CASE STUDY

Convert Art

INTRODUCTION

Convert Art is the first upcycling company in Greece, manufacturing handmade handbags, jewelry, accessories and other products for the everyday use, made exclusively from used inner tubes, tires, electrical materials and recycled aluminium.
The company moved its first steps in 2012, when the creator Marina Griponisioti found herself in a car garage. There were many fallen tires there, so she thought to experiment with one of them. She borrowed the garage tools and made her first belt. In the same period, she began to process an old portable speaker, the parts of which turned out as a colourful and fantastic jewel.
This was how it started, by collecting inner tubes, tires and electrical equipment. As for now, Convert Art has 60 different types of products and over 400 different designs.
Convert Art products have been exhibited at various exhibitions and markets, often receiving relevant awards, such as: Papastratos StartUp Awards (2017), Athens Safary Start Up (2017), Athens Fashion Trade Show (2016), Modern Creations (2016), The Fashion Room service (2015).

SUSTAINABILITY

Upcycling means creative re-use. It is a special recycling process that aims not only to reuse waste, but to treat waste products in new, higher-quality products. Upcycling stands out as a process for its sustainable innovation by using materials in its original form, saving resources and money, thus increasing the quality of the product. The goal of upcycling is to avoid wasting potentially useful materials by using existing ones. This reduces the consumption of new raw materials when creating new products. Reducing the use of new raw materials can lead to a reduction in energy use, air pollution, water pollution, and even greenhouse gases emissions. Upcycling is the opposite of downcycling, which is the other half of recycling. Downcycling involves the conversion of materials and products into new materials of lower quality while recycling involves the conversion or extraction of useful materials from an original powder product by creating a different product or material from the beginning.

The first recorded use of the term upcycling was by Reiner Pilz in 1994. The concept was later incorporated by William McDonough and Michael Braungart in 2002 in their Cradle-to-Cradle book: Rebuilding the way we do things. McDonough and Braungart were pioneers in upcycling, claiming that we should all try to prolong the life of the products. The tradition of re-use in art grew sporadically in the mid-20th century. An exemplary upcycling example is the Watts Tower (1921-1954) in Los Angeles, which is made of scrap, ceramic and broken glasses on a large scale and consists of 17 different sculptural constructions, the highest being reaches a height of more than 30 meters.
Another recent example is the Orchestra de Instrumentos Reciclados de Cateura in Paraguay, whose musical instruments are made of materials from the landfill site of Cateura. Somehow that's how convert art began, turning old inner tubes into used handbags and accessories, and -more- used electrical material into gorgeous jewelry and decorative items.

