THE ABLONI AFFAIRS: THE ICT EMPOWERMENT OF THE RECYCLED CLOTHES BUSINESS IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Impoverished people of Africa and especially of Togo lack a lot of basic needs including: proper education, foods, electricity, and access to healthcare and wearable clothes. In order to tackle this issue of the unavailability of clothes in particular, second hand clothes collected from the north are recycled and sent to the south for the alleviation of the problems faced by the people of Africa where poverty is wide spread even though several economic progress have been registered nowadays. Unfortunately these garments sent to the poor in Africa become commodities that establish huge business transactions held mostly by the African diaspora. This business is feeding its actors and provides nonetheless cheaper clothes to their customers. However it causes several difficulties to the local retailing business in term of competition with the new garment sellers, the health issues, the overcrowding of the Hedzranawoe Market where the business is mostly based in Lomé, Togo and the risk of its closure as planned some African countries government. In order to sort out these issues and easier the running of the second hand clothes business, a virtual garments shopping center is proposed as solution based on the concept of People.net, the knowledge transfer through ICT infrastructure and its extensions either as a link integrated on the People.net Platform or a mobile application which could be accessed by all the actors based on the fact that Mobile phone is used by the overwhelming population of Africa and is considered nowadays as the first communication path throughout the continent. However an adaption to the African culture of orality and symbols should be carefully considered in order to support the usability of the above stated virtual shopping place platform to be developed.

1. INTRODUCTION

The secondhand by metonymy means the resale of clothes and, by extension, objects that have already been used. “Hansen concurs with Arjun Appadurai (1986) that “things” or objects—in this case clothes—have social lives, but she adds that it is indeed, “social life [that] has things” (Hansen 2000: 13). Clothing has both social and cultural value. Beyond the mere practicality of covering one’s body, worn textiles can signify wealth, status, education, and social involvement, without being “a faded and worn imitation of the West” (ibid: 5)” [1]. “Everyone knows that most Africans are poor. Life expectancy is low, education is basic, food is simple and clothes are few” [2] Brooks A (2015) Therefore, developing the secondhand clothes business sector is crucial for Africa. All over the world, people made it possible to relaunch used products in a new consumption cycle by giving them a new market value: It is called Recycling. “Interest in garment recycling is rapidly on the rise due to environmental awareness and landfill pressure. For entrepreneurs, it provides a business opportunity. In addition, various charities also generate revenue through their collection” [3]. Developing countries including Togo have become new markets as western countries no longer manage to absorb all
of these devaluated products on their own.

In this report, we will first highlight how the sector is organized; functioning and how people are managing to survive by selling secondhand clothes. In Africa poor are poorer because the new economic growth does not link to the sector where the poor are [4] This document is proposing an Information and Communication Technology solutions to be used to make easier the daily life of this population and especially the impoverished actors of this business who are always targeted by competitors supported by the pressures of various governments.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The research is built around the population of the Hedzranawoe market based on the focus group methodology. To be able to realize this report, we had to form six (6) mixed groups of wholesalers, other traders, customers and riparians of the market. Each group run three (3) session per week for a total of eight (8) weeks. Observations have also strengthened our research strategy. Our investigation was based on the social, psychological, physiological, philosophical and the economic aspect of the actors of the market and their activities as suggested [5] in a development of the of Life Based Design, LBD methodology, a multi-dimensional approach proposed for an in-depth analysis and understanding of the stakeholders and their formal lives. The objective is to implement the Life Based Design, LBD methodology in order to investigate the formal life of the stakeholders find problems discuss it, see together with the stakeholders whether a built ICT infrastructure could be the solution and design the integrated innovative ICT platform. Thus, as the computer tool and networks are more and more used today and offer several advantages such as rapid access to information and the potential development impacts, the main question discussed was considering together with the different subject of the research how to make these benefits available to this poor population of Togo. Thus, the resulting platform was discussed further. How will it be accessible to all and will, at the first instance, show in real time the new sellers or registered resellers, their contact details, locations, products and promotions, and secondly, follow all the market news and also tackle some issues faced by the sector coming from the business environment including: comply with the government policies and tackle health issues.

2.2. The Focus Group in the Life-Based-Design methodology

A critical problem in developing any new technology is to find a suitable place for it in everyday life. Technologies are tools which should make life easier rather than more challenging. They are not ends in themselves, but aid in achieving greater goals such as increasing social interaction. In order to improve the quality of life of the people, we need to understand the forms of life (age, gender, culture etc.) and varied life situations (marital status, employment, education etc.). Based on this, one effective approach for innovation management is provided by LBD [Le09, LS08, LS10]. “The main component of LBD is to reveal information about people’s lives, in their forms and actions. The problem often rests in finding effective methods for fostering innovative thinking. This means providing tools, which guide thinking towards appropriate problems in addition to the information which enables problem-solving” said [6].

The main method used for by the Life-Based-Design which is the main approach of this research is the focus group. LBD has the objective to foster an inclusive end-user generated micro innovation as represented on the Figure 1.

