FUTURE JOB ROLES IN FASHION-TECH

WEAVING UNIVERSITIES AND COMPANIES TO CO-CREATE FASHION-TECH FUTURE TALENTS

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS JANUARY - OCTOBER 2020

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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FTalliance

PROJECT NUMBER 612662-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA2-KA - FTALL

FTALLIANCE

FTalliance is a 3-year academia-industries partnership aimed to facilitate the exchange, flow of knowledge and co-creation within the Fashion-Tech sector to boost students' employability and innovation potential.

PURPOSE

The purpose of FTalliance is to ensure ongoing innovation in the European Fashion-Tech sector by providing emerging talents with relevant skills and know-how to enter the jobs market.

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WORK PACKAGE 1.1

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

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AIM

The aim of WP1.1 was to create knowledge exchange activities between HEIs and companies that evaluate the state of the art of current Fashion-Tech curricula in relation to industry relevance, and build Fashion-Tech job profiles.

APPROACH

This was achieved through action-based research. Three partner Higher Education Institutions (UAL, HB and ESTIA) hosted a number of focus groups, developed collaboratively with industry partners to:

- Define skills of the future
- Gain an understanding of the role of Fashion-tech in employability; and to have an understanding of the future opportunities this presents for graduates by exploring current and emergent future job roles.
- Link, test and gain feedback on the EDU4FT Curriculum with industry activities to develop future job roles.

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FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Three themes were identified by each HEI:

UAL X PVH
Fashion-tech across the value chain for core business.

HB X WLY
Fashion-tech for disruptive business models.

ESTIA X DECATHLON
Fashion-tech for core business and sustainability.

STRUCTURE AND TOOLS

Focus groups were divided into a series of digital episodes using various digital tools (Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Slides, Microsoft 365) to best suit the design of each focus group.

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EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

A four-step ontological approach was developed for:

- Consistency in data collection
- Design structure of episodes
- Enabling better interpretation of results and identification of themes across all three focus groups.

This four-step approach resulted in findings on:

1. Current state of fashion-tech
2. Future directions of fashion-tech
3. Transformations required to achieve future directions in fashion-tech
4. New and emergent fashion-tech roles and skills

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the focus groups with participants from industry and academia, conclusions can be made detailing the current and future state of fashion-tech industries. These insights also highlight what transformations are required to achieve these future directions within this domain. Finally, a wide range of new and emergent fashion-tech skills and roles have been identified from all focus groups, which have been generated from workshop activities that took place during each focus group.

The list of new and emergent skills and job roles identified presents an opportunity to develop more in-depth job profiles based on the emergent findings. This task will inform the design of the mobilities planned within WP1.2 and consequently the design and development of new recruitment tools in WP1.3 to take place during 2021.

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

CURRENT STATE OF FASHION-TECH

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CURRENT STATE OF FASHION-TECH

The integration between fashion and tech sectors has enabled a systemic shift in the fashion industry towards new business models, revenue streams, and improved sustainability and circularity.

Fashion-tech when integrated across the full breadth of the supply chain leverages data to create smarter and more sustainable products and services.

In larger companies, fashion-tech incubators and start-ups are leading digital processes and upskilling, influencing and infiltrating within the business.

The fashion designer having 3D design skills is considered a current and future fashion-tech requirement.

The focus on technical innovations for textiles and product development, is linked to sustainable production and consumption.

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF FASHION-TECH

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF FASHION-TECH

3D transformation for B2C and B2B experience was identified as being an important future fashion-tech direction.

Digitising the design and development process enables new types of customer experience using technologies such as holograms, AI and 3D printing. It also enables new design processes such as digital avatars, digital prototyping, programmable models and patterns and data/ AI enabled design.

The three most promising future revenue streams identified for fashion-tech based on the potential for capturing value from sustainable and circular business practices were: subscription-based revenue streams, new eco-system/ platform enabled revenue streams and revenue streams based on selling data.

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TRANSFORMATIONS REQUIRED FOR FUTURE FASHION-TECH

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TRANSFORMATIONS REQUIRED FOR FUTURE FUTURE FASHION-TECH

Collaboration & interdisciplinary skills enables transformative change, creating links within teams that are made of up of specialist knowledge.

E-commerce is a growth area within fashion-tech and a transition towards digital retail means that current roles may be lost and/ or repurposed. New roles need to have a 3D awareness to re-imagine buying space, visual merchandising & design.

Moving e-commerce towards new business models for new ecosystem/platform enabled revenues will enable ‘mega-revenue’ streams, including value capture based on selling data and subscriptions. This will require an increase in skills such as data collection, interpretation and analysis, user experience.

Implementing new technologies to transform the production process within the textile industry needs to consider environmental & societal impacts.

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

NEW AND EMERGENT FASHION-TECH SKILLS AND ROLES

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INTERDISCIPLINARY SKILLS AND ROLES

New roles that specifically act to create links within teams or bridges between roles will emerge. Interdisciplinary skills enables a collaborative approach of working across disciplines on a shared goal or objective. Agile approaches are needed to enable interdisciplinary working within organisational structures such as cross-discipline temporary teams to solve a specific task.

- Chief Technology Officer
- Digital Product Manager
- Innovation Manager
- Creative Technologist
- Digital Knowledge Manager
- Change Management
- Transformation Specialist/
- Transformation Manager
- Growth Lead
- Engineer/ Designer
- Job Teacher/ Facilitator

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DESIGN SKILLS AND ROLES

3D design is considered a current and future fashion-tech requirement, enabling better interaction between other areas of the business. However, traditional fashion skills are still important and an increased need for material and textile knowledge. Particular emphasis on the sustainable advantages of pattern designers working within circular teams to develop new business models.

