Usedfully®: A decentralised, replicable, circular system for clothing

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Abstract

Background: The world's clothing system is concentrated on centres of production located a long way away from the market, reliant on transport and open borders. COVID19 pandemic rendered the system unworkable. Retail stores were closed with billions of dollars of inventory piled up in warehouses and factories around the world. Meanwhile at the opposite end of the value chain, the fluidity required for the movement of used clothing across borders to secondary markets was also obstructed, magnifying the need for onshore management of used clothing resources.

Usedfully® - the Textile Reuse Programme is one such resource management system. Designed and implemented in New Zealand as a decentralised, circular system, that operates within a small and geographically remote market. The system currently being tested in a population of approximately five million people could be replicable in other regions and cities with similar or larger populations, its replicability providing solutions at scale for the vast amount of clothing and textile waste generated each year.

The investigation and design phase documented in "The Textile Reuse Programme: Building Macro Circular Systems for Used Clothing" was delivered at the Global Fashion Conference in London 2018, presented the analysis, scoping, feasibility study, system design and case study. This current research proposal continues the journey of this project to "Usedfully®" a decentralised, replicable, circular system for clothing.

Usedfully® and the Textile Reuse Programme is a public/private collaboration aligning New Zealand's industry players in a shared vision and commitment to a circular economy for clothing. Driving large scale collaborative projects, from the building of digital technology to track and measure the environmental impacts of clothing for optimal resource management, to the research and development of industrial scale solutions for clothing resources once they are no longer wearable.

The intent in documenting and socialising the process, the challenges and the lessons learned with industry and research peers, is to advance the theory and practice of circular economies. In particular to foster and accelerate the transition from the current failing linear clothing model to a low carbon, circular system.

References

Casey, B (2019) 'The Textile Reuse Programme: Building Macro Circular Systems for Used Clothing.' Journal of Textile Science and Fashion Technology, 2(5)