

# Perceptions of circular economy of fashion amongst young adults

Neea Hyttinen & Sohvi Lindroos



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| <b>Authors</b><br>Hyttinen Neea & Lindroos Sohvi  |  |
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| <p>In today's world, global textile industry is one of the largest causes for environmental issues. The current linear system is challenged with circular economy (CE) approach that aims to develop more sustainable systems. In the future, Finland aims to be the fore runner of CE, the fashion industry being one of the main goals in the action plan. In order to achieve more sustainable actions, it becomes vital to research consumer behavior, more particularly young adults.</p> <p>The thesis is conducted for a commissioner PasilaHUB, a project focusing on developing new consumer business concepts where CE is one of the key objectives. The aim of this research is to gain understanding of young adult's perceptions of CE in fashion context. Additionally, the research strives to recognize how events can be beneficial when trying to enhance positive consumer behavior. Therefore, an event proposal was created for PasilaHUB.</p> <p>The theoretical framework defines the concept of CE and more specifically how it is applied in the fashion industry. In addition, the theoretical framework addresses the challenges, future actions, and capabilities as well as the situation in Europe and Finland in the context of CE in fashion industry. Moreover, factors influencing sustainable consumer behavior are defined.</p> <p>The thesis was conducted by gathering theory from academic articles, literature, and previous studies. Furthermore, the research problem was approached by a qualitative research method, using two different focus groups.</p> <p>The key findings of the analysed data suggest that people are curious about alternatives challenging the traditional linear way of consuming. In the recent years, the mindset has changed towards more sustainable consuming, yet the behaviour does not always follow the sustainable manners. Moreover, based on the focus group findings a suitable event proposal was done. The event proposal aims to combine different elements from the educational to entertaining, meaning that it would be both meaningful and attractive to attend.</p> |  |
| <b>Keywords</b><br>Circular economy, fashion, sustainability, consumer behaviour, events, young adults  |  |

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# 1 Introduction

Circular economy (CE) is an emerging concept focusing on the world where the prevalent economic and social model is based on extending products life in diverse ways. (Charter 2019, 2.) Moreover, the CE in the fashion context is a growing subject among individuals and organizations around the world. The fashion industry is one of the main industrial sectors causing various sustainable issues. The CE approach in fashion context aims to develop new sustainable systems as an option to the old, linear model where textile is bought, used and disposed. (Niinimäki 2018; 12, 17.)

The study is conducted for our commissioner PasilaHUB. The objectives of the study were created based on their requirements of gathering in-depth knowledge of the perceptions of CE of fashion amongst young adults, as well as finding new event concepts. The commissioner, PasilaHUB is a project focusing on new consumer business concepts, run by the University of Applied Sciences, Haaga-Helia. The concepts will be developed and tested in Pasila area together with businesses, habitants and students. The three main objectives are: Activate area's business ecosystem and gain visibility, to create business concepts and renew the area's consumer business and to build consumer business competence hub. The project started in the end of 2020 and will finish by the end of 2023. The PasilaHUB project is funded by the City of Helsinki innovation fund, Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce, as well as Haaga-Helia, Metropolia and Business College Helsinki. The total funding for the project is 748 000€. Some of the biggest partners are: VR, Messukeskus and Mall of Tripla. (Haaga-Helia 2021)

The focus of this study was to examine the perceptions of CE in the fashion context among young adults. Therefore, the main research question "What are the perceptions of CE of fashion amongst young adults?" was formulated. As the second objective was to develop new event ideas, the second research question "How to develop new event concepts to enhance the positive consumer habits around CE of fashion?" was developed. The study was approached by collecting a theoretical background from books, reports from institutions and academic articles combined with the data collected from two different focus groups.

The thesis consists of the theoretical background, methodology, findings of the study, event proposal as well as discussion. The chapter two comprises the theoretical framework of this study. Firstly, in order to give an understanding for the reader of the subject of the study, the overall definition of circular economy is presented as well as CE in fashion context. Moreover, the theoretical framework discusses the challenges and possible future

actions regarding the subject as well as the current situation in Europe and Finland. Later on, the concept of consumer behavior is explained. The internal and external factors of people's consumer behavior are examined and more importantly, the factors affecting people's sustainable consumer behavior are discussed.

The theoretical framework is followed with the chapter three focusing on the methodology of the study. The chapter presents the research design, data collection methods, focus groups as well as the data analyzing method. The research was conducted with qualitative research method and the data was collected by focus group discussions. The chosen data collection method is explained based on the theoretical framework. The focus group discussions consisted of two different focus groups, and both of them are introduced in the chapter three. Moreover, the data analysis as well as the filters chosen based on the theoretical framework to analyze the data gathered, are presented.

After discussing and justifying the methodology of the study, in the chapter four and five the findings of the study are analyzed. The chapter four presents the findings of the focus group one discussion whereas the chapter five presents the focus group two discussions. In both of these chapters, the findings are analyzed as well as presented, through two different models of filters. The first model consisting of the filters regarding perceptions and the second one regarding events. Based on the findings of the study, an event proposal for our commissioner is presented in the chapter six. Lastly, the chapter seven consists of the discussion of the study. The chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, discusses the validity and reliability of the research, as well as presents our reflection of the thesis writing process.

## **2 Literature review**

This chapter is written in order to help the reader to understand the concept of circular economy (CE). In order to conduct this literature review, secondary data from books, academic articles and reports from different institutions were used. First, the chapter will discuss the theory of the overall concept of CE, and then focus more detailed on CE in the textile industry. The challenges as well as capabilities, that the textile industry is facing when transitioning to the CE model are examined. Furthermore, the chapter will give an overview of the situation and actions taken towards circularity in the textile industry in Europe and Finland. Lastly, customer behaviour will be discussed with the aim of giving an insight of customers consuming habits and factors affecting the buying decisions.

### **2.1 Circular economy**

Circular Economy (CE) is an antonym for the traditional, linear economic model. The linear economic model is based on a 'take-make-dispose' pattern, which relies on large amounts of easily accessible, cheap materials and energy. By stating that, CE is an emerging concept, which describes a world where extending products life by repair, re-manufacturing and refurbishment is the prevalent economic and social model. The main goal of CE is to maximize the value in materials, products and components in social and economic systems to the highest level during the longest time. (Charter 2019, 2.; European Parliament 2021)

Many viewpoints and perceptions have been formulated into different definitions for the concept of CE. These definitions arise from various professionals, scientists, international institutions and governmental bodies, analysing and developing these definitions of the concept of CE, which can be grouped into, environmental, social and economic dimensions. By saying that, it can be stated that there exists several definitions for CE which varies a lot from each other's. When several parties present different definitions for the concept it creates challenges as development strategies, legislations, and policies will be later on developed and implemented based on the definitions. The main challenge is, that CE is a multidimensional and holistic concept, and the definition of it depends on who has defined it, and in which terms it has been done. (Ncibi & Sillanpää 2019, 18, 19.)

In simple terms, according to the European Parliament, CE is a model of consumption and production, involving leasing, sharing, reusing, refurbishing, repairing and recycling existing products and materials as long as possible. This enables extending the life cycle of products. Essentially, CE is about reducing waste to the minimum. When a product cannot be used anymore as it has reached the end of its life, the materials of it are kept within the

economy, and will be used wherever possible. In this way, further value for the product will be created. (European Parliament 2021a.)

In comparison to the overall definition of CE stated by European parliament, Sitra, Finland's innovation fund, presents that Finland should be among one of the first countries to make a transition to competitive and fair CE. Sitra discusses that peoples' wellbeing and the growth of economy cannot be based on constantly buying new goods and on the careless use of natural sources. CE is a vital concept to adapt as the world is ravaged by diminishing natural resources, biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. Based on Sitra, in fair CE everyone can create, use and benefit financially from products and services that lean on renting, recycling and sharing. (Sitra 2021)

Moreover, the Finnish Ministry of the Environment supports the statement of Sitra about Finland being among the forerunners of CE practices in the world. On the 7th of April 2021, The Finnish Government made a resolution about enhancing the Circular Economy practices in Finland. The Finnish Government has committed to decreasing the consumption of non-renewable natural resources. Additionally, it is stated that the productivity of resources as well as the circular material use rate in Finland should be doubled by the year 2035 when comparing to the situation in 2015. (Ministry of Environment 2021)

With the aim of ensuring a competitive CE model, the flow of sources must be efficiently managed, as well as the worth-adding processes arising from the purchase of the raw materials to marketing and use of end products. By saying that, CE is expected to create the base for sustainable economic growth by developing new job opportunities, implementing new business models, preserving valuable sources, while promoting social welfare and preserving the environment. (Ncibi & Sillanpää 2019, 30; PWC 2018, 10.)

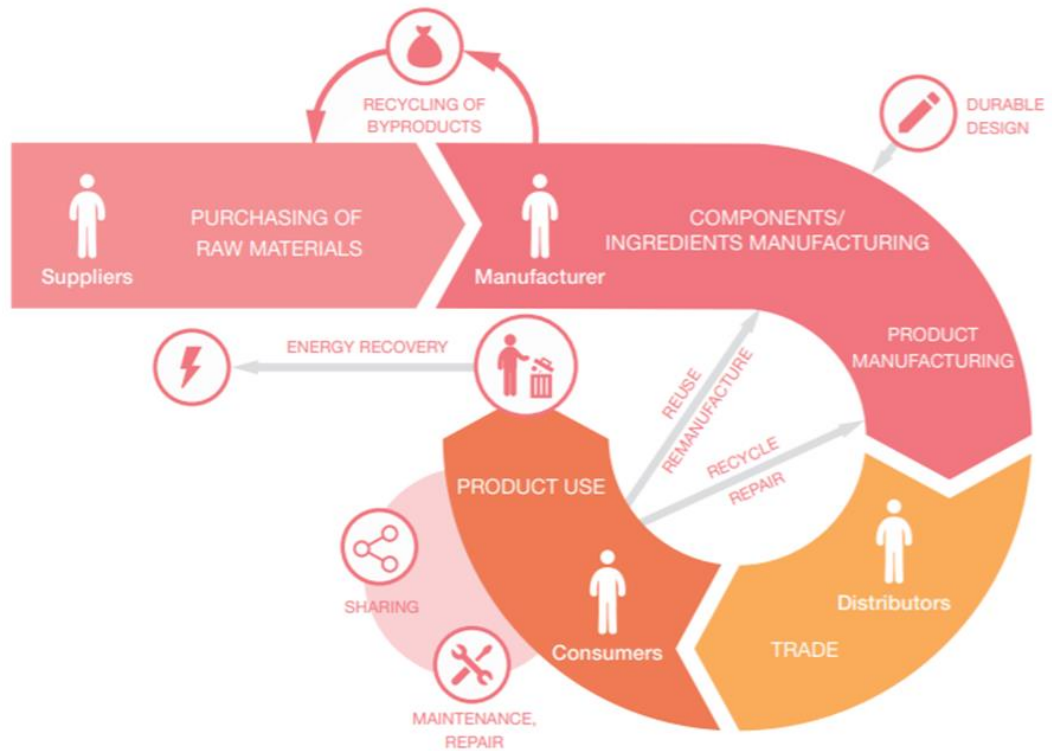


Figure 1. Circular economy loop. (PWC 2018, 10.)

Circular economy loop describes the core idea of CE. Figure 1 represents the idea of CE loop. CE is not only recycling but more. By stating that, the tools used in CE are present through the whole value chain, from the designing phase of the product, to manufacturing and to the way the product is used by consumers. When in a linear model products life will come to an end, in CE, it will be reused, remanufactured, recycled or repaired. In order to fully adopt the concept of CE, corporations must integrate sustainable goals in their planning and be prepared for collaboration with an evolving network of other parties. A properly implemented CE loop ensures profitable outcomes for entrepreneurs, the environment and society. (Ncibi & Sillanpää 2019, 33.; PWC 2018, 10.)

The concept of CE, as well as acting to execute it with concrete initiatives and measures, is one of the main concerns in multiple corporations and countries nowadays. When thinking about the future economic growth and development, the adoption of CE is the best platform for companies in any industry during the exceedingly competitive times. Circularity can be adapted in many agricultural, industrial and mining activities. The types of industry-level circularity vary widely. Yet, driven by demands from governments, employees and consumers, consumer-facing industries, fashion and textile industry being the biggest, have faced the largest volumes of circular activity. (Chaker & Sillanpää 2019, 137; Lacy, Long & Spindler 2020, 75.)

## 2.2 Circular economy in fashion industry

The fashion and textile industry are one of the major industrial sectors, which uses large number of resources and causes various environmental issues. (Niinimäki 2018, 14.) The environmental impacts of the textile production are enormous, as clothes, footwear and household textiles are responsible for major greenhouse gas emissions, landfills and water pollution and use. For instance, 20% of global water pollution is created through dyeing textiles and the carbon emissions are larger than international flights and maritime shipping combined. The figure below (Figure 2) demonstrates the environmental impacts of the textile production. (European Parliament 2021b.)

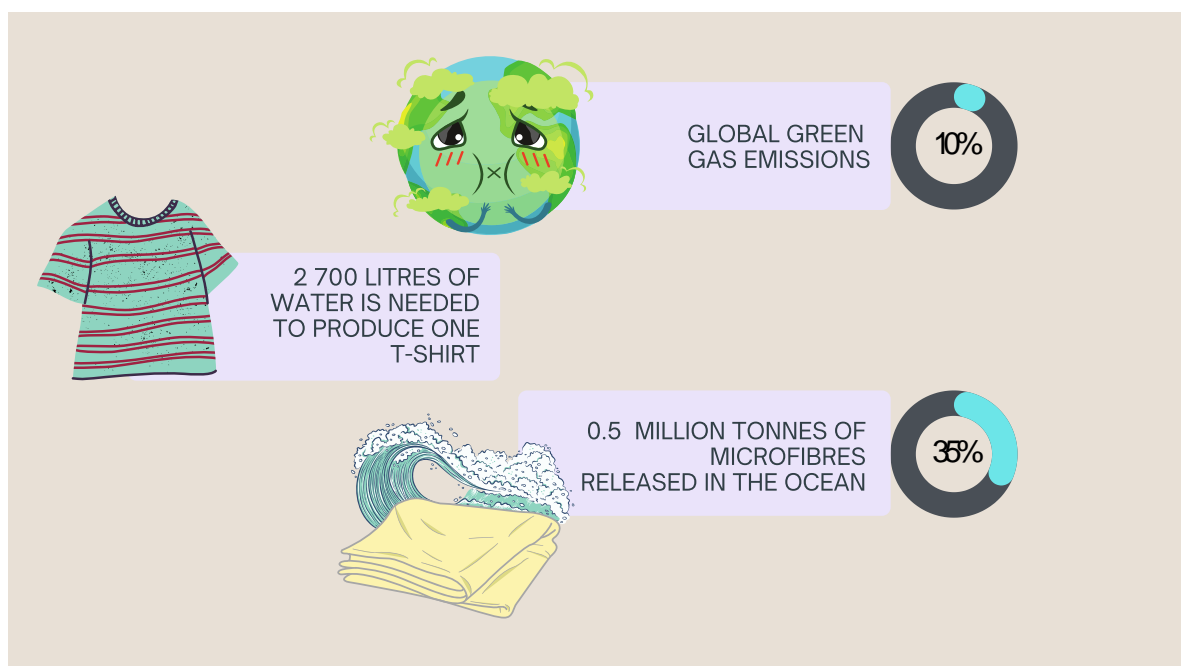


Figure 2. Adopted from European Parliament (2021) Impacts of textile production.

