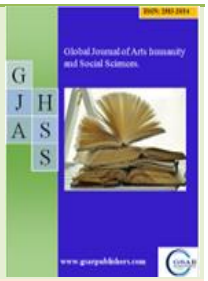
Global Journal of Arts Humanity and Social Sciences
ISSN: 2583-2034

GSAR PUBLISHERS
GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

OPEN ACCESS

Global Journal of Arts Humanity and Social Sciences
ISSN: 2583-2034
Abbreviated key title: Glob.J.Arts.Humanit.Soc.Sci
Frequency: Monthly
Published By GSAR Publishers
Journal Homepage Link: https://gsarpublishers.com/journal-gjahss-home/



Volume - 6 | Issue - 1 | January 2026 | Total pages 78-83 | DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18375740

Contemporary Kebaya Design Based on the Circular Fashion Concept in Sewindu Project's Promotion Strategy

By

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Article History
Received: 15- 01- 2026
Accepted: 24- 01- 2026
Published: 26- 01- 2026

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Abstract

The global fast fashion industry has become a major contributor to textile waste accumulation, including fabric scraps from convection SMEs in various trading cities, which burdens local landfills (TPA). Although Circular Fashion offers a solution through upcycling, local recycled products are often less competitive due to weak design and branding strategies. This research aims to design a product concept for fashion and an integrated innovation strategy based on upcycling textile waste to strengthen local creative economic value. To address issues of aesthetics and durability, this study proposes innovation through the integration of the Patchwork craft technique, enhanced with Tetris motif acrylic painting. The method used is Design Thinking, which focuses on an adaptive, user-oriented design approach, considering the product life cycle. This research resulted in a prototype model of the Upcycling Contemporary Kebaya, documented as a digital branding case study (@Sewindu_Project). The results prove that with the innovation of the patchwork technique and artistic touches, waste can be reconstructed into fashion products that are unique, highly competitive, and possess a strong sustainability narrative. The implementation of this design is expected to be a catalyst for local SMEs in optimizing waste, while significantly contributing to environmental sustainability efforts and creative economic growth.

Keywords: *Circular Fashion, Contemporary Kebaya, Digital Branding, Fashion Thinking, Patchwork, Textile Waste, Upcycling*

INTRODUCTION

The global challenges posed by the fast fashion industry and the resulting accumulation of textile waste necessitate a transformative response from the creative sector. The fashion industry continues to grow through mass consumption (fast fashion), which has become a significant contributor to textile waste in various locations (Nidia & Suhartini, 2020; Fransiska et al., 2022; Leman et al., 2020; Pramodhawardhani et al., 2020; Ripaldi & Fatah, 2024; Vera Jenny Basiroen et al., 2023). This development shifts consumption patterns toward disposable goods while escalating the problem of waste accumulation in landfills (TPA). Based on this issue, the proposed solution is the concept of circular fashion.

According to the National Standardization Agency, as quoted in (Lusiana & Listiowati, 2025), the circular economy functions as a framework to ensure that industrial raw materials, components, and products retain maximum useful value. This approach effectively aims to minimize the remaining waste generated during the production process. The long-debated concepts of sustainability and Circular Fashion are becoming increasingly real, a statement that confirms how recycling and upcycling practices have become the new standard in the global industry (Muttaqin et al., 2018; Marlianti & Kurniawan, 2024; Anggun et al., 2025; Rahmaningtyas et al., 2025). This transformation not only affects environmental aspects but also has consequences for the local economy, particularly in trading cities with high convection activities like Bukittinggi.

Textile waste, especially fabric scraps from the remnants of convection SME production and used clothing, is not just an environmental problem; it is also a potential raw material that has not been optimally utilized. In the Indonesian context, circular fashion initiatives play a crucial role in strengthening the creative economy and solving the problem of waste accumulation.

According to Geissdoerfer et al., cited in (Efendi et al., 2025) and (Shariah, 2025), the circular economy, as an approach, presents a solution through the application of the 3R principles: reduce, reuse, and recycle. The field reality in this era of mass-produced goods is that the interest of SMEs and local communities in innovative processing of textile waste into high-value products remains low.

