

National College of Art and Design

Department of Fine Art: Applied Materials

**“Ask Before You Buy”- Is there adequate education for Junior
Cycle students on the topic of fast fashion?**

Lisa Della Chiesa

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National College of Art and Design

School of Visual Culture

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: *Lesu Della Chiesa*

Programme / department: *Applied Materials / Fine Art*

Date: *30/01/22*

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Introduction

Fast fashion has a detrimental effect on our planet and society. In Ireland, each minute, half a tonne of clothing is dumped into landfills. (Clancy, 2020)

This research paper seeks to address the buying habits and knowledge around fast fashion among Irish Junior Cycle students, and proposes that the topic of fashion and sustainability should be incorporated into the curriculum for this age group.

This research sets out to explore the following question; is there adequate education for Junior Cycle students on the topic of fast fashion?

A survey which involved three schools; a co-ed school, an all girls school and an all boys school was carried out to gather primary research data. Following the procedures advised in the NCAD Code of Practice for Research Ethics, I completed a 'Plain Language' form and prepared a consent form which was circulated to parents by the schools' principals. There were 284 participants in the research, each of whom participated with parental consent.

A workshop was conducted in the schools, post survey, to educate students on the issue of fast fashion. The investigation revealed that there is some growing awareness among students on the issue of fast fashion and sustainability. However, there is an evident gap between student knowledge and shopping behaviour. The survey also revealed that 37% of students could not define 'sustainable fashion'. The workshop encouraged students to act in an environmentally friendly manner by second-hand shopping, up-cycling, or gaining awareness on the sources of the products they consume. Just as students learn about recycling plastics, etc.,

education on fast fashion must be incorporated in the syllabus. Teaching about fast fashion will encourage students to shop and act in a more sustainable manner.

The topic of fast fashion has been addressed by many authors, Kate Fletcher, Sandy Black and Sass Brown have particularly informed my thinking around slow fashion.

In *Fashionopolis*, Dana Thomas has stated that “Fast fashion’s target audience is young eighteen to twenty-four years old, a demographic that doesn’t hold on to clothing purchases very long” (Thomas, 2019, p. 39). I believe the target audience is getting younger and there is very little research on fast fashion in an Irish context. I hope to address this in my research by surveying young Irish people aged 13-16.

Chapter one outlines the problems with fast fashion and the necessity to educate the younger generation on this topic. Chapter two is where I examine how fast fashion can fit into their school curriculum and I will outline my proposed survey and workshop. Chapter three discusses the survey results.

1. The Need For Education For Young People On The Topic Of Fast Fashion

1.1 Reasons for education

This chapter looks at the issues surrounding fast fashion and how manufacturers target our young population.

A project I completed on my first day, in Applied Materials class, made me think about the labour involved in making such clothes. Our tutors gave us a pair of second-hand jeans which we had to reconstruct without using scissors. We could only use a stitch ripper to take apart all the seams and had to keep all the threads for reuse in the construction part of the project. I had to rip a pair of *Primark* jeans, containing many small intricate stitches. This made me reflect on how much labour went into creating a pair of *Primark* jeans which could be bought for less than five euro.

As a teenager, I bought clothes based on desire not necessity. I wish I had been educated on how synthetic material is produced and how it cannot be easily recycled. In school, from a young age we are educated on the importance of recycling, of using the correct coloured bin, of using less water and gas. Yet, I never learned about the consequences of fast fashion or how the fashion industry is second to the oil industry as the world's largest polluter. (Bain, 2015)

Only a very small proportion of textiles are recycled. In the US alone more than "10.5 million tonnes of clothes end up in land-fill each year, and even natural fibres may not break down easily" (Bain, 2015). The textile and tannery industries make up twenty percent of the world's industrial-related freshwater pollution. (Takeuchi, 2014)

The sector of the fashion industry we understand as 'fast fashion' focuses on low

costs and speed to deliver the latest collections inspired by designer collections, catwalk looks and celebrity styles. The pressure to reduce costs and get fashionable, low-cost clothing into stores, in the shortest time frame possible, results in unsafe working conditions, exploitation of workers in developing countries, damage to the environment, water pollution, use of toxic chemicals and increasing levels of textile waste. (Brown, 2010, p. 9)

1.2 Generation Z

My research is mainly focused on the age group of 13-16 year olds, otherwise known as Generation Z. I believe this age group is targeted directly by manufacturers engaged with fast fashion. Through my research, I hope to analyse if our young people have any awareness of the human rights and environmental issues linked to these cheap, wear once only, items of clothing.

Generation Z is the group of people who were born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Dara Treseder states “swiping, tapping and scrolling are about as second nature as breathing” for Generation Z. ("Generation Z", 2021)

Shopping on online platforms such as Shein, Boohoo and NastyGal is also second nature for this generation.

“A 2020 Vogue Business Survey of 105 members of Generation Z found that more than half reported buying most of their clothes from fast-fashion brands” (Kale, 2021).

A survey that I conducted on my instagram stories showed that 91% of my followers were not educated on Fast Fashion in secondary school and 96% wished they had been taught about this topic.

I believe that the target audience is getting younger and provision of education for this age group would raise awareness and create an ethically savvy shopper.

By encouraging youth activism in this area, a greater change can happen, as the young people will bring the message home.

1.3 The fast fashion industry

We are living in a world where we buy too many products and this disposable consumer culture is slowly destroying our planet. Geoffrey B. Small outlines how in the UK in 2009, over two million tonnes of fast-fashion clothing, which was worn an average of six times, was thrown away. According to Small, mountains of synthetic clothes are ending up in African landfills creating ecological problems with water tables and new strains of malaria. (Brown, 2010, n.p)

Alongside the damage to the environment, the conditions of workers is also a major issue. The collapse of a nine-story garment factory in Bangladesh in 2013, threw a spotlight on the fashion industry. More than one thousand workers died and over two thousand were injured in a building deemed unsafe. (Becker-Leifhold, and Heuer, M. 2018, p.1 - 3) Fast fashion dominates, putting pressure on clothing manufacturers to produce goods in a short time span. This ultimately impacts on those at the bottom of the supply chain who actually sew the garments. (Black, 2015)

What is the reason behind our addictive consumption of fashion? The relationship between fashion and consumption clashes with sustainability goals. We shop for clothes addictively. According to Kate Fletcher, there is always the underlying pressure to constantly reconstruct identity, instigated by changing fashion trends. This feeds insecurity and rising levels of psychological illness. The consumption of fashion is a way to beckon wealth, social status, identity and encounter new things. (Fletcher, 2014, p.117, 121)

Fletcher's solution is buying less and making better, choosing better quality items that are made as ethically as possible. Knowledge is key to the sustainability movement in the textiles and clothing sector, therefore we need to empower consumers, activists, academics, and future designers and actors throughout the fashion industry. We also need to create a demand for greater transparency in the age of instant digital communication. (Black, 2015) By educating young people to make the right choices, to buy smarter and to buy less new stuff, change can happen.