In the linear system, fast fashion has led to a big increase of garments and materials being produced and quickly thrown away. It is estimated that only 1% of textiles globally are recycled into new textiles. Currently, the garments are not made to last for long and often these impulse purchased clothing might be never worn. (European Commission 2020, 13; Niinimäki 2018, 14-15.)

In fashion context, the circular economy approach aims to develop more sustainable systems that are alternative to the linear model where huge amounts of valuable materials are wasted. The products, fabrics and fibers should be continually cycled through con-

nected loops where the goal is to extend the use-time of the garments and help to maintain the value as long as possible. This requires processes where the original design needs to consider several lifecycles of the materials. The systems have to include everything from designers, producers, manufacturers, suppliers, businesspeople to consumers. Other valuable characteristics include tactics, such as pricing the products so that it reflects the true costs of materials and production processes. When producing high-quality and accessible garments that are using renewable resources, such as cotton, greenhouse gases can be minimized, and plastic microfibers are not released into the environment. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2017; Niinimäki 2018, 17; Paoli 2015, 4.)

There are various business models developed around circular economy such as: Rental, resale and offering clothing care on spot. Many of the short-term rental businesses offer their consumers subscription-based models, where fast evolving fashion preferences are taken into consideration. The resale of fashion is widely adopted across the world and second-hand stores are extremely popular. When the quality and durability of garments is increased and locally discarded, the clothes can be utilized better. Several brands have additionally adapted clothing care services, where consumers can repair, restyle and wash their garments and this opens opportunities to keep clothes at their highest value. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2017)

### **2.2.1 Challenges**

Waste is one of the biggest challenge that textile industry has to face when transitioning from the linear model to the circular economy. As earlier discussed, currently the amount of textile waste is enormous, and garments have been worn for a relatively short time or never. There are three different sources of waste that are the following: post-industrial waste, pre-consumer waste and post-consumer waste. Post-industrial waste refers to the side-effect of clothing manufacture, for instance by-products from textiles such as fibres and trimmings. Pre-consumer waste can be for instance the unsold merchandise at the retail store. Lastly, the post-consumer waste includes the waste generated by the consumers, meaning garments that are worn out, unwanted or damaged. The main challenge is to reduce and minimize all the three different types of waste that is currently being land-filled or incinerated. (Koszewska 2018, 340.)

The second issue comprises the effectiveness and economic viability of recycling. There are various factors that can affect the viability of CE in textile and fashion industry, product design being one of them. Closing the loop in the clothing industry is hindered by three different types of obstacles: recycling technologies, disposal practices and consumer behav-

ior. The technological possibilities and disposal practices are challenging stage in the development of circular textile systems, as they should answer the question of collection and sorting of the garments. (Koszewska 2018, 342-344.)

In the CE, product performance is determined in the design stage. All the decisions made will influence the overall lifecycle of the garments and these decisions affect the durability, recyclability and reparability of the product. Designing the product can be a real challenge as the garments should last long combining the optimal recycling options and sustainability, but at the same time the garments have to be desirable and appealing to the consumer. Factors that may affect the product design are for instance the fiber composition, logos, methods of labelling, accessories, fabric finishes and durability. (Koszewska 2018, 342-343.)

Recycling technologies are vital part of the CE as they can provide structural solutions when closing the loop. This requires efforts from the industry, research institutions and NGOs that can introduce new business models. Currently, the problems occur in separating the fibers from the mixed blends and lack of recycling technologies for low-grade textiles. Additionally, the availability is poor in the local and regional levels and the markets are dominated by low quality garments. When talking about disposal practices, the challenges arise in the lack of mainstreamed processes that collect and sort the textiles by different fiber types. The collectors tend to only focus on the re-wearable textiles and neglect the waste that require more expensive solutions. Consumer behavior and education is yet another immense issue. Consumers appear unaware of the need and ways to cope with the end-of-life clothing and textiles, when compared to other recyclable materials. The current demand for recycled products is poor and the products tend to be perceived as lower quality. In the present consumerist society, people are seeking for pleasurable and addictive fast fashion. This issue is highly visible when looking at the problematic nature of online shopping as people order more than they need and return large proportion after trying the garments on. These returned items do not only double the emissions, but the garments might end up dumped or burned, rather than finding a new home. (Koszewska 2018, 344; Ro 2020)

### **2.2.2 Future actions and capabilities**

As mentioned, the textile industry accounts around 10% of the greenhouse gas emissions from human activity. In order to cut the emissions from the textile industry, manufacturers, companies and consumers have to take responsibility. Eco-friendly fashion, textiles made from environment friendly materials is an increasing business. Companies are constantly looking for new ways to create their textiles from waste from natural materials or thrown away textiles. (Ro 2020)

The choice of design and materials has an influence on the environmental impacts of textiles and options available in the future. Circular business models need to be taken into account by companies and manufacturers, and these models should be supported by policies and regulations. Some actions that could be taken are the following: resource taxes on new fibres, focusing on sustainable design education as well as extended producer responsibility in order to make producers carry the responsibility of the materials used through their entire lifecycle. The circular business models should ensure more sustainable production regarding fewer emissions, fair working conditions, safe chemical use, resource efficiency and communicating standards to consumers through labelling. Enhancing the use of green public purchasing of textiles could help with increasing the awareness in the society as well as scaling up circular business models. (European Environment Agency 2021)

In addition to the fact that legislations and regulations should be done in order to support the CE around textile industry, customers are requiring more from companies. Consumers expect more than ever before from companies, especially in the textile industry. Consumers want companies to uphold with high standards, from sustainable materials to carbon footprint. Consumers want to know where, how and when the clothing was made. By saying that, the demand is high for sustainably made clothing. Designers must focus on design clothing with environment in their mind from the very beginning as well as companies start investing on more sustainable practices. These practices are such as, moving textile production from global to local. This reduces textiles carbon footprint and creates jobs in surrounding communities and at the same time enhances the working conditions in the developing countries where the fast fashion clothes are mostly produced. (Stanton 2021)

Technology can be seen as a great tool for supporting the CE business models in the textile and fashion industry. E-commerce and social commerce have created a new business model which has driven consumers to care more about personalized experiences and the environmental factors of clothing. Additionally, on-demand design and manufacturing will

have a huge role in the future fashion industry, which means that instead of first producing and then selling the clothes, it will be done the other way around, first ordered then produced. Moreover, in the near future, virtual sampling, alternative textiles, body scanning as well as virtual dressing, will be even more common ways of taking advantage of the technology in fashion industry. It is vital to embrace the digital transformation in order to avoid waste in the textile industry. When consumers become more conscious about the environment, the companies have to change their wasteful practices and instead, improve them with the use of technology. (3DLOOK 2020)

### **2.2.3 Situation in Europe and Finland**

Textile industry is an important part of worlds, more specifically Europe's, manufacturing industry and is employing around 1,7 million people in Europe. On average, there is 26 kg of textile consumed by Europeans yearly. (European Environment Agency 2019)

When talking about Finland, the textile industry stabilized around 1820-1870, due to James Finlayson and the cotton mill that he established in Tampere. By the end of the year 1860, the factory was the largest one in the Nordic countries. Since that, textile industry was in a significant role in Finland. Due to recession and the world war two, the industry was struggling at times. However, after the war and deregulating the foreign trade, the industry was booming again, and Tampere had 38 different textile industry companies. The downhill of Finnish textile industry started around 1980-1990, as the competition with cheap imports accelerated. In the beginning of 2000, since Finland became part of EU, the industry was part of the global textile industry. This meant that Finland had opportunities in high quality product design, technically demanding products and flexible deliveries. (Tekstiiliteollisuus museo 2006)

At the moment, the textile and fashion industry in Finland is having an interesting and positive transition phase. The businesses in the Finnish textile and fashion industry are constantly growing and are more and more taking over the international markets. (6) The total revenue of the textile industry in Finland has increased in the recent years, and in the year 2020, the total revenue was 430 million euros. (9) The biggest export destination countries of Finnish textile industry are the neighbor countries of Finland, especially Sweden as well as the Northern European countries. Most part of the exporting textiles are clothing and technical textiles. Furthermore, the textile that is imported to Finland mostly comes from China, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia, and major part of the textile imported is garments such as clothing and shoes. (Suomen tekstiili & muoti 2021; 6, 9, 17-20.)

From the EU consumption perspective, textile is the fourth highest pressure category for the use of water and primary raw materials, fifth highest for greenhouse gas emissions and second highest for land use. As majority of Europe's textile production takes place in other regions than Europe, most of the impacts and pressures related to the consumption of the textiles does not occur in Europe but in these other regions. (European Environment Agency 2019)

The environmental issues and impacts regarding the textile system include land use, resource use, releases of pollutants and climate change. In order to reduce these environmental pressures from the textile consumption and production, a systemic change towards circularity is needed. It requires carrying out circular business models supported by effectual policies addressing production and distribution, materials and design, reuse and use as well as recycling and collection. This contains product policies such as eco-design, green public acquisition, extended producer responsibility, classifying and standards. (European Environment Agency 2019)

A new circular economy action plan was adopted by the European Commission in March 2020. The action plan included an EU strategy which aimed to develop innovation as well as improve reusing. Furthermore, in February 2021, the Parliament implemented a resolution on the new CE action plan requiring additional measures to accomplish environmentally sustainable, toxic-free, carbon-neutral, and completely circular economy by 2050, containing obligatory targets for consumption and materials as well as tighter recycling rules by 2030. (European Parliament 2021)

In Finland, various actions regarding to circular economy are aligning with the European Union and the action plan created by European Commission. Finland has actively aimed to be the forerunner of circular economy, but the journey is only in the beginning. The main challenges of Finland consider issues such as: global warming, inequality of society, over consumption and the state of the environment. On the other hand, Finland's strengths are social stability, education system and competence development, which support the goal of being carbon neutral by the year of 2035. In order to achieve this goal, the strategies include using sustainable resources where the materials stay in circulation longer. This is said to be done through digitalization and responsible investors, businesses and consumers. (Finnish Government 2021, 28-35.)

## **2.3 Consumer behaviour**

This chapter examines the factors influencing the consumer behavior in the fashion context, as well as the factors of sustainable consumer behavior. Consumer behavior can be referred as the decision-making process that buyers go through prior to making a purchase. Fashion, by its nature is fast changing and evolving. Consumer behavior especially in this context can be a mysterious set of activities and often these consumers do not recognize that how they make up their mind. There are multiple factors, both internal and external that affect the consumer behavior. People often have positive attitudes towards ecofriendly consumptions, yet these attitudes are not usually followed with sustainable choices and behaviors. The factors affecting consumers purchasing habits, whether they are sustainable or not, can be analyzed and discussed through an acronym SHIFT. SHIFT stands for, social influence, habits, individual self, feelings and cognition, and tangibility. (Habib & White 2018, 9; Rath, Bay, Petrizzi & Gill 2015, 14-19, 29.)

### **2.3.1 Internal factors**

Various psychological and behavioral elements affect the attitudes and actions that people have towards fashion. Internal factors can be divided into perception, learning, memory, motivation, attitudes and personality. (Rath & al. 2015, 57.)

How consumers perceive things is subjective, but what each of them perceive becomes their reality. Perception happens through stimulus of five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, touching or tasting is often the first type of exposure that consumers feel before reaction. Vision is the most obvious stimulus when it comes to fashion and touch is essential as each fabric create different physical sensation. Other senses can play a role in the buying process but might not be as vital as vision and touch. (Rath & al. 2015, 59-64.)

The buying decision is dependent on how we organize the perceived information in a meaningful form and humans have a natural need for a complete picture. The way people learn has an impact on the buying process and what people have previously learned and experienced changes the behavior. Memory is vital part of the learning as it is referred as the process storing and retrieving knowledge. (Rath & al. 2015, 70.)



Figure 3. Adopted from Rath (2015, 57.) internal factors of consumer behaviour.

Motivation is a vital element of consumer behavior. It is the result of either physiological, psychological or environmental forces acting within a person to activate certain behavior. Needs and wants plays strong role in motivation and are often complex and unknown to the consumers themselves. Needs rather come from instinct that are largely physiological, while wants are driven by desire. For instance, a consumer can try to achieve satisfaction through fulfilling their absolute need, such as new jacket and another consumer wants to impress the people around them. Shopping new garments can be driven because of emotional motives without the rational purchasing process that focuses on needs. (Rath & al. 2015, 82-97.)

An attitude simply refers to a settled opinion that can be either positive or negative. They can change over time and can be affected because of emotions and other influences such as personalities, experiences, family and friends and media. There are three different elements that contribute to the way of consumers can create their attitudes. Cognitive element means that what is perceived and believed about an object, this case fashion. Second, the affective element discusses about how consumers feel. Lastly, the behavioral element refers to how consumers take action. Attitudes provide the balance by meeting the consumer needs. (Rath & al. 2015, 103, 124.)

Personality comprises the individual characteristics that affect how people act and react to the surroundings. Personalities are lasting but can change over time for example due to

maturing. Multiple different theories discuss different aspects of personalities. For instance, the trait theories examine the characteristics that differ people from another. The personality traits can be introversion, extroversion, negativism or the need for power, affection, knowledge, etc. To conclude it, these traits and the personality of consumers affect how products are perceived and if they will be purchased ever. (Rath & al. 2015, 127-128, 147.)

### **2.3.2 External factors**

In addition to the internal factors, there are important external factors affecting the consumer behavior such as: age, family status, life cycle, social influences, demographics and psychographics. (Rath & al. 2015, 155.)

Along the attitudes and motivations, certain groups such as age groups, current state of life and family situation can have impact on how consumers behave. Especially age appears to control the purchase decisions, as the preferences of what people seek and want differs by time. For instance, the millennials tend to look for value in their products that are additionally environmentally safe, have a meaning and are community friendly. Their preferences might include local products in order to express their social responsibility. Consumer researches have shown that the behaviors and values that children learn from their parents are continuously reinforced as they grow. Older family members might be more reliant on the younger ones when asking advices on which products to purchase and how to use them. Depending which stage a person is in with their life, needs and wants can differ. Compare for instance a teenager versus mother of three kids and how different their preferences and behavior can be. All in all, the upbringing can have a major effect on behavior and old traditions and norms have shifted throughout the time. (Rath & al. 2015, 156-173.)



Figure 4. Adopted from Rath (2015, 155.) external factors of consumer behaviour.

