

Muz., 2022(63): 173-184
Annual, eISSN 2391-4815

received – 07.2022
reviewed – 08.2022
accepted – 09.2022
DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0016.0471

INITIAL DIAGNOSIS OF ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH TEXTILES, CLOTHES, AND FASHION ACCESSORIES UNDERTAKEN BY POLISH MUSEUMS*

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Introduction

Textiles and clothes, as well as related accessories, constitute an extremely important element in people's everyday life. Manufactured and worn in numerous contexts, they are utility items, performing important symbolic functions, while also permitting exercising cultural practices and expressing one's identity.¹ They are more frequently perceived from the perspective of artistic actions when looking at fashion as a discipline of applied art.² All these elements are created in definite historical and geographical contexts. Thus, quite naturally, they have become a part of museum collections.³ 'Fashion' artefacts may constitute a major part of a collection, not only of the museums of specialized profiles, but also of the institutions which boast multidisciplinary collections. The growing interest in fashion observed worldwide in the recent decades is reflected, among others, in the establishment of new specialized museums, the creation of separate departments dedicated to textiles, clothes, or

fashion, or in a broader presence of fashion in the museums not necessarily addressing fashion directly.⁴ At present, this interest can take on the shape of activities both in the real as well as the virtual museum space.⁵ When undertaking this topic, museums cooperate with numerous entities such as e.g., designers or companies representing this sector,⁶ tertiary-education institutions,⁷ other cultural institutions, historical reenactment groups, as well as the local community, and the media. They form part of the (eco) system of fashion, both as entities inspiring, identifying, and defining its cultural values, and influencing the economic valorisation of its products.

Similarly as in clothes' designing and manufacturing, in whose case in the recent years in Anglo-Saxon and European countries a shift in looking at them as a traditional light industry (as its branch considered stagnating, if not declining) towards functioning of the fashion industry as a part of a more promising contemporary creative sector has been observed,⁸ also in museums an akin shift of approach has been noted

over the last decades. What can be seen is the transition from museums targeting clothing, also traditional costumes (museums of costume) to fashion-oriented ones (fashion museums, museums of fashion).⁹ To the extent that some speak of contemporaneity (the last two decades) as the third fashion-oriented stage of interest in fabrics, clothes, and fashion accessories by museums (the transition from the so-called dress museology to fashion museology).¹⁰ The questions related to this process encompass the selection of objects for inclusion in museum collections, various means and reasons for which they reach museums, directions of their interpretation, manners of showing them to the public (e.g., local manufacturing, folk costumes,¹¹ vestments, haute couture,¹² everyday clothes), and pointing to the reasons for their musealization,¹³ as well as shaping narrative around them and the means of accentuating the value of respective artefacts. Questions arise as for the essential issues, such as the legitimizing of the value of clothing industry products or of the output of definite designers.¹⁴ It is, indeed, a fact that fashion can reflect class and social differences, that it illustrates broader issues and social as well as ethical dilemmas related to gender relations, ethnic or religious differentiation, exposing human body, emphasizing the value of handcraft as opposed to mass industrial production, etc.¹⁵ The questions related to the presence of fashion in museums also reflect a wider debate on the complexity of museums' functions and impact,¹⁶ as well as the dilemmas stemming from museums operating as institutions first of all focused on collection and research, but also being places of social relevance and venues for entertainment and leisure.¹⁷

Research methodology

Fashion-related collections constitute an inherent part of many Polish museum collections.¹⁸ Furthermore, a growing interest in these topics and extension of the catalogue of activities related to fashion undertaken by Polish museums has been observed. Despite these questions having already been analysed, particularly as for the museological praxis,¹⁹ there are no overall diagnoses going beyond the presence of such collection types in museum collections or beyond case studies.

The goal of this paper is thus a preliminary quantitative diagnosis of the presence of fashion and fashion-related artefacts in Polish museums in the last three years, beginning with the collection extension, through conservation, research, publishing, and display, up to other museum activities. Also the entities with which museums cooperate on these issues have been taken into consideration. Owing to the limited volume of the paper, a more extensive qualitative analysis of the data obtained in a survey shall be published in other studies.

