The Big Online Clothing Swap

FIND YOUR CLOTHES A NEW FRIEND

A project with Act4Change at EPFL

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1 General Information

1.1 Abstract

One of the major ecological issues of our century is the popular rise of fast fashion. The clothing and textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world, yet, today, there exists considerably few alternatives that are both economic and eco-friendly.

Our solution? The BOCS!

An online eco-platform that allows people on-campus to swap clothes for free and at their own convenience. At the BOCS we also aim to raise awareness on this relatively overshadowed topic and promote the idea that even as students we can actually be part of the solution!

Our hope is that with the BOCS we bring together student communities and empower them to become an eco-generation, acting for change!

1.2 Information Summary

THE BOCS TEAM

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2 The Textile Crisis

Our project aims to raise awareness on the consequences of fast fashion and clothes consumption. In fact, the United Nations estimates that 10% of total global emissions come from the fashion industry. However, the impact of this industry is still not very well known, and that even amongst our more eco-conscious generation (cf. Appendix 10.4).

The best way to reduce our fashion footprint is then to consume less. Yet, according to a study conducted by ERPS, EU citizens bought 6.4 million tonnes of new clothing in 2015 even when more than 30% of clothes in their wardrobes have not been used for at least a year. This number is even higher amongst students (cf. Appendix 10.4).

With the BOCS our goal is to not only help students realise the importance of their choices but to actually offer them a simple solution with a social on-campus dimension. That way, they can go on and make better decisions while sharing their experience with other like-minded students.

Another non-negligible aspect of the BOCS is that the project itself is environmental friendly. Unlike already existing online thrift shops it requires no extra transportation or packaging since the exchange takes place immediately on campus between students.

3 The Innovative Remedy

How can we redistribute clothing while trying to be as eco-friendly as possible? The project that we’re working on at the BOCS is the most simple and effective solution that we found to this problem.

Thrift shops, and most recently online thrift shops that tailor to the more tech-savvy eco-conscious customers, are popping up more and more thanks to the rise in awareness of this generation about the planet’s environmental issues. While in line with this model, the new concept that this project is trying to convey is that second-hand should not be a trend, or something reserved for only our most eco-conscious peers: second-hand should become the norm. It should be accessible by everyone in this modern society, as much as the numerous other things that can be ordered or shipped by the click of a button.

In this sense, the purpose of the BOCS is to not only make second-hand clothing accessible, but to raise awareness of the importance of making second-hand a commodity. It’s the idea of trying to reduce the single use of textiles, while making people believe that second-hand can be as available as store-bought clothes.

While working on the premises of what the BOCS would be like, it was equally important for us that the project be human-scale. A university campus, a small village, a school – those are the target markets we’re looking to develop our project in because we’re hoping to also achieve inclusivity, exchange and create a sense of community. A person who has recently arrived at EPFL and is still settling into life on campus can benefit from the project as much as the people already living in Lausanne and looking for some new clothes to wear on a night out. The service is intended to be free for all, and is built around the idea that people should meet up in order to exchange items of clothing - rather than using other less eco-friendly and more impersonal means of distribution.

How it works

Setting up the BOCS will consist of creating a website that can be integrated to the already existing EPFL Pocket-Campus. This would allow for an easy accessibility to all contributors.

(professors, students, lab members etc.) since they all already use the application on a daily basis.

The concept is simple: the person giving away the piece of clothing will take a picture of the item, post it online with some basic indications (size, textile etc.). The person interested in the item of clothing will then contact the person giving it away through website. This would also create a sense of security between the participants since they know that their match is a fellow on campus member. They will then both agree on a time and place to exchange the item. The service will work best if a person actively plays both parts of giving and receiving items of clothing.

4 The Passionate Commitment

We gladly welcome all EPFL students regardless of their awareness of fast fashion’s impact on the environment. Our wish is to empower students through hands on involvement and participation in the change we strive to achieve, all while spurring leadership among the community and create inspiring stories that makes us rethink our relationship to clothing.

The BOCS also adds a social dimension to the process: our project offers a platform for a friendly swap, allowing students to meet easily. As the item has to be handed directly from the previous owner to the potential new one, this transfer medium enhances the friendly spirit the BOCS is promoting. Thus, the BOCS might become a tool used on the campus to bring students together.

So how exactly are we planning to reach out to EPFL students?