Social influence means the pressure or information that is gained through media, friends, TV, radio, social networks, role models, celebrities, marketers, politicians and so forth. Influence affects what people buy and wear and this has been the case already in 1800s, as wealth was shown through extravagant clothing. Three forces, social class, culture and subculture determine and shape consumer behavior. Social class and the hierarchical nature of it demonstrate the prosperity and opportunity when purchasing fashion products. Culture refers to shared values and beliefs within a group and can affect how consumers screen products and services. Subcultures are so called “mini-cultures”, such as hippies, goths and punks. The social influence may effect on considering, rejecting or accepting products over another. (Rath & al. 2015, 177-181, 194.)

Demographics refer to a measurable human statistics that include factors such as: age, gender, income, education, population growth, etc. Alone these statistics do not give a full picture but looking into psychographics can provide useful information on how consumers behave. The field of psychographics refers to studying consumer personality and lifestyle, focusing specifically on values, goals, activities and so forth. (Rath & al. 2015, 223.)

### 2.3.3 Sustainable consumer behaviour

Consumer behavior has a huge role when it comes to the effects of the human beings on the planet. It has been suggested that if every person of earth would consume like an individual from Europe or North America, we would need resources from four different planets similar to our own. Due to this fact, it is vital to define the reasons behind individual's consumer behavior on what to consume, how much to consume and how to consume. Therefore, behavioral research investigating the motives of sustainable consumer behavior has become more important than ever before. (Habib & White 2018, 9.)

Consumers often have positive attitudes towards sustainable consumptions, yet do not follow through with sustainable behaviors and choices. This so-called attitude-behavior gap is one of the biggest and most common dilemmas when it comes to sustainable consumer behavior. Consumers typically report valuing sustainability and that they want to do the right thing, however when it is time to make decisions about purchasing products, how to use them and how to discard them, consumers forget their sustainable intentions. (Habib & White 2018, 9.)

An analysis has been done by Sitra, based on the acronym SHIFT which refers to the factors affecting behind the consumer behavior. SHIFT (Figure 5) stands for, social influence, habit formation, individual self, feelings and cognition as well as tangibility. By reflecting to an analysis made by Sitra, it will be discussed which factors effect consumer behavior, whether it is sustainable or not. (Habib & White 2018, 9.)

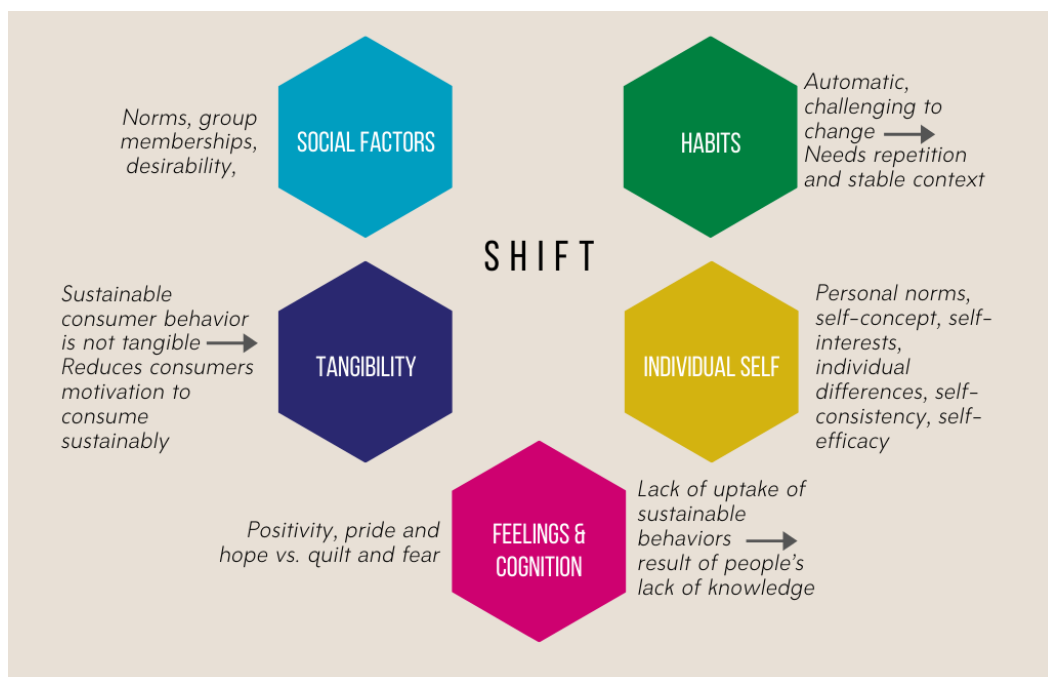


Figure 5. Adopted from Habib & White (2018, 9.) SHIFT analysis.

Social factors have a great impact on whether consumer is engaged with sustainable behaviors. Social norms, social group memberships and social desirability has been highlighted to harness the social influence. Social norms refer to what is generally thought to be socially appropriate and common in a certain situation. Consumers are more likely to adopt sustainable behavior if others are adopting it too, which means that consumers want to follow the social norms in their consuming habits. Furthermore, social desirability refers to the fact that people are motivated to do sustainable choices in order to create a positive self-image in other people's eyes. This leads to the situation whereas consumer choose to invest on sustainable options simply to appear positively to others. Lastly, social group memberships have a great influence on people's behavior. Individuals own social identities partly consists of the social groups they belong to. Due to this fact, people want to fit in to these groups, view themselves positively to the others and behave as well as possess similar behavior, for instance in sustainable thinking. (Habib & White 2018, 13, 17-19.)

According to Goldsmith, social influence is one of the most powerful forces shaping the human behavior. She discusses the differences of offline and online social influences and how they relate in sustainable consumption. It is argued that for instance clothing styles are spreading by non-verbal way, as individuals copy those who they display. Verbal influence refers to for instance word-of-mouth and how interacting with other people can influence purchasing decisions. These both were examples of offline social influences and while online social influences function in a similar way, there are some differences. Blogs, YouTube, Instagram and other social media platforms enable reaching large number of people, as well as their attention and possibly participation. The author suggests that social media in a social world can be an effective tool to promote sustainable behavior. (Goldsmith 2015, 127-135,151.)

One factor in people's consumer behavior is the habits they are used to. In order to have a lasting change towards sustainable consumer behavior, old habits should be broken and new perspective as well as tools to foster new habits given. People develop their own habits and are likely to carry the same habits for the rest of their life, which makes it challenging to change them. Based on Habib & White, habitual behavior is mainly automatic and that is why it is hard to control. In order to form new habits, Habib & White underlines, that first the habit has to be repeated multiple times until it becomes automatic and secondly, there has to be stable context. Firstly, consuming sustainably should be easier, for example by reducing prices and making it less effortful as well as setting green behaviors to be a default choice. Secondly, by providing incentives such as tokens or gifts, and by using prompts in order to remind people to engage in the sustainable consumer behavior,

could be seen as tools to foster new habits. Lastly, providing regular and clear feedback for an individual, can support one's positive consuming habits. Furthermore, according to Lanzini, the stronger the habit, the harder it is to convince people to change their ways of behaving. One way of changing strong habits is to limit the ways of performing old habits, where the individuals are faced with the necessity of considering the alternatives. Besides the fact that changing habits towards sustainable behavior is challenging, there are ways to do that. (Habib & White 2018, 21-25.; Lanzini 2017, 41.)

When attempting to change people's consumer behavior to more sustainable direction, the individual self plays an important role. The factors influencing the individual behavior are personal norms, self-concept, self-interests, individual differences, self-consistency, and self-efficacy. In sustainable consuming context, these factors define how individuals see and experience themselves as consumers, their own motivations and interests as well as whether they are engaged in sustainability or instead thinks that it is others obligation. Based on a qualitative study 'Second-Hand Buying Intentions' conducted in 2020, the consumer behaviour intentions regarding second-hand buying were researched. The findings of the study represents how consumers experience their consuming habits in fashion context. Based on the findings, both, prosocial motive and self-interest motive affect consumers intention regarding environmental behaviour. Moreover, the findings of the study underlined the importance of personal norms much more than other variables in explaining second hand buying intention. The study also stated that the ascription of responsibility and awareness of consequences influences the personal norm. (Habib & White 2018, 29-31, 34-37.; Borusiak, Szymkowiak, Horska, Raszka & Zelichowska 2020)

Feelings and cognition affect sustainable consumer behavior as well. When it comes to feelings in the sustainable consuming context, both, negative and positive feelings are involved. The most common negative feelings appearing are guilt and fear. One might feel guilty about own habits in sustainable consuming. It is stated that feeling guilt, is a vital predictor of attitudes, moral norms and behavioral control which influence environmentally friendly behaviors and attitudes. Fear is seen as another common negative feeling in the context. People are afraid of the consequences of not consuming sustainably, such as disapproval or punishment. Besides the negative feelings, hope and pride are seen as the most common positive feelings in the context. These feelings are connected with the feel about being proud of own sustainable consuming habits and hoping for better future. Furthermore, the lack of uptake of sustainable behaviors has been explained as a result of people's lack of knowledge. This explains why cognition is seen as a factor in more sustainable consuming. There should be clear information provided for consumers as well as

they should be taught about the sustainable consumer behavior and the consequences of it. (Habib & White 2018, 41-43, 45-47.)

The organization Greenpeace has commissioned surveys in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Germany and Italy regarding peoples consuming behavior, emotions and motivation when buying new clothes. Based on all the surveys, a summary was published by Greenpeace. The key findings of the studies showed that people are generally overconsuming clothes. What is more, the overconsumption is followed with an 'emotional hangover' consisting of feelings such as emptiness, shame and guilt. This is explained with the fact that people start to realize that they are stuck in a cycle of following cheap, temporary fashion trends. The findings also showed that instead of shopping because something is needed, people shop for social and emotional reasons such as boosting self-confidence and relieving stress. Moreover, based on the results, many people can be seen as 'excessive shoppers'. These people feel that they have a compulsive need for buying new clothes. Also, the feeling of satisfaction was around with many people when shopping. Lastly, it was discovered that social media has a huge influence in people's desire to shop. (Greenpeace 2017, 2-11.)

Finally, the fact that the results of sustainable consumer behavior are not tangible, affect individual's motivations to consume sustainably. The consequences of inaction and action in sustainable terms are hard to measure and track because the changes occur slowly and there is uncertainty involved in the problems and solutions for them. By saying that, People might not feel that acting sustainably is relevant in the present as the results are not showing immediately. Yet, there are tools to relieve this problem. These tools are such as, reminding consumer to focus on future, highlighting the specific steps to take and outcomes of those steps, make sustainable impacts and actions seem local as well as encouraging the desire for experiences, digital goods and services instead of owning material goods. (Habib & White 2018, 49-51.)

### **3 Methodology**

Fundamentally, research methodology explains how the data for the research is gathered and how it is examined. The research methodology allows the reader to have a critical aspect on the study in order to evaluate the overall reliability and validity of the study. (Myers et al., 3.)

In this chapter, the research methods used in the study will be presented, as well as argued when choosing certain methods. The purpose of this study is to answer two different objectives that are the following:

1. "What are the perceptions of CE of fashion amongst young adults?"
2. "How to develop new event concepts to enhance the positive consumer habits around CE of fashion?"

Both of these objectives will be addressed using a qualitative research method, focus group. The literature review is supporting the development process of the chosen methods, as it was used to formulate the objectives and to analyse the data. To collect data, we have used two different focus groups that will be presented more in detail later on in this chapter. Lastly, the methods applied in analysing the data will be explained and the decisions regarding to the analysing process will be justified.

#### **3.1 Research design**

Research methods can be divided into quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research can be described as a straightforward, systematic method. Quantitative research is conducted by a certain research problem and the aim is to solve problems and find answers by using logical ways. Moreover, qualitative research method is based on examining people's subjective experiences and perceptions. When in quantitative research the focus is on gaining numerical data, the qualitative research is focused on understanding people, their thoughts, perceptions and interpretations about different subjects. (Pitkäranta 2014, 6.; Puusa & Juuti 2020, 56.)

Qualitative research is a research method which emphasizes words instead of quantification in collecting and analysing data. It can be stated, that as a research method it is broadly constructionist, inductivist and interpretivist, yet qualitative researches not always support to all of the three features. Qualitative research is often linked with an interpretive

philosophy because it is needed to understand the subjective and socially formed meaning stated of the phenomenon which is studied. There are multiple data collection techniques and analytical practices that can be used in qualitative research to build theory. Qualitative research was chosen to conduct this research as the aim of the study is to research circular economy in textile industry as a phenomenon, as well as to create an event proposal based on the results. More detailed, the perceptions and thoughts of young adults were researched with the aim of getting new perspective and ideas about the phenomenon instead of numeral data. The research problem was developed after gathering theory from articles, previous researches and literature, regarding the phenomenon. (Bryman 2016, 374.; Lewis, Thornhill & Saunders 2016, 568.; Puusa & Juuti 2020, 79–81.)

According to Hennink and Leavy, focus group discussions can be defined as a type of a qualitative research method, which involve a focus on specific issues, with a predetermined group of people. As the purpose of this study is to research the young adult's perceptions and attitudes towards CE of fashion, focus group method was chosen as it is an effective method when doing exploratory research. The focus groups in this research come from similar socio-demographic backgrounds, and similarity in a certain degree is the fundamental premise for a successful discussion. The goal of the research was to create open discussion between the participants and by choosing focus group method, it is possible to understand the specific behaviors, habits and beliefs. (Hennink & Leavy 2014, 1-2, 16.; Juuti & Puusa 2021, 115.)

### **3.2 Data collection**

In qualitative research, researchers do not find data per se, but instead interpret or construct phenomena in a way that it can be operated as data in social research. Qualitative data collection can include only one or multiple methods. When collecting data for a qualitative research, the aim is to understand, describe and in some cases explain a certain social phenomenon from 'inside the box' point of view, and this can be done by different ways. These ways of collecting data can be such as interviewing or observing individuals or groups experiences, interactions and communication. These approaches strive to understand how individuals construct and experience the world around them and more specifically the studied phenomenon. (Flick 2018, 4-7.)

The advantage of qualitative research, more detailed in this study, focus groups, is the fact that the method helps us to understand the phenomenon from individual's point of

view. Fundamentally, by using focus groups as the data collection method, we aim to collect unique data concerning the studied phenomenon, data which our commissioner can later on benefit from. When considering whether the data collection method has any disadvantages, it can be stated that in any qualitative data collection method, it should be considered whether the data would be same without the researcher's questions and activities. Furthermore, in focus groups, it has to be taken into account whether the participants do not participate in the expected way and be prepared for these kinds of situations. (Flick 2018, 4-6.)

Furthermore, when planning the data collection method, the secondary data presented has a significant role. The literature review is the foundation of this study, as from that we were able to choose the most relevant filters that later on allowed us to answer both of the objectives of the study. The data collection of the study consists of two different focus groups. The participants of the focus group one were found from our own networks. Moreover, the focus group two was comprised of students from a group studying Tourism and Event Management in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. Next, it will be explained how these two focus groups were approached and in which ways the data was collected.