Research asserts that the innovation and integration of unique traditional handicraft techniques are effective strategies to increase the selling value of upcycled products and extend the lifespan of materials. This indicates an urgency to develop new design approaches so that textile waste can be processed into unique and valuable products through the combination of Patchwork and Fabric Painting techniques.

The main problem in this research is the increasing volume of textile waste, particularly fabric scrap waste, which has not been systematically managed and optimized as a raw material for circular fashion. This condition poses a risk of eroding the capacity of local landfills. Another problem lies in the weak branding strategy and design concept of local upcycled products. Products generated from waste often lack high aesthetic value and durability, making textile waste creations less competitive compared to mainstream fashion products. The lack of innovation in integrating techniques makes products from waste difficult to compete. If the issue of textile waste potentially further burdens the environment, the creative economy opportunities from the upcycling sector will fade amidst market competition.

Previous research provides an important foundation for this study, highlighting the core problem of textile waste being marginalized in favor of textile waste business models amidst the fast consumption current (fast fashion). The research objective was to formulate an innovative value chain strategy so that textile waste could be processed into products accepted by the modern market. The results indicate that without an adaptive strategy, upcycling initiatives utilizing circular fashion are potentially increasingly abandoned. As Chitra Subyakto said in her statement via a YouTube video:

"Our efforts in implementing Circular Fashion are realized in the Sejauh Daur program, which focuses on upcycling leftover fabric into useful products to avoid waste accumulation. We invite all of you to collectively reflect on daily consumption and the impact of the waste we generate on the future of our only home, Earth." (Subyakto, 2021)

Based on this problem, there has been no specific study focusing on the design model of product and brand language using the combination of Patchwork and Fabric Painting techniques as a circular fashion strategy for textile waste.

The plan to solve the problem in this research is to design a fashion product design concept and a branding strategy based on upcycling, with textile waste as the object of study. This design concept specifically raises the Patchwork technique. According to (Ummah & Falah, 2023), patchwork is a textile creation method achieved by arranging and sewing fabric fragments (pieces) to form a new pattern or work to maximize the use of small scraps. This technique is then refined and strengthened visually and structurally through painting on fabric using acrylic paint. Based on the general definition according to (Sarwono, 2025) in his journal, the fabric painting technique is defined as an artistic process to permanently introduce patterns and decorative elements onto the surface of textile materials. This technique uses acrylic paint painted on fabric and has proven to be widely applicable to various fashion items. The main medium being developed is the visual design concept of the Tetris game motif.

The main goal of this research is to design a fashion product design concept and a branding strategy based on upcycling textile waste with Patchwork and fabric painting techniques to strengthen the creative economic value that utilizes waste as the main creative medium. The other objective is to produce a textile waste innovation model with the Patchwork technique that can be directly applied to textile waste, so that the resulting product has a uniqueness and competitive quality.

MATERIALS AND METHODES

The design method in this study aims to formulate a Fashion Design strategy to introduce the concept of circular fashion, which addresses the pressing issue of textile waste. The approach utilized is Design Thinking. The application of circular fashion principles, such as utilizing textile waste through the *patchwork* technique, necessitates a conceptual framework that transcends mere functional design.

In this context, the Design Thinking concept is highly relevant as a methodological approach. Nixon and Blakley define the design thinking method as “a highly user-oriented approach, grounded in empathy, needs analysis, and context-specific solution formulation.” Furthermore, Brown (2009), as cited in the journal (Sodik et al., 2025), states that this process empowers designers to gain deep user insights by following structured steps, which include empathy, problem definition, ideation, prototyping, and validation (testing).

Thus, the Design Thinking concept is highly relevant in this context. Based on these statements, this design process is systematically implemented through stages focused on materials and sustainability strategies, ensuring the resulting fashion concept successfully presents a circular identity while effectively addressing the waste issue. This design process consists of four main stages adapted to the needs of material exploration, sustainability, and value in circular fashion design.