The focus group is a group interview technique, an "Expression Group", which collects data on a targeted topic. It is part of qualitative survey techniques as opposed to quantitative surveys based on a questionnaire. This technique can be used to assess needs, expectations, and satisfactions or to better understand opinions, motivations or behaviors. It is also used to test or bring out unexpected new ideas for the researcher. [7]Focus groups are open group discussions organized to identify a topic or series of ques-
tions relevant to research. "The main principle of the focus group is that the interaction between the participants is explicitly used, both as a means of data collection and as a focus in the analysis" (Kitzinger, 1994). Sometimes you can use a group discussion organized for another purpose - for example, when analyzing therapy sessions or discussions between teachers and students. By resuming these discussions and analyzing the interactions, he transforms them, in fact, into focus groups. However, in general, focus groups are organized for a defined purpose and the focus (point of focus) proposed is explicit for participants. Such sessions are, for example, organized to understand current issues such as AIDS, sexual violence or, as in the case of our study, the daily lives of the actors of the Hedzranawoe Markets.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE SECONDHAND CLOTHES BUSINESS

The secular relationship among the north and the south is focused on the social dependency of the south based on receiving any kind of aids from food to funding of various projects even though nowadays some responsible head of state like Nana Akuffo Addo the present President of Ghana are advocating for trading rather than aid “According to President Akufo-Addo, “we want our relations with Germany to be characterised by an increase in trade and investment co-operation”” [8]. Therefore doing business with Africa is better than receiving donations. However, it is awful to discover that even this aid articles sent to Africa by NGOs including Oxfam, Care International...Plan and soon become easily goods in Africa where the needs for clothe is very high because of the poverty sprayed on the continent. Therefore, “The rapid consumption of clothing, and the equally rapid disposal of unwanted garments, drives an international trade in second-hand clothes which reinforces the relationship of dependency between the global north and south” [9] “Many of us, clothes consumers in the West, are aware of the poor working conditions in Asian sweatshops existing side-by-side with multinational companies’ growing revenues. In this context, donating one’s used clothes seems like an act of consumer redemption – an opportunity to redistribute one’s problematic purchases to those less well-off.” explained LSE (2015)

“In the UK, most unwanted clothing gets stock-piled, passed on to friends or family, used in the household or thrown away, but 17% enters a second cycle of production and con-sumption (Morley et al., 2006, p. 8; Gregson and Beale, 2004). There is a long history of clothes being given by affluent to poor people and this is foregrounded in popular conceptions of the sec-ond-hand clothing sector. Charities such as Oxfam, The Salvation Army and the YMCA, accept donations via door-step collections, deposits at clothing banks or deliveries to shops. Commercial companies like Choice Textiles also collect clothes. Similar processes occur elsewhere in the Global North including in Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United States. The collection, sorting and export of second-hand clothes are positively coded by western governments as these processes act as self-financing recycling systems” (House of Lords, 2008)” [10].

“Wage labour activities are undertaken to reproduce second-hand clothing commodities from used clothes. In the Global North used clothes are regarded as waste or gifts; when given to a charity or company, rather than as commodities. Marx (1976) illustrated how commodities necessarily contain use-value, but that an object with use-value is not a commodity unless it embodies socially necessary labor time, which creates an exchange-value that can be realised at the moment when the commodity is sold in the marketplace. Those who rid themselves of used clothing may recognise that the clothes they donate or discard still retain – through their particular physical qualities – use-value Gregson et al., (2007), but these acts of waste-making demonstrate that these clothes do not, for their owners, have exchange-value. The latent use-value of second-hand clothing is a product of the labor that was initially embodied in the clothing when it was first sold as a new commodity. Through being donated or discarded used clothing, in this so-
cial context, is devalued (of exchange-value) and when used clothes no longer have exchange-value they drop out of the commodity form. New labour-time is required to realise the latent use-value still embodied in used clothing and to imbue used clothing with exchange-value so that second-hand clothes can be reproduced as a commodity to be sold in a different social economic context. This labor-time is the work of collecting, sorting and packing second-hand clothing for export” Books A (2017).

The big part of this business is realized by Africans living in Western countries including: the UK, USA, Finland, Nederland, Sweden, Australia and other countries. This Africans are the black African diaspora who is known for strengthening the continent economy through their businesses and the money they send to friends and families back home. There is several stream of African diaspora who are spread all over the world. [11] “identifies five major African Diasporic streams that occurred at different times and for different reasons”. They are nowadays considered as a powerful development group. Nonetheless, “The modern African diaspora, at its core, consists of the millions of peoples of African descent living in various societies who are united by a past based significantly but not exclusively upon "racial" oppression and the struggles against it; and who, despite the cultural variations and political and other divisions among them, share an emotional bond with one another and with their ancestral continent; and who also, regardless of their location, face broadly similar problems in constructing and realizing themselves.”

“Most simply, the African diaspora is made up of those who are descended from Africa at some point in their family’s history. There are now nearly 800 million Africans on the continent and perhaps up to another 100 million persons of African descent living in other parts of the world, most in the United States but with significant communities in Brazil, the Caribbean, Canada, and parts of Western Europe. There
are now roughly 35 million citizens of African descent in the U.S. with a collective purchasing power of about $450 billion per annum—a sum that if represented by a single country would make it one of the 15 largest economies in the world. African immigrants to this country, an increasingly important part of the Diaspora, boast some of the highest educational attainments of any immigrant group and there are now more than 250,000 scientists and physicians of African descent in the United States. As a country, our human, economic, moral and strategic ties to Africa are strong and growing. In 2002, U.S.-African trade totaled approximately $24 billion, and the United States is Africa’s largest single market. The United States is both the leading foreign investor and the largest bilateral aid donor to Africa, providing more than $2 billion in overall development, humanitarian and security assistance this past year. A large proportion of the over $3 billion in remittances that Africa receives from the Diaspora each year originates in this country.” [12].