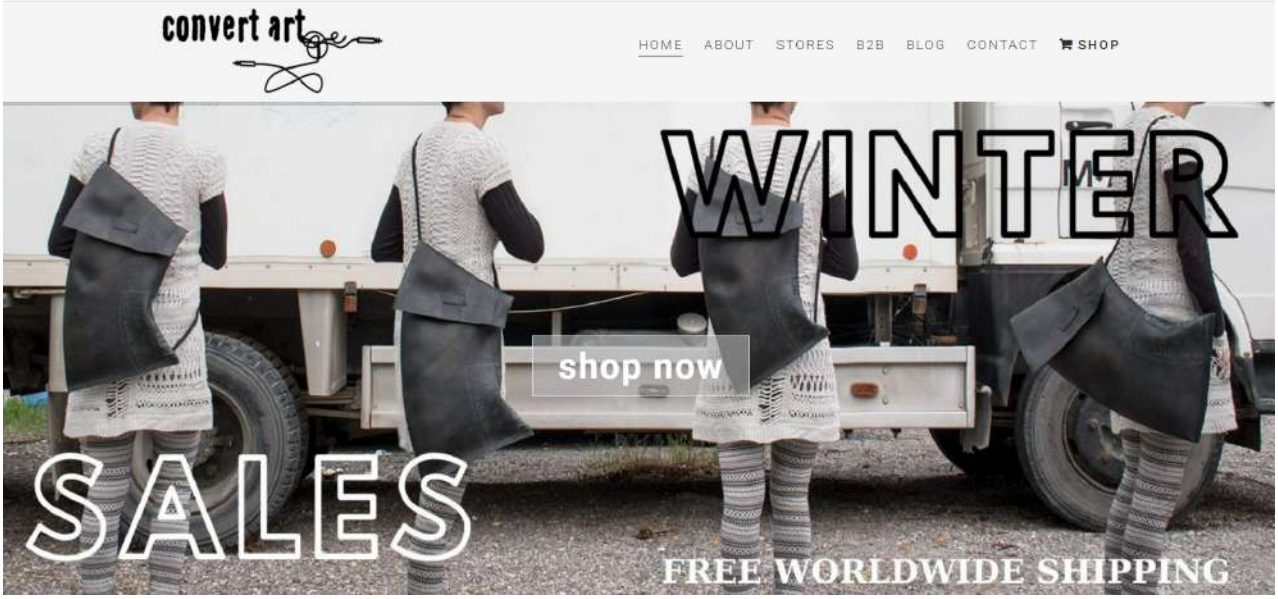
TRADITION AND INNOVATION

All Convert Art creations are handmade and unique pieces. They are manufactured from used raw materials, based on the Upcycling philosophy. They are vegan, ecological and contain no animal derivatives. The inner tubes have 5 processing steps, so they do not smell and do not lose their color. The material is waterproof, due to its non-porous surface, very resistant to extreme weather conditions and easy to clean. The business collects the used inner tubes and bicycle tires from partner companies or bicycle shops. The employees and designers clean, process and organize the inner tubes and tires in their workshop, and later on they begin designing the products. After the production process begins, they add the zippers, buckles, and the latest touches. Lastly the products go through quality control and are placed on the shelves for distribution. The electrical equipment is collected from old televisions, computers and other electrical appliances, whilst the other material is recyclable aluminum. Convert Art products have 5 processing steps to keep them from smelling and discolor. They are manufactured to be durable without needing special care. They are waterproof and their non-porous surface helps clean them easily. You can clean your bag with a cloth and some warm water and soap, or wash it in the dishwasher up to 40oC, using a mild detergent. Do not put your bag in the dryer.
In very hot conditions (such as a locked car sitting in the sun for over 20 hours), you may see a gray-white surface developing over your bag. The gray color that you might see comes from the wax in the rubber composition. The wax is not harmful and your bag will return to its natural color as soon as it is away from its long exposure to high temperatures.

SCALABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Due to the niche core business and its relevance in the field of sustainability, Convert Art grew significantly year after year: In December 2013, the collection of jewelry made of electrical materials and handmade inner tube bags won an award at the Greek Design = Good Design contest, while in 2016 the Convert Art collection of polymorphic bags was awarded with the Top Design Award for 2016. In December of the same year, Convert Art was selected to participate in the European Final of the StartUp Europe Awards in Brussels. In December of 2014, Convert Art created a workshop on processing, design and construction. There was also a Convert Art Lab store, where apart from Convert Art products; the company also hosts a large collection of handmade jewelry and accessories from Greeks designers. In January 2017 the production unit was moved to Athens and Convert Art opened the official store in 24-26 Pallados str, at Psirri Square in the center of Athens.
Up to now, Convert Art has over 35 points of sale in Greece, Cyprus and abroad.
Within the first five years, it has reused more than 20 tons of inner tubes, giving them life again, while protecting the environment from the pollution.

https://convertart.gr/



Sicilian Sheep Farmers' Network

INTRODUCTION

Tonino Rizzico is a rare farmer, one of those who look far beyond the crests of the Leonardo Sciascia's sealess Sicily , where his company is based.
In 2006, with a degree in Agronomy (University of Palermo) in his pocket, he went off to London together with his friend and brother-in-law, who also just graduated in Economics (Bocconi University-Milan). In the British capital, Tonino ended up holding the reins of the kitchen at a small restaurant in South Kensington's Fulham Road, The Aglio e Olio.
When asked what he recalls abouth the United Kingdom he says the bad food on the one hand, and "honesty in the workplace and the praise given to competence and merit, instead of name or origin. As Italians - he holds – we have a lot to learn from the British in terms of work ethics and management. And then there's the language, which is essential if you want to seriously grow internationally ".
This is perhaps the first stepping stone upon which Tonino built his own professional training path.
On returning to his Sican Peaks, he spent a decade managing relations with tour operators on behalf of Villa Giatra Hotel and restaurant .