### **3.2.1 Focus group one**

As mentioned above, the focus group one consisted of six young adults from our own networks. After defining the research questions and the purpose of the study, we reached out to people who socio-demographically remind each other. All of these people live in Helsinki, are studying or have recently graduated from university, as well as are aged between 23-29. Due to the Covid19 situation and restrictions regarding it, the focus group interview was conducted virtually in a video communication app Zoom. The aim of the first focus group interview was to get a deep understanding of the participants fashion consuming habits and thoughts regarding the CE of fashion. Besides that, another objective of the interview was to generate ideas about new event concepts around CE of fashion.

First, in order to give an understanding for the participants of the interview situation itself as well as the subjects that will be covered, the following questions were sent by email to the participants:

1. What kind of role fashion has in your life?
2. Think about the past year...
  - a. Where did you purchase your clothing?

- b. How much have you spend in your clothing?
- c. Have you recycled your old garments?
- d. Have you ordered clothing? If yes, how much and have you returned them?
- e. Other thoughts about your own consumer behavior?

The participants were informed, that these questions were not supposed to be directly answered but considered before the interview. Additionally, it was said that there are no right or wrong answers, and that any kind of thoughts and ideas were welcomed.

The focus group one interview was held the 15th of April 2021. The interview lasted for one and half hours and with the permission of the participants, the whole session was recorded. The aim of the interview situation was to let the focus group share their thoughts and ideas freely about the subject. Sub-questions had been created, not to directly ask from the participants but to support the conversation if needed. These sub-questions were the following ones:

- What are the factors that affect your clothing decisions and consuming habits?
- Does social pressure affect your consuming habits?
- Do old habits affect your consuming decisions and how? Can these habits be changed and how?
- Does social media affect your thoughts about consuming behavior?
- Thoughts about fast fashion?
- What kind of elements does a good event include?
- Which kind of events would you most preferably attend?
- How could the theme of CE of fashion be combined with these elements of good events?

The interview started by us introducing ourselves and then each participant introducing themselves and sharing their thoughts about the questions which had been handed them beforehand. After that, the discussion continued naturally, each participant reflecting their thoughts and ideas regarding fashion and events.

### **3.2.2 Focus group two**

As discussed earlier, the focus group two consisted of a group of 23 students. The group is studying Tourism and Event management, in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The group was contacted through our teacher Pia Kiviaho-Kallio. Two meetings

were conducted with the focus group two, and both of them were done through an online platform, Zoom.

The first Zoom meeting was held with the focus group two, the 12th of April 2021. The purpose of the meeting was to present the subject of our thesis, as well as the methods that will be used in the research regarding the group. Furthermore, a pre-assignment was given to the group to answer to during the following weeks before the next meeting. The pre-assignment consisted of a question 'What kind of role does fashion play in your life?' as well as of an assignment called 'Remembering the future' (Image 1).



Image 1. Story shared with the focus group two (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

Remembering the future is a technique that allows the participant to critically think and estimate what could happen in the future. It helps to choose what kind of future people want to live in through old memories. This happens by placing these memories into the future scenario, but when doing so, it allows the participant to decide exactly how the future could be like without limitations. (Sitra 2020)

The participants were asked to fulfill the story and then submit it in a file where we had access to. 16 out of 23 students submitted the pre-assignment, yet all the 23 students were taking part to the second meeting. The second meeting was conducted the 26th of April 2021. In the beginning of the meeting, instructions were given regarding the meeting and the participants were informed that the session will be recorded, and later on deleted after analyzing the data. The focus group was divided into five groups of three to five members in each group. The participants were guided to share their thoughts about the pre-assignment given, as well as to summarize their thoughts into a visual presentation. Besides

that, they were asked to discuss great elements of events and brainstorm event ideas around the concept of CE in fashion industry.

After dividing the participants into five groups, they were divided into breakout rooms in Zoom. Each group had 40 minutes time to discuss, and we visited each group at a time to observe and to see how the process of brainstorming is going. After 40 minutes, the participants returned to the main Zoom session. This was followed by each group presenting their visualization of the thoughts and ideas and sharing them with us and the rest of the group.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The success of research is highly dependent on the analysis of data. Additionally, analyzing the data is one of the most difficult aspects when doing social research. As qualitative data analysis aims to find general statements about relationships and other underlying themes, analyzing it can be lacking clarity when comparing to working with quantitative data that is little easier to contextualize. (Gibson & Brown 2009, 1-4.)

Data reduction is an essential part of working with data that is generated by focus groups, as the discussions generate large volume of data. It is rather impossible to transcribe all the data that has been generated and therefore in order to analyze the data, we have created different themes that function as filters in the analyzing process. These filters have been conducted from the literature review, and there are different filters for both of the research questions. This process allows us to represent the findings in a clear and coherent way and later on to create an event proposal for our commissioner.

For the RQ1 that aims to find out the perceptions of CE amongst young adults, we have focused on the consuming habits and the overall significance that fashion has in their life. Figure 6 demonstrates the process of finding the right type of filters. Additionally, we wanted so examine factors that affect the clothing choices, as well as what people want to communicate through their clothing style. Based on that, four different filters were developed. As discussed in the literature review, social factors, feelings, habits and different motivators affect enormously on purchasing decisions and therefore these filters were chosen.

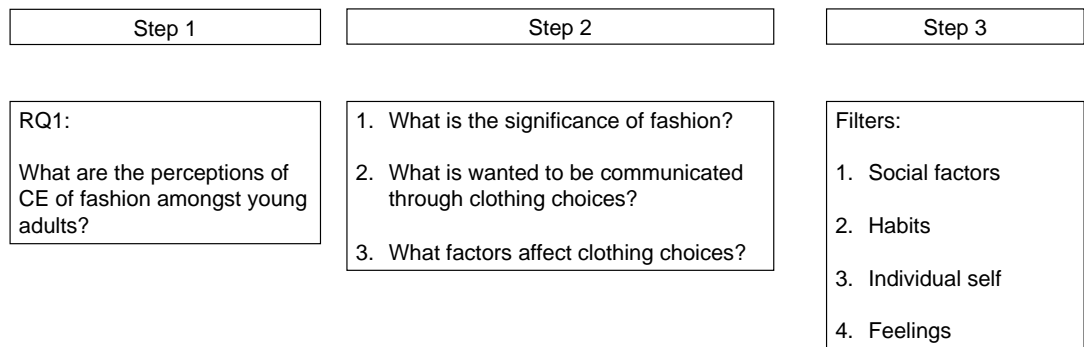


Figure 6. Process of finding the filters for RQ1. (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

In order to answer the RQ2 that aims to find out how to develop new event concepts around CE of fashion, similar procedure was done. The weigh here was to see what kind of sustainable events could be organized that would enhance the positive consuming habits. Therefore, it became relevant to find out different elements, experiences and attraction factors that make people to attend events. Figure 7 presents the process that lead to choosing these specific filters.

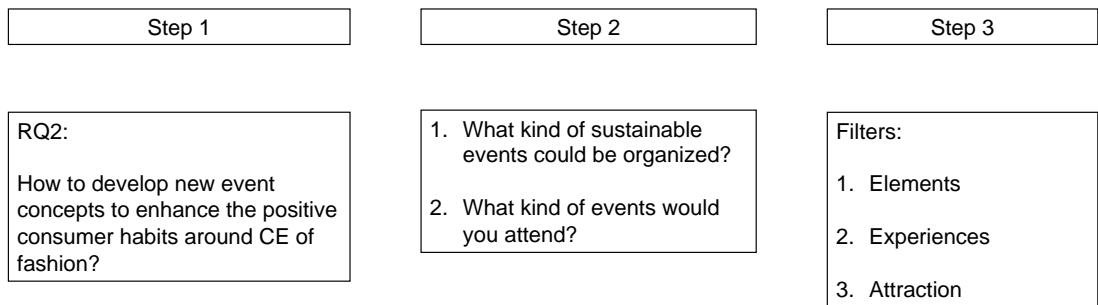


Figure 7. Process of finding the filters for RQ2 (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

## 4 Findings: Focus group one

In this chapter, the findings from focus group one will be presented. As discussed previously, different filters were chosen for both RQ1 and RQ2. First, this chapter examines the findings related to the perceptions of the CE of fashion, discussing one filter at the time (Figure 6). After that, the chapter examines events accordingly (Figure 7).

### 4.1 Perceptions

This sub-chapter presents the findings regarding to the perceptions of CE of fashion amongst young adults. Therefore, the themes discussed are the following: social factors, habits, individual self and feelings. The figure below (Figure 8) was created in order to visualize the findings.

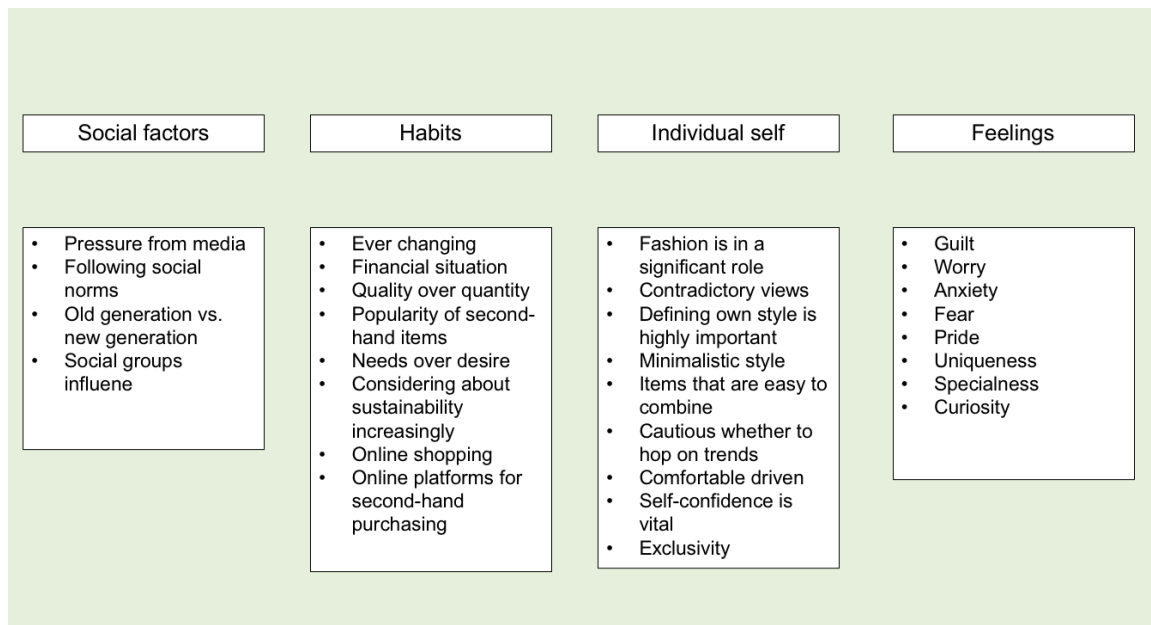


Figure 8. Findings of the perceptions (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

#### 4.1.1 Social factors

Based on analysis done by Habib & White (2018), social factors have a huge impact on people's consumer behaviour, which also emerged from the focus group discussion. Social factors such as the pressure from media, social norms and social group memberships, were mentioned to have a great influence when it comes to the participants perceptions regarding CE in the fashion industry.

According to Goldsmith (2015), online social influence, meaning media and social media, is a huge force shaping peoples consumer behaviour, which could be observed from the discussions as well. During the recent years, the negative issues of CE in fashion industry

has been highly discussed in media, which was also mentioned several times during the discussion by the participants. The participants experience, that certain cases and facts regarding the sustainable issues in the fashion industry that media has brought up have made the problem concrete. Issues such as human rights, carbon footprint and water consumption have strongly affected the participants consumer behaviour.

"The reason why I have started to change my consuming habits is that for instance as I have read the news and how fast fashion industry affects the manufacturer countries and how the human rights are tread down. Also, how some of the western textile companies are taking clothes to for instance Africa, and their textile industry might die as we take our cheap clothes there."

The participants could identify themselves with the Finnish saying 'tieto lisää tuskaa' which refers to the fact that the more you know the more it hurts.

The impact of social media and more detailed the effect of social media influencers was also considered for several times. It was discussed that following social media influencers focused on fashion, affect some of the participants consuming behaviour. Few participants discovered that social media gets them to follow certain fashion trends which increases their consuming. One participant mentioned that by unfollowing the fashion focused accounts has helped with the feeling of needing to purchase new garments.

"I follow several different people on social media who speaks out about the subject (CE of textile industry), which has inspired me to think about my own consumer behaviour as well as helped me to become aware of the multiple grievances regarding the textile industry."

Furthermore, Habib & White (2018) discussed that social norms are a huge factor in whether people act sustainably or not. Overall, the participants agreed that when the issues are commonly recognized and discussed, individuals own thoughts and behaviour regarding the subject will change as well, as they are seen as social norms. In addition, the culture around the fashion industry was discussed.

Regarding to Habib & White (2018), social group memberships have a great influence on people's behaviour, which was highly discussed among the participants. One participant pointed out that the models of consumer behaviour change along new generations.

"When I was younger, it was embarrassing to shop in the second-hand stores, but now as it is a 'trend', it is probably more embarrassing to buy everything brand new."

Moreover, it was mentioned that nowadays, the young generation create their own styles whereas when the participants were younger, trends were more strongly followed. It was considered whether the popularity of second-hand culture affects the fact of youth being braver with their clothing decisions.

Additionally, the participants discussed the fact of how other people's opinions affect their own style and consumer behaviour. Others agreed that they do not care about other people's opinions, whereas others thought that those opinions do bring pressure for them.

#### **4.1.2 Habits**

One of the most vital topics of this research is to gain understanding of the consumer habits. According to Habib & White (2018), habitual behavior is mostly automatic and difficult to change, as old habits should be broken, and new sustainable habits should be formed. By sending out the earlier mentioned questions via email, we managed to get very precise data of the participants habits when purchasing fashion. All of the focus group participants agreed that their habits have changed throughout years due to multiple factors, for instance when gaining financial independency or starting studies in a university. The participants discussed that the purchasing habits nowadays value quality over quantity. Whereas the focus used to be more in the fast fashion and items on sale, now the habits have shifted buying more consciously.

“The new garments that I buy are stable, meaning that I will use them at least for five years. They are big purchases, but I know that they will be in my wardrobe for a long time.”

While the focus in the discussions was quality, it did not necessarily mean purchasing sustainable garments. Three out of six participants emphasized the idea of sustainable fashion consumption when making a purchasing decision. On the other hand, five out of six participants agreed that second-hand purchasing is a great addition to more traditional way of consuming and therefore, part of their consuming habits. One participant stated that they do not purchase second-hand fashion or recycle their old garments. The extremity for this was one participant who purchases 90% of the clothing second-hand and they sell or give their old garments, so that the garments are not thrown away. Additionally, this same participant alters and creates new clothing pieces from second-hand garments.

One participant highlighted the efficiency of mobile apps, when purchasing and selling second-hand garments.

“I have tried to go to second-hand stores, but it is really not something for me. I have experienced mobile apps much more functional for myself.”

Additionally, other participants highlighted the importance of mobile apps and websites, such as Facebook, Zadaa and tori.fi when purchasing second-hand garments. Online shopping was mentioned multiple times when buying new items and one participant mainly gets their garments through collaboration with brands as an Instagram influencer. Moreover, online shopping is not solely a way to buy new garments but used for entertainment purposes.

