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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Wear(e)able - best dressed sustainably

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OUTPUT 1

Fundacja “Zielony Słoń”

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The focus group study was aimed at finding out young people's opinions about the concept of environmentally-sustainable fashion, their state of awareness about it, as well as general preferences related to fashion, getting dressed, and the conscious choice of clothing products.

The focus group was selected using social media, where both description of the study and the link to the form were placed. Participants who were willing to take part in the study had to complete the form and send it back. Moreover, the form was used to collect demographic information such as gender, age, place of residence (city/village). The target group of the project consisted of people living in the eastern part of the Lubelskie voivodeship since, in this region, our Foundation aims at continuing further project activities.

The focus group was moderated by a person employed by the Green Elephant Foundation, Mrs. Edyta Ignatiuk.

Mrs. Ignatiuk has a huge experience in conducting such types of activities (e.g. she repeatedly conducted environmental research and moderated similar discussions) as well as in working with young people. Upon receiving each participants' submissions, her duties were:

- a. to contact people willing to take part in the focus group
- b. to determine the details of the organization of the discussion.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, it was impossible to gather the group and conduct discussions under standard conditions. The study was conducted remotely using a Messenger teleconference (the choice of form and tool was previously consulted with the participants).

A FOCUS GROUP

The focus group consisted of 9 people who expressed their willingness to participate in the survey by completing the form. They were people aged 16 to 18 (year of birth from 2000 to 2004). The group consisted of 5 girls and 4 boys. As for the place of





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residence, the vast majority, (8 people) live in rural areas, only one participant in the city. Table 1 presents the participant's gender and age structure.

Table 1: Participant's gender and age structure

Year of birth	2002	2003	2004
Gender			
Female	0	1	4
Male	2	1	1

QUESTIONS

The first step to prepare a discussion was to create questions. According to the instructions, the discussion was divided into three sections: preparatory, main, and closing section.

The preparatory section was aimed at preparing and encouraging the group and introducing the main topic. In the beginning, the moderator presented the rules of the discussion, then the participants introduced themselves (simply by telling their names). In the preparatory section, participants were asked two introductory, subject-related questions:

1. What is your favourite clothing brand? Why is it your favourite brand? Was there anyone who recommended this brand to you?
2. What do you think are the best things about fashion? Can you also point out its flaws?

Most of the questions were asked within this main section. During the whole activity, the moderator was ready to ask the main questions and, if necessary, support participants with leading questions to help them clarify the statement. According to the instructions, the questions were formulated indirectly in order to get





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to know the participants' opinions on the discussed topic. The main questions were as follows:

1. What are your clothes made up of? Can you name some of the materials used to produce your clothes?
2. Have you ever heard of a sustainable fashion concept? How do you understand the general concept of this type of fashion? Could you describe it?
3. In your opinion, what do you think young people should know in order to be more aware during the process of choosing and buying clothes?
4. Can you indicate the best ways how to deal with sustainable fashion in your country or abroad? (for example: ethical, eco-friendly, certain initiatives, etc.).

During the closing section, each participant summed up their statements. The focus group has also spent a few minutes on the participants' free discussion. In the closing session two questions were asked:

1. What social media do you use to obtain information? Which influencers or bloggers in the field of fashion are significant to you and why?
2. What do you think of second-hand clothing stores, clothes exchange/ "flea market"/swap meets? Have you ever had the chance to make use of such opportunities?





THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. A PREPARATORY SECTION

What is your favourite clothing brand? Why is it your favourite brand?

Was there anyone who recommended this brand to you, or influenced its choice?

Most of the participants did not hesitate to indicate their favorite brand/s, only two people responded that they did not have a favorite brand, and when choosing clothes they were guided by their quality, appearance, color, or the occasion for which they were buying the item - the brand was not important to them.

Most often, young people name chain stores as their favourite clothing brands. Both, girls and boys definitely chose sportswear brands, most people indicated adidas (4) and companies such as Nike, 4F, Hummel, H&M or Pull&Bear also appeared.