Like said above the African diaspora has a tremendous contribution in boosting the continent economy by the amount of money they send. “The World Bank and other development partners have revealed that the total money transferred by African migrants to their region or country of origin surged by 3.4% to $35.2 billion, in 2015. The sum which includes intra-African transfers represents 6 percent of total transfers by migrants worldwide to their region or country of origin, Ecofin agency reports’ [13]. “Both individuals and groups within the African Diaspora promote overseas business enterprise with their African homelands. They undertake this activity by setting up their own enterprises in their respective countries or by collaborating with local businessmen. In the Netherlands, some of the African Diaspora has entered into collaboration with Dutch businessmen and enterprises with the intention of setting up joint ventures in Africa. Other Diaspora plays a mediatory or intermediating role by linking Dutch companies with companies in their homelands. In doing so, they help facilitate the transfer of finance and technical know-how from Holland to local enterprises. This is of utmost importance because, with the shrinkage or collapse of the formal national economies in many African countries, most Africans now engage in small-scale informal trade for their livelihood. Informal trade is now, in fact, the biggest market economy in Africa currently generating more than 60% of domestic wealth” [13]. Therefore this diaspora and especially the one with documents, the legally settled one in western countries is nowadays playing big role but not specifically in the development of the secondhand clothes business. They are at any level of the business: some are organized as used clothes collection companies or work with NGO for the collection, sorting and packing or they are running shipping companies for the delivery of the containers to Africa. Africans are also the labor who is employed in the various warehouses in western countries; those workers are most of the time the illegal immigrants who are exploited and are less paid. Illegal immigration unfortunately means exploitation and poverty.

1) The actors of the secondhand clothes business from the 20e century

This business has started in Togo a while after the independence of the country on the 27/04/1960. This activity was in the hand of the Nigerians immigrants coming from the IGBO tribe and has tremendously grown after the Nigerian Civil War.

“Before the civil war started, Nigeria had depended on imported second-hand clothes to supplement the clothing need of its teeming population who could not afford the cost of new apparels. Igbo traders started importing second-hand clothing from Europe and North America into Nigerian the 1940s. The first set of second hand clothing consignment landed in Port Harcourt. Some of the first customers were the people of the village of Okrika. It is therefore not surprising that Okrika is the name by which second-hand clothing has come to be known in Nigeria. … The most painful of government’s bans to second-hand clothing trade was that imposed immediately after the Nigerian civil war in 1970. This ban was a big blow to the entire Igbo people. The Igbo business men were the main im-

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porters and retailers in the second hand clothing trade. Many Igbo people who were not in the business had been pauperised by the war; they had lost clothes and valuables in the course of the hasty migrations caused by the bombing of their communities. The rest who had survived the war with little capital were financially crippled by the vicious economic policies of the Gowon administration. The result was that majority of the Igbo could not feed themselves and their families. With such pressing need as food for most of the Igbo, clothes, whether new or second-hand were luxuries. The ban was perceived in many quarters as a vengeful act aimed at punishing the Igbo and slowing the pace of economic resurrection of war-ravaged Igboland. The ploy hit the war-losers of Biafra where it hurt the most.” [14]

Like said above this “Sector once dominated by Igbos traders from Nigeria, we find today in the trade of thrift shop Togolese who no longer hesitate to indulge in this mercantile activity. Miss Akoey Amevor, in her thirties, gave up her profession of executive secretary to become a thrift shopkeeper. "I was trained as secretarial officer, in 2005. But in the face of the rampant unemployment that affects the youth, I decided, for five years, to engage in this trade. This is another form of entrepreneurship. This business allows me today to feed my whole family, "says Amevor. Today, she does not regret her choice because she has a ready-to-wear store in one of the suburbs of Lomé, the Togolese capital town. Like this secondhand shop keeper, thousands of Togolese invade, at dawn, the hangars of the market under which are exposed bullets containing "second hand" clothes from Europe, the United States and sometimes 'Australia.” [15].

Therefore the participation in the secondhand clothes business is huge and is continuously growing and is reaching some neighboring countries such as Ghana and Ivory mainly from Togo by road as this kind of commodity have difficulties to be accepted in Cote d'Ivoire or in Ghana Sea Port as seen on the figure2 below.

4. THE NOWADAYS TOGO SECOND-HAND CLOTHES MARKET

4.1. The daily life of sellers in Hédzranawoé market

The Hedzranawoe secondhand clothes market is applying marketing tool from selling cheaper, with discount and practice emotional prices and know the kind of product to sell for which kind of public. Marketing psychology based on the customer behavior is practiced and is including: “The study of consumers helps firms and organizations improve their marketing strategies by understanding issues such as how

The psychology of how consumers think, feel, reason, and select between different alternatives (e.g., brands, products, and retailers); The psychology of how the consumer is influenced by his or her environment (e.g., culture, family, signs, media); The behavior of consumers while shopping or making other marketing decisions; Limitations in consumer knowledge or information processing abilities influence decisions and marketing outcome; How consumer motivation and decision strategies differ between products that differ in their level of importance or interest that they entail for the consumer; and How marketers can adapt and improve their marketing campaigns and marketing strategies to more effectively reach the consumer. [16].

Commonly called "Abloni" in the local language, the secondhand clothe is popular with the majority of the population, regardless of nationality.