- UX Designer
- Colour Designer
- Industrial Designer (modelling 3D)
- 3D Modelling Specialist
- 3D Modelling Lead
- 3D and Visualisation Expert
- Virtual 3D Imaging (updated from photographer)
- Avatar/Human Body Specialist
- Fit Specialist
- AI Designer
- AR/VR Expert
- Holographic Specialist
- Digital Product Tester
- 3D pattern maker
- Pattern Programmer / Designer
- Zero Waste Pattern Maker / Designer

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OMNICHANNEL AND E-COMMERCE SKILLS AND ROLES

There is an increasing importance of digital storytelling within the customer experience of the digital product. The role of the user experience designer and related roles will continue to be of increased importance. Developments in avatar and digital body fitting will enable a personalised e-commerce experience.

- Expert in 3D E-commerce/ Digital Experience
- User Experience Designer
- Digital Experience Manager
- Customer Experience Designer
- Customer Success Managers
- Vendor Integration Specialist
- Co-creation Platform Manager
- Personal Tailor/ Virtual Seller

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SUSTAINABILITY AND CIRCULARITY SKILLS AND ROLES

Sustainability is a priority for the future of fashion-tech with the potential for technology to enable more sustainable and circular models with AI and traceable technologies. Fashion designers with knowledge of bio-based/ biodegradable materials is becoming a requirement, and specific roles in material research and innovation will increase within companies.

- RFID Specialist (for traceability)
- LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) Specialist
- Sustainability Lead (within each department)
- Textile Product Owner (in charge of Circular business model)
- Products Data Manager
- Closed Loop Designer (disassembly)
- End of Life Product Manager
- Re-commerce Platform Lead
- Recycled Fabric Expert
- Recycled Component Buyer
- Disassembly Engineer / Disassembly & Component Recycling Engineer
- Sustainability Expert

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SUSTAINABILITY AND CIRCULARITY SKILLS AND ROLES (CONTINUED)

- Circular Design Pattern Expert
- Chemical Designer (scientists)
- Chemical Engineer
- Green Fabric Sourcer
- Fabric Component Designer
- Material Researcher
- Material Innovation Manager / Ecosystem Innovation Manager of Components
- Eco-fabrics Designer

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PRODUCT INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS AND ROLES

With the growth of incubator & start-up programmes, entrepreneurial and innovation management skills will be desirable, such as leading with a visionary approach, pitching and developing nuanced ideas. Meta-design extends beyond traditional research and product development skills to include systems thinking skills. Roles within product design could evolve to become system designer roles.

- Digital Product Manager
- Systems designer
- Innovation Manager

  (working with product development teams)

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DATA ANALYSIS, MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE SKILLS AND ROLES

Fashion-tech roles would require knowledge in digital law related to data security, regulations and data protection. Data analysts role needed to understand insights specifically related to fashion & fashion-tech. Specific opportunities for data analysts working directly with AI experts and software developers to produce zero waste patterns for products based on user data.

- Data Scientist (process automation, product creation)
- Data Analyst
- Artificial Intelligence Expert
- Software Developer

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POLICYMAKING SKILLS AND ROLES

Policy experts at governmental, national and corporate levels will become key in crafting policies that facilitate business model innovation and collaboration between industry partners and between different teams within organisations.

- Lobbyist
- Policy Influencer

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MANUFACTURING SKILLS AND ROLES

There is future potential for micro-manufacturing and local supply chains, resulting in new manufacturing skills and roles. Micro-manufacturing using 3D printing technologies would improve internal production processes. Micro-manufacturing skills and roles link to sustainability and supply chain management.

- Micro Factory Manager
- Head of Technology (Engineering)
- 3D Printing Specialist

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SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

RESEARCH

DEVELOPMENTS

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FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS INFORM WP1 PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The insights from the focus groups will inform future job roles (WP1) as outlined below:

T1.2 Staff learning virtual mobility: study visits to companies

- 8 identified new and emergent fashion-tech roles will be further developed as personas from FG findings, and visualised through the virtual study visits (D1.2 presented in report).
- Insights will contribute to a portfolio of different Fashion-tech job profiles fit for career development in the Fashion-Tech sector (D1.3).

T1.3 Job prospects and Career services

- Insights will inform design of interview format with HR departments and qualification framework. The aim is to identify and share recruiting tools to attract and support Fashion-Tech talents, and understand and manage expectations for recruiting new fashion-tech roles (competences profile/job description for the sector).

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FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS INFORM WP2 PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The results from the focus groups are informing the task of designing and piloting educational learning experiences for HEI university courses (WP2).

Gained feedback from industry and academic knowledge on the skills related to the Fashion-Tech industry. Insights are informing the design of dedicated courses aimed at university students from partner HEIs in line with market demands. These results inform the following tasks and deliverables:

- T2.1: Design project based experiences linked to Fashion-Tech market needs and to the developed curriculum.
- D2.1: Project based Learning Modules
- T2.2: Challenge based workshops involving company experts (partners) in teaching activities
- D2.2: Proofs of Concept for Innovative Fashion-Tech products/services

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FULL DETAILED REPORT TO BE PUBLISHED JULY 2021 TO INCLUDE FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF JOB PROFILES AND RECRUITING TOOLS FOR ATTRACTING FUTURE FASHION-TECH GRADUATES.

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