#### **4.1.3 Individual self**

Habib & White (2018) discuss that the individual self is in a vital role when shifting into more sustainable consuming habits. Individual self in the context of sustainable consumer behavior is defined as different motivations and interests. Therefore, it became vital to get in depth knowledge of the participants individual norms that affect their perceptions of CE of fashion. When starting the focus group discussion, the participants discussed the importance of fashion in their life. All of the participants agreed that fashion has significance in their life, whether they work in the industry more specific in a clothing store, as an Instagram influencer or want to specialize in fashion journalism. Other half of participants that do not work in the field additionally agreed that fashion is important but can still have a difficult view on it as a phenomenon.

When analyzing the different motivators of the participants, it was clear that often the purchasing decisions were driven by the need of getting the garment. Many of the participants shared that their wardrobe has changed enormously throughout the years, as they nowadays prefer the quality over quantity, and that they desire more minimalistic lifestyle. Moreover, some participants discussed that their motivators were finding their own style either from abroad, as well as creating that type of clothing pieces that please themselves.

“When I was younger, I saw many of the fashion trends online, saw how much it costs and I could not afford it. Therefore, I created similar styles with a twist, and it was a lot cheaper. I got the same item in an inexpensive way.”

What was fascinating to see was the fact of how many of the participants agreed that having simple garments that fit with one another with a minimal effort, is the new trend that

drives many of the purchasing decisions. For instance, one participant shared that their wardrobe only contains certain colors that they feel comfortable with, and they do not buy “riskier” options as they might be never worn. Vital take from these discussions were when many of the participants recognized that whether they should hop on every fashion trend or would it be more sustainable to buy something that they could wear for multiple years.

“People should get rid of the idea of always having something new to wear. It should be ok that you can wear same items for multiple years.”

Furthermore, when discussing the clothing style of the participants, all of them agreed that feeling confident in their outfit plays a significant role. The perceptions of their own body, how comfortable the garment is, how easy it is to combine the items and what feelings the outfit evoke were mentioned to be important aspects when choosing what to wear. Additionally, the desire of being more sustainable affects whether a garment is being purchased or not.

“Nowadays, I think sustainability more and I do not want to have a big pile of clothing that I do not use.”

One of the participants mentioned exclusivity when thinking of buying a new clothing item, whereas other mentioned that they have a special feeling when purchasing something outside Finland. Moreover, having an “own style” is important part of the identity of many participants.

“I do not want to follow the mass and that has a lot to do with second-hand, vintage stores and all that. There, I can find something that not everyone who I across with wears the same.”

To conclude it, the confidence, exclusivity and compatibility of items have significance in what drives these individuals to consume.

#### **4.1.4 Feelings**

Based on the theoretical background of the research, fashion and more detailed fashion in the CE concept evokes different feelings in people. Throughout the whole focus group discussion, there were several feelings recognized in the participants while discussing the subject. Both, negative and positive feelings were present.

According to Habib & White (2018), negative feelings such as guilt and fear are often around when discussing the topic of sustainable consuming. The difficult role of fashion in the participants life was discussed a lot. Based on surveys commissioned by the organization Greenpeace (2017), when overconsuming clothes, or buying fast fashion, people often feel feelings such as shame and guilt, similar feelings were observed in the discussions. Feelings such as fear, worry, anxiety and guilt were mentioned for several times by the participants when talking about their relation to fashion industry. Few participants talked about the fact how the huge role of fast fashion in the world evokes anxiety in them.

"I have worked for one of the biggest online stores, and I am aware that the textile industry has a huge carbon footprint, as well as that there are some horrible things related to the clothing industry, when combining all of this it causes guilt and pain. Fashion has a difficult role in my life."

The participants agreed that they all want to strive for more sustainable consuming. It was discussed how the subject evokes mixed feelings as even though one would want to consume sustainable, it might not be possible for instance if you simply cannot afford that.

Moreover, all the participants mentioned that fashion has an important role in their life. It was discussed how the interest towards fashion has increased by time. In addition, all of the participants agreed that they wear clothes which brings self-confidence. Throughout the whole discussion, purchasing second-hand or vintage clothing was attached with being personal.

"It would be cool to dress in a very personal way, yet for some reason I don't know if I feel comfortable then. Dressing in a personal way is brave."

As Habib & White (2018) discussed in their analysis, the topic also evokes positive feelings in people, especially if they are adapting the sustainable consuming behaviour in their own life. Feelings such as pride and being special or unique came up in the discussion. One participant mentioned that the mindset towards second-hand clothing has changed. Before, it could be seen embarrassing when nowadays it is mainly cool and something to be proud of. The other participants agreed to that opinion. It was also discussed how purchasing second-hand evokes the feeling of being special as the products are unique and recycled. Besides the negative and positive feelings of the subject, curiosity was also brought up. Few participants mentioned how nowadays they have the need of knowing from where their garments come from and how they are produced.

## 4.2 Events

This sub-chapter analyses and presents the findings of the focus group one regarding new event concepts in the CE of fashion. Firstly, the participants experiences of great events are discussed. Moreover, the elements and attractions that motivate the participants to attend events were examined. Lastly, event ideas around the CE of fashion were brainstormed by the participants. In order to visualize the findings, Figure 9 was created.

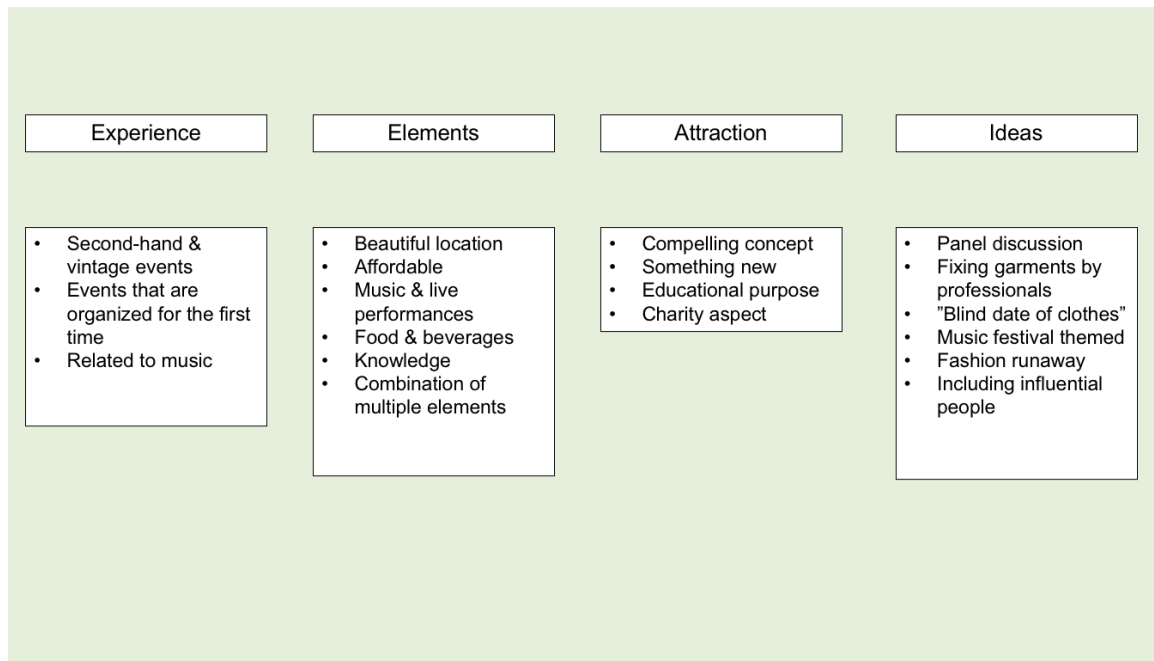


Figure 9. Findings of the events (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

### 4.2.1 Elements, experiences and attraction

When discussing events, it became vital to gain understanding of the previous experiences of the participants. While many of the experiences were related to music, other experiences included attending events that were associated with fashion. For instance, one participant visited an event for sneakers and other visited a vintage clothing event, where the idea was to be able to purchase vintage pieces according to price per kilo.

“I visited Sneaker Bash event couple years ago in Helsinki where you sell second-hand shoes. There you can buy a spot for yourself and sell your own shoes. There is music and competitions. This event made me travel from Turku to Helsinki, because I had waited an event like this happening in Finland.”

There were multiple important elements of events that were covered throughout the discussion. Events that are not too expensive were seen as a factor that makes people to attend. Elements, such as music, live performances, excellent location, food, beverages and

competitions were seen as crucial part whether an event is worth to visit. Additionally, the participants discussed that people should gain up-to-date information on the topics that the events are about. Lastly, the participants discussed that a good event consists of multiple elements, not only the things related to the event itself. Being able to socialize and to enjoy while gaining more knowledge play an enormous role when visiting an event.

One important aspect is the attraction factor, that makes people interested of an event in the first place. Having a compelling concept and trying out something that has never been done before was mentioned multiple times during the focus group discussion. For instance, one participant mentioned about a pop-up event that was organized by a clothing rental company. While the store is online, they organized an event where it is possible to try out the garments, as well as socialize with others while eating good food and drinking beverages. The similar example was mentioned other time when a participant attended the sneaker event that was organized in Finland for the first time. Events that educate and have a charity aspect to it can be a make it or break it type of case when making the decision, as they made the participant feel like they are taking part in something important.

#### **4.2.2 Event ideas**

After discussing the elements, attractions as well as the memorable events that the participants have experienced, new event ideas around the concept were brainstormed. The participants came up with different ideas and elements regarding events around the theme of CE in the fashion industry.

Firstly, one participant pointed out the importance of knowledge in an event like this and the others agreed. It was discussed whether there should be a huge panel discussion organized around the subject of CE in the fashion industry.

"What about organizing the biggest panel discussion in the world. A ready-made concept could be taken, and it could be modified to the theme of CE in the fashion industry."

The participants agreed that there should be speakers such as famous influencers speaking about the subject and evoking the audience to think about their own consuming habits. It was pointed out that the subject should be presented in a way that there has already been a lot done for the issue, but also consider the things that could be changed in the future.

"The speeches should not be held in a way that blames people about not consuming sustainable. Yet, an open discussion, with positive vibes about the options that could be still done should be discussed."

One participant brought up the idea of creating a booth where people could bring their broken garments, and they would be fixed and pimped up by professionals. The idea brought up a conversation about teaching people to use sewing machines and fix their clothes by themselves.

"What if we would hire professional sewers to teach people how to fix their clothes. During the pandemic times, they probably do not have as much demand for their services as normally, so we could offer them a job at the event which would also kind of bring the charity aspect to the event. So there could be a huge sewing event organized."

One participant had an idea about 'the blind date of clothes', where people could bring their own piece of clothes to a wall full of hangers, and then pick something in return for themselves. The whole group started to brainstorm the idea further.

"Actually, there could be multiple different booths in the event. One full of shoes, one full of jeans and so on. Everyone could bring a whole outfit to the event and then choose a new outfit from the booths."

After brainstorming the idea of the 'blind dates of clothes', the participants started to add other relevant elements to the imaginary event.

"There should be a fashion show then, where the new outfits build from the booths would be showed. And there should definitely be a famous person hosting the event."

The participants agreed that there should be a panel discussion attached to the 'blind dates of clothes' event. They all thought that it is vital to share knowledge about the subject. In addition, there should be other elements of a great event around. The participants pointed out that these elements could be good food, an atmospheric venue and music.

## 5 Findings: Focus group two

In this chapter, the findings from focus group two will be presented. First, the findings regarding the perceptions of the CE of fashion will be analysed through the chosen filters (Figure 6). Later on, the findings related to events will be examined similarly through filters seen in the Figure 7.

### 5.1 Perceptions

This sub-chapter examines and discusses the perceptions of the focus group two. As discussed in the data collection chapter (3.2), the methods used for the second focus group was “Remembering the Future” technique and a question related to the significance of fashion. All the answers that were submitted to us, can be found in the Appendices section (Appendix 1). By using this technique, we managed to collect data, where the participants are reflecting on their perceptions without any limitations. (Sitra 2020) The Figure below (Figure 10), summarizes the findings of the perceptions around CE of fashion from the focus group two.

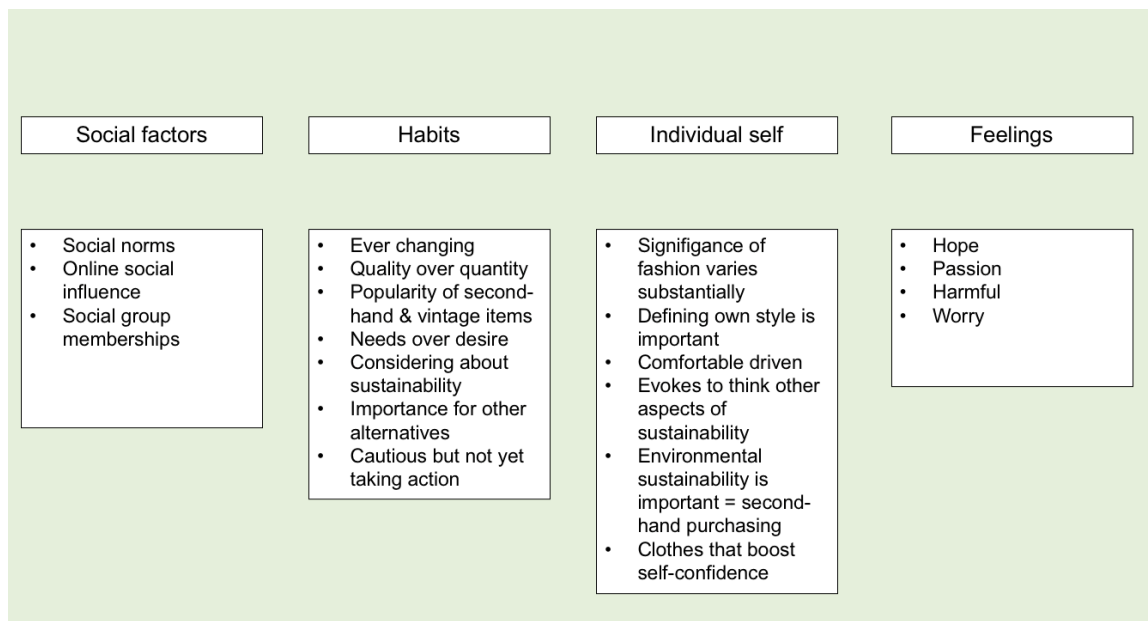


Figure 10. Findings of the perceptions (Hyttinen & Lindroos)

#### 5.1.1 Social factors

Based on the analysis done by Habib and White (2018), social factors have a huge impact on peoples consuming behaviour and to the fact whether they are sustainable. The findings of the focus group two also referred to this fact. Firstly, the impact of social norms could be highly seen in the participants answers to the given 'remembering the future'

task, as well as in their discussions later. According to Habib & White (2018), social norms refer to the fact what is socially normal and appropriate way to behave in certain situation. For several times, the participants experienced that in the year 2030, sustainable consuming, such as recycling clothes, borrowing clothes and paying attention on how and where the clothes are manufactured would be ordinary.

