ACCELERATING ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE AND CIRCULAR GARMENT AND FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY OF THE FUTURE: harnessing the potential of digital innovation for due diligence and informed consumer choices

Facilitators

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Rationale

Theme 1 of the IFFTI 2022 Conference, WHERE IS FASHION? recognises the importance of digital advances and the increasingly blurred boundaries between physical and digital fashion. This workshop addresses some of the digital applications used for transparency in online and offline fashion retailing, supply chain provenance for production and manufacturing, consumer technologies and the commercial and social implications of these developments. We propose that these technologies can be applied in global, regional and local fashion.

A transition to circular economic models is key to improved sustainability in the garment and footwear sector -a shift that can be realised with verifiable lifecycle data, delivered through improved supply chain traceability and transparency. This 1hr 30m workshop aims to provide an opportunity for industry stakeholders to gain access to the technologies and tools they need to drive action on sustainability and advance progress towards a circular economy. Attendees at the IFFTI/MFI workshop will learn about the UN-brokered policy recommendations, implementation guidelines, an information exchange standard and call to action, known as 'The Sustainability Pledge', adopted at the 27th UN/CEFACT Plenary in April 2021 and how they can be applied in a real-world context. Based on our learnings from the Milan Conference and our internally funded TEXTILE TRANSPARENCY (TT) project work in Manchester we propose to present this workshop at the IFFTI conference with the intention of providing participants with the digital and organisational tools to launch similar workshops globally. Delegates will have the opportunity to engage with the toolbox and discuss improvements to the initiative. The IFFTI/MFI workshop will present a transparency toolbox and model for engaging stakeholders from across the industry to harness innovative tools for due diligence among producers, in preparation for Extended User Responsibility (EPR) Legislation and Textiles 2030.

What people are saying about the problem

Several technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality, NFTs, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT) facilitate various fashion industry processes. However,

consumers currently have very little reliable information about the contents of the textile products they purchase. Unless they are searching for something specific such as fibre content or country of origin, consumers usually only check clothing labels (swing tags, stickers and tags) for size and/or price (Evans, 2018).

> Retailers and brands are increasingly expected to be more open, accountable and vigilant. As a result, they must prioritise traceability and recognise that this will require resources and investment to start digging deeply into their supply chains. There must also be a fundamental shift within the network to prioritise and provide for fair wages, worker safety, and environmental protection
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> (Fish, 2021)

Aspers, 2008; Koszewska, 2011; SAC, 2019). The information about the contents of the textile products would not only inform, but lead to behavioural change with positive social, economic and environmental impact and transition actors in the market towards 'responsible production and consumption' (UN's Sustainable Development Goal 12). The problems facing the industry are twofold: the lack of a common data ontology and the reticent adoption of digital tools to automate data collection and retrieval.

Workshop Format

Conference delegates wishing to participate in this workshop are asked to read the UNECE Call to Action paper. Delegates are also invited to submit a short paper of up to 500 words focusing on (but not limited to) the identified theme(s):

- Digital technology adoption challenges for under resourced firms
- Smart tags and the Internet of Things
- Tracking, tracing, visibility and transparency for the fashion supply chain

Selected papers will be presented by the authors and will be used to provoke workshop participant discussions. Following the discussions we will facilitate an ideation session with all participants, finding ways to develop the TT project globally. We will conclude by recording contact details of those willing to collaborate beyond the workshop and continue to develop the project in the future.

Minutes	Who	What
15	Hilde Heim (HH)	Introduction: The theme, -Enhancing traceability with digital technology The UNECE sustainability pledge, Call to Action, Toolbox and Prior workshops

15	Panel: HH Introduction Panel Members: HH, Courtney Chrimes (CC) and Professor Yonghong Peng (YP)	Why Textile Transparency: Experience gained from our work with fashion firms in Manchester; emerging digital technologies enabling the traceability; challenges and opportunities.
30	Selected participants	Present their submitted short papers. Open to discussion.
20	Participants	Brainstorming. Discuss challenges and opportunities – bringing industry and academic together to discuss a common data ontology and apply digital tracing technology. Would participants be interested in conducting workshops with industry to introduce the traceability toolbox in their locations?
10	Panel members and Participants	Developing the community and ecosystem Planning for future workshops; the Sustainability pledge. Make connections; contribute to the website that has been set up by MMU for the Textiles Traceability project; Add the outcomes of this workshop to the website. Suggestions for collaborations, co-authored papers etc. Contribution to the IFFTI conference proceedings. Potential for global collaboration for larger funded follow-on project.

What we might achieve from it

This workshop will build the network for participation in a potential future pilot study that implements affordable and universally acceptable digital tracing technology for textiles. The

pilot study, The Textiles Transparency (TT) Project may take around 6 months to implement and would include academics from Fashion and Information Systems as well as research assistants (e.g., PG students) that may be embedded in one or several pilot-study participating fashion firms. Responding to the UNECE call to action, the TT project will ensure fashion businesses are in the best possible position ahead of the implementation of the new EPR legislation, and that Textiles 2030 targets are met. The study will yield reports, and importantlya framework that can be disseminated to other fashion firms – either large or small-scale for implementation. In this way, the project aims to facilitate the circular economy for textiles.

This workshop will develop a new area of research expertise and methodologies that will open pathways to working with trans disciplinary colleagues – in Information Systems – which has not been the case until now. This new pathway will facilitate the research of others in the groupwho can use, work with, and contribute to research into digital technologies in fashion. The ambition will be to engage other like-minded colleagues in different/related areas across academia for example from the digital arts as well as social science, business consultancy and information systems. The research progress will be shared on communication platforms (e.g., adedicated Textile Transparency website) as well as reported in research, technology and fashionsustainability media, thus demonstrating the impact and significance of this research.