1.4 How manufacturers target Generation Z

Forty-five percent of Generation Z uses Instagram to discover new brands. (Patel, 2021) In a *Forbes* interview, Joe Cardador highlighted that Generation Z will become the largest generation of consumers in the next few years. They already embody up to one-hundred and forty three billion dollars in buying power. (Fromm, 2021)

Fast fashion industries embrace the surge and functionality of new technologies. This is especially evident in the use of social media influencers. In *Influencer Marketing Hub*, they define an influencer as “someone with the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience” (Geyser, 2021). This strategy is certainly used by influencers, such as Molly-Mae Hague, a twenty-two year old former Love Island contestant, who had no experience in the fashion industry, yet, this year was appointed as a Creative Director of fashion label *PrettyLittleThing*. Ms Hague has secured a seven figure deal with this Fast Fashion Company. Ms Hague has 6.2 million followers on Instagram so it is not difficult to imagine her impact on her followers promoting *PrettyLittleThing*. (Blaney, 2021)

There are also other strategies that brands use to promote impulse buying. Brands provide influencers with a discount code which they advertise to their followers. The influencers then earn commission per use of their discount code. *Instagram* is also the perfect platform for advertising as influencers have the power to swipe up links which their followers can access by swiping up while watching their stories and the link will direct them straight to their products/websites. (Siegle, 2019)

This clever marketing strategy is highly successful for the fast fashion brand, *Shein*, a Chinese, ultra fast-fashion retailer, which experienced “10.3 million downloads globally from across the App Store and Google Play, Sensor Tower data shows”. (China’s turbo-charged online fashion takes on Zara, H&M, 2020)

This conflicts with Generation Z being known as the leaders of change to save the planet. *Shein* has used a blend of Instagram and *TikTok* advertising. On *TikTok*, the

trending hashtags are #Shein and #SheinHaul which seemingly boasts billions of views. There are thousands of videos with buyers showing off their hundred euros worth of clothes bought on *Shein*. The more one advertises for *Shein*, the more discounts they receive. This leads to impulse buying and unnecessary purchases. (Nguyen, 2021)

The CEO of *Shein*, Molly Miao, states the company releases between 700 and 1,000 new items a day. *Shein*'s "sustainability policy" affirms that each product is only made in small numbers (between 50-100 items), so it minimises the amount of raw materials that are wasted. In a *Euronews* report, using the most conservative figures, they calculated that *Shein* produces at least 35,000 items a day and at worst 100,000. This scale of production is contributing to enormous levels of carbon emissions and waste. (De Ferrer, 2021)

Instagram is also the cause of a new pathology, "the cinderella syndrome" , where one should never be seen wearing the same outfit twice on social media. This results in clients buying clothes online, wearing them once for an event or *Instagram* post (with the tags still on) and then returning them the next day. (Thomas, 2019, p. 272) This syndrome has become so severe that brands and retailers are overpowered. The result is your "brand new returns end up in landfill" as companies no longer resell returns, while delivery also adds to the levels of carbon emissions. (Constable, 2020)

In an article titled, "Gen Z doesn't know a world without fast fashion", an untypical teen shopper, Bialek, who had grown up in a family of artists, was interviewed. She

creates her own clothes using second-hand fabrics. Acknowledging the amount of work that is involved in creating a garment, she says, “If I see a new dress for \$16, that makes me think someone along that supply chain who made it or transported it might not be paid well or treated fairly.” (Nguyen, 2021) Bialek is unusual in thinking so responsibly. A survey I conducted on my Instagram showed that 170 of my followers never wore the same outfit twice to a teenage event. The survey also showed that 81% of my followers had bought an item which they never wore.

1.5 Environmental impacts

For basic everyday clothing such as T-shirts and jeans, the greatest environmental impact comes from the high energy consumption of laundering clothes. (Black, 2010) Fibres still have to be spun, knitted or woven, dyed, finished, sewn, and transported – all of which have different environmental impacts. This shows there are challenges in the fibre production because materials are treated differently. (Fletcher, 2014, p.6 - 7)

We all need clothes and our clothing choices can also be used to express our personalities. Gen Z cares deeply about the environment and saving our planet, yet, they succumb to the constant pressure to change their wardrobes, unaware of the negatives of the fashion industry. For this reason it is essential that young people receive education on fast fashion.

2.The Plan Of Action

2.1 Fast fashion in the Junior Cycle curriculum

This chapter addresses where education on the topic of fast fashion fits in the Junior Cycle curriculum.

The issue of fast fashion is touched upon in Junior Business under the topic 'consumerism and impulse buying'. It is also referenced in 'Economic Inequalities', which is part of Junior Cycle, (J.C.) Geography, where it could be an option for a CBA ,(Classroom Based Assessment), Project. It is also touched upon in the new J.C. Home Economics under the topic of "Creative Textiles", (CBA), where students can recycle or upcycle a textile item for an individual or the home. In many schools the above subjects are optional. It is dealt with in 'development education' in Transition Year, (TY) , however this year is also optional in many schools.

The framework of the J.C. consists of twenty-four statements of learning, (SOL), grounded by eight principles, which constructs the curriculum. Schools will establish all statements of learning, alongside the key skills featured in the programmes for J.C. students. (Framework for Junior Cycle | NCCA, 2021)

2.2 Junior Cycle Statements Of Learning

I believe that the topic of Fast Fashion fits into the J.C. curriculum under SOL, 7, "to value what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts." Students can decide their consumer choices and recognise

that their choices can impact positively or negatively on their community and the wider society. Their choices can lead to real change.

It could also fit under SOL 9, “the student understands the origins and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him.” Students will explore and engage with areas of learning such as the materials and toxic chemicals that are used to make our clothes, the people who make our clothes and the wasteful nature of fast fashion. However, students will also become aware of the potential benefits the fashion industry brings, such as providing employment in developing countries.

Learning about fast fashion would also support SOL 10, “The Student has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably.” The students would learn about the importance of asking before buying. They would learn what are the alternatives to fast fashion. They could be invited to discuss the sustainable living strategies they might employ in their shopping habits. The main solutions that could be explored are; shopping less, shopping better quality or second hand, and extending the lifespan of our existing clothes.

SOL 11 is “The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/his well being and that of others.” When learning about fast fashion, students would be made aware of the exploitation of fashion industry workers and can also address mental health pressures placed on young people to follow trends.

SOL 14 is “The student makes informed financial decisions and develops good consumer skills”. In the context of learning about fast fashion, students would gain an understanding of the benefits of shopping sensibly and ethically, while understanding where their money goes when supporting fast fashion companies. The topic would prevent students from trend buying, or buying single wear pieces.

In addition to the above SOLs, the topic of Fast Fashion could be linked to the Key Skills of Junior Cycle:

‘Managing myself’- Making considered decisions.

‘Working with others’- Contributing to making the world a better place.

‘Communicating’- Discussing and debating.

‘Being Creative’- Exploring options and alternatives, Implementing ideas and taking action. (Framework for Junior Cycle | NCCA, 2021)

2.3 The resources available

Up to now, fast fashion has been an optional topic for schools. For example, in Northern Ireland, *Twinkl*, offers an optional debate pack on fast fashion for primary schools. Perhaps, it is more beneficial to educate students at a younger age on this topic. *Unicef* offers information and a forty-minute activity on fast fashion for young people. They state “children have a right to a sustainable and healthy planet” (Unicef, 2021).

ECO-UNESCO has recently launched an online platform with courses for students on sustainable development, fast fashion and climate justice.

There are plenty of educational programmes that offer to teach students about the issues around the consumption of fast fashion. However, schools or students must pay for the programmes. These include *Rewrite Climate*, which offers two programmes, but you must pay per student. This programme is approved by *Gaisce Ireland* and could be a very popular option with TY students. There are twelve lessons in the programme and one lesson is dedicated to “Sustainable Fashion”. *Climate Revolution*, a programme that touches upon Fast Fashion, can be taught in Development Education for TY students. Another programme is *Action on Global Citizenship*, for both primary and secondary school students in Ireland.

In Ireland, we also have the *Fashion Revolution*, which was originally called “*Re-dress*”. This company successfully organised the *Better Fashion Workshops* with secondary schools. However, most of these events happened only in Dublin.

2.4 Fast fashion in the CSPE curriculum

I believe that fast fashion should be on the curriculum and not be an optional topic. It fits perfectly in the subject of CSPE, as part of the Wellbeing programme that is compulsory for all Junior Cycle students. The topic of fast fashion also fits into Geography and Business Studies topics, but these two subjects are optional in secondary schools in Ireland. CSPE is a core pillar of the J.C. Wellbeing programme. The six indicators of wellbeing are; Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected, and Aware.

By teaching students about fast fashion, we are encouraging students to make responsible choices. We are developing their awareness around issues in the fashion industry. Students will respect others and respect true craftsmanship. They can also be active and connected in their school and local communities. The topic can also develop their resilience in relation to peer pressure and fashion trends.

In the subject of CSPE, fast fashion can be looked at in Strand 1: Rights and responsibilities (child labour and human rights abuse). However, it could also be a major topic in Strand 2: Global Citizenship, where students examine issues of poverty, inequality and sustainable development and explore ways to bring about effective change.

