

Summary by Alexia Cosme

TMD Graduate Students Explore Innovation in Different Lights

Erika Holshoe & Jaime Fine

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When most people think of innovation they tend to think of an advancement in technology. Although this is oftentimes the case, proven by Jaime Fine's graduate research with E-textiles, innovation can pertain to a whole lot more than technological advances. Erika Holshoe, a URI M.S. Candidate in TMD, demonstrated this to be true during the TMD 402 Lecture on Hijab fashion on social media. After immense amount of research on their topics, Jaime and Erika were able to dissect huge areas for growth within the fashion industry. For Jaime, that was the potential of the immersion of sensors and textiles while for Erika it was the lack of modest clothing within the industry. With this, they were able to realize there is a place in both segments of the market for innovative growth.

E-textiles have uses within different markets including health fashion, gaming, athletics and more. It is currently valued at \$100M in annual wholesale revenues and is expected to reach \$5B by 2027. An example of the use of e-textiles is the textile sensors within the car seat and the ability for it to recognize whether someone is sitting there or not. Textile sensors have many benefits including ease of integrations, comfort for the user, and washability. The possibilities are endless when it comes to creating innovative products with the use of textiles sensors. It is an industry with major potential that many innovators will begin to tap in to.

Fashion is a visual representation of who you are and what you believe in. Therefore, it is important to study fashion because it has tremendous implications for our world. In modern society, social media is an essential tool in studying cultural trends through fashion. Social media gives people the means to observe parts of a culture through their fingertips and has exposed us to many forms of fashion. Dina Tokio, an avid Youtuber, is known for being a fashion forward Muslim who is able to remain modest in her style of dress. In one of her videos, she reviews the H&M modest collection and explains how she felt the brand was not able to meet her basic needs as a Muslim woman. Her opinion along with many other notable fashion influencers, Muslim women, and scholars like Erika, believe there is room for innovation regarding modest dress.

Brands like Nike have recognized this need and begun this new "wave" of innovation by creating a sport Hijab. Many social influencers like Hana Tajima have begun collaborating with famous designers and brands like UNIQLO to make modest collections. Before these brands could release these collection, extensive research and development had to be conducted. Observations of the market and one on one personal conversations were necessary to take place in order to capture the essence of modest dress and Muslim culture.

One may find it hard to find the connection between innovation and fashion but it is important to remember that innovation targets a specific problem or area that has yet to be addressed by anyone. The e-textile industry has major potential for the ability to make everyone's lives easier and it has yet to be fully tapped in to. Companies are beginning to see the potential of this market and expand their research and development. Many Muslim women are finding it difficult to uniquely express themselves while respecting their values. Brands are beginning to pick up on this and create lines that address the needs and concerns of this massive, underrepresented market. That, is innovation at it's finest.

