

## **A Critique of Design Toolkits for Sustainable Fashion**

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### **Abstract**

Clothing life extension provides potential for significant environmental resource savings. Research in this area is growing; however, research can influence practice only if these insights are effectively disseminated. To address the question of how to support fashion designers in implementing strategies for garment longevity, this research takes a two-pronged approach by examining the issue from the viewpoint of both toolkit developers and their potential users. The first strand of enquiry explores toolkits as a format for communicating approaches to sustainability and applying these in practice. Literature discusses the implementation of toolkits in product design and industrial design, for instance, but in fashion research is sparse on this topic. This paper examines which format and within which contexts a toolkit specifically for fashion can be useful and critiques the relevance of design toolkits as a whole. This research reviews texts on design toolkits as well as drawing on seven interviews with toolkit developers. These insights are complemented by case studies with three exemplary fashion micro-enterprises, exploring their own design tools and the designer's perceptions on toolkits. Findings from both studies are combined to reveal new insights. While this research focuses on British fashion micro-enterprises, the insights may be applicable within other contexts, though this would require further investigation. The findings describe toolkit impact factors as well as foundations for the development of innovative design approaches toward clothing longevity and sustainability in fashion.

**Keywords:** Fashion, sustainability, product longevity, knowledge transfer, design toolkit, clothing use, fashion practice, fashion micro-enterprises

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