Mondays and Thursdays morning at the market of Hedzranawoé, the thrift shop starts at 4 o’clock in the morning.

During these two days, Nigerian traders or dealers open bales of different kinds of thrift. But if you want to buy cheaper products, you have to be present at 4 am in front of the Shell gas station and the new road already built in front of the big market. Shop owners dump all their goods in front of their facilities to allow their many customers to make their choices and purchase the items.
For Mr EZE, a shoe retailer met on the spot: "I am often here at 3:30 for the installation and be able to sell my products, I mean my shoes". Beside him, we ask a customer seriously busy searching the mountain of shoes to see if he wanted to buy a pair of shoes? While launching the joke "there is something for all tastes and all ages. We can make the choices for you." Surprised but open, he answers: "Indeed, every Monday and Thursday, we get up early to be the first customers and make the first choices. Since not all dealers will be able to get up early like us, we resell them afterwards. What makes the young people who arrive after, buying the second choice and a little more expensive" Competition is also huge between all sellers and customer service strategies are developed as reveal all the participants of the focus group sessions". All businesses face competition even if you’re the only restaurant in town you must compete with cinemas, bars and other businesses where your customers will spend their money instead of with you." [17].

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In front of his shop, a Nigerian, an Igbo man, obviously manager of the shop not far from Hédzranawoé’s Bon Pasteur bookstore spoke to us with a certain pride about this trade with enormous advantages but with a lot of risks. "I have been in this business for over fifteen years. Goods arrive from Europe, United States, Korea and Australia. We have correspondent suppliers who are there and who ship them to us. Sometimes we have to go to some countries to work ourselves. This has been done and organized by our brothers in the African diaspora in either Europe or America he said. The diaspora is giving a lot back to the continent as we saw above “The other shortcoming with what’s Diaspora Got to Do with it is that it falls completely short on recognizing the diaspora’s added value – which is far beyond economic remittances and sporadic tourism. Even though remittances continue to be the largest form of diaspora contributions, amounting to roughly $40 billion a year to support livelihoods and development, it is not the only form of significant deliverables from diaspora. The last decade’s sudden explosion of technology, social media and new models for change has resulted in more contributions from the diaspora, particularly around long term development and advocacy” [18].

After witnessing a four (4) hour haggling, we moved behind the market around 6 o’clock. The show was beautiful. Dozens of people lined up washing shoes. "When you buy the shoes, they are sometimes dirty, sometimes spotted. That’s why we wash and dry them before polishing them to give them their shine before, said a young man in a hurry to finish his work before sunrise.

Further away, another line of people turn sewing machines. “Our job is to retouch torn clothes, especially shirts still in good condition; was also quick to say a seamstress.”

The clientele of second-hand clothes is as varied as the goods. Today, in Togo everyone is a consumer of cheaper second-hand clothes. In all households, more than 90%, there is at least one object from this market. Some are no longer hiding to brandish it unlike what was happening ten years ago. Students even find their school uniform. For office workers, this is the place to go for beautiful jackets and office suits. Even the chiefs take their neckties or other items.

4.2. Social impact of the thrift business

Whether it is because of bad economic situation such as recession or a decrease in purchasing power, thrift is present in all countries [19] "In Xipamanine Market, Maputo, Mozambique, a used pair of jeans will typically cost £2.90 and a T-shirt £1.50. Second-hand clothes are cheaper than new alternatives and normally better quality, but the average daily income in Mozambique is just £1, so even used clothes are difficult to afford. Selling clothes does provide some jobs but there are also negative impacts” [20]. It has existed for centuries; it has emerged in the 60s and continues today. There are second hand shopkeepers in Togo and in the West Africa since the colonial time. “Second-hand clothes from an array of developed countries dominate local market stalls in sub-Saharan Africa. Across the African continent second-hand clothes are a mainstay of informal traders, even accounting for the majority of clothing sales in some countries. In Nigeria they are known as kafa ulaya (the clothes of the dead whites) and roupa da calamidade (clothing of the calamity) in Mozambique.” [20] "A high proportion of the second-hand clothes put into black plastic sacks in bins outside charity shops in Denmark ultimately end up in Africa or other developing nations. However, what might seem to us like extending a helping hand to enable less affluent people to buy cheap, quality clothing from Western countries is, in fact, damaging the African garment industry, Politiken reports. “Our garment industry is dying because of these imports,” said the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni. Eight out of ten articles of clothing sold in Uganda’s shops or markets are second-hand items from Western countries. It is not only in Uganda that there is a problem. Once, there were around 500,000 people working in Kenya’s garment industry. Now, there are only about 20,000 employees left. However, it is not second-hand clothes alone that are to blame for the problems faced by the African garment industry; imports of cheap clothes are also responsible for the decline of the garment industry in African countries.” [19]"
clothes from Asia are also a headache.” [21].

Neighboring country Ghana and other African countries have a plan to prohibit this import business: “The confederation of east African countries, East African Community, is now suggesting that imports of used clothing and shoes should be stopped from 2019.” [21].

In Lomé, secondhand clothes market is full of second hand products, from clothes to kitchen accessories. The whole Hedzranawoe market is entirely devoted to it: there are all the tastes and all the prices said one seller.