In Strand 2.9, students learn about 'Effecting global change'. The learning outcome is students should be able to analyse one global issue or challenge, under the following headings; causes, consequences, impact on people's lives and possible solutions.

In Strand 2.10, the learning outcome is students should be able to evaluate how they can contribute in responding to one challenge currently facing the world.

In Strand 2.11, students should be able to examine a campaign for change in the area of sustainability and assess reasons why it has been successful or not.

(Short Course Civic, Social and Political Education, 2021)

2.5 The survey

I plan to survey three secondary schools, single-gender boys, single-gender girls and a co-ed school on their knowledge of the topic.

Step one is to survey students prior to presenting a workshop on fast fashion. The purpose of the survey is to find out where they shop and why, if they shop online, if they buy a new outfit for each event, how often they wear the same item of clothing, (excluding jeans), what influencers they follow and if they have ever bought an item of clothing and never worn it.

I would like to find out if they shop second-hand, if they know how to dispose of clothing the correct way and if they are concerned about the environmental impact caused by the disposal of unwanted clothes. My final question in the survey is to find out if they can define what is meant by sustainable fashion. I plan to carry out this survey using Google forms.

2.6 The workshop

Step two is where I present a workshop. To introduce the workshop, I will begin with the question, "Where do you buy your clothes?". I will then speak about the most popular shops in Ireland and how some of the businesses do not even need a physical store as they are so popular online. The goal is for students to be able to distinguish the difference between fast fashion and sustainable fashion brands.

The second stage I want to highlight is the wasteful nature of Fast Fashion. “Where do our clothes go?” In my slideshow, (figure one), I will show the campaign by Stella McCartney where a model poses on a Scottish landfill site for the AW17 collection. I feel this striking image will grab the students’ attention as it highlights the issue of our disposable culture.



Fig.1 (McCartney, 2019, Model on a Scottish Landfill)

I will also discuss an RTE news article about a mountain of discarded clothing in the Atacama desert (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 (Fast fashion leftovers dumped in Chilean desert, 2021)

It is important for the students to know how to dispose of clothes correctly, by donating to a charity shop or a clothing bank. However, what happens to the clothes if they cannot be sold? In the *Journal*, it states that “globally, 30% of collected clothing are not resold on domestic markets due to poor quality and low resale value”. The rest is sent overseas to sell in countries like Ghana, Senegal and Kenya. (Rogerson, 2021)

I hope to develop students’ awareness that cheap and poor quality clothing cannot be resold or upcycled. The consequences can be seen in figure one and two.

I plan to use examples such as *Boohoo*, which was named and shamed in the British Parliament in 2018, for producing a dress that cost only £5. One expert deemed the dress of such low quality that even charity shops could not accept it. Labour MP

Mary Creagh said in the Parliament, 'Clothes are sold at pocket money prices, costing little more than the price of a coffee, and are treated as just as disposable.' (Ferguson, 2018)

Figure three is a simplified map of the life cycle of a fast fashion dress. I feel this strong image will help students understand the cost to the environment of Fast Fashion.

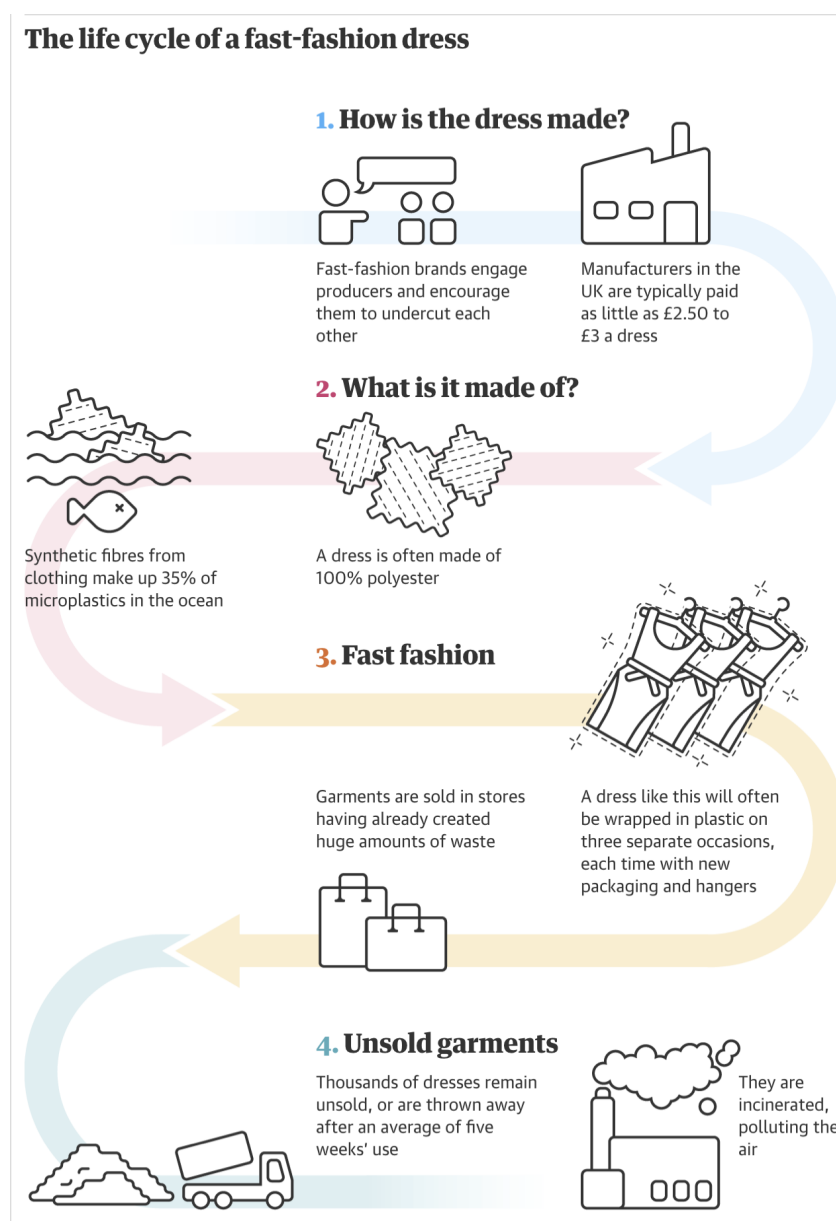


Fig. 3 (Laville, 2019)

The third stage in the workshop is, “Who Makes Our Clothes?”. I believe we should always be asking who made our clothes, are they paid fairly and are they working in a safe environment? Similar principles are taught in Business Studies and Geography about the food industry and should also be applied to the fashion industry, allowing for cross-curricular links to be developed.

The fourth stage of the workshop is to speak about the impact of laundry on our clothes. Scientist Imogen Napper discovered that up to 700,000 fibres can be shed from an average wash of 6kg. This damage comes from fast fashion or even sports clothing which is mostly made from plastic or synthetic fibres. Sadly these microfibres are destined for our oceans or waterways. So we need to launder less and smartly. (Siegle, 2021)

The final stage of the workshop is, “What are the solutions?”. As I mentioned earlier, people have always used fashion to satisfy emotional and egotistical desires. The desire for new clothes is something that may be impossible to change. We can appeal to the consumer to buy more ethically produced clothing but the reality is that one in six people on the planet work in the fashion industry so the onus is on the large fashion brands and fashion houses to design products that can be recycled or re-engineered into new styles with minimal use of virgin materials, water, energy and chemicals. (Fashion Revolution, 2016)

Ethically produced clothing costs more than fast fashion putting it out of the price range for most teenagers. Therefore it is valuable to promote second-hand shopping

to the younger generation. I will show them their options in Ireland or online. There are technology platforms, such as *Vestiaire Co*, which resells luxury fashion, *Depop* for second-hand mainstream fashion brands and *Thrifty* which sells clothes for charity shops. There are the benefits of buying a piece that no one else will have while also supporting a strong cause.

