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NORDISKE ARBEJDSRAPPORTER

N O R D I C W O R K I N G P A P E R S

Communication handbook

Changing consumer behaviour towards increased prevention of
textile waste

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Communication handbook

- low or no budget ideas on how to communicate key messages regarding the prevention of textile waste

Any communication strategy must answer the basic questions who should communicate what to whom and with what effect. In addition any strategy and action plan must take into consideration the resources at hand and prioritize accordingly. This communication handbook only includes suggestions, which the project partners and potential partners can implement at low or practically no cost. More ambitious and costly suggestions for campaign activities are not included in this handbook. The suggested ideas involve the distribution of one or more of the project deliverables listed below, which are all based on the background report delivered as part of the project;

- Consumer guide in four Nordic languages (DK, S, N, SF)
- Information film in four Nordic languages (DK, S, N, SF)
- Journalistic article in English

What could be communicated?

Fact and figures relating to the environmental footprint of textile consumption in general and textile production in particular are not commonly known. As the actual figures, for instance the fact that it takes approximately 10 bath tubs of water to produce a single t-shirt, will probably be quite surprising for most consumers, a communication effort or awareness campaign emphasizing and illustrating the hard facts makes perfect sense. In order to maximize the effectiveness of such a campaign, any recommended solutions and call to action must be preceded by information about the nature, volume and relevance of the problem. This information and the specific facts and figures are gathered in the background report produced as part of this project. Based on this

data, the project partners' communication strategy should consist of two elements, problem awareness and call to action. The first element is the effort to highlight the problem and boost awareness among the most influential consumers. The second element is the call-to-action messages pointing to the desired behaviour and making it easier for the consumers to increase their reuse of textiles, to demand durable textiles and to demand eco-labelled textiles. Since a limited budget requires tough prioritization, the primary focus of this handbook is on communication efforts and activities that support the message about the benefits of re-using textiles. As pointed out in the background report, this is the focus area with the largest potential for reducing the environmental impact. Since the Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for eco-labelling, the opportunity to integrate the reuse of textile agenda with existing eco-labelling efforts is suggested as a potential for further investigation.

To whom should we communicate?

The prioritised and identified target group for this project is families and young people. Consequently the specific ideas presented below are a combination of low-cost initiatives which can function as part of a family-centred awareness campaign while at the same time reaching out to young people attending school or other educational institutions. The suggested approach combines relevant media (PR in f.x. family magazines, professional magazines and regional and local media) and a package of information material designed for day-care institutions, primary schools and other educational institutions, which are points of daily interaction for families and young people alike.

The idea about a facebook-forum providing an online platform for best practice, sharing of ideas and news about results and events and the distribution of key project deliverables such as the films and consumer guides is targeted at the younger audience. Given the extensive use of facebook in the Nordic countries and the fact that the parent generation and even the grandparent generation are rapidly adopting facebook, this platform has a potential that reaches far beyond the younger target group.

How should it be communicated and with what effect?

The facts and figures could be presented illustratively using the drawings made for the film and the consumer guide. A specific example is the the above mentioned fact about water consumption, which could be strongly communicated visually on practically any platform, be it online or offline advertising, PR, outdoor or video/TV.

A family-centred campaign based on hard facts visually communicated to a well-defined target group with relevant decision-making power could be particularly effective, since the social context (primary school, day-care institution) where the messages are communicated to the fami-

lies would also be a potentially fertile ground for some of the recommended actions. Schools and day-care institutions would for instance be obvious places to organize selling and swooping of clothes, events communicating the environmental footprint of textile production and the sharing of information about consumer behaviour and prevention of textile waste. The campaigns hard data could then be combined with local knowledge of where and how to buy and sell clothes for reuse, where to buy eco-labelled clothes and where to get clothes repaired, if feasible.

A similar approach could be adopted as regards the target group of young people. To reach this target group in a social context, where information and action can be combined, a suggested focus could be educational institutions, where young people on a limited budget and with an often strong incentive to save money are gathered in substantial numbers. In such locations a series of social events involving campaign material and information about prevention of textile waste as well as the actual selling and swooping of clothes, could be organized by either the project partners or designated partner organizations with a specific interest in the agenda, such as consumer NGO's, progressive fashion industry agents or similar. As the subject "prevention of textile waste" offers numerous opportunities for interdisciplinary school projects (f.x. math and chemistry) educational institutions could also be encouraged to adopt the theme and selected project deliverables in their local curriculums.