SUSTAINABILITY

In 2015, he went back to his roots, taking over the company founded by his great-grandfather a century ago, which today is a family-run business assisted by 2 seasonal collaborators. Social sustainability at Agricola Rizzico e Giambrone - he says – is guaranteed by "providingemployees working conditions and sharing with them the company know-how. There are no business secretshere because we believe in the story of the farmer and his award-winning corn. Asked by a reporter: 'How can you afford to share your best corn seeds with your neighbours, if they compete with yours every year?', The farmer replied: 'the wind collects pollen from the ripening corn and it swirls it from field to field. If my neighbours grow lesser corn, cross-pollination will constantly degrade the quality of all corn, including mine.' "
Therefore, a fair approach to doing business pays both a social and an economic dividend. And it is by sharing his method that Rizzico has guaranteed not only his own economic sustainability, but also that of 43 other companies, who joining his in the Sicilian Sheep Farmers' network (2016), which - by networking and creating critical mass - finds customers and target markets for its members, elevates the producers' bargaining power, leads intermediaries and consumers to acknowledge the product value, and therefore, assigns it its fair price.

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Starting from the thounsands year old tradition of sheep farming, Rizzico retrieved and continues the traditional cheese making, in the form of pecorino di masso (literally rock sheep cheese), aged in Cammarata's bare-rock faced cellars. To such tradition he added some elements of process and technological innovation. At individual farm level, a biologist takes samples and analyses them.

At network level, shepherds and breeders share their good practices via Whatsapp, thus creating an internal quality standard. While at a higher level of the value chain, they took up the block chain tracking system, which makes it possible to inform the consumer about all the nutritional, geographical and zootechnical data gathered of dairy products gathered by the biologist, shepherds and breeders. All through a simple QR code. If this were not enough, Rizzico and Giambrone Farm has recently been identified as the regional representative of one of the 5 supply chains (lamb) of the Guaranteed Safe Quality (GSQ) project, by which the Sicilian regional government entrusts independent control bodies with the quality monitoring in line with the ISO17065 standard and with such indicators as animal health and welfare, protection of agrobiodiversity and genetic resources, environmental protection and produce wholesomeness, produce intrinsic features, ethno-social and economic quality.

LANDSCAPE

Particular attention is paid to the protection and integrity of the landscape surrounding the farm and to economic circularity, which – Rizzico holds - "are mostly taken care of by our sheep that live in the wild and graze for 10 months a year and which supplement their diet with animal feed. based on cereals produced in the part intended for the purpose, always in the company. It follows that the fertilisers are organic because the manure remains on the ground when the animals are grazing and it is scattered around by the farm staff when the sheep take shelter in the stables during the coldest months."

VALUES AND STANDARDS

In addition to GSQ Sicilia, Agricola Rizzico e Giambrone is also a member of other quality standards being a member of Slow Food's Monti Sicani Convivium. which he represented at Terra Madre - Salone del Gusto, the yearly Internation Food Fair in Turin.

His efforts over the last five years are bearing fruit. Indeed, Pegaso University listed the Sicilian Sheep Farmers' Network as Italy's only case of business aggregation in the field, being all the more welcomeconsidering it originates from the last province in terms of GDP and average per capita income. In November 2020, his initiative received the SMAU innovation award in Milan. On January 19th 2021, the Network will hold a conference at the Chinese Board of Trade in Italy.

SCALABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Looking ahead, Rizzico is interested in the scalability of just one company dimension: that of value, profit being its consequence, not its cause. And it is precisely value that he points to when he advises the young beneficiaries of the Bucolico project on how to start a business in times of crisis or to resist a crisis by having recently started a company:

"We resist" - he argues - "by getting together, and creating an amplified marketing system. And we also resist thanks to the internet and the value it generates (Internet value), making it possible - for those who want to understand it - to return to those small rural communities, which have until recently been the point of origin of the emigration wave, and may become the new destinations. If you produce value, you can achieve your goals, regardless of where you live. This is my reason for living." says Rizzico.

https://www.retipmi.it/index.php/rete-di-imprese/rete-ovinicoltori-siciliani

RETE OVINICOLTORI SICILIANI

CASE STUDY

Olive-Mill Santa Chiesa

INTRODUCTION

Santa Chiesa was founded in the twenties of the twentieth, when three young people and entrepreneurs associated with Azione Cattolica gave life to a mill and then to the first oil mill of the area of Monte Cammarata, limestone offshoot in the constituting Parco dei Monti Sicani, away from major sources of pollution. After the death of the co-founder and director cav. Luigi Lupo, the activity was continued by his wife, initially within the city and subsequently outside, as required by Community legislation. The current management company was founded in 2000 by Marisa Russotto, daughter-in-law of Cav. Lupo, making use of the skills acquired as an accountant in a local construction company. "Twenty years ago" - she says - "an opportunity which couldn't be missed arised" and so, looking at the third generation of the company, a 32-year-old daughter and a 28-year-old son, she confesses: "to continue what my father-in-law started was a truly fulfilling wish."

SUSTAINABILITY

Frantoio Oleario Santa Chiesa cares about environmental sustainability more than any other factor. In fact, it has been working organically since its foundation, being a substantial part of the agricultural land planted in the woods (50 hectares of Nigra): this is the result of an investment, thanks to a funding which came from the Community (2080/92). Secondly, the economic circularity is respected since the olive producers withdraw and reuse the pomace, the residual waters of any process are given to a company which takes care of its dispersion (avoiding the dispersion in the rivers and in the sea). The vetch and leavening waters are used as fertilizer, excluding chemical fertilizers. The ecological approach is prominent in the production phases: the company treats the olives using only and exclusively the cold process: this approach is fundamental in order to preserve the organoleptic properties and the integrity of the oil fragrance. Finally, by having its own oil mill, Santa Chiesa eliminates the carbon emissions that would be produced if the olives had to be transported by road, to be pressed elsewhere. As for social and economic sustainability, Marisa Russotto says: "we move forward thanks to the family-based structure of the company: this aspect keeps costs to a minimum. But we occasionally make use of a seasonal employee".

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

At the Frantoio Santa Chiesa, the tradition of a practice as old as the Homeric poems meets innovation several times:

1) technological, because the mill is the only one plant with presses and mixers in the area which, along with kneading machines and decanter, is able to provide a product that enhances the scent of the finest cultivars

2) process, through the anticipation of the harvest in October, instead of December-January, subverting a centuries-old tradition once dictated by the need of small landowners to take care of the olives only once the sowing was completed. The result is an oil with a very low acidity rate.

A further element of innovation is the result of a recovery.
Marisa Russotto had the idea of flavoring the oil thanks to the memory she keeps of her father-in-law: he used to degrease the mullers with lemon juice. The memory of the intense scent released in this process suggested to the current owner to use the lemon for aromatic purposes. That intuition paid off and in October 2020, Santa Chiesa was awarded the bronze medal among aromatic oils at the 18th Les Huiles du Monde AVPA international competition in Paris.

The oil mill is open to school visits with flows of 100-150 people per day, and looks with interest at the possibility to receive visits with smaller numbers, in detail by oil culture enthusiasts.

Consequently, Santa Chiesa Extra Virgin Olive Oil reaches all regional destinations and is, to date, distributed in Lombardy, Liguria and Tuscany.