As Generation Z are known as tech savvy people, I will show them apps that can allow them to be an ethical shopper. *Good On You*, is an app that gives every brand a rating out of five and tells if they are sustainable or not. Students need to be aware of greenwashing. In the dictionary, greenwashing is the act of providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound to increase their sales. This was evident with *H&M's Conscious Collection*, which was pitched as a more sustainable fashion line as they used materials such as organic cotton or recycled polyester. However, this collection was found to contain a higher amount of damaging synthetics materials, (72%) than its main line, (61%).
(Westwater, 2021)

I will show them a situation where I would use the app. Let's say I need a pair of new running shoes and I don't want to buy second-hand. I would use the app to inform me which is a more ethical brand, *Nike* or *Adidas*? The ratings will influence my choice due to the companies' ethics.

One of my main concerns is the purchase of single wear items of clothing. This was evidenced in my Instagram poll findings. For occasion wear, we should really be borrowing or renting clothes, as we will probably only wear the dress or suit once.

Vogue editor, Anna Wintour praises the practice of renting clothes as it gives as many people as possible the opportunity to wear fashion. Renting can be also seen as the most environmentally friendly thing you can do. (Thomas, 2019, p. 282) I will show students where they can rent or swap clothes, apps such as *NUW*, could be used for finding an outfit for occasions such as their debs or TY balls.

The final solution I will show them is up-cycling or mending of clothes. I listened to *The Cutting Room Floor Podcast* with Liz Ricketts. In 2019, she states the most ethical strategy we can employ is to extend the life-span of the clothes we already own. This could be by fixing a button, dying with natural dyes or cropping fabric. I will end the workshop with a discussion of what the students could do in their school to promote sustainable fashion. Could they enter *Junk Kouture*? Could they create an app? Could they set up a business similar to *Pure Clothing*, where two boys from Mayo, set up a Sustainable Fashion Company as their TY enterprise project and are now successfully stocked in Arnotts, Dublin. Could they create a magazine about Sustainable Fashion, similar to *Linn*, our first fashion magazine in NCAD, created by Alex Burns. I am now editor-in-chief, and it is inspiring to talk to people in the industry of Slow Fashion and to raise awareness.

In conclusion, I believe that the topic of Fast Fashion fits perfectly into the new Junior Cycle CSPE syllabus and links well with Statements of Learning and Key Skills. As CSPE is a compulsory part of the Wellbeing Curriculum, CSPE teachers and schools need to be encouraged to teach the topic. Going forward, I envisage providing schools with the workshop material for free. This could be achieved by contacting the Wellbeing team leader at PDST, (Professional Development Service for Teachers). I

hope to be able to present CSPE associates with the workshop. The associate presenters can then roll out the workshop to CSPE teachers in their regions through their education centres. The workshop could also become a TY project where the TY students present the workshop to Junior classes.

3.The Results

In this final chapter I will examine the results of the student survey and if the results support my opinion that fast fashion needs to be addressed in the Irish school curriculum.

I surveyed 284 students, 143 were female and 141 were male. The participants in the category were all in the 13-16 year-old age range, commonly categorised as 'Generation Z'. The survey was answered anonymously.

Most of the participants had a strong idea of the concept of Sustainable Fashion. Some quotes taken from the survey support this fact. Student A mentioned, "Sustainable Fashion is fashion that doesn't have an impact on the environment." Student B said, "To me it means wearing the clothes you have and repurposing them instead of throwing them out...". Student C provided a comment saying, "Wearing the clothes you have and buying when you need something, not when you want it." A recurrent answer that emerged from the survey was; "Fashion that does not negatively impact future generations". On the other hand, it was evident that there was uncertainty on the topic of Sustainable Fashion. 37% of participants could not answer the question or stated "I don't know".

73.9% of students only shopped at chain stores, e.g, *H&M, New Look, Penneys, JD SPORTS and Zara*. 14.3% shopped online only, on websites such as *Boohoo, Shein and NastyGal*. Only 1.8 % shopped in local boutiques or charity shops.

The majority of the students stated that their preferences for shopping in the chosen outlet, was primarily down to quality and price. As seen in figure four.

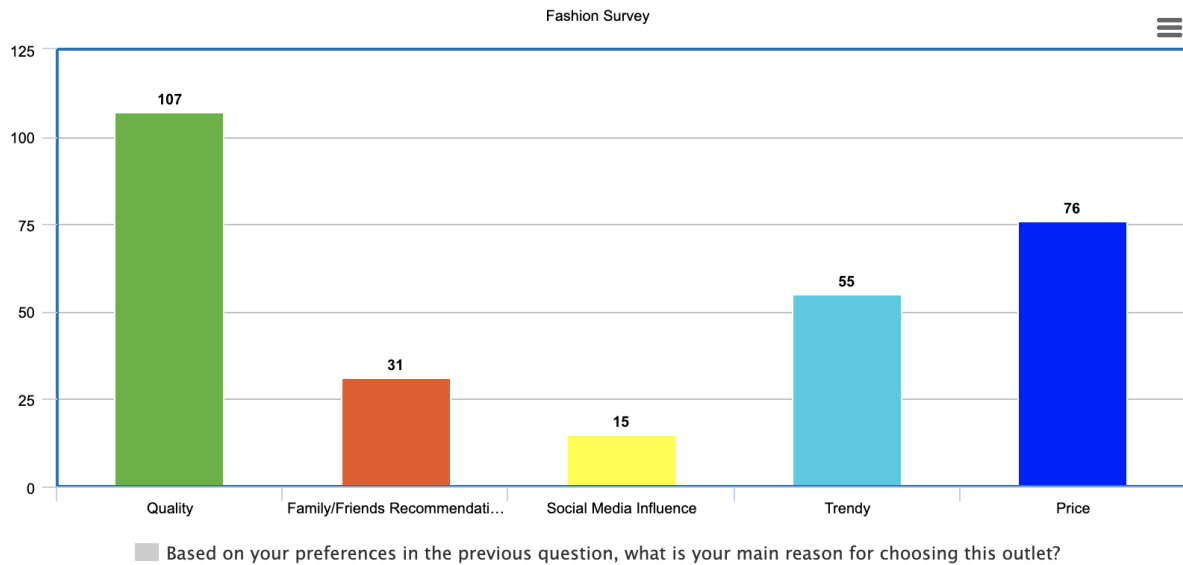


Fig. 4 (Author's own, 2022)

Interestingly, only 5% cited social media as an influence. However, we can see in the word cloud,(figure five), the most popular influencer was Molly Mae Hague, who featured 26 times, followed by Olivia O'Neill, face of fast fashion brand, *Motel Rocks*.

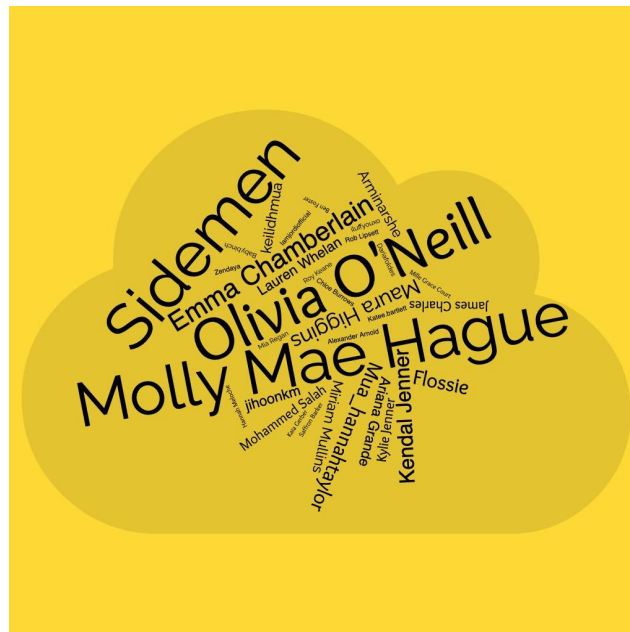


Fig.5 (Author's own, 2022)

75.8% students buy both online and instore, 12.5% students buy mostly online, while 8.2% students only buy in store. Buying in stores is beneficial as you can try on clothes for size and fit. Online buying is riskier, as I have previously mentioned, with a lot of returns ending up in landfills.