A. Materials and Waste Sources

The main material utilized is post-production textile waste (scraps) made from cotton. The waste is collected, sorted by color and texture, and processed (washed, ironed) before being used as raw material

Figure 1. Fabric scraps with nonuniform sizes

This final result affirms that the management of irregularly sized fabric scraps, through reconstruction techniques such as *patchwork*, is a practical and creative solution for reducing post-production textile waste accumulation

B. Stages of the Creative Process

The prototyping process for this contemporary *kebaya* was developed through a systematic series of stages, integrating the principles of Circular Design and the methodology of Practice-Based Research.

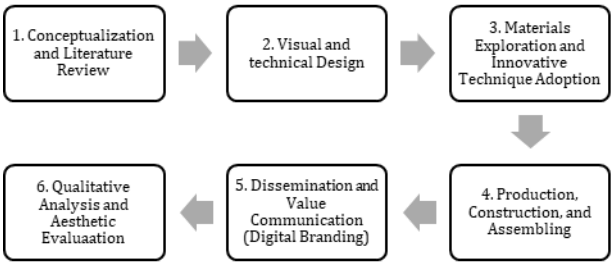

Figure 2. Stage of the Creative Process

1. Conceptualization and Literature Review

This initial phase focuses on establishing the theoretical foundation. Activities included a comprehensive literature study on textile waste, Circular Fashion frameworks, upcycling principles, *timeless fashion* philosophy, and Contemporary *Kebaya* development. Timeless fashion (Febrillia, 2025, *zetizens.id*) is defined as a highly aesthetic mode choice that remains functional and fashionable despite shifting current trends. The stage concluded with intensive visual research to gather aesthetic inspiration, focusing on Tetris geometric motifs and the *patchwork* technique to support sustainable and timeless design.

2. Visual and Technical Design

This stage translates the concepts into concrete design guidelines. It began with the creation of a moodboard to visualize the theme and determine the aesthetic direction. This was followed by the formulation of technical sketches (*flat sketch*) to define the contemporary *kebaya* silhouette. The most crucial part was the development of precise patchwork patterns, serving as the blueprint for integrating textile waste pieces into new functional fabric panels.

3. Material Exploration and Innovative Technique Adoption

This phase focused on testing material capabilities and technical application. Material exploration involved determining the most suitable waste types (based on fiber composition and color) for upcycling. The *upcycling patchwork* technique was tested to ensure structural integrity and visual uniformity. Simultaneously, an acrylic textile painting technique was explored to ensure the adhesion, flexibility, and durability of the Tetris motifs on the reconstructed *patchwork* surface.

4. Production, Construction, and Assembling

This stage involved the physical implementation of the design. The production and construction process included stitching the patchwork patterns into fabric panels, followed by assembling (sewing the *kebaya* prototype) according to the technical sketches. Finally, the application of the Tetris motif using the acrylic painting technique was executed on the designated areas, completing the final prototype.

5. Dissemination and Value Communication (Digital Branding)

After the prototype was finished, the work was disseminated and its sustainability value communicated. This included professional visual documentation (fashion photography). The work was then uploaded to the Instagram platform @Sewindu_Project as a digital branding case study. This publication aimed to test the effectiveness of communicating the *upcycling* narrative and the *timeless kebaya* philosophy to the digital audience, an integral part of the circular fashion business model.

6. Qualitative Analysis and Aesthetic Evaluation

The final stage was a critical evaluation of the practical results. A qualitative analysis was conducted on the visual aspects (composition, color, motif) and functionality (comfort, fit) of the prototype. This evaluation aimed to assess the successful integration of the *upcycling* technique with the final product and ensure that the resulting contemporary *kebaya* met the aesthetic and functional standards of modern apparel supporting sustainability principles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Moodboard

Figure 3. Moodboard Design

1. Kebaya Visuals: Domination of a contemporary *kebaya* silhouette with modern cuts while retaining traditional elements (collar, buttons).
2. Waste & Patchwork Visuals: Collection of textures and colors of the waste material to be utilized. Structured visualization of the *patchwork* technique.
3. Tetris Visuals: Abstract components of Tetris blocks (I, J, L, O, S, T, Z) used as a visual reference for the painted motifs, symbolizing the philosophy of reassembling unused pieces into a harmonious unity. The moodboard plays a crucial role in maintaining the visual and philosophical consistency of the work throughout the execution process.