Given the economic crisis and the state of Togo economy, many people no longer have the financial ability to buy directly in ready-to-wear boutiques where items are priced high. “In recession there is temptation to stop buying clothes and at first this can be superficially soothing, for the can sicken on consumerism, shopping and spending. There is a mother lode of comfort in making your own soups at home instead of going out to a mediocre restaurant to pick up over a lukewarm starter slapped on a table by a waiter who is adding up in his head how much he’s going to make in tips. With fewer occasions to go out, who needs to dress up anyway? The simpler life of Jeans and T-Shirt can seem radical new approach to living, the clothing equivalent of moving out the city to country” [22]. However, one needs to get dressed to at least go to work. Whether accessories, clothes of any order, we find everything in thrift at the Hedzranawoe second hand market.

"Thrift stores are more than just a fad, they are here to stay. It is a total social fact insofar as it makes it possible to understand and analyze major changes in our societies " Frédéric Godart, (2010). For the sociologist, author of Sociologie de la Mode, not only are the thrift stores open in a massive way in the last ten years, but they now concern a much diversified market including: students, employees, fashion designers, tourists ... The thrift shop is an integral part of fashion. In the minds of our contemporaries, fashion was often associated with a practice at the margins of society, reserved mainly for a handful of wealthy people.

4.3. Secondhand clothes and health and hygiene issues

Thrift stores are selling high-risk clothes. Many people wear second-hand clothes. These are cheaper, yet these clothes are not without effects on health.

When we visit different places especially, all around the Hédzranawoé market, we see that it is sold dirty used shoes too. They are bought a lot but not because they are good but because they are cheap. Although, their prices are lower, thrift stores present dangers if they are not treated before wearing them. The thrift stores are clothes left by other people, there are even those who throw them to the dump. Communities that buy these clothes are asked to first wash (with bleach), then iron them correctly. According to [23].

“Many human diseases, especially the sexually transmitted diseases, are transmitted through body fluids (blood, sweat, urine, semen, vaginal discharge and so on) and the causative organisms implicated in a lot of these diseases have been isolated in clothes of people with these diseases.

Infections such as vaginal and skin candidiasis, scabies, ring worm, body lice, chicken pox, gonorhoea, syphilis and hepatitis (types A, B, C, D and G) can be transmitted through clothes previously used by infected persons. The risk is even more if the clothes are not properly washed, disinfected and ironed before use. The category of clothing that are more culpable are underwear which most people do not iron before use do to the material with they are made which does not allow them to withstand that much heat.

Washing with regular detergents may not be enough to get rid of some of these bacteria and the eggs of some parasitic organisms which are naturally conditioned to withstand harsh conditions for survival; for these, strong reagents are sometimes needed to get rid of them and you will need to iron them after to be double sure.”

Therefore, thrift that are not well washed can contribute to the development of skin diseases including fungal infections and skin allergies. On the question, Dr. Camara, a doctor at the Cscom de Magnambougou (Mali) is also formal: "Although appreciated by women, the underwear..."
from thrift stores are a real nest of microbes. Generally, women are exposed to fungal infections: infection due to a fungus, vaginitis: inflammation of the lining of the vagina and other skin diseases. These diseases can be chronic if nothing is done. Given the degraded state of the underwear provided to the thrift shop, it is not at all advisable to use them, "he explains. This is as valid for clothes as for shoes. In the same way these people who are in charge of the transport of balls suffer in the long run of the problems of aches, lumbago and others as they are not using the proper equipment.

4.4. The Economic Aspects of the secondhand clothes business

In a difficult situation, thrift stores appear as a double solution: they can sell used clothes and buy new ones cheaply; an economical solution that also allows you to renew your wardrobe.

While driving in the city of Lomé, there are many displays of shoes, bags or clothes that are found along the roads.

The goal of thrift stores is to fill a gap and gain some security clothing, says a participant of the focus groups. According to him, the process of impoverishment of the population, especially in Togo is pushing a growing number of people to visit thrift stores to dress.

These businesses are therefore primarily intended to serve those in need. In recent years, however, they have earned their nobility. Fortunately, the stigma against the disadvantaged is smaller than before, which reduces negative judgments about thrift stores confirmed another one.

However, far from being marginal, the fashion and luxury industry is a major economic activity, which represents, in 2008, 6% of world consumption (against 4% for example for the automotive sector) ses.ens-lyon (nd). But fashion is not only an economic phenomenon; it is also a social fact.

Beyond the economic aspect, the development of ecological awareness and the need to recycle have contributed to the emergence of these new stores.

4.4.1. Is Thrift A Threat? Problematics of the ban of the imported used clothes business

A "major global market is second-hand clothing which, like used automobiles, could grow much bigger. World exports in used clothing amounted to $990 million in 2001, a small fraction of the export of new clothing, valued at $146 billion. However, this trade is more than it seems, because the relative weight value of second-hand clothing is very small, at just $0.73 per kilogram. The trouble with the used goods trade is that, just as with new products, many countries have put up high barriers against them, not because they have anything against second-hand items as such, but often simply to protect local manufacturers and salespeople of new and used goods from outside competition" [24]. The economic problems are the first incentive to use the vintage (refers in fashion to a garment, accessory, etc... previous decades, brought up to date, Larousse (nd). In a crisis situation, thrift is a double solution: it allows you to sell used clothes and buy new ones cheaply. "People come here because they can buy brands for the price of a cheap new garment," says a saleswoman. An economical solution that allows you to renew your outfits: "I’m a student and life is expensive so I come here to buy my clothes," says a young client.