Another finding showed that 31.7% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I like it, I buy it”. Only 22.4% students disagreed with this statement with 45.9% students remaining neutral. It is evident that we need to ask before we buy. Georgina Wilson-Powell, author of *“Is It Really Green?”*, suggests that we adhere to the 30 wear rule. She states do not buy an item of clothing where you think you won’t wear it over 30 times as it won’t work off the clothes’ carbon emissions that were created during production. (Marriott, 2021)

When asked if they buy a new outfit for each event and how often they would wear the same item of clothing, 43% said no to buying a new outfit for each event. (Fig. 6)

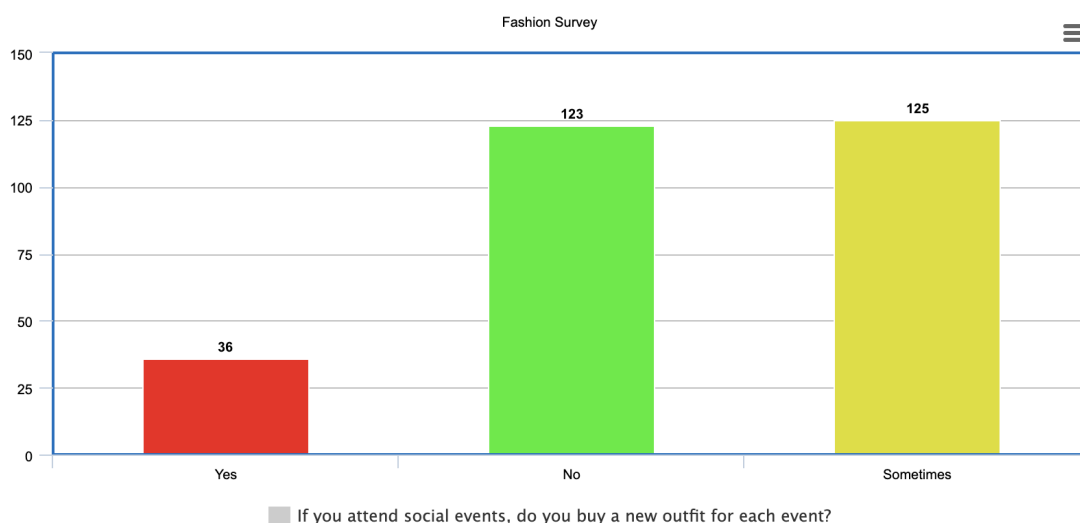


Fig. 6 (Author’s own, 2022)

Only 5.2% students said they usually buy a new item of clothing for each night out in figure seven. Most of the participants might only wear the same item 2-5 times. This is why we need to educate the younger generation about renting schemes or clothes swaps, as it is evident that the students are not wearing their clothes more than thirty times.

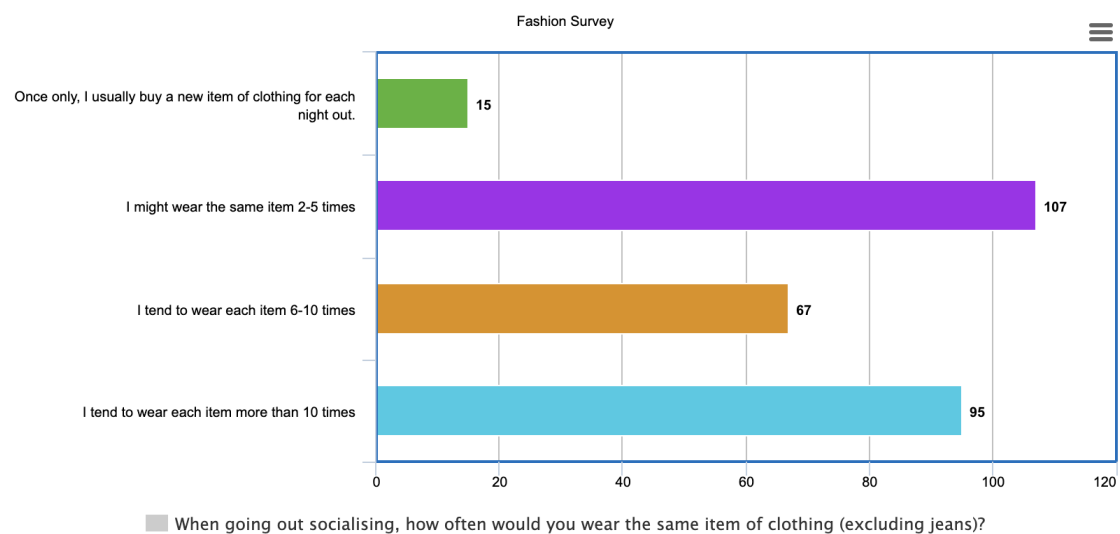


Fig. 7 (Author's own, 2022)

It is very possible that the results would be different if Covid-19 was non-existent. Figure eight shows that 31% of students only attend social events monthly while 53% students answered that they attend social events less frequently.

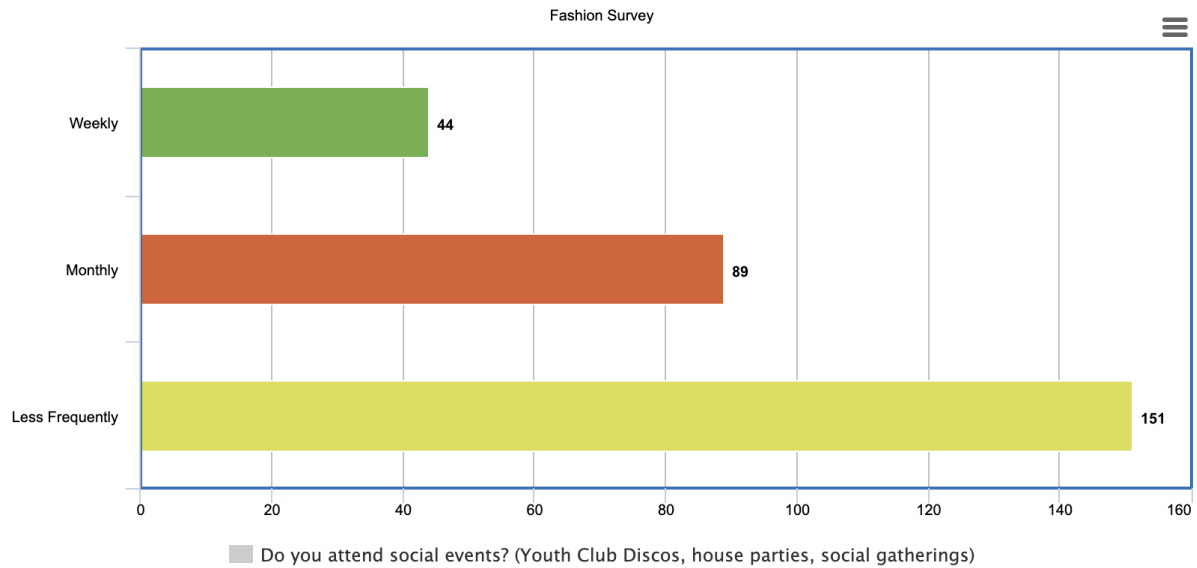


Fig.8 (Author's own, 2022)

59.7% of students have bought an item of clothing and never worn it and 41.5% of students have never bought a second-hand item of clothing. The workshop will provide students with options in this area.

It was satisfying to see that most participants disposed of clothing the correct way by donating as seen in figure nine. This is possibly due to fundraisers that students often participate in for their schools or local clubs using companies such as *Cash for Clobber*. It was rare for students to answer that they disposed of their textiles in the bin.