Concerning our marketing endeavors, the promotional element of our marketing strategy will revolve around three main axes:

**Digital Marketing:** Since our project aims to create and optimize local networks, we plan to leverage pre-existing communities in social networks (mainly Facebook and Instagram) to create word of mouse and raise awareness about the project. The official page of The BOCS will first prioritize increasing EPFL student engagement (quantified by likes, shares, and comments) through trendy and fun content, such as memes (cf. Appendix 10.2). Our wish to build inspiring coherent feeds that will attract as many diverse students as possible. Striking the right balance between levity and mindfulness will be paramount for communicating the heaviens of the subject matter without alienating less knowledgeable audiences.

**Person to Person Marketing:** Despite the use of corporate language so far, we wish to emphasize that our project aims to retain the human warmth typically observable in tightly-knit small communities. This goes through personal interactions with members of the community. Increasing students’ sense of belonging to the community can be boosted through more visibility; for instance, posters around the campus could stimulate students’ curiosity.

**Event Marketing:** Raising awareness through workshops, “aperos”, symposiums, trips, etc. (cf. Appendix 10.2). These events will also allow socializing, collective brainstorming, and creating word of mouth for our project.

5 EPFL - feat The BOCS

In concept, the BOCS is essentially a "social network". We believe in the strength and values of human connection and wish to harness it for a better future. Community building and involvement is paramount for the success of our project. What could be perceived as a managerial challenge or a potential weakness is an opportunity to showcase this “power of communities” that we believe in. As such, we plan on involving students in the development of our project. For instance, volunteers interested in web development are most welcome to participate in the
enhancement of the platform. Students from the SIE section can also partner with the BOCS to offer innovative solutions to fight textile-induced pollution and reduce the harm inflicted to our planet. Additionally, we plan to make the BOCS as inclusive as possible, going beyond traditional gender stereotypes perpetuating the idea that fashion is an exclusively feminine concern. We also hope to have professors and researchers contribute to our endeavor.

By forging partnerships with the existing associations and projects at EPFL, we strive to achieve even more promising outcomes (cf. Appendix). Though much remains to be done, we have already discussed a potential cooperation with Unipoly and contemplate participating in the Durability Week in March 2020. Launching an initiative with associations like Ingénieurs du Monde or AIESEC Lausanne to promote the SDGs is also being currently discussed.

6 The Broadening Horizons

The ultimate goal of this project is to raise awareness on the environmental impact of textiles and the clothing industry. To promote the importance of reducing consumption, different methods are used such as media communication, workshop activities (cf. Appendix 10.2 for more details). However one additional step envisioned would be to potentially work together with on-campus professors to propose projects concerning this industry and the different aspects it entails. In fact, professors play an instrumental role in influencing and bringing global matters to their students’ attention (cf. Appendix 10.3 on how the project started). Some ideas would be to provide them with data, and even on-field information that can be used for students project. These can range from studies of agricultural lands themselves to the retailers’ strategies.

This project will first be tested on the EPFL campus but our ambition is to create a basic structure that can be implemented in different universities in Switzerland and later even in campuses around Europe. We believe this is possible given the large interest amongst students to find out more about how to act for the well-being of our planet and reduce their negative impact (cf. Appendix 10.4). Since this project distinguishes itself by its social aspect and our desire to bring students together, one particularity of this project is its modularity; each campus can eventually reconfigure the platform to create the perfect fit for the needs of its community.

7 Wanted : Funding

The pilot phase of the project is estimated to run for 1 year. This is the time we would need to review the viability of the project on the EPFL campus and its potential to expand to other universities. Since the project consists mainly of an online platform, purchasing a domain name would be the most essential step towards setting up the project. The funding awarded by Act4change is therefore intended to cover the funding for the pilot phase. There are no additional costs estimated to run the project. The platform aims to put people in contact to exchange clothes, therefore delivery or packaging costs are not included in the service.

If the project takes off, it can be financed in many ways. For it to keep running beyond the pilot phase, will seek for it to be financed by other grants that are organized at EPFL (e.g. YGrant, XGrant). Another option is crowdfunding. Heroslocaux for example is an initiative by the Raiffeisen Bank that promotes crowdfunding for non-profits.

