

Share what you wear – innovative path to stylish but conscious consumption?

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Abstract

Even though “sharing economy” and “collaborative consumption” are not new concepts, they are recently enjoying a growing popularity in different industries. From a sustainable development point of view, they could be considered as welcoming trends that might decrease the negative impacts of the fast fashion phenomenon. Altering the consumption paradigm from individual ownership of new products to sharing and using second-hand clothes by promoting the concept of collaborative fashion consumption (CFC) could contribute to achieving absolute reductions in material throughput and energy use. For instance, it has been identified that clothes-leasing could reduce the demand of materials (Alwood et al., 2006).

The research on sharing concepts is still in its initial stage (Gullstrand Edbring et al., 2015). Although terms such as sharing economy or collaborative consumption have been recently studied by different researchers (e.g. Belk, 2014; Schor Fitzmaurice, 2015), there is still a lack of knowledge and systematic research in these fields. This is especially the case in the textile industry, where the lack of academic research is even more appealing. Besides purchasing new sustainable garments, the concept of collaborative fashion consumption with all its approaches (such as renting, leasing, sharing, gifting, borrowing, etc.) could provide consumers with more sustainable and simultaneously affordable alternatives to cheap fashion items (Armstrong et al., 2014). At the same time, companies can benefit from adopting their business models to such innovative fashion consumption approaches (e.g. Pedersen & Netter, 2015). Through combining sustainability and innovative concepts, they could generate economic growth by satisfying eco-conscious consumer needs. Moreover, they could contribute to sustainable development (e.g. Kozlowski et al., 2012).

In order to increase the efficiency of the efforts attempting to explore CFC, we realized the need to prepare a theoretical basis for the future research on this topic. Therefore, in this article we explore CFC and a wide range of related concepts (such as product-service systems, sharing, connected-consumption) to provide a systematic literature review. The following research questions are going to be investigated:

- What is the current state of knowledge in the field of alternative apparel consumption?
- Which methodological approaches have been used in former studies and which one delivered the most valuable result?

Practitioners, companies and academic researchers might find this study useful, as it outlines major developments in the field of CFC. Further, it provides them with a comprehensive overview on the current state of knowledge, constraints and drivers for the diffusion of CFC, as well as the successful applied methods of previous research.

Keywords

Collaborative consumption; sharing economy; product-service systems; sustainable fashion; sustainable textile