

RE-INVENTING PORTUGUESE BRANDS FOR SUSTAINABILITY - THE CASE OF THE LUÍS BUCHINHO BRAND

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Abstract

This research aims to demonstrate practices national fashion brands adopt for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. In the specific case of this research, we explored how the Luís Buchinho Brand positioned itself regarding the current topic of Sustainability and its importance for the Fashion and ITV sector in Portugal.

It is important to understand the strategies adopted, the methodology developed for the creative process, and the respective objectives behind this practice. Identifying the products developed, the results, and how these were received by the market and the brand's target audience is also a concern, to identify them as good practices in obtaining results for sustainability.

The initial approach of the Zero Waste concept, as well as the research of other examples of brands that have developed products under the same perspective, becomes of great importance for studying the relevance of this practice.

The research methodology focuses on mixed, non-interventionist methods by developing framing and interventionist bibliographical research through the practical study of the Luís Buchinho brand. The results reveal market acceptance as well as the implementation of a good practice that can be an example for other brands in a first approach to sustainability and the reduction of textile waste; on the other hand, it becomes a means for the brand itself to optimize the investment made in raw materials and give them new uses.

Keywords: *Fashion Sustainability, Zero-Waste, Fashion Design, Luís Buchinho Brand.*

Introduction

In contemporary society, textile and clothing recycling has a significant impact, especially in terms of social responsibility, where, according to Hawley (2006), there should be no waste in the textile and clothing industry since the textiles are almost 100% recyclable. Otherwise, the discarded waste related to clothing and textile products is getting worse as consumers buy their products in a society where the notion of fashion and the instinct for change fuels excess consumption. According to Fletcher (2010), different worldviews are evident in fashion, with different values and ideas, such as fast and slow fashion. In this way, social movements can promote changes in the fashion area, where "slow culture" emerges as one aspect. At this point, the concept of "slow fashion" is related, where the sense of ethics, heritage, and durability of garments and the application of more traditional production techniques are implemented as a business model in fashion.

Mandarić et al. (2022) state that interest in sustainability and sustainable fashion products has been increasing despite this demand still being a low percentage among fashion consumers. Exploring new marketing strategies to raise consumer awareness about more sustainable purchases is necessary. According to the authors Shen et al. (2013), eight categories of criteria can be related to sustainability in the fashion area (namely: recycled, organic, vintage, vegan; artisan, locally made, custom made, and fair trade certified), where the combination of these characteristics can allow greater effectiveness in promoting products. On the other hand, emotional, conditional, and environmental values are highlighted by the authors Bielawska and Grębosz-Krawczyk (2021) as impactful values that influence consumer consumption and purchase of green clothing products. In terms of the Portuguese market/sector, the authors Fernandes et al. (2022) refer that awareness of the sustainable consumption of fashion products proves to be the main factor in the purchasing decision,

and it is also observed that the higher classes have a greater tendency towards the sustainable purchasing typology. Lemke and Luzio (2014) state that high prices do not hinder Portuguese consumers from purchasing sustainable products. Meanwhile, Vassalo et al. (2024) observe that, despite consumers' environmental awareness, this awareness does not always translate into sustainable purchasing habits. A disparity in consumer behavior is observed in the context of fashion products concerning sustainability and sustainable fashion brands.

Therefore, textile waste can be used in different approaches within the context of fashion and the circular economy. According to Marques et al. (2019), although the implementation of upcycling and sustainability in conceptual fashion projects is challenging for the example of young designers, it is possible to develop creative solutions using textile waste from various industries or activities, such as the reuse of old fabrics from airplanes in clothing pieces. On the other hand, the author Rissanen (2013) highlights in a study on the topic of sustainability the development of zero-waste fashion design, emphasizing patternmaking as an area of most significant importance in the creation of clothing. This area should be regarded as a tool equivalent to drawing in the creative and conceptual process of garment design, defining the act of cutting textile material as a liberating approach and risky in different aspects, such as economic and ecological. For the authors Wilujeng et al. (2023), cutting patterns allow innovation and the creation of new shapes according to the study process of the garment with a zero-waste concern. The authors Carrico and Kim (2014) also highlight the creative potential of the zero-waste approach in the garment conceptualization process, where new styles, silhouettes, and concepts can be achieved, as well as introducing new perceptions in fashion and its trends.