We will then seek to form partnerships with sustainable brands that are contributing to the effort of reducing and reusing textiles. For example, there are some sustainable Swiss brands such as Jungle Folk and Sanikai. These eco-friendly brands use sustainable materials to create their fabrics such as regenerated fibers, recycled nylon and organic cotton. Texaid, a company that recycles textiles and repurposes clothes based in Switzerland, could also be a potential partner in promoting green values.
What would make the most sense— if the project should end up being a service provided by the university, the commune or the canton— would be that it could get financed by the public institutions themselves. The values promoted by the project, which aims to provide eco-friendly solutions while trying to create a sense of community, are inarguably in the general interest of everyone.

As for how the service would function on a day-to-day basis: it’s intended to be free for all students since it is based essentially on the idea of exchange and mutual assistance. That makes our project both ecological and economical!
# Budget

## BUDGET

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Price Estimate</th>
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<td><strong>Online Platform</strong></td>
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<td>Domain (1 year)</td>
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<td>Webdesign tools</td>
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<td><strong>Total CHF</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
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<td>Posters</td>
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<td>Stickers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photoshop License (1 y. if possible)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total CHF</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome-Info Session + Apéro</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop-Clothes Re-purpose</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshop-SpeedSwapping</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site Visits (incl. transport)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives</td>
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<td>Specialists speakers and Conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Others/Unforeseen Expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL BUDGET CHF:</strong></td>
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Figure 1: Estimated Budget Table
# 9 Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Main Points</th>
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| **Environment**     | • Raise Awareness on the Impacts of the Fashion Industry.  
                     • Eco-Friendly Project (no transport nor packages)  
                     • Striving to contribute in achieving SDGs (9 responsible consumption and production, 11 sustainable communities...) |
| **Innovation**      | • Accessible and effective trading of second-hand clothes, while promoting sustainable values of reusing and repurposing textiles  
                     • Small-scale market, with potential development in other communities  
                     • Innovation by providing a free service on campus  
                     • Multidisciplinary project combining new technologies, social and environmental motives, and the textile industry |
| **Interests**       | • Empowering EPFL students to improve their relationship with their wardrobes  
                     • Friendly tool to meet students or any EPFL stakeholder on campus easily in an unusual way  
                     • Use of Digital, Person to Person, Events marketing to promote effective solutions to the textile crisis and raise awareness |
| **Social**          | • A valuable "social network" defined by its sustainable and social ambition  
                     • Inclusive community encouraging EPFL students and stakeholders to be involved in its development  
                     • Partnerships with students associations and organisations within EPFL and Lausanne to launch eco-friendly initiatives |
| **Potential**       | • Collaboration with Professors (student projects)  
                     • Modular Project Adaptable to Different Campuses  
                     • Expansion to Campuses around Europe |
| **Economics**       | • One year pilot phase to determine the viability of the project  
                     • Long term viability due to low initial costs  
                     • Potential financing through grants, partnerships, and crowd-funding |
10 Appendices

10.1 Who we really are

**PRISCILLA**

The Enthusiastic Insider

- Lived in Beirut and Lausanne
- Had experiences in software and automatic control, design and development engineering
- Loves coding and hiking
- Plays piano and violin
- Football fan
- Very picky eater and not a big fan of chocolate
- Arty mind
- Shy but somehow manages to talk a lot (uses handgestures as well)

**Motto:** "Never let a punportunity slip away!"

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**CÉLINE**

The Creative Mind

- Lived in Beirut and Paris
- Had experiences in human rights, the Council of Europe and law firms
- Likes to draw sketches
- Loves Thai food
- Still hung up on 90's R&B
- Favorite book: The Catcher in the Rye
- Practices Yoga
- Has watched every teen movie ever made

**Motto:** "Don't be you, Be Yoncé."
How we manage the BOCS?

- Priscilla is the **Chief Technical Officer**, she takes care of all the scientific and technological matters. She is also responsible of the platform’s development.

- Céline as the **Chief Operating Officer** focuses on executing the company’s business plan and supervises the BOCS’s operations. Additionally, alongside with Sara, they both handle Finance and Legal matters.

- Sara is the **Chief Creative Officer**. She is responsible for the marketing, media, and branding associated with the BOCS.