VALUES

Santa Chiesa has joined the Protected Geographical Indication, but – as Marisa Russotto says - the relationship between costs and benefits of the specification as for now lacks of benefits because the costs of processing and certification do not produce any added value yet, which should produce in turn a fair increase in the selling price.
However, Frantoio Santa Chiesa's in-house disciplinary has already involved several customers, who have become more aware of the quality of organic oil than the commercial variants available on the shelves of large-scale distribution. The disciplinary influenced neighboring companies as well: they have adapted to the good practice of harvesting olives in early Autumn, rather than early winter.

SCALABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Santa Croce thinks of a qualitative, not quantitative, scalability, to be divided into three actions:
1. Replacing the Nigra wood with the native equivalent;
2. Planting new olive trees;
3. Avoiding to process olives on behalf of third parties in order to focus exclusively on their own production.
In terms of crisis and resilience, the one of 2007 was not felt by the company, while the one of 2020 is leaving deeper signs: "the only way ahead lies on the earth because, while everything in the other sectors tends to suffer a severe break, people must continue to eat and, where possible, with greater awareness" says Marisa Russotto.

https://www.oliosantachiesa.com/

OpenTherapi

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the brothers José María and María Sancho launched OpenTherapi, a comprehensive service for the development of online psychological therapy. Both in their 30s, José María is an electronic engineer and María is a psychologist. Since 2016, they started working on this idea because many patients had the need of running online therapy. For that reason, they decided to design and implement something innovative guaranteeing security and privacy. The platform allows professionals to run their own virtual consultation with a single click. They have the possibility to access to a wide range of tools that facilitate the management and care of their patients online. "It is all encrypted and totally secure to guarantee privacy in the therapeutic relationship", as explained by Sanchos, who pointed out that "we offer the security of the video calls, a gateway so that payments can be made, a calendar for patients to fix appointments, as well as a virtual waiting room where the professional can put the contents necessary for the patient to view. All this is 100% online, without downloads or installation".

SUSTAINABILITY

Patients from all over the world will be able to reach experts thanks to OpenTherapi. Psychologists will have a public profile that can be edited to improve positioning along with patient ratings, which will help experts to attract more and more people.

In June 2018, OpenTherapi was awarded a prize in the 'Business Creation' category, for projects less than three years old, at the fifth edition of the Andalusia Enterprise Awards in Seville. These awards aim to recognise the most innovative Andalusian companies with the greatest potential for growth and development of those linked to the Andalusia Enterprise Centre (CADE) network.
Winner also in the 10th edition of the UPO Emprende Competition, in the 'Best Start-up/Business Project' category at the Pablo de Olavide University in Seville; in February 2018, they won the 1st edition of the WomenUP Competition. AirBnB and ImpactHub Madrid, as well as being awarded prizes in the 7th edition of the Young Entrepreneurial Psychologists Award. Entrepreneurial Business Initiative Category' of the Psychofoundation (Foundation of the General Council of Psychology of Spain).

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

This project is part of the 2017 call of the Minerva Programme, an entrepreneurship programme promoted by the Andalusian Regional Government and Vodafone, which encourages business projects in the technology sector in the Andalusian region. OpenTherapi works automatically in most popular browsers, without the need to download additional software or plugins. OpenTherapi makes it easy to find the specialized professionals for each patient to contribute to their assessments. “Teletherapy can be an important tool to help people learn more about psychological health” told the founders in an interview to a local newspaper. Some people may feel more comfortable undergoing therapy in a digital setting, especially younger people who are more intimately familiar with such methods of communication, especially when privacy is assured.
Therapists can treat clients from anywhere in the world, differently from in-person sessions. It is important to understand your therapist's qualifications and experience before you begin the treatment process.

LANDSCAPE

The founders are from Trigueros, a small village in the province of Huelva, Andalusia. A rural area dedicated to cereal, vine and olive farming.

“From our point of view in Spain there is still a long way to go” they affirm. To begin with, there is no regulation in the field of online mental health, which means that many professionals carry out therapy online using tools that are neither safe nor guarantee the privacy of the therapeutic relationship.

