

Designing Smart Sportswear for Athletes in Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

Researchers explored advanced technology platforms to design high performing sportswear. This high performing sportswear can enhance comfort, performance and wellbeing of athletes. However, most of the existing high performing sportswear were designed mainly focusing on key sportswear markets located in developed countries overlooking disadvantaged athletes living in low-resource countries. Hence, we conducted an iterative co-design study with twenty-nine athletes in Sri Lanka; a tropical and developing country to understand the considerations for designing affordable yet, high performing sportswear. As stated by the study participants, Sri Lanka does not have seasonal climate changes; hence they do not replace or change sportswear seasonally. The participants also elaborated the role of clothing re-use in Sri Lankan culture, specifying the emotional value attached to the re-use of clothing worn by elder siblings or family members. Considering these, participants suggested designing durable sportswear that can be re-used over a longer duration to achieve the cost advantage. The participants also emphasized the importance of focusing on non-monitory values attached to the sportswear rather than focusing only on product features to enhance users' perceived value economically. Further, the study participants suggested designing versatile sportswear that can be worn even during non-sports activities to enhance value for money, giving a new perspective to athleisure wear trend. Moreover, the participants stated the importance of designing sportswear, considering their prioritized needs and local resources to increase affordability.

Keywords: re-use, durability, versatility, value for money, emotional value