Consequently, from a perspective of intervention in sustainability and in the area of zero-waste fashion design and

according to the study and summary in literature by authors ElShishtawy et al. (2022), different forms of methodological introduction practices for zero-waste fashion design can be observed, where the reduction of textile material is carried out through techniques/methods involving different concepts and designers, namely: a) the concept of the "Creative Pattern Making" (with the "Embedded Jigsaw" (by Timon Rissamen, Holly McQuillan); the "Jigsaw" (by Holly McQuillan, Mark Liu); the "Creative Cut" and the "Tessellation" (by Holly McQuillan)); b) the concept of "Draping" (with "Subtraction Cut" (by Julian Roberts) and "Minimum Cut" (by Holly McQuillan, Melanie Carrico & Victoria Kim)); and c) the concept of "Folding" (with "Transformation reconstruction" (by Shingo Sato) and "Origami" (by Kyung-Hee Choi)). In addition, the authors refer to technology and algorithms as an ally in developing creative patterns in different cutting and patternmaking techniques, highlighting the importance of involving the fashion designer's work in the patternmaking processes, encouraging the multidisciplinary, circular process, and waste reduction. Thus, according to the authors James et al. (2016), in the zero-waste methodology, the concern and study of new cutting methodologies in the production phase arises, which facilitates the reduction of textile waste when creating the garment, allowing a greater sense of collaboration between the designer and the pattern cutter, whether in a production or a creative mind, providing additional dynamics in the design and production phases, changing traditional patterns. Moreover, in digital printing, Putri and Nursari (2023) highlight using the Sashiko craft technique to facilitate zero-waste results in garment production by modifying orientations and positions of conventional patterns.

Following the zero-waste fashion and sustainability of fashion production aspects, it is also observed that two of the processes present in the development of clothing must be carried out and improved simultaneously: the fashion design process and the patternmaking process. In this way, Enes and Saygili (2023) present a method combined with zero

waste, the creation of clothing with modular fashion design. The creation of sustainable solutions, focusing on the use of every centimeter of fabric (avoiding cutting waste), with the combination of designs that enable the change in the look of a garment during its usability by the consumer, allows the increase of the sustainable character through multiple design methodologies.

Furthermore, several national and international fashion brands have developed zero-waste practices or reused "deadstock" material to make their clothing products in contemporary fashion. Although the market remains relatively small in Portuguese, it is showing growth in both physical and digital commerce. Thus, the following clothing brands stand out in applying sustainability and Zero Waste practices: the Elementum brand (Elementum, 2024) and the Guaja. brand (GUAJA., 2024), the SIZ brand (SIZ, 2024), and the Sienna brand (Sienna, 2024). The following brands are observed regarding deadstock materials: the NÄZ brand (NÄZ, 2024) and the Isto. brand (ISTO., 2024); the Seapath brand (Seapath, 2024); the Stró brand (Stró, 2024); the Judite brand (Judite, 2024); the ColieCo brand (ColieCo, 2024); and the Mirakaya brand (Mirakaya, 2024). Subsequently, in the context of the international market, the following brands with zero waste and deadstock practices stand out, namely: the Zero Waste Daniel brand (Zero Waste Daniel, 2024); the Preloved brand (Preloved, 2024); the Dorsu brand (Dorsu, 2024); the Christy Dawn brand (Christy Dawn, 2024); and the Love Faustine brand (Love Faustine, 2024); the brand Whimsy + Row (Whimsy + Row, 2024).

In conclusion, it is essential to reflect that, according to the authors Vassalo et al. (2024), the progression of sustainable development is not possible without the involvement and interconnection of the areas of economy, society, and environment. It is also essential for companies and clothing brands to invest in digital commerce to foster innovation (as encouraged by the Portuguese state and the European Community)

and invest in consumers' digital literacy in sustainable fashion, considering the digital revolution and the contemporary world.

Development

The main objective of this work is to study innovative practices adopted by the brand and designer Luís Buchinho. It focuses on the methodology and creative process of a garment with a sustainable approach and the implementation of a textile waste reduction in its production, without compromising creative freedom and enhancing the brand's profitability in the Portuguese national market.

Therefore, it is essential to reflect that Luís Buchinho's passion for illustration and graphic design has led to the creation of several collections over the years. In his main collections, the pictorial character of each garment was explored in various ways. Specific pieces reinforce the individuality and unique character of a designer/fashion creator's collection through the introduction of different approaches to palettes, materials, and cuts.