This problem has been echoed by professional psychology associations and the 'Guide for the practice of Telepsychology' published by the General Council of Psychology in Spain or 'Recommendations on psychological intervention through the Internet' of the Official College of Psychology of Western Andalusia has been published. Key steps to become aware and start to put solutions in place.

VALUES AND STANDARDS

“Sometimes, when we talk about mental health problems, society tends to relate it to severe disorders such as schizophrenia. But in reality, the term refers to a state of balance and well-being between the individual and his or her environment. This state allows the individual in question to participate fully in all areas of his life to achieve a good quality of life”.

That’s why for OpenTherapi it is essential to take care of our health, both physical and mental. Pay attention to the warning signs and prevent them as much as possible. Let's break taboos and talk about it!

SCALABILITY AND RESILIENCE

It goes without saying that the current coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and is impacting on society and the world in lots of different ways. That’s why nowadays, more than ever, being able to access online mental health therapy is so important. Also, another important factor is that people are now unwilling or unable to access face-to-face therapy.
“It’s completely understandable if people need some time to adjust to the concept of online therapy but remember, your therapist is there to help and guide you during this time and has your best interests at heart” they argued.

https://opentherapi.com

CASE STUDY

Adopta un abuelo

INTRODUCTION

Alberto Cabanes is founder and CEO of Adopta un abuelo (Adopt a grandparent), the social enterprise that has managed to put the emotional needs of the elderly on the board.
Since 2013, the project faces the dream to make the elderly feel heard, accompanied and loved. That dream became a reality and today it is a social enterprise that connects more than 3,800 volunteers with 2,800 grandparents.
60% of the elderly who live in homes do not receive visitors. Alberto, founder and CEO of Adopta un abuelo, thinks that the figure of the elderly is a great social asset in this country and, unfortunately, the most undervalued.

SUSTAINABILITY

In 2015 the first intergenerational accompaniment programme was launched with 57 volunteers in Ciudad Real and Madrid. The demand for young people was so great (+10,000 registrations in two months) that in May 2016 Alberto left his permanent and stable job in a multinational to develop the project in more cities.
Since then, the project became a social movement in more than 50 cities in Spain in 2 years and was awarded more than 20 times in social entrepreneurship and social innovation at national and international level.
Today it is a social enterprise that connects more than 3,800 volunteers with 2,800 grandparents.

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

This project that began in Ciudad Real in 2015: "My friends supported me, but it's also true that they thought I was half crazy," Alberto Cabanes says. In Spain, getting it started is doubly complicated, but I encourage anyone to take a step forward. At the end of your life, you will regret those things you don't do, not what you have done". Alberto sold his car and invested all his savings in the project. For him, it was the best investment in business training: "Entrepreneurship is more useful than any master's because it allows you to experience practice. When you become an entrepreneur, you can see perfectly what you are working for and why".

LANDSCAPE

The project born in Ciudad Real in the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha, in the centre of Spain, in the south-east of Madrid.
"If setting up a business could be difficult, imagine it in a rural environment", argues the founder.
"Our aim is connecting generations and making older people feel listened to, accompanied and loved, while young people learn wisdom and values during the visits".

VALUES AND STANDARDS

Networking is the keyword in Adopta un abuelo. "We like very much the idea to collaborate with local and national reality and to export our idea at a national level" argues the founder. In particular, our best collaborations are with centres for people with disabilities all over Spain, as they host many people over 60.
"I never look at what I have done, but always look at what I have and want to do. Entrepreneurship is a way of life in which you have to continuously improve.

SCALABILITY AND RESILIENCE

The COVID-19 crisis has further highlighted elderly's vulnerability by causing the collapse and isolation of many residences. From one day to the next, the nearly 4,000 volunteers were deprived of their weekly visit.
However, the organisation did not stand idly by. They decided to develop, with the collaboration of Madrid City Council, an initiative aimed at offering telephone accompaniment during the lockdown. Within 24 hours the project received more than 3,000 applications from new volunteers. Within two weeks they had made 4,000 calls and had expanded to other cities in Spain.

https://adoptaunabuelo.org/