The main reasons for choosing these brands were indicated by the participants:

- Comfort (all)
- High quality (4 people)
- Compatible with their own style (3 people)

The price appeared only once ("relatively low price"), there were also answers that the clothing of a given brand fits into the lifestyle of the respondent ("I like sport, and this brand sells sportswear", "I used to play in a football club and there were clothes of this brand used and so I stayed").

The vast majority of young people believe that nobody had any influence on their inclinations for choosing a particular brand, and they made their own opinion on the basis of their own experience and testing of clothes of various brands. Only one person replied that their taste for a brand was influenced by their mother, who dressed herself in the products of a given manufacturer, and one admitted that sibling recommended a given brand's products.





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What do you think are the best things in fashion? Are you able to point out bad things too?

The young people quite perversely said that the best thing about fashion is not to follow it and have your own style. The respondents of the survey stressed that it is important for them to be non-standard, to want to emphasize their own style - as the participants of the survey said, this can be achieved through fashion, because the way we dress defines us. The opinion expressed by one of the participants was interesting, that in fact, not following the fashion is only a sham, because few people have enough precise and original style to stick to it. The very fact of dressing in chain stores makes us follow the fashion, because we choose only from a given set of clothes, which a particular shop offers at a given time.

Young people said that what was mentioned as an advantage can also be a disadvantage of fashion: a given way of dressing tag us within the society, it assigns us to specific environments or social groups, it is also difficult to be original, as it is often being criticised.

Moreover, young people considered mass production of clothes to be a disadvantage of fashion, because it affects quality, The participants mainly noticed poor quality of materials, which are "artificial", "synthetic", which, on the other hand, causes lack of comfort within users.

2. THE MAIN SECTION

Do you know what materials your clothes are made of? Can you indicate some of them?

As it resulted from the preparatory part of the discussion for young people, it matters what material their clothes are made of. However, they pay attention to it almost exclusively for practical (comfort) or aesthetic reasons, not ecological.

Only one person couldn't tell what materials his clothes were made of (boy), the rest of the group (both girls and boys) declared that they know and that they pay attention to it when doing shopping.





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The most frequently mentioned materials were:

- Cotton - 7 answers
- Viscose - 2 answers
- Polyester - 2 answers
- Elastan - 1 answer
- Linen - 1 answer
- Wool - 1 answer.

The participants pointed out that clothes most often consist of several materials, e.g. cotton and polyester. They believe that it is difficult to find clothes made of 100% natural ingredients, e.g. cotton, because there is almost always an admixture of polyester.

Have you ever heard of a fashion concept that is sustainable? How do you understand the general concept of this fashion? Could you describe it?

Analysing the participants' answers, it should be stated that they are unfamiliar with the concept of sustainable fashion. The vast majority (8 people) admitted that they had never heard of such a thing. One of the participants knows this concept of fashion, she uses it herself. She understands it as "recycling clothes, giving new life". According to the respondent, it is a very positive phenomenon in the era of consumerism and overproduction of everything.

This statement provoked a discussion among the participants. Almost everyone agreed that it is worth to be prudent about buying new clothes and using those that are no longer in use. However, they all admitted that they had not previously considered the impact of the production, purchase and use of clothes on the environment, and that recycling was mainly associated with waste segregation.





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What do you think young people need to know to be more aware during the process of choosing and buying clothes?

When it comes to the knowledge that young people need to possess in order to be more aware during the process of choosing and buying clothes, focus group identified two, the most important issues: what the clothes are made of and where they were produced.

Regarding what the clothes were made of, the respondents of the research pointed out that some materials are manufactured artificially and can, therefore, be less comfortable and functional, they can also be less durable and deteriorate faster. Ecological arguments have been mentioned occasionally: it has been pointed out that natural resources are probably more environmentally friendly. One of the respondents stated that it is also important to think about what can be done with a particular thing when it is no longer needed, whether it would be possible to use it somehow or simply it has to be thrown away (which she does not support).

