5s3: Circular Textiles

WORLDWIDE WARDROBES, inside consumers' clothing systems

DE WAGENAAR D. 1), GALAMA J. 2), SIJTSEMA S.J. 3)

1) Wageningen Economic Research, The Netherlands,

2) Wageningen Corporate Value Creation, The Netherlands

The current clothing system is a complex and linear system, which is wasteful and polluting (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Decreasing the impact of the clothing industry on the environment requires efforts in all phases of the garment life cycle, such as production, selling and use phases, and requires behavioral change by all associated stakeholders in the value chain including the consumer. Extending the use of garments is often seen as an important strategy of decreasing the impact of the fashion industry, however currently there is a lack of data and understanding of consumers' wardrobes. Consumers are increasingly willing to buy second-hand clothes and it is expected that the amount of second-hand clothes will make up one third of the wardrobes in 2033 (ThredUp, 2019). Nevertheless, in order to turn these predictions into real behavioural change, it is essential to get more insight in actual wardrobe contents and behaviour. In this study we explore consumers' wardrobes in different countries, and we aim to establish a better understanding of the total amount, unused and second-hand clothing in different categories in order to be more successful in targeting interventions to support consumers' sustainable clothing decisions.

Through a Massive Open Online Course Circular Fashion, Design, Science and Value in a sustainable Clothing Industry, data was gathered of in total 606 respondents who filled out a small survey about the content of their wardrobe, counting the amount of 17 predefined clothing categories, and the amount of unused and second-hand clothing thereof. Differences were found between females and males for the total amount of clothing items, total amount of unused clothing items and the total number of second-hand clothing items. Between nationalities differences were found only in second-hand clothing.

These insights are needed to develop more targeted interventions related to specific categories of (unused and second-hand) clothing, gender and age groups, in order to elongate the use of- and reduce the consumption of clothes. It will provide understanding in circular interventions such as which clothing category is most suited for upcycling, or which clothing category is already accepted within the second-hand market. Additionally,

this exploration provides insight how to improve the value of wardrobe studies as part of monitoring clothing consumption.

Ultimately, through consumers' wardrobe perspectives this study supports the next steps towards a more circular clothing system.