

LONG STORY SHORT
GRC 462 Winter 2024
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My project is called Long Story Short and is a vintage upcycling art brand. Our mission is to breathe new life into vintage pieces, crafting them into modern wearable art. As the name suggests, each creation tells a story while being revitalized for today's fashion forward community.

GRC puts a big impact on technical skills in design. I've learned so much design from this major, and the next phase for me as a creative is to hone in on more of my creative identity. Long Story Short will be a piece that involves the cumulation of things I've learned from GRC and the process of growing my confidence as a creative. While Graphic Communication is not a fashion based degree, we learn everything from branding and marketing, design principles, photography, web design, and the value of user experience. We have the option of using every project as an outlet for our creativity. All of these things I've learned through GRC are core going forward in this project. I focused this project around the core concept of diffusion of innovation, as well as limitations, benefits, and current trends.

Fast fashion and trend cycling has been a growing problem in today's society. Things are going 'in' and 'out' quicker than they ever have. With a growing community online and through social media, online shopping and influencer culture is bigger than ever. This is leading to trend cycling, and ultimately starting to wipe out individuality and innovative design. In fact, the apparel industry has had over a 100% increase in output between 2000 and 2023 (Periyasamy & Periyasami, 2023). Trend cycling has always been a part of our fashion history, but the sped up timeline encourages people to constantly over-consume in chase of the next cool thing. It's an impossible chase. I've fallen into the loop all too easily, and can see the ways the people around me do too. As someone who's finally realized the value of my personal creativity and craves a successful future in design, I want to make Long Story Short a safe landing place for others finding their way back to inspiration and sustainability in fashion.

The theory of diffusion of innovation was first coined by EM Rogers in 1964. It focused on answering three different questions: First, what processes and contextual factors affect innovation's rates of diffusion? Second, what characteristics differentiate earlier from later adopters? And third, how does the structure of networks of adopters affect the sequence in which adoptions occur during diffusions? (Abrahamson, 1991). These questions were pertinent during the post-World War II era of U.S. economic dominance when the theory was first getting talked about. In a time of rapid innovation, everyone sought to speed up diffusion rates and efficiently reach people at the right times and in the right ways.

The diffusion of innovation theory groups of people into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. People are sorted based on "the degree to which an individual adopts a new idea" and in fashion today, influencers are typically classed into innovators and early adopters (Gunawan & Iskandar, 2020). Within the category of fashion influencers, people are further grouped into 'micro influencers' and 'macro influencers'. In a 2019 study, the correlation between micro and macro influencers and impulsive buying was explored. It found that people tended to prefer micro influencers over macro ones, because they're less mainstream and give their followers a chance to be the first in their social circles to buy into fashion trends. For their followers, this puts them 'ahead of the curve' with fashion in

their communities. People want to be the first in adapting to the latest fashion products, and don't want others to overtake them - the result of this is impulse buying (Gunawan & Iskandar, 2020). This brings to light the fact that people are driven by social motivations in fashion more than anything. Going outside of social norms can result in outcasting. For example, if a member of a community of vintage cars were to install a modern CD player, other members would likely disapprove and consider them less worthy in the community. But, if this person happened to be a *community opinion leader*, the chances of becoming an outcast are much less likely (MacVaugh & Schiavone, 2010). Opinion leaders are critical for expanding the social adoption of innovation and are, in a way, given special permission to be outside of the box. This is another reason why influencers have the hold on their followers that they do and are crucial to the evolution of fashion.

In relation to modern day marketing and business, diffusion models are built on "epidemics, biology and ecology, serve the purpose of forecasting sales for durable goods and novelty items" (Mahajan, 1979). Many of these state-of-the-art diffusion models of new product acceptance are used as tools in product launch planning. They follow the progression of people from the untapped market, to the potential market, and finally to the current market. These product growth models act as guidance, based on mathematical calculations and statistics that are useful for creating an effective diffusion process.

While diffusion of innovation is a solid theory with a lot of backing, there are still some limitations to the process. There will always be some individuals that eschew new technology, refrain from purchasing categorically (price, function, availability) newer products, or become non-users because of dissatisfaction with their experience (MacVaugh & Schiavone, 2010). Along the way, these groups of people fall out of Rogers' five-stage process of adoption that includes knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. People generally adopt something new out of increased utility. For example, Americans are straying to frozen and microwave meals over cooking from scratch, to achieve the highest nutrition but with the shortest amount of time and energy required. Sociology literature argues that consumers can also adopt new things through temporary fashion, where their goal is not to maximize utility but instead social orientation. This makes diffusion of innovation context dependent rather than following one of the data-driven models previously mentioned (MacVaugh & Schiavone, 2010). In connection to the fast-fashion movement, the diffusion of innovation process is very much based on opinion leaders and their subsequent followers increasing social standing and approvals. From a utilitarian perspective, it would logically make more sense to invest in a few high-quality clothing pieces and maintain them throughout years of wear. In today's age, people tend to do the opposite and buy many low-quality items that align with trends.