Fashion swap parties - low budget event making with PR- and partnership potential

An example of a specific idea easily adopted by all project partners is the organizing of Fashion swap parties. These could be privately or institutionally organized (goggle f.x. fashion swap parties for specific instructions) events, where f.x. the information film and the consumer guide produced could be shown/distributed as part of the entertainment or accompanying the invitation. Allowing private individuals to distribute the material freely and endorsing such events could be one strategy. Another strategy - they are not mutually exclusive - could be for the project partners to organize such an event themselves in cooperation with a partner such as f.x. an established NGO or perhaps even a progressive institution related to the fashion industry. If so, the potential for media coverage would obviously increase.

Such events, targeted at a broader audience, the media and announced using social media such as facebook, could thereby serve as a launch ramp for the communication of awareness messages regarding the environmental footprints as well as more specific and detailed call-to-action messages regarding the desired change of behaviour.

Either as a separate campaign element or in combination with the eco-labelling marketing efforts, both types of local campaigns could then be tied together nationally and potentially even regionally (Nordic/European). This could be done using a combination of social media such as facebook and larger local-regional and national PR-events.

Specific suggestions for communicating the messages further

1. Communicate the messages proactively via PR-efforts and project partner websites

PR is generally an inexpensive tool if you want to reach an audience. The fact that the specific data as regards the environmental footprint of textile consumption fulfills the criteria for newsworthiness makes PR a relevant tool to be taken into consideration. Most of the relevant data can easily be aggregated and customized to fit the perspective of national, regional and local media, so that f.x. Swedish media is presented with national Swedish figures in addition to the conclusions and data presented as part of this project. Similarly the data could serve as a point of departure for articles in professional media focusing explicitly on issues such as fashion, retail business, environmental affairs, chemicals and consumer affairs. The journalistic article produces as part of this project, which could be relevant for professional magazines focusing on fashion, environmental og consumer related issues, is just one such example. The Danish magazine *Samvirke* is the type of magazine where the project partners could consider getting this and similar articles customized to the individual formats published. Such stories could involve case stories emphasizing environmentally conscious households and companies acting as front-runners when it comes to addressing the challenges involved in increasing reuse and the prevention of textile waste.

Combining the hard data with specific local initiatives as suggested, local media could be invited to cover the event in the daycare institution or at the local high school or university, and consequently the message will spread from the original target groups to the local community in general. As part of a PR-launch all the material, film, consumer guide, article and report should be published online on the project partners' websites thereby making the material accessible to the press, the public, academia etc. A partnership could furthermore be pursued with national NGO's, consumer agencies and organizations and perhaps progressive fashion industry agents. If such partners are integrated

in the PR as well as the general distribution efforts they could support the communication effort by providing the media with more sources backing the overall message and adding the communication muscle of their organisations to that of the project partners'. It could for instance be considered to reach out to institutions such as The Danish Fashion Institute and explore whether their specific CSR-related NICE-project (Nordic Initiative Clean & Ethical) could be a point of departure for cooperation and agenda-setting activities based on the project deliverables.

2. Create and market a facebook forum about the prevention of textile waste

The combination of interesting and newsworthy data and the push from a project partner initiated PR-campaign based on events as suggested could both raise awareness significantly and create a demand for an online social forum where knowledge, views, advice and experiences can be shared easily in a form considered appealing and convenient for the primary target groups and change agents. In order to optimize traffic and knowledge-sharing across national boundaries the project partners headed by the Nordic Council of Ministers could consider launching a joint Nordic facebook-page allowing everybody to contribute in their own language and in English. Such a forum would allow knowledge and best-practice to cross borders as several of the Nordic languages (Finnish not included) are sufficiently similar in writing as to be understood in neighboring countries. A facebook forum, preferably set-up in cooperation with f.x. selected NGO-partners with substantial communication muscle could furthermore serve as a distribution platform for the films and the consumer guide produced as part of this project. As mentioned above a facebook forum could also serve as a forum or market places for the exchange of experience and inspiration when it comes to the planning and organization of local events such as selling and swooping of clothes.