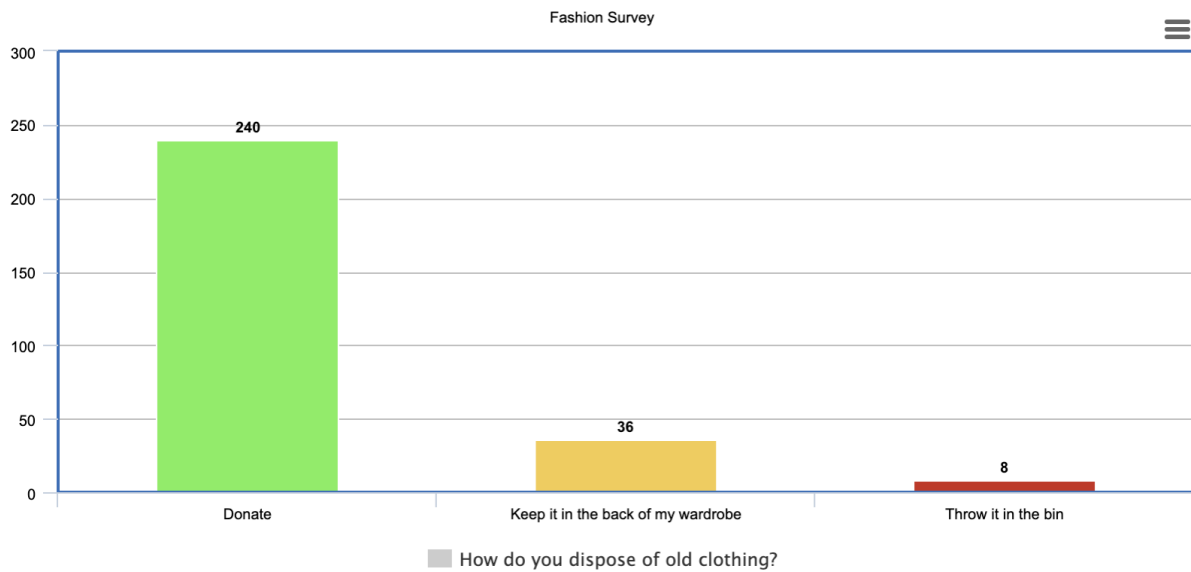


Fig. 9 (Author's own, 2022)

I believe it is important to educate young people on the topic of fast fashion as 30% of students said they were not concerned about the environmental impact caused by the disposal of unwanted clothing.

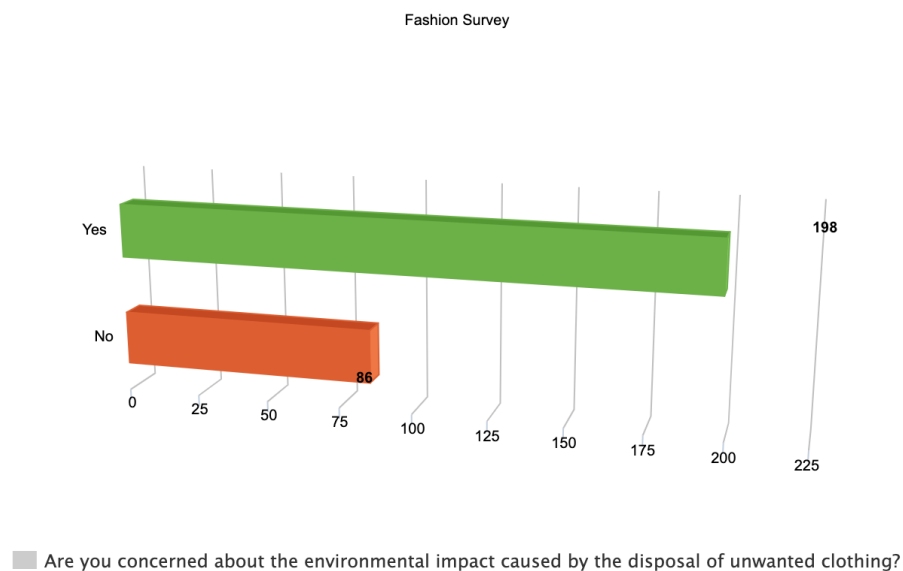


Fig.10 (Author's own, 2022)

Students were unaware of how much clothing ends up in landfills. They often put clothes in charity bins or donate to textile recyclers but were unaware of how much of that clothing was shipped to developing countries or ended up in landfills.

The findings reveal a generally positive knowledge of sustainable fashion as 62% students were able to give an answer but this does not necessarily translate into their shopping habits. Also, some major gaps in student knowledge are evident. I believe the workshop I presented post survey addressed these issues.

Conclusion

The purpose of my research was to examine if there is adequate education for young people on the topic of fast fashion. Do Irish Junior Cycle students think before they buy? Based on the findings from my research I believe that the topic of fast fashion is not always looked at in Junior Cycle classes and that while students had some knowledge of the topic, there were major gaps in their understanding.

It is worrying when 30% of students surveyed are not concerned about the environmental impact caused by the disposal of unwanted clothing. Almost 60% of students had bought an item of clothing which they had never worn. Only 22.4% of students disagreed with the statement; "I like it, I buy it". These statistics prove that our young Generation Z students do not always think before they buy.

A new strategy on education for sustainable development is to be published in March 2022. It aims to create a better knowledge of the climate crisis and empower students to take action. Climate educators and students want the issue of climate change to be a whole-school approach. (Boland, 2022) From my research, it appears that education on sustainability can be very hit and miss. In the single sex school I visited, the CSPE teacher was unfamiliar with the topic. The topic of fast fashion is often only covered if a teacher or student feels passionately about this issue, (e.g. a student may choose to do a CBA on the topic or it's covered in a subject choice that is optional). Many CSPE books do not deal with the topic in any great detail. I look forward to reading this new strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and I hope it will address some of the findings from my research.

I believe my powerpoint presentation was highly successful in providing young students with knowledge they lacked on the issue of fast fashion and its detrimental effect on the environment. Students were unaware that the fast fashion industry is the second largest polluting industry. They had zero knowledge of the issues related to laundering of poor quality clothing and its impact on our oceans. The presentation also enlightened students on the negative impact of many online retailers. It helped them to reassess their shopping habits and the quality of the clothing they purchased. An interesting statistic from my survey showed that only 1.8% shopped second-hand. Most students were particularly interested in the solutions offered in my presentation with many taking screenshots of the suggestions of where to shop second-hand, the various apps on offer and the rental companies available.

In one of the schools I worked with, the transition year students have taken fast fashion on board as a *Young Social Innovators* project. They plan to show my presentation to all students, they are organising a clothes swap and they are organising for a seamstress to give an up-cycling workshop.

In a second school, following my workshop, students organised an up-cycled Christmas jumper competition, and organised a Christmas Fair based on the theme of sustainability.

In both of these schools, work on the topic of fast fashion has become a small part of a much larger climate action project. This is evidence that when young people are given the knowledge and become passionate about a topic they become empowered to take action. By addressing the issues surrounding sustainable fashion and its impact on the environment students then have the skills to bring about change in other areas.

As evidenced by my research, not all young people ask before they buy. It is imperative that the topic of fast fashion is coherently taught in Irish second level schools. As I have outlined in chapter two, the topic of fast fashion can be focused on as part of the CSPE programme in Junior Cycle Wellbeing. I am determined to make my presentation widely available to schools through the *PDST*. I believe if CSPE teachers have this resource readily available they will be more likely to teach the topic in Strand 1: Rights and Responsibilities and Strand 2: Global Citizenship. As ECO-UNESCO's Elaine Nevin states;

“Fast fashion is very topical with young people. I think it's one of those places where they feel that they can make a difference, because as young people, that's one of the places that they consume” (Boland, 2022).

Appendices, Appendix A: Participant Consent Form



National College of Art and Design

A Recognised College of University College Dublin

Informed Consent Form for Research Study Participant

Research Title: "Ask Before You Buy"

Researcher: Lisa Della Chiesa

Address: Foxtail Hill, Gort, Co. Galway

Contact No: 0861908221

Email: 18326716@student.ncad.ie

Date: 9/11/2021

Dear Volunteer,

My name is Lisa Della Chiesa and I am currently in my final year of a BA (Hons) degree in Applied Materials in the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. As part of the final year of our undergraduate programme, we are required to complete a Critical Cultures Research Project.

My study aims to find out if there is adequate education on what is known as 'fast fashion' in the Junior Cycle Curriculum.

Your child's involvement in the study would be through an online survey. The platform used to conduct the survey will be Microsoft Teams. I will also be conducting a workshop and visual presentation.

Participation in this study is voluntary and a participant can choose to withdraw and not take part in this research project, at any time.