"The thrift stores allow to consume sustainably" explains Frédéric Godart, (2010). Extending the life cycle of clothing is thus made possible. Changes in mentalities thus contribute to the phenomenon.

We can also see there a limit of fashion, which would be more and more faced with difficulties to create novelties. According to Frédéric Godart, (2010), "the vintage is a major and global phenomenon in the current fashion. It refers to a fascination of fashion for one’s own past, which came to the fore in the 2000s. This is a major break in the industry. " What was out of date is now "vintage" and is back in vogue. The sociologist adds that "this indicates a difficulty in the current fashion that is struggling to renew itself."

Could the new industry be dethroned? For fashion designers this is a real problem to sell their products because most people prefer to have
clothes cheaply against those they offer at a price slightly expensive. Do not panic, Frédéric Godart concludes that "Thrift stores, if they constitute a new mode of distribution, do not replace but complement the current fashion". These competitions to the new garments are the reason why some countries decide to prohibit this used clothes business by leveraging barriers to their entry to the country. Different policies are developed and voted in parliaments for this purpose.

Hence, “Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania have since raised taxes for used clothes and offered incentives to manufacturers to invest in their local textile sectors starting in the financial year 2017/18. Uganda has increased the environmental levy imposed on used clothes from 15% to 20% of the cost and freight insurance (CIF) value in some taxes during the post-election budget. Rwanda has increased taxes on import of used clothes for the second consecutive year from $0.2 to $2.5 in the last financial year to US$4 per kg this financial year arguing that it intends to protect the market for new clothes made locally. In the financial year 18/19, Rwanda plans to charge $5 per kg on import of used clothes” [25].

“Other countries in Africa have already faced a similar experience. In Zimbabwe, for example, the sale of second-hand clothing was prohibited in 2015 — although the ban was relaxed two years later. The local textile industry was not yet ready to deal with the rising demand. At the same time, Zimbabwe also faced the issue of a growing black market.

"It’s been very difficult to implement these bands, because there’s a lot of informal trade, a lot of cross-border trade," says Calabrese, "There are a lot of traders who go into a country, buy a lot of clothes in the market and then just bring them back in their suitcases. This is very common in Africa, so it’s very difficult to stop these illegal imports." South Africa and Nigeria also had similar experiences; "I am not aware of a country which has completely stopped the import of second-hand clothing," says Calabrese” said Kraus S (2018).

5. AN INNOVATIVE AND INCLUSIVE SHOPPING CENTER

[26] alleged that “Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are broadly defined as technologies used to convey, manipulate and store data by electronic means (Open University, nd). This can include e-mail, SMS text messaging, video chat (e.g., Skype), and online social media (e.g., Facebook). It also includes all the different computing devices (e.g., laptop computers and smart phones) that carry out a wide range of communication and information functions. ICTs are pervasive in developed countries and considered integral in the efforts to build social, political and economic participation in developing countries.” Therefore a web based virtual shopping center included in the social knowledge exchange platform named People.net is proposed concept which intend to tackle poverty issues by making available personal and collective information to all disadvantage people taking in account their respective formal life in order to provide them with the necessary transformational information that they are looking for to unlock their talents and improve their living conditions, like revealed the Chinese axiom: "Give a man a fish, and you have fed him once. Teach him how to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime.” Therefore, PeopleNet will teach the people in need by delivering the sustainable change information in respect of the Article 19 of Human Right resolution which state that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” [27].

This infrastructure is encompassing, several links and extensions or mobile applications that will be integrated by the users or the participants of this ICT4D project themselves. People in varying area of activity will develop their poverty solving problem thematic on the platform in order to stress ideas and discussions through different information technology tools such as blogs, forums, chat and so on. In the case of secondhand clothes market of Hedzranawoe, several virtual shops will be opened either for new or secondhand products.
as asked by the participants of the Hedrzanawoe Market themselves: “we need a place where it could have either new and old garments to be sold for the establishment of a greater collaborative work in order to enhance the business” said some of the actors. Hence the agreement on the development of a virtual retailing place which should be accessed everywhere and through any connected ICT terminal including: Personal computers, Tablet computers, mobile phones... were welcomed by the majority of participants of the focus groups ran.

5.1. Virtual retailing strategies to be implemented

Business strategies developed in companies and organizations support the business activities in order to achieve goals and efficient results for the welfare of the employees and the shareholders. “business strategy defines what needs to be done to meet business goals, which also mean that it helps you make sound decisions related to hiring (and firing) and resource allocation. And while all departments need to work independently and innovatively, a business strategy ensures that there is no conflict between what each department is doing with the overall direction of the organization.

In short, your business strategy is a summary of how your business plans will achieve its goals and improves and sustains its position in the industry.” [28].

“The business strategy of the company is very important in planning for information systems. The information systems plan is drawn up in a way that it supports the strategic objectives of the organization even in the near future. It is for this reason that the strategic role of information system has to be clearly defined in the planning processes itself” [29], continue by revealing that “The information required to support business strategy and the development of information systems relevant to providing such information needs to be planned and fitted with each other. This alignment of business strategy with IS results in information systems strategy. It is a continuous process that helps the IS support structure to continuously remain relevant for any organization’s strategic goals and objectives.” Hence from the discussion of the different actors of the second-hand clothes extended to some new garments shop owners, various strategies are planned. Therefore, further to the above, there will be a link of the Retail business pages and/or a mobile application that will involve either the new manufactured, international or local clothes or the secondhand clothes. It is an e-commerce sub-system or m-commerce platform representing a virtual shopping center dedicated to unify the country actor of the retail market. This platform is based on strategies including:

- Opening Shops by registration and creation
- Product presented by each registered shop on Catalogue pages
- Sales/promotion event pages executed by the new garment sellers
- Collaborative and Partnership work among different retail shops especially between new and old products sellers as they will exchange garments to be proposed to their customers. This is because very often there are new very clean and clothes in the bales received by the second clothes providers and also on the other hand instead of doing sales some old clothes can be given to the secondhand clothes shops for distribution.