The data on the presence of fashion in museums were amassed thanks to the survey conducted in cooperation with the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections (NIMOZ) in the first quarter of 2022. The surveys were sent out to 268 museums selected for the investigation on the grounds of an earlier research (nonprobability sampling). The museums considered were those which in the earlier NIMOZ research admitted to having fabrics, textiles, or clothes in their collection, as well as the museums in which such collections had been identified in the guide to Polish museums by Dorota Folga-Januszewska.²⁰ The base

was extended with the museums which featured the word 'fashion' or 'textile industry' in the name or were identified through an online preliminary research conducted in January 2022. In the case of multi-branch museums, regardless of the number of the branches, a given institution filled in one survey. The number of organizations involved in the survey stood at 147 (55% of the forms were returned) representing varied types of museums, ownership forms, and organizers. The museums recruited from all the regions of Poland.

Textiles, clothes, accessories, and other fashion-related objects in museum collections

Fashion-related museum exhibits constitute an immanent part of the majority of Polish museum collections. Within the analysed museum group as many as 93% institutions began collecting museum exhibits connected with fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories, over a decade ago. More than ¾ of them have been collecting these items since their beginning. Among the selected group for 45% of the museums such collections were either the leading or a major motif in the museum collection (as of the end of 2021).

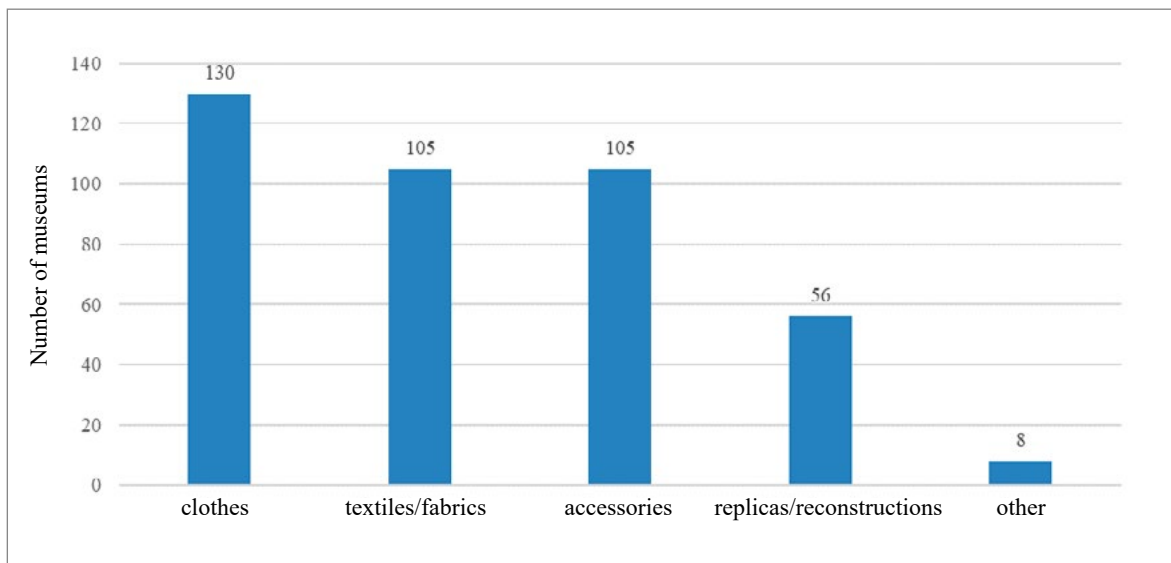
In the collections of the above museums three major categories were formed by: clothes (amassed in 88% of the museums), accessories (71%), fabrics/textiles (71%). Fewer museums focused on replicas/reconstructions (38% according to museum registers) and other objects (5%). The surveys also asked about the age of the objects. Their general periodization was classified into three categories: produced prior to 1918 inclusive, in 1919–1989, and after 1989.²¹

In the course of the analysis of the types of clothes and clothes' replicas/reconstructions in museum collections as of 31 December 2021 what we observe is the dominance of occupational clothing, objects connected with definite jobs or professions, (e.g., uniforms, business attires), and folk costumes. For example, in the category of clothes produced in 1919–1989, as many as 73% of the museums which collected clothes from the period had occupational clothing. Folk costumes produced before 1918 are collected by 67% of the museums amassing clothes from the period, while for the clothes produced in 1919–1989 that share stands at respectively 64%.

