framework.** The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) was used as a theoretical lens in the design of the data collection instruments and for data analysis. In the field of clothing and textiles, it has been successfully applied to explain, understand, and predict consumer behavior (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009; Kim & Karpova, 2010). The antecedents in the TPB model are beliefs, subjective norms, attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and intentions related to a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

**Methods.** Thirty women participated in the present study (mean age 43.75, 86.67% Caucasian), including six from the aforementioned previous collaborative redesign project. The rest were recruited from consumers, who had redesign experiences. First, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire tool with closed-ended questions, which took participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. In-depth interviews, intended to capture detail and rich description, lasted up to one hour and were primarily held in the participants' homes. The questionnaires and interview schedules were organized into sections according to the concepts in the theoretical framework and research model. Participants' redesigned garments were photographed for visual analysis.

**Results.** Participants had a somewhat high level of concern for the environment (mean score 14.48, with maximum possible score of 25). They were somewhat likely to feel social pressure from friends and family to behave ecologically (mean score 12.24, with maximum possible score of 25). They engaged in several types of sustainable fashion behaviors, including buying vintage (75.68%), avoiding fast fashion clothing (62.07%), repairing clothing (86.21%), and wearing used clothing (96.55%). Eighty percent intended to keep their redesigned garments rather than divest of them, and an even larger number (89.66%) planned to redesign clothing again in the near future. Almost half of participants (48.28%), expected to pay less than the original retail price of the garment for redesign. A visual analysis of redesigned garments was used to categorize individuals into groups, based upon their skill level and complexity of

redesign. Redesign Consumers (RC), 30% of participants, either hired someone to complete a redesign, or did not use advanced sewing and fashion design skills (for example, cutting a basic team sport t-shirt into a stylized t-shirt for tailgating on game day). Redesign Enthusiasts (RE), 33.33% of participants, redesigned clothing for themselves, implementing advanced sewing and design skills. REs frequently redesigned their own clothing and even other textile items such as pet costumes. Redesign Professionals (RP), 36.67% of participants, had sold redesigned garments in the past. RPs had developed clientele and outlets for selling their products, such as at runway shows, wearable art galleries, boutiques, and art fairs. Redesign Professionals needed to establish a high level of trust with clients to reduce uncertainty about the final outcome.

**Conclusions/Implications.** Price was a significant barrier for Redesign Consumers who were paying for a redesigned service or a redesigned product. It may be necessary to change consumers' price expectations through educational marketing messages, so they perceive more value in redesigned clothing. Garment redesigns could be proposed to clients appropriate to their desired price, experience, and familiarity with the redesigned process. For Redesign Consumers, simple redesigns could be completed on their own. They could also purchase ready-to-wear redesigned clothing directly from RPs, through websites such as Etsy.com, and from retail stores. They could also collaboratively redesign items with a skilled family member or professional to complete the sewing. RCs could take redesign classes to improve their sewing and design skills and eventually transition to RE. Redesign Enthusiasts are capable to make complex redesigns on own; however, in some cases, REs may prefer to work with an RP for specialized operations such as dyeing. REs may also hire an RP as a consultant to solve problems on a project. REs could take classes to increase their redesign skills and sales knowledge to transition to RP. Redesign Professionals could design seasonal collections of ready-to-wear redesigned clothing for sale, using elements of modularization and specialization to enhance profitability and efficiency. They could also offer custom, collaborative redesign services to clients. RPs could teach redesign workshops and serve as community activists to build excitement around redesign and sustainable living in general.

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