10.2 Wake up call

In order to produce a simple cotton shirt, the fibers are processed until they can be turned into a yarn, which itself is then knitted into a fabric. In addition, bleaches and dyes are additionally commonly involved. Finally, the fabric is made into a clothing. Each one of these steps and stages contribute to the environmental impact of producing and consuming a shirt. The making of these shirts uses in fact huge amounts of water because all of this yarn has to be constantly washed, to be able to undergo all the chemical processes to turn it into a high quality fabric.

The environmental impact of the clothing industry is mainly a result of the volume of clothing that is being produced. This is largely driven by our consumption habits. In fact, nowadays, with the lower prices and always changing products we find it easier and more convenient to buy new items than actually tending for the ones we already own. We live under the impression that fast fashion helps us spend less and consequently our impact is reduced. This is a common misconception.

Here are some of the projects we are currently working in alignment with our social strategy:
10.2.1 Canevas

Figure 2: Infographics propositions

Figure 3: For our meme-loving community

10.2.2 Event ideas

1. **Speed-swapping**: Students would meet and share stories related to the clothes they want to swap in order to convince the participants to adopt their items (works of pure imagination are highly encouraged).

2. **Conferences ideas**:
   - Sustainable fashion in Switzerland
   - Preferred materials for responsible fiber and sustainable clothes

3. **What to do with clothes with no hope?** Workshop on clothes repurposing, collective brainstorming and DIY for those with a tinkering spirit.

4. **Academic projects sharing**:
   - Recycling research
   - Life-cycle of an item
   - The impact behind washing our clothes

5. **Afterworks with other associations (Unipoly...)**

6. **Trip to a clothing recycling center (Texaid...)**
10.3 The BOCS

How it all started

It all started a few months back, when two members were first confronted to the reality of fast fashion. At EPFL, Priscilla is taking a course in Life-Cycle-Assessment where she is assigned a project to study the life of both a cotton and synthetic T-shirt and assess the environmental impact of each step, from cotton plants to the end-of-life disposal. At that same time, in Paris, Celine, a law student, watches a documentary about the less glamorous realities of the fashion industry. Together, they decided that it was time for them to learn more and start researching deeper into annual reports and studies concerning the environmental impact of fast fashion and its circular economy. Afterwards they decide it was them for them to be part of the change and start brainstorming for ideas. They then elaborate a survey to assess the current situation and get a first feedback on their idea. Once the basic idea was devised, they decide to meet up with Act4Change on the EPFL campus to propose their project; the process was launched. Soon after, a new member joined the team, Sara. Also a business law student and actively promoting the SDGs for a few years now, she was enthralled by the idea and truly believed in its success. She had a few insights from her travels in Seoul and Istanbul, two huge fast fashion hubs where you could easily sense the euphoria for clothes and the cultural and economic impact of the textile industry on both South Korea and Turkey. Sara felt overwhelmed by this unethical business and she was firmly convinced she wanted to act efficiently against all the drawbacks of the industry. While sharing a cup of tea with Celine in Paris and discussing our generation’s current challenges, she was thrilled by a blossoming project aiming to tackle the fast fashion crisis and decided to join the team. The BOCS was born.

Why ‘The BOCS’

We wanted to find a name that would reflect the multi-dimensional aspect of this project. After a long but enriching brainstorming session we eventually came up with the BOCS, an acronym that spells out : the big online clothing swap.

This perfectly epitomizes the unique mindset we want to transmit to our community : the BOCS is an unparalleled opportunity to open your eco-mind box, your person box and of course to get your clothes out of their box !

The next step was to design a logo and a motto for our concept that would encapsulate our ambitions.

Here below are some options to highlight our process :
Figure 4: Logo Propositions
10.4 They Talk about us

In the summer of 2019, we conducted a survey to better evaluate the current behaviours and precepts of students concerning their clothes and the textile industry as a whole. This survey was filled by 130 students around the world and provided valuable insights useful to the elaboration of the project as a whole. Some key numbers and statistics are summarized here below \(^2\):

![Pie chart showing shopping frequency]

**How often do you go shopping for clothes (including online shopping)?**

- 40.8% every week
- 26.2% several times a month
- 23.8% once a month
- 5% once every few months
- 4.7% once a year
- 3.8% twice a year

\(^2\)For further results and details concerning the survey, please feel free to contact us.
How much clothing do you currently own but do not wear anymore?