Another highly numerous group are vestments (for liturgy and priests; particularly among the clothes in the first period, in 1919–1989, and replicas/reconstructions of clothes in 1919–1989). Haute couture clothes in the categories of clothes created by 1918 and in 1919–1989 are collected in about 30% of the museums which have respectively clothes created by 1918 and in 1919–1989, and in 22% of those which have clothes produced after 1989.

Significantly fewer museums collect replicas/reconstructions. Most frequently they are replicas/reconstructions of objects produced before 1918, more rarely of clothes manufactured after 1989. Regardless of the period of the origin of models/patterns among the replicas/reconstructions two types of clothes dominate: occupational clothing and folk costumes (27% of the museums which boast clothing from that period). One more interesting collection category are clothes belonging to other cultures, such as kimonos, saris, or sarongs.

Another interesting varied collection is composed of other



Authors' own study

Chart 1. Museums having in their collection clothes, fabrics/textiles, and accessories and other objects related to their designing, production, sale, and consumption (in museum register as of 31 December 2021) (N = 147)

clothing types, including e.g., fragments of clothes which are historical mementoes connected with historical events, theatre costumes, ceremonial dress, formal wear, ritual clothing, sports attire, scout uniforms, school uniforms, layettes. These are particularly numerous among the clothing manufactured post 1989.

Museum collections related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textile, and fashion accessories have been increasingly growing. In 2019–2021, as many as 70% of the museums acquired new objects for the collections fitting in these categories. When comparing the structure of the new collections *versus* collections in general what can be seen is a systematic interest of the museums in the analysed sector. Among the new register entries what dominate are those related to clothing (54% of the museums acquired them in the recent years *versus* 88% of the museums which have them in their collection). An equally extensive category is that of accessories (these were acquired by 39% of the museums, while 71% of the museums have them in their collection). A smaller share of museums commissioned clothes' replicas/reconstructions (11% *versus* 38% of the museums in the analysed group which have them in their collection). The reason for the latter possibly being that objects of this type often reach museum collections as auxiliary or educational items, thus not entering the museum register.

Museums also amass objects related to the analysed topic which, however, are not fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories. The structure of these museum exhibits as of the end of 2021 is shown in Chart 9, while the share of the acquisitions from 2019–2021 is presented in Chart 10. Over the last three years more than 35% of the museums acquired objects fitting in this category. The dominating group in the collections overall is constituted by photographs (they are amassed by 75% of the museums, while 23% of them have acquired them in the recent years). A similar share in the structure is taken by postcards (43% of the museums have them in their collection,