The eco-design of the Luís Buchinho brand has been reflected in the profitability of resources since its inception in 1990, as well as a strong commitment to working with artisans, ateliers, tailors, and small-scale seamstresses. The design of the brand's collections has always been based on creating garments that seek timelessness and emotional attachment from part of the customer, becoming "the best friends in the closet." Recurring feedback obtained from customers is that they very rarely discard purchases from this brand, even when the garments are no longer used due to various factors (such as body changes or saturation). The high-quality materials, good cut, and timeless design ensure that the garments carry over from generation to generation, relating several comments, such as the example of the daughters of

the brand's early customers who inherit a wardrobe of reasonable volume and bring these pieces back into use.

Thus, since the designer presents collections with higher added value and higher prices for the public to access (due to their elaboration and artisanal character in conception and production), the designer occasionally launched capsule collections on the ready-to-wear regime, using methodologies for using small quantities of stock stored in the atelier. Reusing dead stock textile materials from previous collections (usually in small sizes, which do not allow their use in a complete garment but instead in small and/or medium fittings, with or without asymmetries) enabled productions in limited quantities on each garment. Therefore, designer and brand Luís Buchinho's main concern was producing clothing items at no cost, with a minimum of materials purchased. Furthermore, using textile materials that would otherwise be waste is not an option for the designer, given the cautious cost management required for an author brand (a small-scale company/business) due to its niche market and financially self-supported structure.

Otherwise, garments focusing on sustainability exhibit more straightforward characteristics in patternmaking and manufacturing, which enables greater price accessibility at the point of resale of collections launched in a ready-to-wear regime. The garments released in this format, unlike the way seasonal collections are marketed (where clients place purchase orders five months in advance and garments are produced based on these orders), are made in quantities predetermined by the brand (rather than by the customer), according to material availability, with the purpose of a capsule collection for immediate delivery. This approach allows the brand, rather than the customer, to manage the quantities, colors, and models to be produced, a decision determined by the existing stock.



Fig. 1 Photographs of the garments during the fashion show.

In terms of design and conceptual methodology, fashion designer Luís Buchinho developed different sustainable textile manipulation strategies that allowed the development of exercises and garments with a sustainability focus, namely: a) fabric creation per meter, b) localized textile pattern creation, c) creation of pieces using synthetic leather; and d) creation of capsule collections ready-to-wear. This practice also allowed the brand to use 100% exclusive materials that are impossible to find on the market, reinforcing the exclusivity and unique language of the author's collection.

First method/approach: Fabric creation per meter (Spring/Summer 2024 collection)

For the women's Spring/Summer 2024 collection, whose theme was based on a language that conveyed a value linked to spirituality and simplicity, the designer Luís Buchinho created garments with a minimalist, practical, and unpretentious cut. As these values are closely related to the creator's sustainability vision, creating a raw material entirely

constructed from dead stock materials arose. Rolls of fabric with small quantities each were "multiplied" in meters due to the construction of bars cut with different widths (between 15 and 45cm each) and joined together in a running stitch, creating three-dimensional effects by pleating some of them. This graphic game was reflected in three chromatic aspects



Fig. 2 Photographs of the garments during the fashion show.



Fig. 3 Photographs of the garments in the fashion show.

presented in a fashion show: a) one with gray, white, sky blue, sun yellow, and black colors (Fig. 1); b) other with bluish colors (the brand's fetish color) and with brownish colors (Fig. 2); and c) in water green, white and ice gray colors in allusion to the chosen theme (Fig. 3). The proposal managed to create

a unique fabric with the characteristics of the materials used frequently by the brand since all of these had already been used in previous collections.

Second method/approach: Creation of a localized textile pattern (Fall/Winter 2022/2023 and Fall/Winter 2023/2024 collections)

For the women's Fall/Winter 2022/2023 collection, whose theme was based on pop star Debbie Harry (Blondie), pieces were created with a very present rock aspect where the spirit manifested in the late 70s, early to 80s is well personified in a wardrobe with extremely affirmative and assertive garment items in their language, as exemplified in the illustrations in Fig. 4 and presented in the fashion show photographs in Fig. 5.