130 responses

- 26.2%: A lot (more than 10 pieces)
- 14.8%: A considerable amount (5 to 10)
- 23.8%: Not a lot (less than 5)
- 22.3%: None (I wear everything I own)
- 33.1%: 56.9%

Are you aware of the social and environmental impacts of the fast fashion industry (H&M, Zara, Mango, ...)?

130 responses

- 22.3%: Yes, that is why I don’t shop at fast fashion brands
- 20.8%: Yes, but the fast fashion industry allows me to purchase a lot of clothing with very affordable prices
- 33.1%: Yes, but as long as there are no other alternatives I will keep shopping from these brands
- 23.8%: No, I am not aware about the consequences of fast fashion
- 67.7%: 11.5%

Do you think it is urgent to start thinking about alternative business models to that of the fast fashion industry?

130 responses

- 20.8%: Yes, I think it is time to start adopting more ecological and affordable alternatives to shopping at fast fashion brands
- 67.7%: No, I think there are more important ecological issues at hand
- 11.5%: I don’t have an opinion on this issue

Figure 6: Key Results from Survey
10.4.1 Vox Populi

To get an even deeper understanding of our fellow student community we led a "street interviews" on different campuses where we briefly explained our concept. Here are some of the feedback we gathered:

- **Anna Morel - Université de Fribourg (PhD Candidate, Tax law)**: "I am very interested in this project, I have heard about thrift shops but it always seemed so impersonal. This would make me feel more comfortable about sharing my clothes since I actually get to meet the previous owner!"

- **Joëlle Hanna - EPFL (MA3, EL)**: "This would have been particularly useful for me my first year here at EPFL! I didn’t know anyone and didn’t have enough space in my luggage to get all I needed."

- **Nassim Ben Brahim - Université de Fribourg/Université Panthéon Assas (Master, Business law)**: "The idea looks pretty appealing to me! I have a lot of clothes that I don’t wear anymore, even clothes from renowned brands. The thing is that I cannot picture myself giving it all away like this. So, having the opportunity to swap clothes with on campus people is definitely tempting. Let’s see how everything goes!"

- **Khaoula El Alami - Insa Lyon (Master, Science et Génie des Matériaux)**: "I’m always looking for thrift shops to buy my clothes, so this project is perfect as it brings the thrift shop on my campus. I’m sure it’s gonna succeed as it’ll also be the opportunity to meet new people and be an ice breaker with them."

- **Michael Bialocur - EPFL (MA1-ME)**: "This sounds like a great idea! The best thing is that it can also be extended later to other goods."

- **Camille Labroue - Université Paris Diderot (Master, Sociology)**: "This project speaks a lot to our generation. The application allows people to make small scale contributions to a greater cause. It also seems very achievable to put in place on campus, and could eventually extend to other universities if it takes off."

- **Andrea Dos Santos - UNIL (Research)**: "I like the concept but how does it distinguish itself from other existent online services?"

- **Hugo Bocquet - EPFL (MA3-ME)**: "It’s true that we don’t often hear about the negative impacts of fashion, I really like the social side that will allow to raise awareness within the community. I was wondering though, how do you plan to guarantee the quality of the clothes exchanged?"

This little experience was truly helpful as it proved to us that students, no matter their background or their cultures face the same struggles when it comes to creating links with their peers. This was the decisive for us to try and propose to them a simple alternative while taking part and acting to make their campus greener.

Some of the people interviewed challenged us with their insightful questions, here is how we thought out of the box to clear up their doubts!

10.4.2 Successful Problem-Solving

One aspect that could seem controversial is how we plan to ensure the quality of the clothes exchanged since this matter is left for "swapers" themselves. However, having a quality control process would actually go against the spirit we promote here at the BOCS. The aim is to encourage people to meet up in an eco-context. They are then able to easily assess visually the quality of the good exchanged, and that over a beer or a coffee.

Plus, there is no monetary engagement required by the user since the service is free for all!
10.5 The Journey

**Timeline**

- **JUNE-AUG 2019**
  - Study of fashion cons
  - Market Study
  - Survey Launch
  - Ideas/Brainstorm
  - Meeting A4C
  - Newbie

- **SEPT-OCT 2019**
  - Logo/Name

- **APRIL 2020**
  - Visit cellt clothes
  - Durability week

- **MARCH 2020**
  - Survey EPFL

- **DEC 2019**
  - Report submission

- **NOV 2019**
  - First Post

Figure 7: Project Timeline