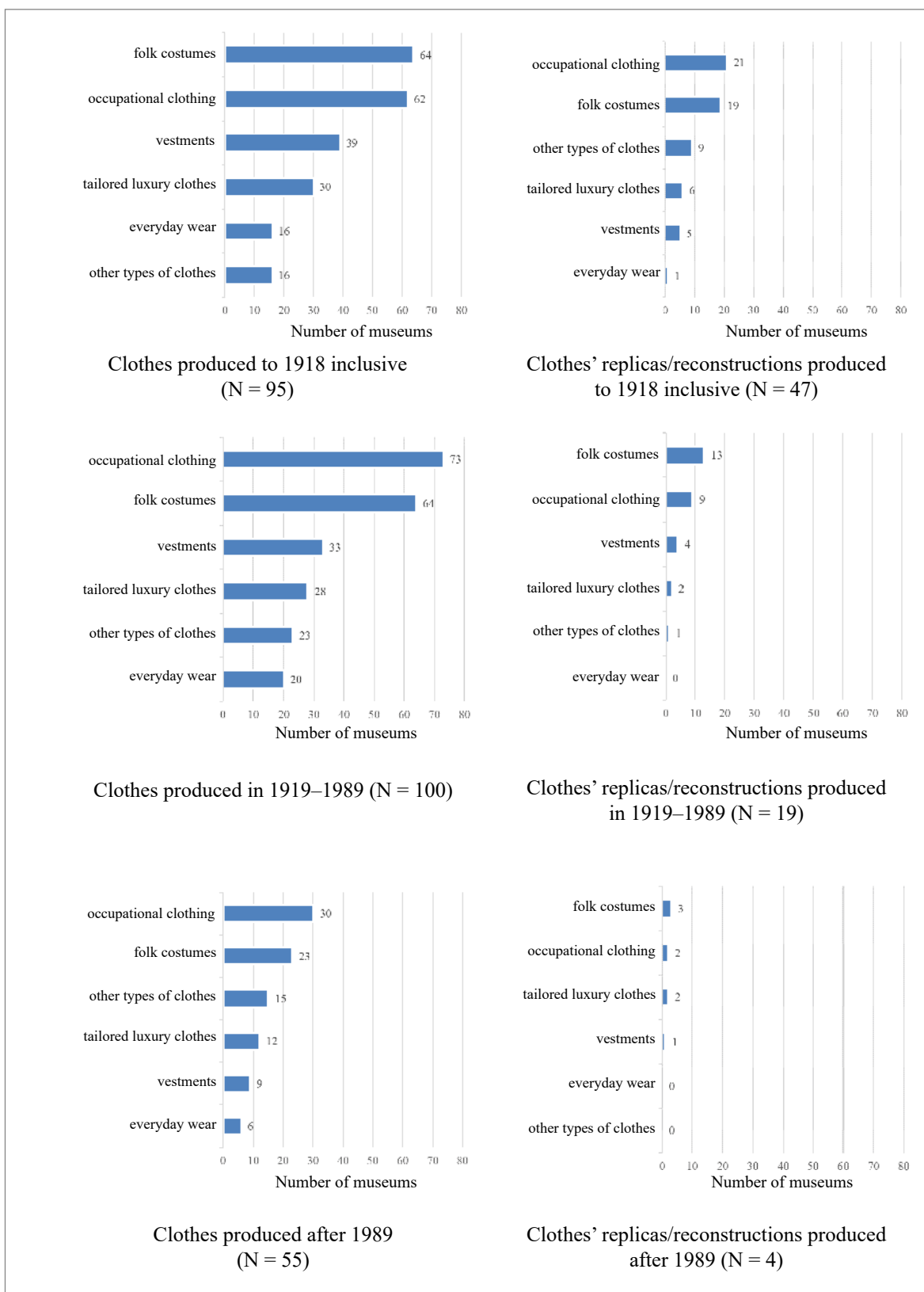
11% have acquired them recently), and pattern books (37% have them in their collection, 9% have acquired them). Over ¼ of museums have fashion-related press in their collection, however, only 2% of the museums have acquired new such items. Similarly, ¼ of museums collect albums, yet merely 3% of the analysed institutions have acquired new such items. Drawings related to fashion designing could be found in 18% of the museums, and among acquisitions they stood at a higher value than their share in the collection in general.

The topic of fashion is also reflected in the organizational structure of museums. In 2019–2021, 26% of them employed staff specializing in topics related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories, while 12% of the museums boasted their own conservation studios for fabrics/clothes.

Fashion and museum display activity

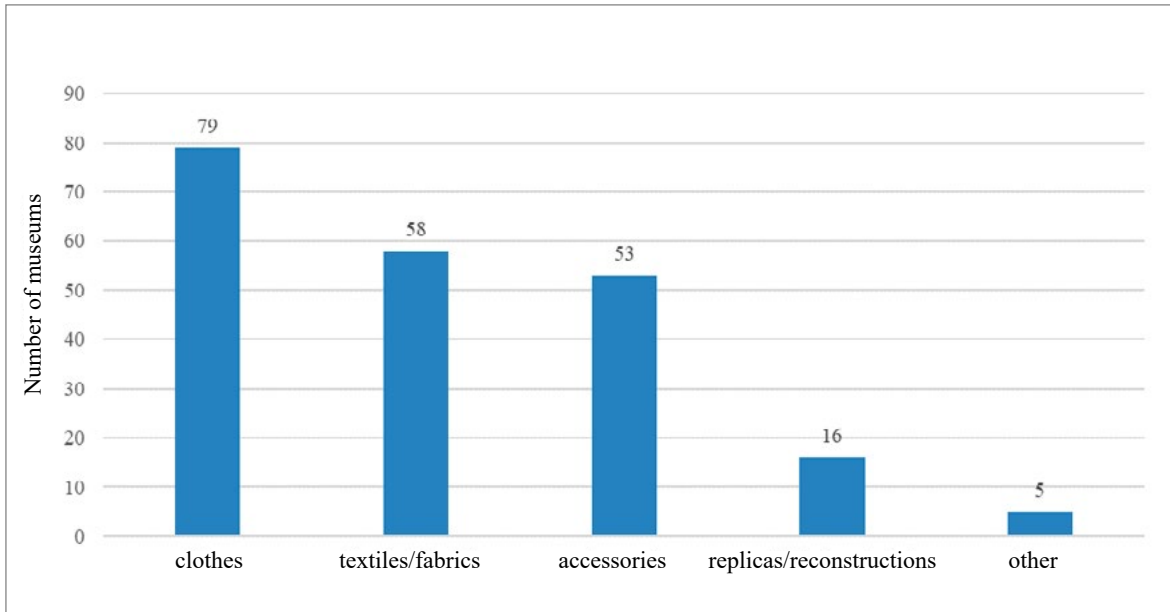
Over 2019–2021, museums displayed 156 permanent exhibitions which featured to a varied extent the topic of fashion. Only four museums (ca 3%) did not have permanent exhibitions taking this topic into account. In the case of 56% of the exhibitions it appeared in displays not directly directed at fashion. In the view of the surveyed museum staff over ⅓ of the exhibitions featured exhibits related to fashion, fabrics, textiles, and fashion accessories as the litemotif or a visible/separate exhibition module.