B. Sketch Design

Figure 4. Sketch design

The design features a Contemporary *Kebaya* with Asymmetrical Cutting. The *patchwork* area is concentrated on the torso and cuffs, creating a stark textural contrast. The modern silhouette is combined with traditional accents to ensure the work remains relevant and possesses a long lifespan, aligning with the goals of sustainable fashion.

C. Design Realization

The final prototype is a contemporary *kebaya* that transparently reflects the recycling process.

Figure 5. Front View of Kebaya Result

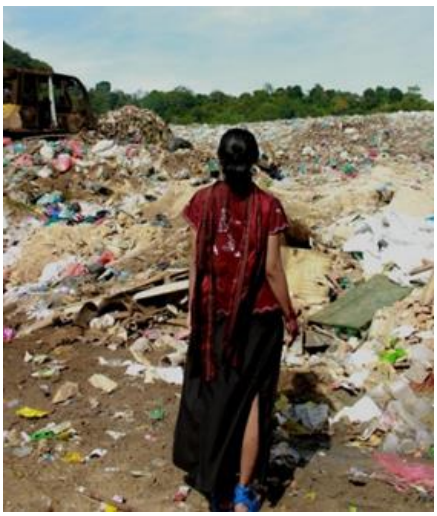

Figure 6. The resulting kebaya back view

Figure 7. The kebaya prototype result during the fashion show

The contemporary *kebaya* prototype was documented against a highly contrasting and meaningful background: a pile of solid waste (an uncontrolled landfill or waste site). This intentional selection of the backdrop serves as a visual metaphor and a social commentary on the textile waste issue addressed in this study. The presence of accumulated rubbish, spills of colorful non-organic waste, and worn-out heavy equipment (bulldozers) in the background emphasizes the urgency of the Circular Fashion concept. The contrast between the beauty of the garment worn by the model and the environmental chaos highlights the potential of waste to be reconstructed into high-value products, while simultaneously criticizing the negative impact of the linear fashion industry.

Garment Description

This contemporary *kebaya* top is a tangible implementation of the *upcycling patchwork* concept for textile waste, where dominant maroon (burgundy) cotton waste pieces are reconstructed into a new, richly textured fabric, simultaneously extending the material's life cycle. Structurally, the design integrates a modern silhouette with traditional touches, featuring short sleeves, an open neckline, and is accentuated by scalloped edges along the hem, which contrast with the bold *patchwork* texture. The aesthetic and philosophical core of *upcycling* are further emphasized by the application of geometrical Tetris motifs, painted with acrylic textile paint along the front opening line. This Tetris motif symbolically represents the process of reconstruction and harmonious unification of separate waste pieces, reflecting the essence of *upcycling*, complemented by a series of buttons that serve as both a functional fastener and a traditional decorative accent.

D. Digital Publication

The work was published through the Instagram account @Sewindu_Project as a case study for communicating sustainability values. This digital publication was aimed at educating the audience about the *upcycling* process and the philosophy behind the Tetris design. Consistent visual content and storytelling about the origin of the waste materials were key to building brand awareness and consumer trust in the sustainable product.

Figure 8.Sewindu Project Instagram Feed Publication

The analysis shows that the transparency of the creative process and the uniqueness of the design (*patchwork* and Tetris) successfully generated positive engagement from audiences seeking ethical and unique fashion alternatives.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary *kebaya* design project, utilizing textile waste *upcycling patchwork*, empirically proves that waste can serve as a primary sustainable raw material source, challenging the hegemony of virgin materials in the fashion industry. The use of the *kebaya* as a design platform emphasizes that traditional garments with their timeless nature are crucial assets in the sustainable fashion ecosystem. The application of the Tetris motif via acrylic painting functions as an added artistic and narrative value, strengthening the recycling philosophy. This article offers practical guidance and insight that by critically dissecting ideas creatively and adding an artistic touch, the value of waste can be redefined, opening up opportunities for the creative economy while simultaneously addressing environmental issues.

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