5.2. The Health issues discussed online

In order to help the implementation of a strong health policy with the clothes selling system, it must be important to do a collaborative work with the National Health Service of Togo. “Health Policy is intended to be a vehicle for the exploration and discussion of health policy and health system issues and is aimed in particular at enhancing communication between health policy and system researchers, legislators, decision-makers and professionals concerned with developing, implementing, and analysing health policy, health systems and health care reforms, primarily in high-income countries outside the U.S.A.” [30]. Moreover, Health Policy is committed to support this international dialogue to ensure that policies are not just copied but used and adapted based on the specific problems and objectives as well as...
the respective context” [30]. Thus there should be a sort of counseling system that will be physically present and automated on the virtual platform which will alert wherever there are complaints about diseases due to the use of sold garments throughout the whole clothing system even though this could be mostly found with the used clothes shops. The counselling should properly help in prevention of spreading diseases and address issues of health hazards developed above. This sub-system of the big People.net infrastructure should focus on the above by giving advices in the use of the garments, alert in case of a wide spread or a serious epidemic diseases that may arise. The objectify of these information system main objectives is to reinforce people security. “Improvement of the quality and efficiency of healthcare in medicine, both at home and in hospital, is becoming more and more important for patients and society at large. As many technologies (micro technologies, telecommunication, low-power design, new textiles, and flexible sensors) are now available, new user-friendly devices can be developed to enhance the comfort and security of the patient. As clothes and textiles are in direct contact with 90% of the skin surface, smart sensors and smart clothes with noninvasive sensors are an attractive solution for home-based and ambulatory health monitoring. Moreover, wearable devices or smart homes with exosensors are also potential solutions. All these systems can provide a safe and comfortable environment for home healthcare, illness prevention, and citizen medicine” [31].

5.3. Mobile business, Mbusiness

“Over the past decade six of the world’s ten fastest-growing countries were African. In eight of the past ten years, Africa has grown faster than East Asia, including Japan. Even allowing for the knock-on effect of the northern hemisphere’s slowdown, the IMF expects Africa to grow by 6% this year and nearly 6% in 2012, about the same as Asia.” [32] An important incubator of this change is nowadays strength of the telecommunication system for its use in business but the growth of its sector itself. “A little over a decade ago there were about 100,000 phone lines in Nigeria, mostly landlines run by the state-owned telecoms behemoth, NITEL. Today NITEL is dead, and Nigeria has close to 100 million mobile phone lines, making it Africa’s largest telecoms market, according to statistics by the Nigerian Communications Commission.

Across the rest of the continent the trends are similar: between 2000 and 2010, Kenyan mobile phone firm Safaricom saw its subscriber base increase in excess of 500-fold. In 2010 alone the number of mobile phone users in Rwanda grew by 50%, figures from the country’s regulatory agency show [33].

This spectacular rise in the mobile phone use throughout the continent: over 600 million sold during the last decade shows that illiterate and poor also communicate. From the evolution of this phenomenon Africans are indeed benefiting from the integration in the mobile phone technologies of the innovative technologies based on the oral and the image culture that characterize Africa. The use of mobile phone to access the people.net platform and its extensions including the clothing virtual system should be highly considered even all the secondhand clothes actors consulted throughout our various focus group sessions have suggested it as they all use Android based smartphone and enjoy the use of whatsapp and facebook applications and have considered them as one of their important communication tool.

5.4. Human Computer interaction for development

The majority of the African population is rural, “63 percent of total Sub-Saharan population live in rural areas, whereas 74 per cent of all EU-citizens live in urban areas and 26 per cent in the countryside. Overall there are 854 Million people living in Sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 502 million in the European Union.” Global-Growing (nd) Therefore, they are mostly illiterate or less educated living in villages and very far from schools, college and universities. Izeduwa Derek-Briggs, UN Women’s regional director for East and Southern Africa, described women as the cen-
ter to Africa’s development. “Information drives technology, technology drives innovation, innovation is central to the development and growth of Africa. Therefore, putting women in technology puts women at the heart of Africa’s development,” she said [34].

In this case a strong technological barrier is established; Hence, talking about women in Africa, “Izeduwa Derex-Briggs, UN Women’s regional director for East and Southern Africa, described women as the center to Africa’s development. “Information drives technology, technology drives innovation, innovation is central to the development and growth of Africa. Therefore, putting women in technology puts women at the heart of Africa’s development,” she said” [35]. It is therefore, obvious that without literacy and education this population will barely access the proper information they need to unlock their state of poverty and open the door to better lives and prosperity as women are the least educated on the African continent. According to the above, it is important to think about the representation of the information in order to broaden the access of the information provided by people.net and its extensions like the virtual space for garments sellers in Togo.