In 2019–2021, a third of the surveyed museums presented temporary exhibitions whose litemotif was the discussed topic. There were 75 exhibitions mounted, of which the independently organized ones dominated (45%), about ⅓ were held in cooperation with other entities, whereas ca 20% were rented/loaned exhibitions. Over that period of time, 20% of the museums presented temporary exhibitions whose major module was the topic of fashion, fabrics, clothes, and fashion accessories (49 exhibitions). Over half



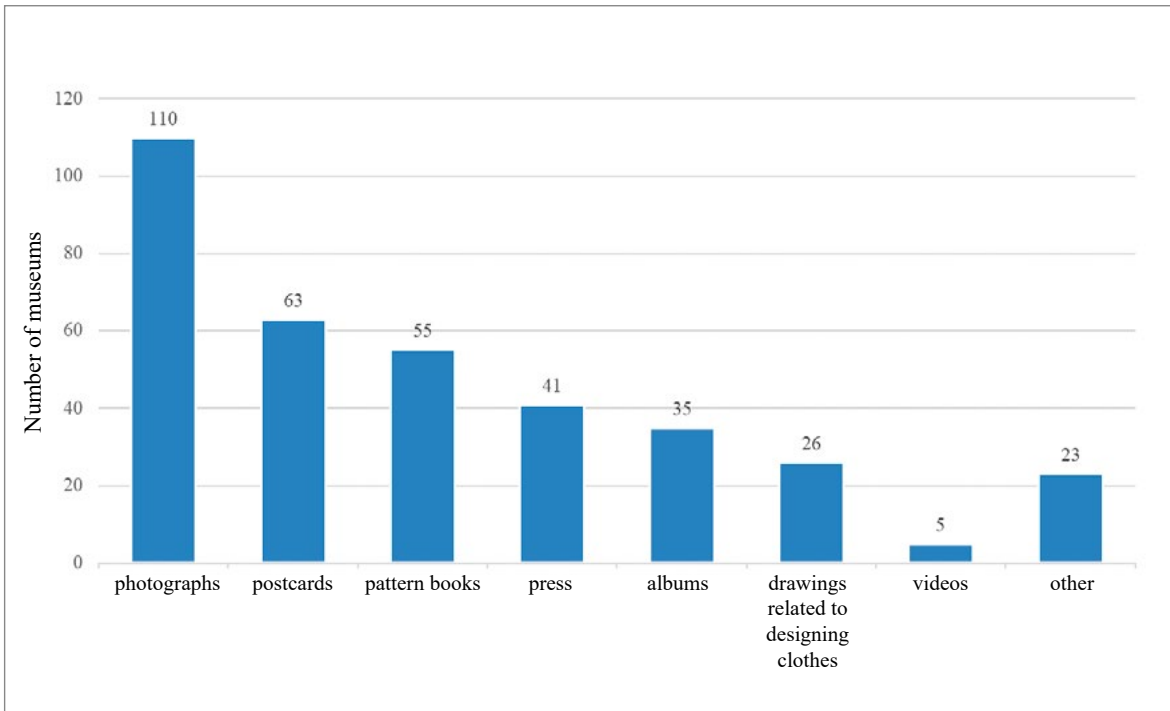
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Chart 2–7. Museums having definite types of clothes or clothes' replicas/reconstructions in their collections (as of 31 December 2021)