The information that is collected will be kept private and anonymous, saved on a password encrypted Microsoft form which only the researcher has access to. The participant will be assigned a number when the information is being transcribed in a report by the researcher. The information that is gathered in the research will be destroyed 12 months after the survey and workshop have been completed.

At the end of the research period the information gathered will be used to present results in the researcher's research project. The information will be completely anonymous. No participants' names will appear in any of the results. All data gathered from the research will be stored securely and safely by the researcher, Lisa Della Chiesa, on their password encrypted Microsoft form for 12 months.

It is important that you feel that all your questions have been answered. If you have any questions about the survey/presentation, you may contact the researcher (see contact details above).

At any stage should a participant feels that they wish to stop taking part in the research, they are free to withdraw from the study and take no further part. There are no consequences for changing one's mind about being in the study.

If you consent to your child participating in the research please sign the consent form and return it to me by 26th November 2021.

please complete the following:

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement Yes No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes. No

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent for my child to take part in this research project.

This is a google form so if you consent to your child participating in this research project, please type your name where it asks for your signature.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Plain Language Statement



National College of Art and Design

A Recognised College of University College Dublin

Plain Language Statement

Research Title: “Ask Before You Buy”

Researcher: Date: 5/10/2021,

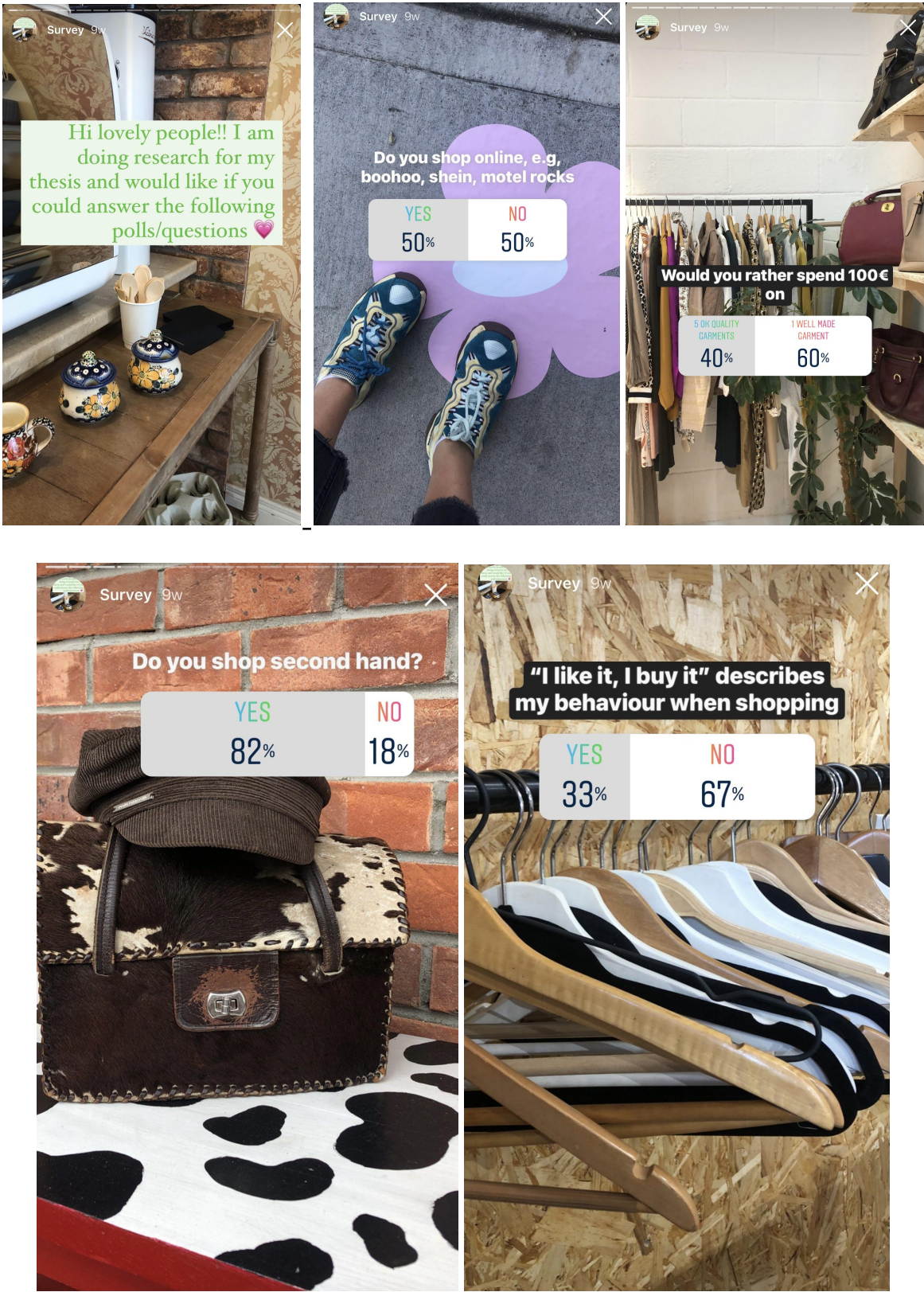
State as clearly and plainly as possible:

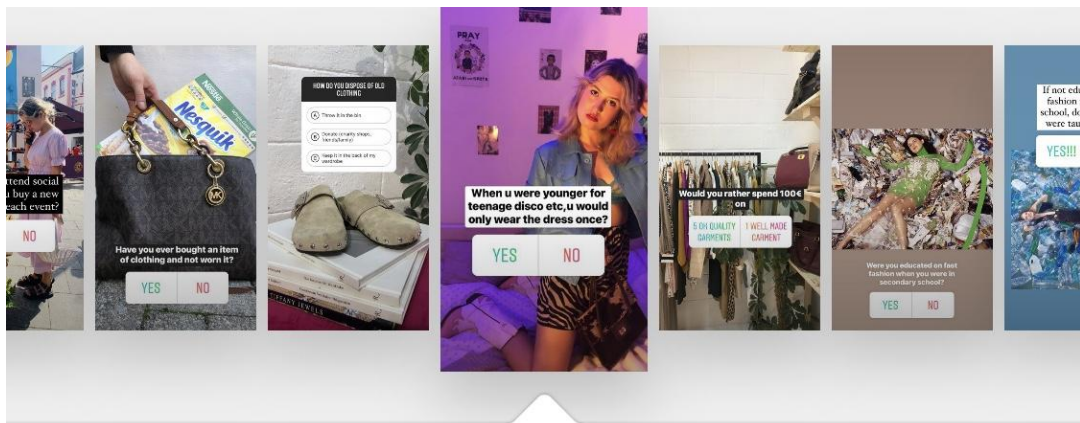
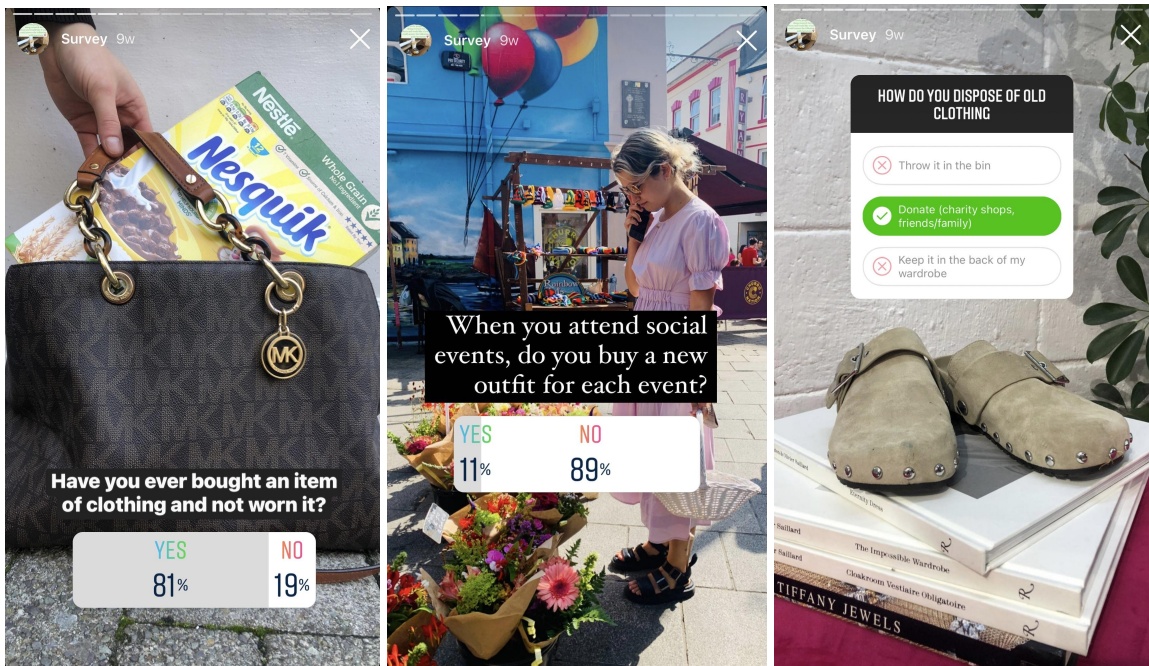
1. What the research is about: Is there adequate education for young people on the issues surrounding fashion and sustainability and what is known as 'fast fashion'.
2. Who will be involved, where and for how long: I have identified two secondary schools and I plan to deliver a presentation to each of the TY classes and Junior Classes in those two schools between mid-November and the first week of December.
3. A link for a consent form will be sent to the parents via VSware. Students will then complete a shopping survey on google forms. A forty-minute presentation will be given to students on Fast Fashion.
4. Student anonymity will be upheld.
5. Involvement in the Research Study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