"In the year 2030, circular economy in fashion will be mainstream."

"The "fast fashion" will be gone, and people will prefer sustainable and ethical brands. The cloth shops have adapted to this kind of demand, and they offer more expensive, but sustainable, quality clothes in their shops."

From the discussions regarding sustainability being mainstream and normal in the year 2030, it can be interpreted that in today's world, sustainable consuming is not a strong social norm. Moreover, some participants discussed the fact that they are consuming today from some fast fashion chains, but in the year 2030 they hopefully will not be doing that anymore. Besides that, some participants did not think that they keep up with the fashion trends at all, which refers to the fact that social factors do not define their style.

According to Goldsmith (2015), online social influence, referring to for instance social media, is one social factor in peoples consuming behaviour. The influence of media was seen in the discussions with the focus group two. It was discussed that some of the participants are following clothing stores and influencers in social media which also has an influence on their consumer behaviour.

"I am constantly looking at different clothing stores and influencers on social media and see a lot of advertisements at the same time."

Moreover, regarding to Habib & White (2018), social group memberships is one of the social factors affecting consumer behaviour, meaning that individuals own identities consists and gets influence from social groups they belong to. The affection of social group memberships could be strongly seen in the discussions of the participants as well. One participant considered that clothing decisions are showing that people are part of specific communities. Furthermore, it was discussed that there are differences between generations regarding environmentally consuming.

"Using clothes as a form of expression will reduce with the newer generations more environmentally consume way of thinking. What is important to one generation is not necessarily important to the next."

It can be concluded that the social factors such as social norms, online social influence and social group memberships highly affect the participants consumer behaviour.

### 5.1.2 Habits

As Lanzini (2017) argues, the stronger the habit, the harder it is to convince people to change them. Moreover, when discussing ways to do so, Lanzini suggests the limitation of ways when performing old habits, where the individuals must consider new alternatives. One great example of limiting old habits is when a participant suggested that in 2030, the garments would represent the actual value, meaning that the cheap fast fashion items would not be available.

“We agree that I would pick my new clothes up in about two weeks and the price will be 120€, that is a lot of money, however nowadays we value our clothes and the work behind it and only buy new ones when the old ones break anyway.”

As discussed with the focus group number one, here the second-hand and vintage stores are a great addition to more traditional ways of purchasing as well. Some of the participants discuss that they would want to purchase more second-hand garments but are not currently doing so. Additionally, the importance of quality over quantity is yet again important factor that directs consuming habits. Similar to focus group one, the participants in the focus group two discussed their habits changing over years.

Some of the participants highlighted that “in the future” their wardrobe would be containing garments that are either recycled or second-hand and made out of sustainable materials. Moreover, where the garments would be purchased is yet another topic that made the participants to think about their habits.

“I’ll buy recycled clothes direct from the store, not from the internet.”

The importance for other alternatives was highlighted, as one participant expressed their need for more clothing rental stores in the future. Another topic discussed was how all the large companies should accept old and damaged garments, where they could be made into new pieces or other items containing fabric.

“I find the clothing renting stores to become a big trend in the future. For instance, renting outfits for special occasions and events would be rather useful instead of buying a new outfit every time. “

To conclude the findings from focus group two, it was highly visible that the participants are more and more cautious of their consuming habits. However, when many of the participants described how their ideal future would look like, their ideal habits are not yet part of how they consume in 2021. Therefore, it could be argued that new ways of consuming should be enforced so that people would give up on their old habits.

### **5.1.3 Individual self**

As argued in the previous chapter (4.1.3), individual self is in an important role when making a purchasing decision. As Habib & White (2018) discussed, factors that affect personal behaviour are for instance personal norms, self-interests and motivations. In order to analyse whether fashion is important to the participants of focus group two, we sent out the pre-assignment question: "What kind of role does fashion play in your life?". These answers varied substantially, as some participants argued fashion having significance and large impact on their life, whereas portion of the participants argued fashion not being in an important role.

"Fashion doesn't play that big of a part in my life, I don't need to have the newest and latest fashion."

When thinking about the future of fashion consumption, a participant argued that they want to purchase more responsible clothing, that do not use child labor. Other participant shared that their motivation is to buy second-hand garments, as it is better for the environment. Moreover, when examining the motivation of the participants, it is clear that when discussing sustainable consuming of fashion, other aspects of sustainability are considered as well. An example of this is the following quotation from "Remembering the Future" - story.

"Solar-generated power will be used to charge the devices. When making food, no food waste will be left - all edible will be made into a dish and the non-edible parts will be composted to fertilize the local garden. "

Similar as in the first focus group, participants mentioned motivating factors such as being comfortable driven, wanting clothing that makes them feel good and having garments that fit their preferred style. When discussing the future, one participant demonstrated interest of the materials and whether they need the item or not.

"It is 2030, I have taken more into consideration from what material my clothes are made of. I would think about the material before I buy the clothing and think about do I actually need this clothing?"

To conclude it, there are various factors coming from individual self, that in the end affect whether an item is purchased or not. While many of the participants are currently motivated by consuming sustainably, other participants consider it to be a vital factor in the future.

#### **5.1.4 Feelings**

According to the analysis of Habib & White (2018), feelings, both positive and negative, are highly attached to the sustainable consuming context. Referring to the analysis, hope is seen as one of the most common positive feelings in people regarding to the subject. When it comes to the focus group two, the discussion highly reflected the feeling of hope. Almost each participant discussed the fact how in the year 2030, consuming habits in the world would have been changed in more sustainable direction and it would be a new norm.

"In the year 2030, consumers are more aware of all phases of manufacturing clothes. Brands that are focused on environmentally friendly products will success."

Moreover, many participants experienced that fashion is very important part of their life. At the same time, it was discussed that hopefully in the future they are able to accomplish their passion in fashion with more sustainable choices. Besides only thinking about the circular economy in fashion, the topic evoked feelings about being sustainable in other contexts as well, such as food, energy and materials in general.

Referring to Habib & White (2018), the subject also awakens negative feelings, such as guilt and fear in people. Negative feelings were not as strongly around in the discussions with the focus group two as the positive ones. Yet, it was discussed that the life as a consumer in today's world is harmful and it was mentioned for multiple times that in the future, sustainable consumer behaviour should be a social norm. By almost each participant mentioning this, the feeling of worry towards the social norms of consuming behaviour in today's world, was reflected for several times in the discussions.

## **5.2 Events**

In the second meeting with the focus group two, the participants were asked to brainstorm event ideas. As discussed in the data collection chapter, there were five different groups

that presented their findings and ideas of events around the CE of fashion. These presentations can be found in the Appendices section (Appendix 2). Before presenting the event ideas, it is vital to look into some elements, examples and attraction factors that were mentioned in the discussion. Figure 11 demonstrates the findings related to events from the focus group two.

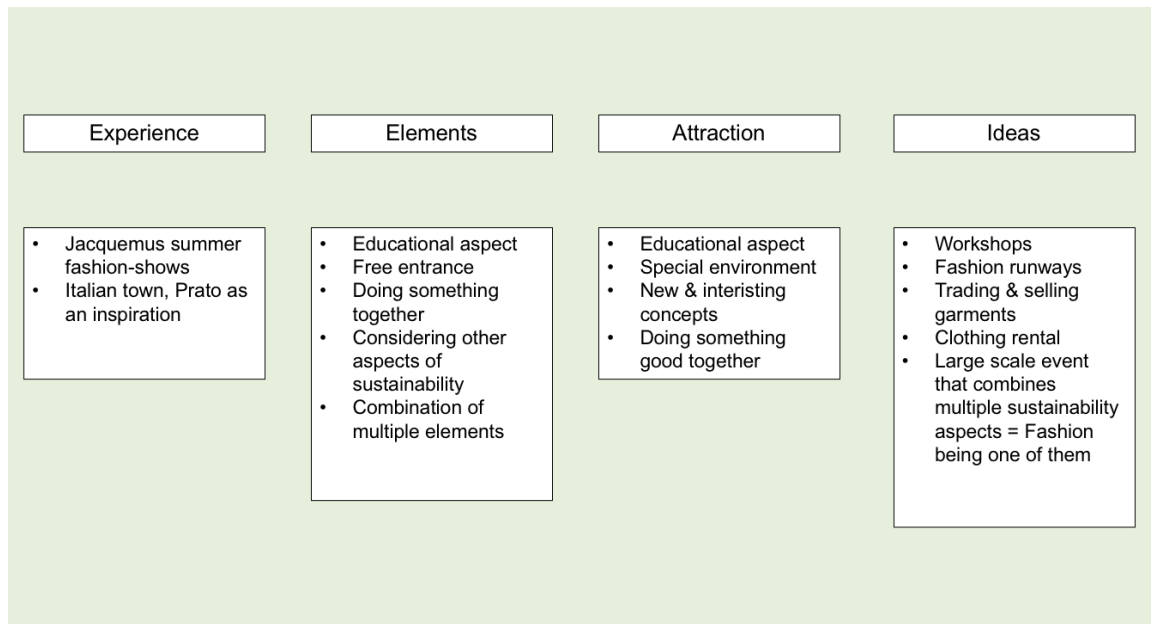


Figure 11. Findings of the events (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

### 5.2.1 Elements, experiences, and attraction

When the participants brainstormed and presented their ideas, some great examples, elements and attraction factors were pointed out. Throughout all the presentations, having an educational aspect in an event was seen as one important element. It was discussed that it is vital, especially in the context of CE to somehow educate and share information about the subject. Besides, having the educational aspect, it was discussed that there should be people with influence to talk about the topic, for instance in the form of a panel discussion.

"Besides all the workshops and other activities there should be something to read and some information available."

Moreover, elements such as being together and doing something together, the entrance being free and other aspects of sustainability taking into consideration in the event were discussed. One group pointed out an example of Jacquemus summer fashion-shows which are organised in natural, ready environment.

"Jacquemus summer fashion-shows, use natural environments to use clothing and fashion brands, one has been in wheat field and one in lavender field. By having these kind of environments, we eliminate the need of renting a venue, spending money on electricity, lighting and everything like that."

In addition to the above-mentioned example, another group of the participants referred to an idea of transforming old clothes into new ones executed by a small town in Italy.

"A small town in Italy called Prato has built its fortune on transforming old scraps of clothes that cannot be sold in thrift stores into new clothes, particularly knitwear and wool."

The attraction factors of events emerged from the examples and elements mentioned by the participants. The importance of the educational aspect of the event was discussed throughout the whole session, which refers to the fact that learning something new attracts the participants. Moreover, special environment, new and interesting concepts as well as doing something good together were mentioned for several times which refers to these elements in events attracting the participants.

### **5.2.2 Event ideas**

This chapter discusses the concrete ideas that the focus group two presented. Several groups mentioned workshops as an idea, where people could fix their old garments, such as jeans and moreover learn how to fix them. One group mentioned a brand called Petit Pli, which focuses on clothing that grow with the children. By spreading the awareness of brands similar than them, it could really enhance more sustainable consuming. Events for trading and selling garments was mentioned multiple times.

"People would go through their own wardrobes and think what they don't need anymore. Then everybody would gather and trade pieces of clothing. It would be trading clothes and not money at all. "

Additionally, events that relate to clothing rental was proposed couple times. One group suggested that second-hand and vintage related fashion runway could be done, and the idea is to create a new collection from old pieces or recycled items. Other groups mentioned interest for fashion show events, where the materials of the clothing would be the focal topic. Moreover, the recycled fashion themes should be brought up by the designers.

“Designers should actually show to the people that what you can do with recycled fashion.”

As discussed in the previous chapter, new and interesting concepts, special environments and events where new attitudes are created and information is shared could be the focal points of new event ideas. One group discussed how the event should be held in a large venue, such as Messukeskus located in Helsinki, and the area would be full of different booths. To summarize it, similar than with focus group one, this group combined multiple elements when presenting their ideal events and the focus is on increasing the awareness of sustainable fashion.

## 6 Event proposal

This chapter presents the event proposal for our commissioner, PasilaHUB. In a great event, the consumers are in the central point of the event. Consumer perceptions of event experiences consist of the viability of the event. The satisfaction and enjoyment of the event visitors is formed by the event program, interactions of consumers, event management systems, the setting of the event as well as the staff. (Robinson, Wale & Dickson 2010, 164,165.)

The event proposal consists of multiple elements that were mentioned during both of the focus group sessions. As both of these groups agreed that an exceptional event has various elements, we have combined different components that make the event appealing. Based on the participants perceptions of great event and suggestions on event ideas, we created the final proposal. The figure below demonstrates the different elements for our event proposal.

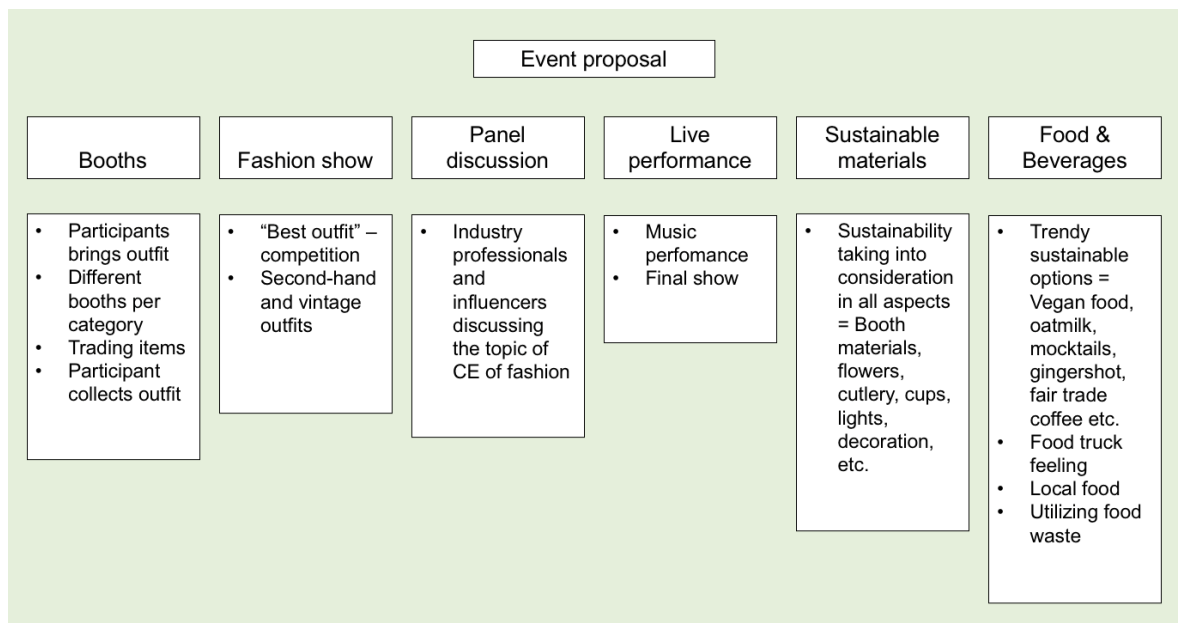


Figure 12. Event proposal (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

It is essential to define the theme of the event. While CE of fashion is the main focus, other sustainability aspects have been taken into consideration. This event combines the elements of entertainment, education and activities. First, the main attraction factor is a second-hand concept, where the event venue would have multiple different booths (Image 2). These booths would be organized by different clothing categories, meaning for instance jackets, jeans, bags, hoodies, accessories, shoes and so forth. The idea is that a participant would bring an outfit that they no longer use and collect a new outfit from the

booths instead. To take part on this activity, the participant must bring an outfit to give away, yet no money is involved.