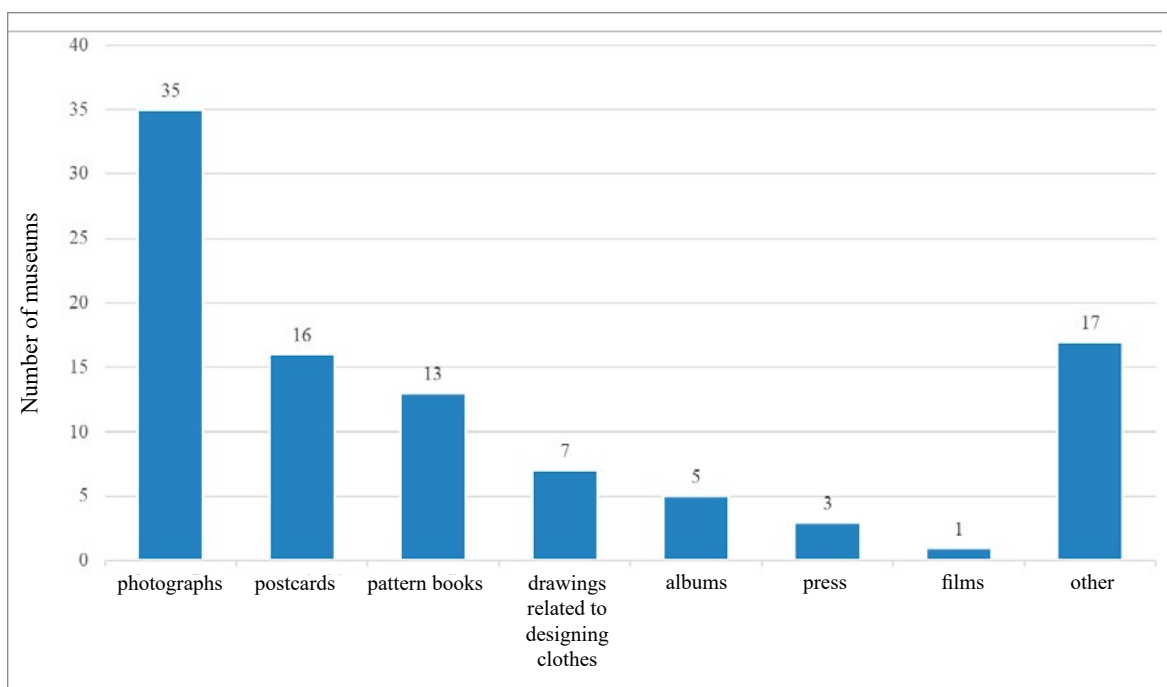
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Chart 8. Museums which acquired clothes, fabrics/textiles, and accessories, as well as other objects related to their designing, production, sale, and consumption in 2019–2021 (divided into object categories) (N = 147)



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Chart 9. Museums collecting artefacts related to fashion, clothes, textiles, and accessories, which are not fabrics, clothes, textiles and accessories (as of 31 December 2021)



Authors' own study

Chart 10. Museums which acquired artefacts related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and accessories which are not fabrics, clothes, textiles and accessories in 2019–2021

of them (59%) were mounted independently, 35% in cooperation, 6% were rented or loaned exhibitions. In 2019–2021, over a third of museums rented or loaned exhibits from their collections for exhibitions on topics related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories to various institutions.

Fashion and other forms of activity of Polish museums

Implementation of research projects

Among the analysed museum community (N = 147) 11% conducted research programmes related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories. A vast majority of them (68%) were related to folk culture, regional design, manufacturing and ornamentation techniques. Single research activities were related to the research into clothing of other social groups. A relation between fashion, clothing, and fabrics with local intangible heritage can be observed. These concern mainly regional cultures, but urban culture as well.

Publishing activity

A fifth of the analysed museums also run a publishing activity on the discussed topic. A vast majority of the publications were in various ways related to the display activity, both with respect to permanent and temporary exhibitions. Museum publications popularized and extended the knowledge of the collections of respective institutions, and were

a form of attracting attention to, boosting interest in sometimes unobvious elements of museum collections. As part of the promotion of temporary exhibitions the following were published: exhibition catalogues, brochures developing the topic tackled in the exhibition, pattern books, albums, or educational publications. Other publications were also yielded by the conducted research and implementation of research projects. Furthermore, museums publish their own journals in which they present effects of their activity related to the analysed topics.