To convey this unique and individualistic spirit, a technique was developed to combine various raw materials using the "*aguliato*" technique, which consists of the fusion of two distinct materials first joined to each other, with the threads



Fig. 4 Fashion illustrations of the Fall/Winter 2022/2023 collection.

subsequently being pulled through needles that lift and transport the fibers of the one on the lower plane, creating an undertone that results from the mixture of both. As a principle of sustainability, the base raw material (white bouclé made of

wool and polyester) was purchased to construct the piece. In contrast, all other materials used in its graphic composition were sourced from existing dead stock (colored wool, black leather, and black synthetic leather).



Fig. 5 Photographs of the garments from the Fall/Winter 2022/2023 collection in the fashion show.

Consequently, this methodology was also applied in the Fall/Winter 2023/2024 collection, as illustrated below in the

fashion illustrations in Fig. 6 and the photographs of the garments presented during the fashion show in Fig. 7.



Fig. 6 Fashion illustrations from the Fall/Winter 2023/2024 collection.



Fig. 7 Photographs of the garments from the Fall/Winter 2023/2024 collection in the fashion show.



Fig. 8 a) Fashion illustration of the garment; and b) Photograph of the garment during the fashion show.

In addition to the “*aguliato*” technique, graphic textile patterns were also explored, achieved through modular cuts using a new raw material acquired explicitly for this purpose, combined with existing dead-stock textiles previously used in other collections. These are used in smaller molds, as they are subject to the limited quantities already available and suitable for use in productions that align with clients' purchase orders. Fig. 8 a) provides an example of the illustration, while Fig. 8 b) presents an example of the garment showcased on the fashion show.

Third method/approach: The creation of pieces using synthetic leather (Fall/Winter 2020/2021 collection)

The collection presented for the season Fall/Winter 2020/2021 celebrated 30 years of the eponymous brand Luís Buchinho, and several phases of the brand and common elements of its signature's DNA were revisited. Thus, as a sustainability exercise, attention was focused on the stored waste of animal leather, a material used in several collections and accessories. This resulted in a stock that was difficult



Fig. 9 Fashion illustrations from the Fall/Winter 2020/2021 collection.



Fig. 10 Photographs from the Fall/Winter 2020/2021 garments collection during the fashion show.

to use due to the size of the leftovers (small dimension). The methodology applied in this collection to use this dead stock involved the use of small leather pieces cut into strips or laser-cut, which were applied with zigzag or thermo-glue seams, respectively, creating graphic patterns that enhance the female form - an aspect the brand has consistently maintained as a creative principle. Fig. 9 presents examples of fashion illustrations, and Fig. 10 shows an example of a garment during a fashion show.

Fourth method/approach: The creation of capsule collections of ready-to-wear

In parallel with the main seasonal collections, designer Luís Buchinho regularly presents to his sales team garments integrated into a mini capsule collection (comprising between 6 to 10 items) where the brand's core principles (graphic character, femininity, and timelessness) are represented in a manner that is easier and more economical to produce. This approach ensures a more comprehensive and accessible result for the public, as the pieces are made in small series per color



Fig. 11 Photographs of the garment's typology "shirt-dress."

but with some expression of volume in their total quantity per reference. At this point, a selection system of dead stock raw materials was used, organized according to quantities and combined in a modern and appealing way. The garment patterns are developed according to the selected typology and strategically cut, creating 'color block' typologies that evoke the more elaborate construction of first-line pieces but with a simplified production process. Furthermore, these garments are not presented during the fashion show but are exclusively marketed through multi-brand retail stores or online stores. Fig. 11 presents examples of a "shirt dress" resulting from this methodology.

In summary, the capsule collection provides greater accessibility for the public by offering more economical pieces without compromising the brand's characteristic quality and design, as they are produced from textile materials previously used in other contexts and collections.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results from the new methodologies and approaches applied in designer Luís Buchinho's conceptual process reveal market acceptance as well as the implementation of a good practice that can be an example for other brands in a first approach to sustainability and the reduction of textile waste.

The design and textile manipulation methodology developed by designer Luís Buchinho allows innovation to be achieved through the application of sustainable awareness, the use of dead stock materials, and more manual and artisanal manufacturing and patternmaking techniques, promoting slow fashion.

Furthermore, the strategy of developing capsule collections and unique products with zero waste allows savings,

improves the management of brand profits/expenses, and monetizes the investment made in raw materials by giving them new uses.

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