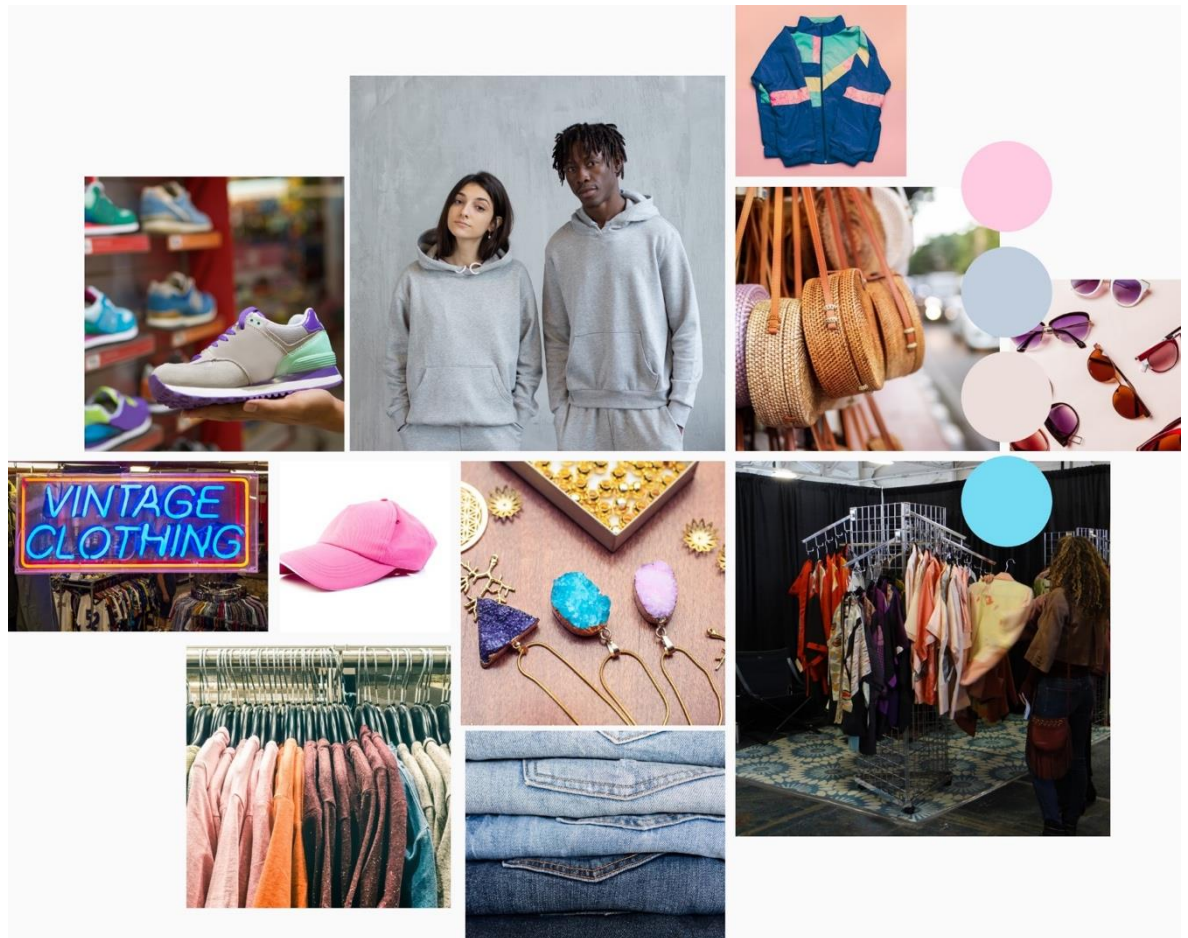


Image 2. Mood-board of second-hand booths (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

The main activity, second-hand trading, is followed by a fashion show. The participants can join a competition of creating the best style from the garments they have purchased. While there is the competition factor, the activity itself is relaxed and entertaining. The fashion show as well as the whole event is hosted by a well-known speaker. The speaker will additionally moderate the panel discussion, where professionals and influential people will discuss the CE of fashion. The topics discussed could be the progress that has already been done, as well as what the future entails. The final activity of the event is a live music performance. It would be the perfect closure for the event and the last WOW-element offered for the participants. In order to visualize the atmosphere of the shows a mood-board was created (Image 3).

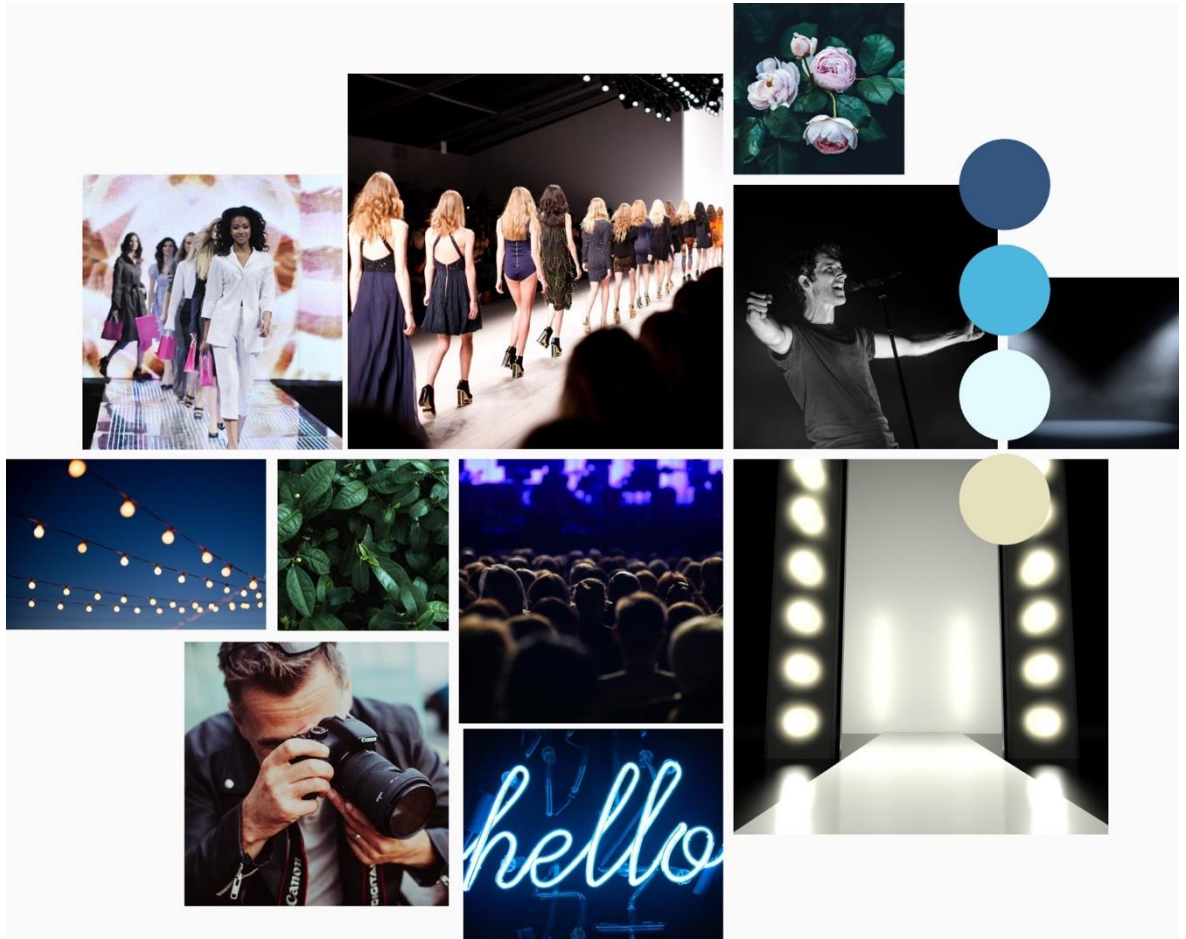


Image 3. Mood-board of fashion show and live performance (Hyttinen & Lindroos 2021)

After discussing the program of the event, it is vital to discuss other elements that tie together with the sustainability concept. Materials used to build the venue and the booths should be sustainable, meaning either recycled or materials that can be later on recycled to minimize the waste. Additionally, the decoration and flowers should favor domestic manufacturers, as well as yet again think the recyclability of the materials. This should apply to the cutlery, cups and plates used in catering as well.



Image 4. Mood-board of food and beverage court (Hytinen & Lindroos 2021)

Food and beverages are an important element of the event. When thinking about food court design, local food trucks could be used in the venue (Image 4). The menu should be carefully chosen and following the sustainability theme. Most of the dishes could be vegan and dairy products could be replaced by the plant-based products, such as oat, almond and soya. The selection could contain for instance finger food, mocktails, champagne, ginger shots and fair-trade coffee. One way to enhance the sustainability is to use locally produced food and to consider the food waste. For instance, the leftover dishes could be sold as takeaway.

## **7 Discussion**

The two objectives of the research were: “What are the perceptions of CE of fashion amongst young adults?” and “How to develop new event concepts to enhance the positive consumer habits around CE of fashion?”. In this chapter, we will observe the connection between the findings and the theoretical framework. Additionally, we discuss the validity and reliability of this research, as well as the overall learning process of conducting this study.

### **7.1 Consideration of results**

The aim of the research was to gain understanding of how young adults perceive CE in fashion context. Therefore, it was highly relevant to research consumer behaviour, particularly the significance of sustainable consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the second aim was to research on how to develop new event concepts and therefore one event idea was proposed based on the focus group findings.

Throughout the research of the perceptions, it was evident that sustainability is a factor that affects how people perceive and consume fashion. On the other hand, while it is considered enormously, the difference is that whether a consumer can or will act accordingly. The results indicate that there is a high interest on alternative ways of purchasing, such as second-hand stores and online platforms for it, while most of the participants still get their garments through fast fashion stores.

Throughout the research, social norms, social group memberships and the pressure of media could be seen as a great influence. This analysis supports the theory of Habib and White (2018), that argue social factors being one of the biggest force that impact consuming behaviour. The findings indicate that the pressure coming from social media meaning the negative issues, such as human rights and carbon footprint make the issues concrete, yet the participants do not always purchase sustainably. While Goldsmith (2015) argues that online social influence is a huge factor shaping the consumer behaviour, our results indicate that it might rather affect the mindset but not yet the behavioural patterns.

The consuming habits were recognized to be everchanging, due to growing up and changes in financial situation. The findings suggest that the overall trend in consuming habits has shifted more purchasing what is needed, rather than purchasing by what is wanted. According to Rath (2015) the family situation, age and current state of life have a major impact, as well as can influence whether an individual is purchasing according to

their needs versus wants. From this it can be stated that sustainable consumption is partly relying on upbringing and how the individuals' habits have changed throughout the years.

The data suggests that fashion is in a vital role for the majority of the participants and the findings indicate that motivators that shape consuming behaviour revolve around the self-concept and self-interests. The theory from Habib & White (2018) suggests individual self plays a role in whether the people are engaged in sustainability or perceive it as others obligation. The results indicated that people are partially engaged with the idea of consuming more sustainably, as it was discussed that the mindset should shift from buying everything new to rather it being acceptable to wear the same garments multiple years. In the study, it was seen that participants argued fashion supporting their self-confidence, as well as a way to express themselves. Additionally, their purchasing motivation focused more on minimalistic style as well as outfit collection that are easy to combine with one another.

The study demonstrated that people have several different feelings about fashion and moreover can have mixed feelings particularly in sustainability context. The findings suggest that people are feeling guilt and fear regarding to the negative side effects of fashion industry. Similar feelings were founded in a study conducted by the organization Greenpeace (2017), as overconsumption can lead to feeling of shame and guilt. Moreover, Habib & White (2018) argue that hope and pride are the most common positive feelings when for instance an individual is being proud of their own consuming or being hopeful for a better future. This was visible in our study, as the participants in the first focus group highlighted the feelings of pride when purchasing second-hand garments. In the second focus group, the findings indicated that majority of the participants feel hopeful for more sustainable future.

In conclusion, our study indicates that people are curious about different alternatives challenging the traditional linear way of consuming. Currently, the mindset has shifted to a more sustainable consuming, but the actions do not always follow the sustainable principles. As the second aim was to create an event concept that enhances positive consumer habits around the CE of fashion, the proposal considered multiple elements that could boost the sustainability. Our findings related to events highly suggested that participants are seeking for getting knowledge on topics around CE of fashion, as well as sustainable consumption in general. Additionally, our findings suggest that one of the biggest factor that attracts a person to attend an event is the diversity of elements. While an event should be educational and meaningful, it should not make the participant feeling judged. Moreover, it was suggested that a great event is combining entertaining elements, such

as fashion show and live performances. When combining all the different elements that our event proposal suggests, it could enhance the positive consuming habits as well as the sustainable mindset could be followed by sustainable actions.

## **7.2 Validity and reliability**

Validity and reliability are well known measures that originate from quantitative research. While these terms can be an imperfect fit for qualitative data, it is equally important to assess these measures when discussing the credibility and consistency of the research. Validity refers to how accurate or “truthful” the research is. In qualitative data, the overall focus is on the extent which the data effectively portray the phenomena that is researched. Validity requires the researcher to clearly document research process so that others can assess whether a study is credible or not. The validity of data is dependent on the effective application of data collection. When talking about reliability, it means the degree of whether a study would produce the same results if repeated using the same approach and methods. One can think it as if another researcher would conduct the same research projects and can come up with the same findings. On the other hand, reliability is not seen as important as validity in qualitative research because of replication. Reliability of the findings is dependent on recurrence of the original data and how it is interpreted. (Hennink & Leavy 2014, 175-178, 187-189.)

In order to support the validity of the study, clear research questions were determined, as well as a clear structure of the thesis planned. Relevant themes for the thesis were chosen so that they would later on support the following steps on the thesis as well as with planning the focus group discussions. Relevant and reliable sources were used in the theoretical framework, such as books, academic articles and previous studies. Furthermore, qualitative research method was chosen to conduct our study as the aim of the study was to research the phenomenon of CE in textile industry. Moreover, instead of collecting numerical data, the goal was to get a deep understanding of the perceptions and thoughts of young adults amongst the subject as well as come up with an event proposal based on the findings. The focus groups were chosen with the aim of getting relevant data for the study and the participants shared common perpetrators. In order to ensure the reliability of the data collection, the focus group discussions were recorded and later on analyzed. Additionally, the participants were clearly informed about the topics as well as the terminology was explained.