Other dissemination forms

The research also covered the widely conceived topic of knowledge dissemination going beyond the activities presented above. Bearing in mind the peculiar epidemic situation over the analysed period, a separate analysis was focused on the activity related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories conducted on-site, while the activities in the virtual reality were regarded separately.

Apart from exhibitions, more than 1/3 of the museums organized on-site events on the topic related to fashion, fabrics, textiles, and fashion accessories over 2019–2021. The forms of such activities are presented in detail in Chart 12.

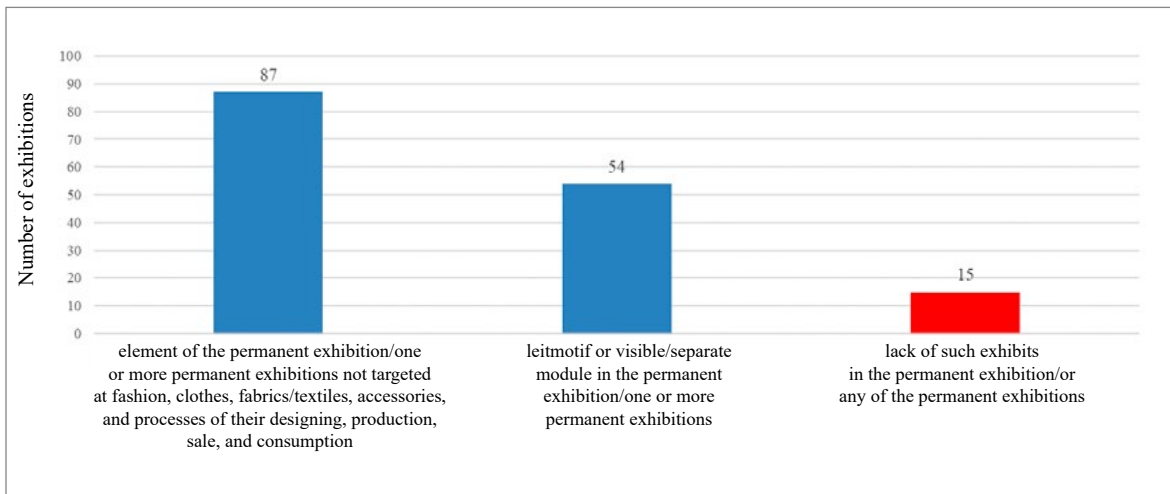
Apart from exhibitions, the most popular form of popularizing the topic of fashion was the organization of workshops in the course of which participants gained practical skills (e.g., sewing, cutting, embroidery, lace, weaving, upcycling, etc.). In 2019–2021, events of this type were held by 30 museums. 90% of the museums addressed such workshops to the general museum public. Instead, not fully a half of them offered workshops targeted at definite age groups, while 20% of them

at selected social groups (e.g., students, craftspeople, folk artists, fashion designers, teachers, folklore groups, residents of small towns and rural areas, people with disabilities). 43% of the museums prepared workshops as events accompanying exhibitions related to the analysed topic.

Another, almost equally popular form were lectures (25 museums), followed by: historical staging, historical reenactment, or outdoor events participated by individuals wearing historical or historical-related costumes (18 museums), craft shows related to fabrics and fashion