The second issue that the group considered important in the context of the knowledge that helps to consciously buy clothes is where the item comes from/where it was produced. Here, the group clearly drew attention to scandals related to human rights abuses and the exploitation of children for work by well-known clothing brands. The group agreed that such actions are reprehensible and that this kind of clothes should not be bought. The four respondents admitted that they gave up buying things of a certain brand after the media revealed scandals related to the exploitation of children during its production.

Can you identify the best ways of dealing with environmentally sustainable fashion in your country or abroad? (for example: ethical, eco-sustainable brands, initiatives, etc.).

The vast majority of people in the focus group were unable to give any examples of practices related to ecological or sustainable fashion. Only three (girls) out of nine people were able to respond to the question asked.

One of the participants listed three examples of clothing brands which she believes (or, to her knowledge) are organic, these were: Two Thirds, N'go and





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Bochen, but she couldn't specify what the environmental performance of these companies is.

Two more respondents mentioned initiatives to collect clothes that are then given back to the people in need (PCK containers, collections organised by Caritas) - these are activities they observe in their surroundings and get involved in by reviewing their wardrobe from time to time and selecting clothes they no longer use and passing them on to a selected charity.

As a result of the discussion, the Group also concluded that it may be good practice to sell unused and undamaged clothes on the Internet or to exchange them with friends.

3. CLOSING SECTION

What social media channels do you use to obtain information? Which of the influencers or fashion bloggers are important to you and why?

The most popular social media among the focus group are:

- Instagram - 6 answers
- Facebook - 5 answers
- YouTube - 5 answers.

Most of the respondents said that they are not following any influencers or bloggers in the field of fashion. As a reason, they mainly admitted shaping one's styles on their own - they don't need any suggestions in this aspect. Even though, one of the girls mentioned Lizzy Hadfield as she likes her dresses very much.

However, the discussion showed that the respondents (mainly girls) sometimes watch makeup & hair tutorials on the Internet, not having their specific favorite channels. They would rather search on the basis of slogans or phrases, e.g. "How to make lines on the eyelids?".

Moreover, the girls admitted that sometimes, when planning an outfit for larger events (weddings, proms, etc.), they tend to watch celebrities. However they do not





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focus on any particular, they rather look through many photos, searching for an inspiration.

3. What do you think of second-hand clothing stores, clothes exchange/flea markets/swap meets? Have you ever had the chance to make use of such opportunities?

The vast majority of respondents positively referred to the second-hand stores. They considered main advantages as:

- a) Low prices;
- b) Originality;
- c) Good quality,
- d) the uniqueness of the item found

The vast majority (8 people, including 7 girls) admitted that they regularly use second-hand stores, moreover, they have their favorite points where clothes are of a high quality and undamaged. Some of them even admitted being informed of a delivery time in a given store as well as going there during the selected hours - the reason being the widest range of products.

All young people agreed that second-hand clothing turnover significantly reduces wastes and overproduction of goods. Everyone believes that this is a cost-effective solution allowing individuals to stand out from the crowd.

Only one of the respondents admitted not using such type of store since one is convinced that wearing second-hand clothes worn before by other people is unsanitary.

CONCLUSION:

- The young people participating in the survey have low awareness of ecological fashion and the impact of the clothing industry on the environment.
- The knowledge that young people have is residual and disordered - they have heard certain concepts, but are unable to explain them, relate to their lives, apply them in practice.





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- The young people participating in the survey do not pay much attention to pro-ecological behaviour on a daily basis, but this is mainly due to insufficient education in this area.
- Young people understand the need to take pro-ecological actions.
- The group under review shows great sensitivity, mainly in ethical issues related to fashion and the clothing industry.
- The group under review is willing to increase its knowledge of ecology and implement pro-ecological behaviour in the field of fashion in its life.