### 7.3 Self-reflection

Overall, the whole thesis process taught us a lot. In the beginning of the process, we both had a general understanding of the concept of CE in fashion industry, which had to be deepened before starting to gather data for the theoretical background. We got ourselves familiar with the subject by watching documentaries, listening podcasts and reading the latest news regarding the subject. By this way, we gained more knowledge and felt more confident starting the thesis process itself.

When gathering data for the theoretical framework, our interest towards the subject constantly grew. We struggled with the fact of what is relevant to include to the theoretical background chapter as suddenly there was lots of interesting data founded regarding the CE in the fashion industry. Yet, by focusing to the main aim of the study, we succeeded to gather the information needed regarding this study.

Our overall concern was whether the chosen filters for analyzing the collected data would provide us and more importantly our commissioner relevant information. Moreover, when choosing focus groups as a data collection method, we were considering, whether the participants would participate enough to the discussions. Despite all the concerns we had, the focus group discussions provided us valuable data regarding the researched subject. Afterall, we were satisfied with the findings as well as the event proposal conducted.

Lastly, doing this thesis with a pair, it allowed us to reflect and discuss the study throughout the whole process. Additionally, we felt that this process enhanced our teamwork skills, especially at the stressful times. The subject of our thesis made us think about our own consuming habits and what we could individually do as consumers. Most importantly, the fact of doing the thesis for our commissioner PasilaHUB, made the whole process much more meaningful and interesting.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1. Focus group two pre-assignment findings**

#### **Participant 1.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- Fashion has quite a large impact in my life but I don't strictly follow all the latest trends anymore like I used to when I was younger. I have recently gotten a bit more interested in Vintage kind of clothing so thrift stores have been my new friend.

Remembering the future

- I think the recycling clothes and thrift storing will get more and more popular (like it already has during the last few years)
- The shopping moves more and more to being online (platforms like Zalando will get even more popular)
- People will pay more attention on how and where the clothes have been made

#### **Participant 2.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- Fashion has an immense role in my life. I do not follow trends but I dress in a way that is comfortable and fit my style. I do not really buy clothes second hand even though I would want to which means that most of my clothes are bought from stores that represent the fast fashion. However, I take care of my clothes and do repairs if and when something breaks.

Remembering the future

- My every day consuming habits would mostly be seen in my diet. I would not eat any kind of meat (chicken, red meat, fish) or use any kind of animal products (milk, eggs). I would be vegan and I would be very conscious of how much food I buy from the store so that nothing goes to waste. I would also walk or use a bicycle to travel for example to work. I would also use sustainable sources of energy to get electricity.

My wardrobe would look like a small piece of history is placed there. The clothes would be all bought second hand from for example flea markets. I would probably have styled my clothes to fit my personal style by making small repairments and modifications.

There would be a lot of flea markets to purchase and recycle fashion. There would also be a lot of dressmaker's shops that would be very popular because people want to modify their clothes to fit their styles. The dressmakers' prices would be relatively low and people with no sewing skills would use their services.

### **Participant 3.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- I love buying new clothes and I like fashion but I don't always keep up with the newest trends. I always look carefully at what I wear so that the whole outfit looks good.

Remembering the future

- I think that in 2030 people will think more about what kind of clothes they wear and how those clothes are made they will think more about sustainability. It will become more popular the wear clothes that are made from recycled material etc. I also think that people will start buying more on the internet.

### **Participant 4.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- I like fashion, but I don't always follow it. I like to wear clothes that feel good, and that I personally like. If they follow the fashion, good. If not, I don't mind. I love fleemarkets, and I usually buy recycled clothes, or if I buy from the shop, I try to buy good quality clothes, that last long.

Remembering the future

- In 2030 people will recycle their clothes much more. The fleemarkets are the places to find good quality clothes and that's where I will be bying mine. The "fast fashion" will be gone, and people will prefer sustainable and ethical brands. The cloth shops have adapted to this kind of demand, and they offer more expensive, but sustainable, quality

clothes in their shops. There are some brands, that will use reused material, such clothes made out of woodfiber or plastic.

**Participant 5.**

What kind of a role does fashion play in my life?

- I feel like fashion in a way is important to me. I don't follow all the trends but I like to keep myself updated on what's in and what's not. My own style isn't completely based on the current fashion trends, I like to think that I combine different pieces of fashion and make it work in my own way.

Remembering the future

- In 2030 I hope my wardrobe would consist of clothes that are made from sustainable materials and bought from responsible businesses that wouldn't for example use child labour. I hope that in the future I will be able to better recycle my old clothes as well as shop for new clothes that are recycled. In 2030 I feel like I should also have quit buying fast fashion and that flea markets would be as popular as H&M is today.

**Participant 6.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- My habits according to fashion have change quite much during the years. As a teenager I did buy clothes that did seem nice at store but I didn't think any further. Nowadays, if possible, I want to know more about the brand and I'll find out do they use recycled materials or does they do other ecologically friendly actions.

Remembering the future

- I believe that people will recycle more and there will be also new ways to recycle clothes. Consumers are more aware of all phases of manufacturing clothes. Brands that are focused on environmental friendly products will success.

**Participant 7.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- Fashion plays quite an important role in my life, but I don't usually follow the newest trends. I wear clothes that I like and feel comfortable.

Remembering the future

- It is 2030. I have taken more into consideration from what material my clothes are made of. I would think about the material before I buy the clothing and think about do I actually need this clothing? Before I go to the stores, I would check out these flea market apps such as Zadaa or Tise, or just to go to the actual flea market. Visiting flea markets can be time-consuming but there is a chance to find something you wanted and with affordable price! And when I want to get rid of my old clothes, I would try to sell them in a flea market or give them to Uff. I would also ask my friends are they in a need for something.

### **Participant 8.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- Fashion doesn't play a big role in my life and I don't follow the newest trends. I wear classic clothes that look and feel good and fit many situations. I prefer quality over quantity.

Remembering the future

- In 2030 I really care which materials my clothes are made of and I appreciate the high quality of them. Overall, I try to live as sustainably as possible and recycle everything. My travels will also be done in a sustainable way.

### **Participant 9.**

Remembering the Future

The year is 2030 and the circular economy has fully developed. Just for reference I will be 49 years young and feel that my life as a consumer will be much less harmful to the environment than it is today. There are many changes I hope to make in that time to lower my carbon footprint. Changing the house, I live in which is large and energy inefficient. This will be rectified over time with renovations to bring my home up to a greener energy rating and utilizing the recycled materials more readily available. Solar energy panels installed

on my roof and an electric car if I still must own one. I hope to see more eco-friendly solutions to car ownership with more ride rental options for car use minimizing the need to own one's own car.

In this circular economy the use of recycled materials has become mainstream, and the fashion world no longer is as expressive as it once was. Due to the use of recycled materials the fine delicate fabrics that once dominated the runways are no longer available due to the downgrading of fabrics caused by the recycling process. I envision that the colours will be less vibrant and branding less important. Using clothes as a form of expression will reduce with the newer generations more environmentally consume way of thinking. What is important to one generation is not necessarily important to the next. Consider Cars for example, older generations love the sound and feel of big powerful engines and the car they drive to some not all reflects the persona they want to project. Just like fashion. The new generation who are used to electric vehicles and understand the damage internal combustion engines cause will you really car if you do not have a big V8 to show off with?

The clothing will be bland yes but there will not be such a demand for new and cheap clothing each season that sweatshops in Bangladesh and other 3rd world country's will not be necessary either. Clothing will be manufactured locally using locally sourced recycled materials. Practical and quite uniform. I hope this does not sound to much like a George Orwell dystopian future type scenario like in the book 1984. This new system is for the benefit of the environment. I hope many other industry's follow the same example.

As you may have already guessed fashion does not play a huge part in my life. Sure, I like to look good when I go out, but I do not update my wardrobe often. I have a few nice pieces of clothing for going out and suits for formal occasions. However, 90% of those items were found in UFF. It is better for the environment although it can a little time consuming going through the unorganized racks of clothes and difficult to get an idea what it would look like on or even fit. Socks and Underpants I buy new because I do have to draw the line somewhere and do not want to be in some dudes preloved jogging undies.

### **Participant 10.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- Fashion is important part of my life, but I don't always keep up with the new trends. I always pay much attention to my clothes and their appearance. I don't always have to buy new clothes from normal clothing stores but I usually also prefer flea markets.

Remembering the future

- 2030 when people have adopted the mindset of consuming sustainably:

1. I think I would use more sustainable supplies for example less plastic things
2. I would buy more clothes from flea markets, I would find out what my clothes are made of
3. I would prefer vegetarian food but I would not give up meat entirely
4. I would recycle everything
5. I would look where my clothes as well as my food have come from
6. I would change my beauty products to not contain microplastics

### **Participant 11.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

-Fashion plays a big role in my life as I am constantly looking at different clothing stores and influencers on social media and see a lot of advertisements at the same time. I also love to shop, but have been trying to improve my habits by for instance shopping in online second-hand stores like Zadaa and Depop. I think Finland still has some improvements to do in the triftshop side as I find most of them very unpleasant to shop at. However, there is quite a few nice new triftstores such as Saaga Second Hand in Oulu and many quality second hand boutiques in Helsinki.

Remembering the future

-In 2030 I would consume more responsibly. My wardrobe would consist of fewer items than now. The items would be high-quality clothing, possibly from my favourite brands that are out of my budget at the moment. In the wardrobe you would not find any fast fashion items, they would all have been donated or recycled.

I would also shop from second-hand stores. The app that i now use, Zadaa, will have improved greatly and there is many similar apps in Finland to shop from. Furthermore, there will be more high-quality second hand stores also in Porvoo, with reasonable pricing. Finally, I find the clothing renting stores to become a big trend in the future. For instance, renting outfits for special occasions and events would be rather usefull instead of buying a new outfit every time.

### **Participant 12.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- Fashion doesn't play that big of a part in my life, I don't need to have the newest and latest fashion. However, Fashion is sometimes a way to express myself and who I am.

Remembering the future

- I believe that most of my clothes will be either from the flea markets and vintage stores. If I buy brand new clothes they'll be from recycled and sustainable materials.

### **Participant 13.**

Remembering the future

-I think in 2030 I'll have less clothes than now and I pay more attention to sustainable consuming. I'll buy recycled clothes direct from the store, not from the internet. Clothes might be fully made from recycled material. Borrowing clothes f.ex. for one or two days might be possible.

### **Participant 14.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

-Fashion doesn't play a very important role in my life. I prefer my clothes being comfortable or supporting over looking good or being some special brand. However, since I study in a business degree, I know that I will have to dress up a little when it gets to business life. One more thing I sometimes use fashion for is to show that I am part of a community.

Remembering the future

- When I got up this morning and got dressed, I got a gig hole in one of my three shirts. So, I grabbed the shirt and a skirt that already broke a while back and has since then been carefully stored in my wardrobe and went after work to the clothing shop. I showed the women working there my two items of clothing and we decided to get a new skirt made out of it. For newly made clothes she ordered a while ago a bigger amount of fabric so there only had to be one delivery. Before she orders new one every single piece of the old one has to be sold. Now she has only two pieces left and I decide on the one I prefer better. We agree that I would pick my new clothes up in about two weeks and the price will be 120€, that is a lot of money, however nowadays we value our clothes and the work behind it and only buy new ones when the old ones break anyway. After that I go to the

market where as it is autumn, I buy some fresh mushrooms and potatoes, some apples for desert and I am already getting my favourite farmers milk for breakfast tomorrow morning. As it's my friends' birthday tomorrow, I am also buying her a potted plant and I will make her a cake with the leftover apples from tonight.

### **Participant 15.**

What kind of role does fashion play in your life?

- My current habits and preferences direct the way I purchase and use my clothes. Since I have a passion for some style, I have many clothes that are different. However, the majority of them (I would say 60%) are second hand and the rest are clothes that I've had for many years now. Many clothes have been also given to me by my friends and relatives. I don't buy new clothes because I take good care of them.

Remembering the future

- A normal day has the same concepts as breakfast, some work, lunch, workout, and dinner. Although, the energy used for these actions will be reduced to very low numbers. Instead of turning a lamp on, sunlight from the window will be used. Solar-generated power will be used to charge the devices. When making food, no food waste will be left - all edible will be made into a dish and the non-edible parts will be composted to fertilize the local garden. Shopping is reduced to only 2 times a week. The packaging for products is all made from recycled materials and can be either recycled once more or bio-degradable.

My personal wardrobe is similar to as it was before. All clothing is 8 or more years old. New garments are purchased in second-hand flea markets. Interactive platforms for exchanging clothes allow people to switch their garments. Large companies accept old or damaged clothing to make it into new clothes or other fabric containing items.

## Appendix 2. Focus group two presentations of event ideas

### 1. Group one event ideas

### Circle Economy Event Ideas.

- Access to workshops teaching sewing techniques.
- Access to sewing machines in a group environment.
- Flee market sell and swap clothing.
- Able to clothes in a larger area rather than having to sort through piles of clothes.

- Able to donate and purchase recycled fabric.
- A fashion show displaying what is possible with recycled clothing fabric.
- We feel that the entrance to the exhibition should be free.
- Information on how this new attitude towards clothing helps reducing exploitation of workers in 3rd world countries.

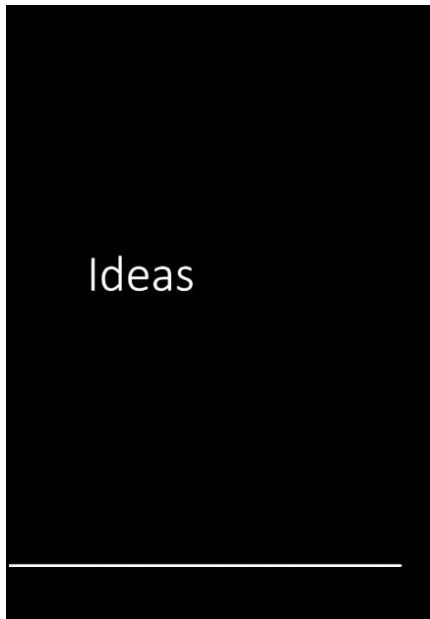
### 2. Group two event ideas

#### **FASHION EVENTS IMPLEMENTING CIRCULAR ECONOMY:**

- Educational conventions or panel discussions educating the field professionals or people interested about making fashion events circularly economical
- Fashion shows using natural environments  
(*Jacquemus summer fashion shows*)
- More recycled fashion themes and designer collections



### 3. Group three event ideas



Clothes that grow with children (petitpli)

Event about recycled clothes

Workshops on how to repair clothes and how to make them last longer

Renting clothes

Supporting domestic seamstress'

Trading clothes

Supporting second-hand stores

### 4. Group four event ideas



### 5. Group five event ideas

## Events around fashion & circular economy

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- Fashion shows with clothes made from sustainable and recycled materials
    - Recycled cotton, Tencel, Econyl
  - A small town in Italy called Prato has built its fortune on transforming old scraps of clothes that cannot be sold in thrift stores into new clothes, particularly knitwear and wool.
    - Bringing people to introduce ideas like this to big events to raise awareness
- 