Pushing for sustainable fashion has countless benefits. There has been a lot of newfound awareness on the connection between fast fashion and sustainability. It's been proven that facilitating a shift towards more sustainable fashion consumption results from a combination of "providing clear information about the environmental and social impact of products, and creating strong feelings" (Papsolomou, Melanthiou et.al., 2023). Storytelling is crucial to creating this emotional response in people. The best method of sparking transformational change is through the narrative pattern of a 'springboard story'. The trick to

this lies in telling the story in a minimalist fashion, ignoring all the sights, sounds, and smells that an entertainer would use. This is because “the story told is much less important than the new story that listeners imagine for themselves” (Denning, 2006). With springboard stories, listeners begin co-creating the shift by envisioning the narrative in their own context, inadvertently forming a new action plan for themselves without much effort from the storyteller. The power of storytelling is core to the current fashion movement. A study was done on a cohort of 97 people, to evaluate their level of knowledge and behavior towards sustainability, in the context of fast fashion. It found that although most consumers claim to be knowledgeable on sustainability-related issues, they lacked knowledge related to the sustainable supply chain. This includes everything from fabric, materials, recycling, and re-using. Within this, women tended to be more knowledgeable on the topic but men were willing to pay more for fast fashion brands that reflected their moral values (Papsolomou, Melanthiou et.al., 2023). People are willing and wanting to learn, so a powerful story could be the catalyst for getting people to more genuinely care about fast fashion and its impacts.

Despite this lack of specialized knowledge, consumers around the world are aware that the environment and climate changes are some of the most important social issues for humans today. The main goal is to ensure that our natural resources are used as efficiently and responsibly as possible. For fashion, this means a sustainable life cycle that encompasses everything from material production, manufacturing, transport, storage, and post-consumer purchase behavior like reusing, repairing, remaking and recycling (Ahmad, Madi et.al., 2020). In general, there has been a rise in the creation of eco-friendly products and many people are willing to pay a higher premium for these. In the fashion industry, some companies started to produce new fashion products with their out of fashion stockpiles. By “adding a high touch and some creative ideas”, they met the needs of current consumers by up-cycling (Kim, 2013). Up-cycling by definition is a process that instills new value into second hand articles by adding freshness through creative expression. The reason why slow fashion and upcycling has still been less prevalent is because company owners find it hard to balance needs of the balance and that of the environment. Underpaying laborers in foreign countries, even with high pollution and transportation costs to get goods to the US, make the total cost much less than what it would cost to sustainably produce the same product in-country. Until consumers make sustainability a non-negotiable in fashion, the big companies will continue to operate the way they do, simply because they can.

Looking at current trends, there is a distinction between radical fashion and marketable fashion. The way they follow the diffusion of innovation pathways are very different. Radical fashion tends to stay on the runways, as avant-garde art pieces more than wearable pieces for consumers. While radical fashion innovation involves the breakdown of old ideas, incremental innovation involves the evolution of new ideas from old ideas (Zhang & Di Benedetto, 2010). The first Long Story Short piece falls under this category. While it’s not a revolutionary concept by any means, the incremental innovation from up-cycling through painting and brass charms has a higher likelihood of consumer adoption, which is ideal at this stage.

Looking towards the future, green fashion and sustainability are also starting to evolve in the digital fashion and metaverse space. The metaverse refers to a virtual world where users

can exist and engage with each other digitally. For digital fashion, anything from open repositories of digital patterns, material and textures can be used for fashion designers. Brands can also use these digital spaces for launching new marketing tactics. In 2021, Helsinki fashion week was held virtually, reducing carbon footprints for the house by a huge percentage. Companies are starting to catch onto protecting these kinds of digital assets on the blockchain. Big designer names like Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Gucci, and Marc Jacobs are also starting to venture into NFT territory. Already, a subset of Nike's brand auctioned off a digital jacket for over \$100K. It's clear that people are interested in more of a digital life and as VR and AR technologies become more widely adopted, it could be revolutionary in many ways for the fashion industry.

Long Story Short seeks to inspire people to care about sustainable up-cycling and promotes finding your own path through the industry as a fashion consumer. Creatives have the power to transform things, increasing their value and versatility in unique ways. This project, for me, is an experiment in the creative space while also promoting unique, individualistic fashion in an earth-friendly way.



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