3. Develop inspirational online material for primary schools and daycare institutions, which can engage children and parents alike

Since the concept of reuse is particularly relevant for children's clothes, as pointed out in the background report, a message platform involving awareness as well as call to action messages could be a way to pick some of the lowest hanging fruits. A

communication campaign targeting families, could include online and/or ready-to-print material combining awareness messages and hard facts with specific instructions and advice on how to facilitate reuse and clothes swapping locally. A package of material involving for instance color books, suggestions for the children's collection of used textile in their own households or in the neighborhood, suggestions for experiments with creative reuse of textile etc. could be made available for free download and promoted to schools and daycare institutions. As most children in the Nordic countries attend f.x. daycare institutions, and since these institutions often engage in projects teaching the children about environmental affairs, such a customized information package easily and freely downloaded from the project partners' websites is very likely to be warmly welcomed. The information package could f.x. be presented and promoted using a combination of direct mail to individual institutions and their municipal administrators and/or advertising in professional media targeting the relevant pedagogical personnel. As indicated above a similar approach could be adopted addressing schools, other educational institutions (high schools) and relevant teaching professionals with suggestions for interdisciplinary projects on the theme. The national project partners could boost the communication effect of such an approach even further by actively using the local initiatives resulting from institutions using the information package as local PR-events. This can easily be done by inviting local press to attend locally organized cloth swap parties and providing them with sufficient background information based on the project deliverables such as fact sheets based on the background report and local data.

The information packages for the schools and daycare institutions in the four countries participating in the project could easily be produced based on the ready-to-use-films, the ready-to-use-consumer guides, facts and figures from the background report customised to local/national use and – maybe - a specific manual, check list and catalogue of ideas on how to start up specific initiatives and engage children and parents alike. A specific example could be a check list on how to arrange fashion swap party at the local school.

4. Integrate prevention of textile waste in the key message platform of the Nordic eco-label, the Swan

It could be considered whether the agenda about textile waste could help to boost the existing efforts to promote the Nordic

eco-label, the Swan and vice versa. Although the strategy for promoting the Swans is outside the scope of this project, it appears that some potential synergies could be pursued in order to secure that the discussion about the prevention of textile waste is not only put on the agenda, but that it also stays there for quite some time. Campaign and communication efforts as suggested above could for instance be designed to promote the Nordic eco-label, the Swan, or maybe even be integrated as a pioneer project in the existing marketing and communication efforts of one or both of the two eco-labels? To the extent that the ideas presented above will be organized by the Nordic Council of Ministers, it presents itself as an opportunity to systematically introduce or market, the Swan, to a target group of consumers not necessarily fully aware of the content or existence of that specific eco-label.

5. Conclusion

A list of opportunities to communicate the messages further will always be inconclusive. The suggestions above present a number of low-hanging fruits, which can be picked even with very limited resources at hand and executed by all project partners locally or as part of an integrated Nordic strategy executed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. A larger budget would obviously allow for a widening of the scope and duration of some of the suggested communication efforts, and an even lower budget would require an even tougher prioritization of the communication activities and/or a narrowing down of the target groups chosen.

The combination of the campaign material produced, families and young people easily accessible at educational institutions and daycare institutions, and the ability to actually share information and organize actual activities on these locations at low cost, presents itself as a good opportunity to initiate a cost-effective campaign. The idea of an information package distributed freely via online communications channels allow the project partners to empower change agents interacting with the selected target groups to carry the message and initiate action and activities locally. Such actions, events and initiatives could in turn be promoted in order to inspire other families and young people. If potential partners such as NGO's within f.x. environmental or consumer affairs were invited to participate, the cost-

effectiveness of such a campaign effort could obviously be boosted even further. As the textile industry has recently begun to explore opportunities to address the issue of prevention of textile waste, partnerships involving the industry and institutions such as f.x. Danish Fashion Institute could also be pursued.

Regardless of the level of ambition and geographical outreach, the organization and promotion of such local, regional or national agenda-setting initiatives, project partners can use PR, and social media such as facebook and facebook advertising to make sure that the messages get through to the target groups chosen. Particularly the consumer guide and the film, which can be easily promoted and distributed via facebook, could serve as part of the promotion material used when inviting people to participate in f.x. fashion swap parties/events. The ability to integrate such activities in existing communication strategies (i.e. for the Nordic Swan) would only add value to the suggested communication efforts and a coordinated plan would make it possible for the individual activities to mutually support each other.