I understand that the Research Study is voluntary and the participants can withdraw their permission to use data from my Research Study at any point, in which case the material will be deleted. If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

**The Head of Research,
National College of Art and Design Research Ethics Committee,
National College of Art and Design, 100, Thomas Street, Dublin 8.**

Appendix C: Instagram Survey

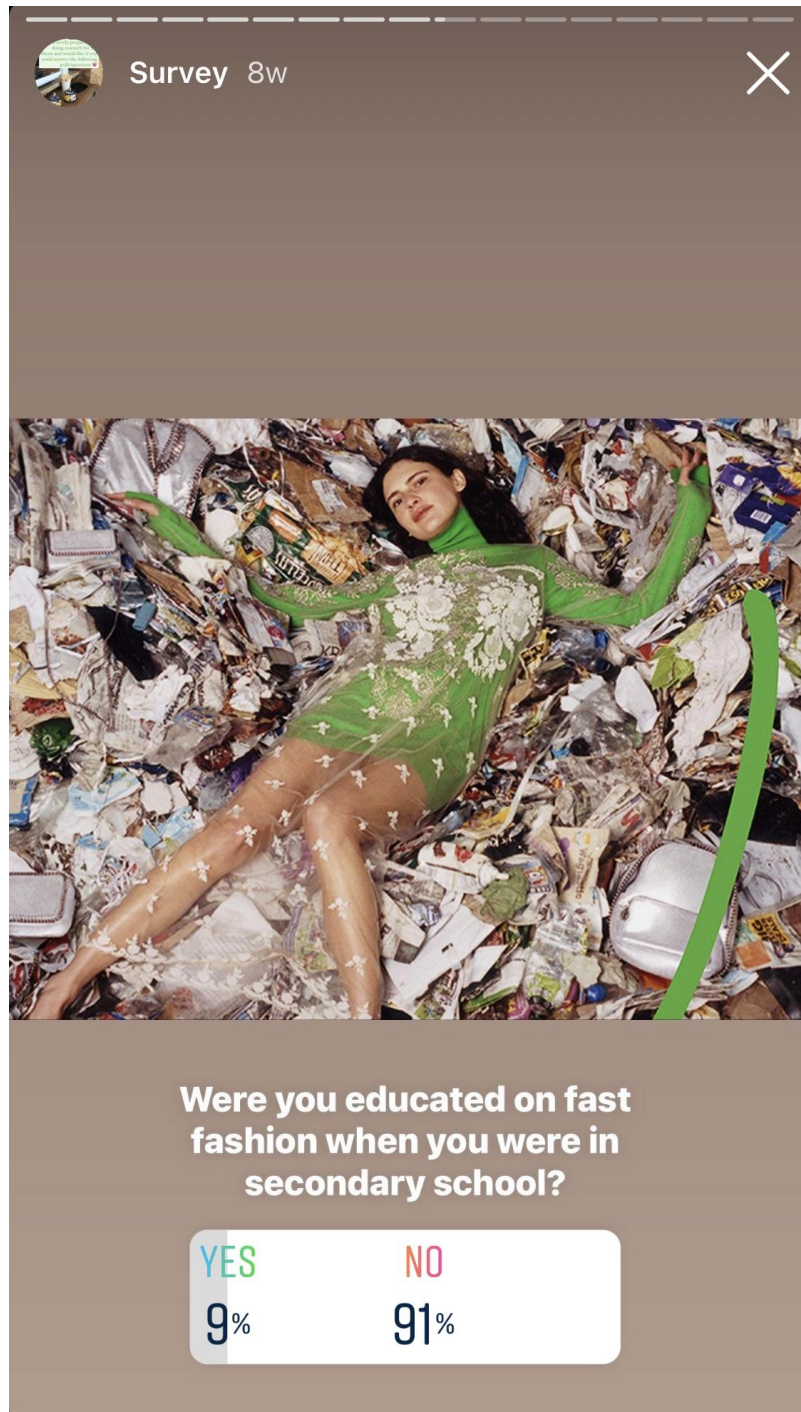




170
votes for yes

146
votes for no

Share Results



(McCartney,2019,Model on a Scottish Landfill. [image]

Available at:

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/fashion-news/news/a42842/stella-mccartney-landfill/>)



(Pantano, I., 2018. *Stella McCartney fights ocean pollution with fashion*. [image])

Available at:

https://www.vogue.it/en/fashion/news/2018/03/22/stella-mccartney-fights-ocean-pollution-with-fashion/?refresh_ce=

Appendix D: Shopping Survey

Clothes Shopping Survey

Form description

What gender are you?

Short-answer text

Where do you shop for clothes?

- ☐ Charity Shops, e.g. Oxfam, The Simon Community, Age Action & Enable Ireland
- ☐ Chain Stores, e.g. H&M, New Look, Pennys, JD Sports & Zara
- ☐ Local Boutiques/independent clothing retailers, e.g. Willow, Brass, Cornucopia, Kind Folk & A Plomb Mens...
- ☐ Online, e.g. Boohoo, Miss Guided, Shein, Nasty Gal
- ☐ Other...

Based on your preferences in the previous question, what is your main reason for choosing this outlet?

- ☐ Quality
- ☐ Social Media Influence (instagram/youtube)
- ☐ It's trendy
- ☐ Price
- ☐ Family/Friends recommendation

Do you shop online?

- ☐ Yes, I buy most of my clothes online.
- ☐ No, I only buy in store.
- ☐ I buy both online and in store.
- ☐ Other...

"I like it, I buy it" describes my behaviour when shopping

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Do you attend social events? (Youth Club Discos, house parties, social gatherings)

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Less Frequently

If you attend social events, do you buy a new outfit for each event?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

When going out socialising, how often would you wear the same item of clothing (excluding jeans)?

- ☐ Once only, I usually buy a new item of clothing for each night out.
- ☐ I might wear the same item 2-5 times
- ☐ I tend to wear each item 6-10 times
- ☐ I tend to wear each item more than 10 times

Do you follow influencers online? If so, which ones do you follow?

Short-answer text

Have you ever bought an item of clothing and not worn it?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you ever bought an item of second-hand clothing?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How do you dispose of old clothing?

- ☐ Throw it in the bin
- ☐ Donate (Charity Shops, Cash For Clobber, Friends and Family)
- ☐ Keep it in the back of my wardrobe

Are you concerned about the environmental impact caused by the disposal of unwanted clothing?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Can you define what is meant by sustainable fashion?

Short-answer text

.....

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