5.4.1. Africans are fundamentally people of orality

Mode of representation. Africa is characterized by the civilization of orality: “Many Africanists used to claim that Africa, by which they often meant "sub-Saharan Africa," was defined by oral modes of expression and communication before the intrusion of European influences from the fifteenth century and especially following colonization in the nineteenth” [36] Sciences Jrank (nd) However, that does not mean that the cognitive ability is not accurate.

“For the interpreters of the ancient document, the question of literacy and illiteracy in a given culture is not simply about the prevalence of the ability or lack thereof to read and write in social group. The basic issue is writing a language document, whether an utterance, a speech, or a writing, was carefully composed and edited, or unprepared and extemporaneous, in the form we have it. The question, to be performed or read aloud in any event, was written down or memorized is quite secondary to the point at issue, which is whether the document was carefully prepared or extemporaneous. Much that has been written on orality and literacy in the first-century Mediterranean world is rather beside the point. [Sylvia] Scribner and [Michael] Coles extensive research published as the psychology of literacy (Cambridge Mass: Havard University Press, 1981) reveals conclusively that being able to read and write has no great effect on cognition, certainly less than the experience of attending school and even less than whether or not on lives in an urban or agrarian community. Reading and writing like any other activity, develop only those cognitive skills, there is no reason to believe that a certain minimal mastery of literacy will result in profound changes in how people think or organize themselves (Melina 1996: 98 citing Tuman)

Nowadays communication technology tools are used and even by most of rural Africans including mobile communication applications like WhatsApp which offer a huge potential of the use voice, image and video. ” African countries notched a 12%-growth in active social media users to 191 million last year, according to a report by global digital agencies, We Are Social and Hootsuite. Of those, mobile users accounted for 172 million, most of whom used only two Facebook-owned platforms: WhatsApp and Messenger.” [37].

With the WhatsApp application voice are used to make phone call but it is also used to record messages for example in the chat interactive discussion. Video and images presenting some events are exchanged easily with the phone to camera to capture images or filming some events. Those could expressly be shared with others. The Table below is presenting the way the participants of our research at the Secondhand Clothes market of Hedzranawoe are using whatsapp application. The voice, video and images are used by all of the participants compare to the text that is just used by the educated subject and the less educated one.

Hence, as the non-educated people represent the majority of population of the African continent, it will be easier to rather consider video,
Table 1: Percentage of the use of WhatsApp by the Hedzranawe Market participants of the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>VIDEO</th>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>IMAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NON-EDUCATED</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESS EDUCATED</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATED</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

voice and image to communicate around the People.net platform and its extension the virtual shopping center than text. It is therefore important the audio in building interfaces while developing the platform.

5.4.2. Symbols induced behavioral attitudes of Africans

Use of specific African adapted icons, button and graphics. As developed above Africans are not truly people of literacy and the majority of them are mostly comfortable with symbols that they use in the whole of their culture and civilization. To the human mind, symbols are cultural representations of the reality. Every culture has its own set of symbols associated with different experiences and perceptions. Thus, as a representation, a symbol’s meaning is neither instinctive nor automatic. The culture’s members must interpret and over time reinterpret the symbol (Cliffnotes 2016). Symbols are semantic and determinant of several ideas or connected representations that are based of the intentionality or the so called isomorphism [38]; the internal representation of the images that are very similar to the physical form and shape [39]. Therefore Africans have developed several symbolic in order to communicate and get their understanding of the world. A typical stool is representing in some part of Africa including: Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Ivory Coast...a kingdom figure below or politics. The symbol of Finance and Money or Wealth is the cowries figure below. Thus it is therefore suggested that due to the state of illiteracy of most of the actors of the Hedzranawoe second hand clothes market of Lome, it must be best using African several graphics and symbols to make the various button and icons of the interface of the pages of either mobile or web application rather than western’s.

This will specifically present a proper African ICT infrastructure that is relevant to these communities. This will enable the users to quickly catch the meaning of each part of the applications.
and enhance their familiarity with the virtual environment. Once they find themselves integrated in the process not only by their participation but also the use of their cultural symbols, they will kindly find the developed system as their own property. Hence it will promote a feeling of pride among the actors of this activity on the field in Lomé and in the diaspora who are also concerned by this platform. This ICT infrastructure could be replicated in other parts of Africa where the second clothes business is developed as well.

6. FINAL COMMENTS

For several decades in Africa, not only did the second-hand trade enable the poorest to dress cheaply, but it also encouraged the spread of Western standards. The crumpled symbolizes a modernity that is both attractive and repulsive. Attractive because it allows access, offline, to international fashion; repulsive because it refers to the recurrent dependence of developing countries on the West.

The thrift shop not only saves shoppers money but also makes money by selling old worn clothes. Evening dresses, costumes, coats, checkered skirts, floral knitwear, cowboy boots and jeans jackets: the shopping possibilities in a thrift store are endless. However, it must be kept in mind that before putting on second-hand clothes, you must first wash it with bleach and iron it. The platform that will be developed based on the formal lives of the stakeholders of the second hand clothes market of Hedzranawoe, their daily activities and their suggestions would be useful to sellers and resellers to reach a large number of customers and save time. Similarly to customers who also need a second to second clothes, it will allow them to find their way on the market site through the plan, find the list of sellers, their contact information and products and know what to pay, when pay and where to pay. It will be very inclusive by allowing shops that sell new clothes to also integrate this environment, to establish strategic partnerships with those who do the secondhand in order to lessen the harmful effects of the ABLONI “affaires” on their business.

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