

Central Baltic Programme

Laurea explores the second-hand clothing market

Laurea University of Applied Sciences operates in Southern Finland, Uusimaa region at six campuses. The University has about 9 900 students enrolled, 660 staff members, and 34 700 alumni in the community network. The programmes cover both Bachelor's and Master's Degrees focusing on Business Management, Social Services, Health Care and Hospitality Management. Laurea has a broad variety of research themes, including Service Business and circular economy. This article focuses on this theme; second-hand and circular textile domain, and the insight collaboration with Crowst.

Baltic2Hand Project – Dressed in insight

Laurea has joined the international **Baltic2Hand project** dedicated to enhancing behavioral and business-driven change of the second-hand textile industry in the Central Baltic region. The project is focused at improving textile reuse and reducing textile waste in the second-hand market in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Sweden. The project includes a variety of insight programs in the aforementioned countries, and in this article, we focus on the qualitative in-depth consumer interviews carried out in Finland.

“We are thrilled about this project as it covers so many interesting, valuable, and interlinked elements”, opens **Veera Joro**, Doctoral Researcher and Project Assistant at Laurea. *“First of all, the driving force is the environmental aspect and ecological sustainability, which can be justified from so many perspectives. Secondly, the second-hand and circular textile market represents a huge business opportunity, and ultimately; for individuals like you and me, what would be a more intimate way to signal your value and personality than the clothes you wear?”*, Joro highlights.

Indeed; this program combines the genuine, fact-driven motives to do good, fuel the business around an already-blooming business, and offer ways to make a statement: For all of us.

In the mind of the consumer

In order to understand the genuine consumer behaviour, purchasing-making criteria, and triggers for purchase, Laurea kicked off the collaboration with Crowst. Based on the carefully defined interviewee recruitment profile and criteria, 20 personal in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviews lasted 40-60 minutes, and the interviewees represented females, males and the non-binary gender.

“We wanted that the interviews were more like casual, theme-based chats rather than interviews. Narrative interview approach enabled to break that certain boundary that typically puts the interviewee on guard, emotionally detached from the topic at hand”, comments Joro. *“Crowst did superb job, they genuinely made the interviewees feel they were having a chat with a friend over a cup of coffee. And this is the key to get into the mind of people, understanding their emotional and self-expressive motives to buy, beyond plain functional drivers”,* Joro affirms.



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The interviewees were screened and selected based on three main behavioural groups;

- People who buy almost only new clothes
- People buy some clothes second-hand, but the share of these is lower than 30 %
- People who buy mainly second-hand clothes / textile products on the circular market

The key goal of the insight project was to understand consumers’ drivers and barriers for buying, providing insight to the service design professionals that craft and design service offerings for second-hand clothes and circular textiles. How to reinforce and highlight the advantages? How to dispel the concerns, nudging the low-level second-hand buyers to buy more? Understanding the consumers’ motives provides the platform for service designers to make their magic.

Dressed to kill, the universal win “in the crosses”

Following the qualitative approach the key really is, as the term suggests, to focus on mapping out the reasons, motives, drivers, hidden thoughts and subconscious attitudes. Twenty interviews is a low figure, but the task is to identify the common behavioural denominators, unique, segment-specific traits, and also those factors that do not enable drawing common conclusions based on the study results.

“Damn this is fun and exciting, throughout the process. Top topic, brilliant execution, and mind-tingling discoveries to work on with. We are on the mission to achieve something great!”, Joro closes, smiling.

Baltic2Hand is an Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027 project that is co-funded by the European Union.