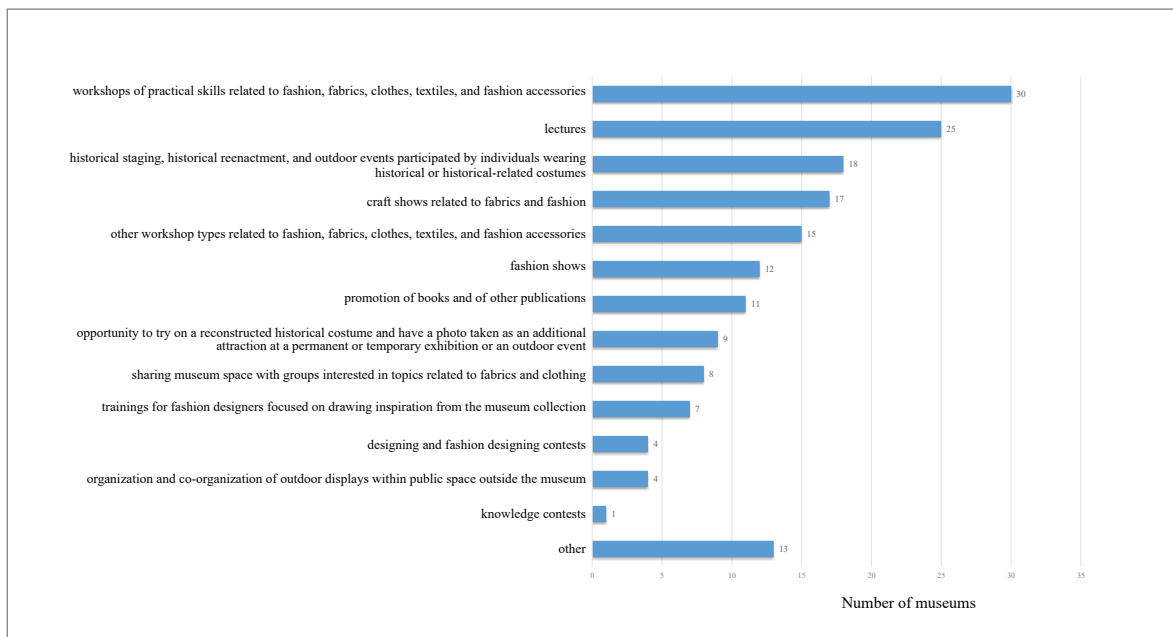
(17 museums), or other workshops related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories (15 museums). Furthermore, museums provided workshop participants with the opportunity to present the effects of their work.

Another interesting activity were events involving fashion designers. The following were held: fashion shows (12 museums), training in drawing inspiration from the objects found in the museum collection (4 museums); also the possibility to use museum space was offered to external



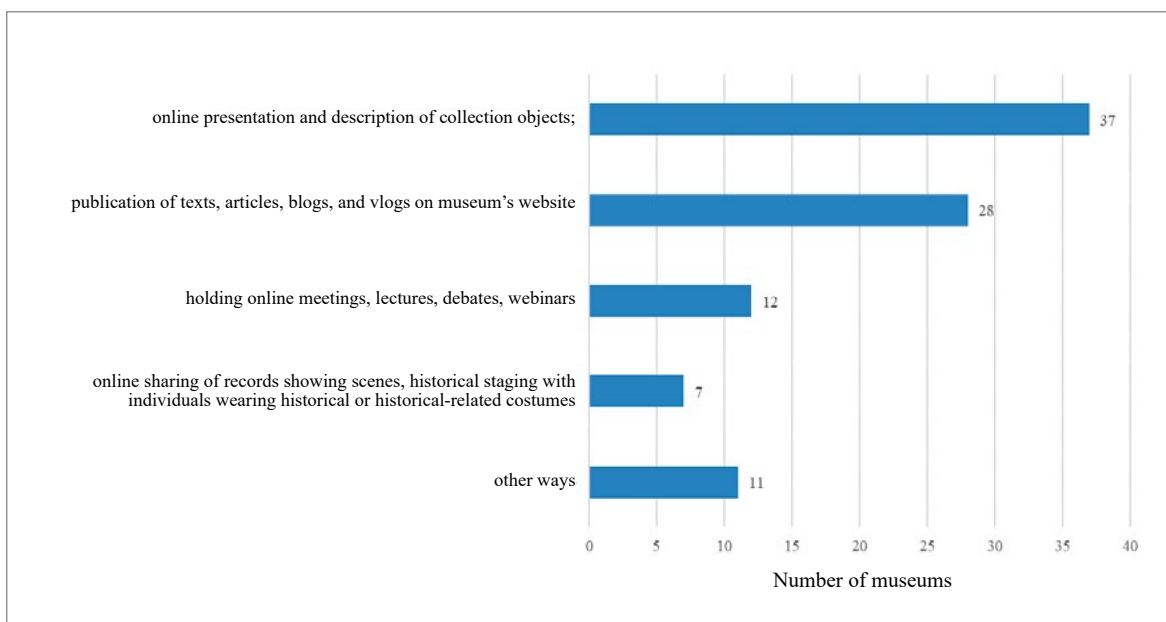
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Chart 11. Permanent exhibitions with recorded presence of exhibits related to fashion, clothes, fabrics/textiles, and accessories, and those related to their designing, production, sale, and consumption in 1 January 2019 – 31 December 2021 (N = 156 exhibitions)



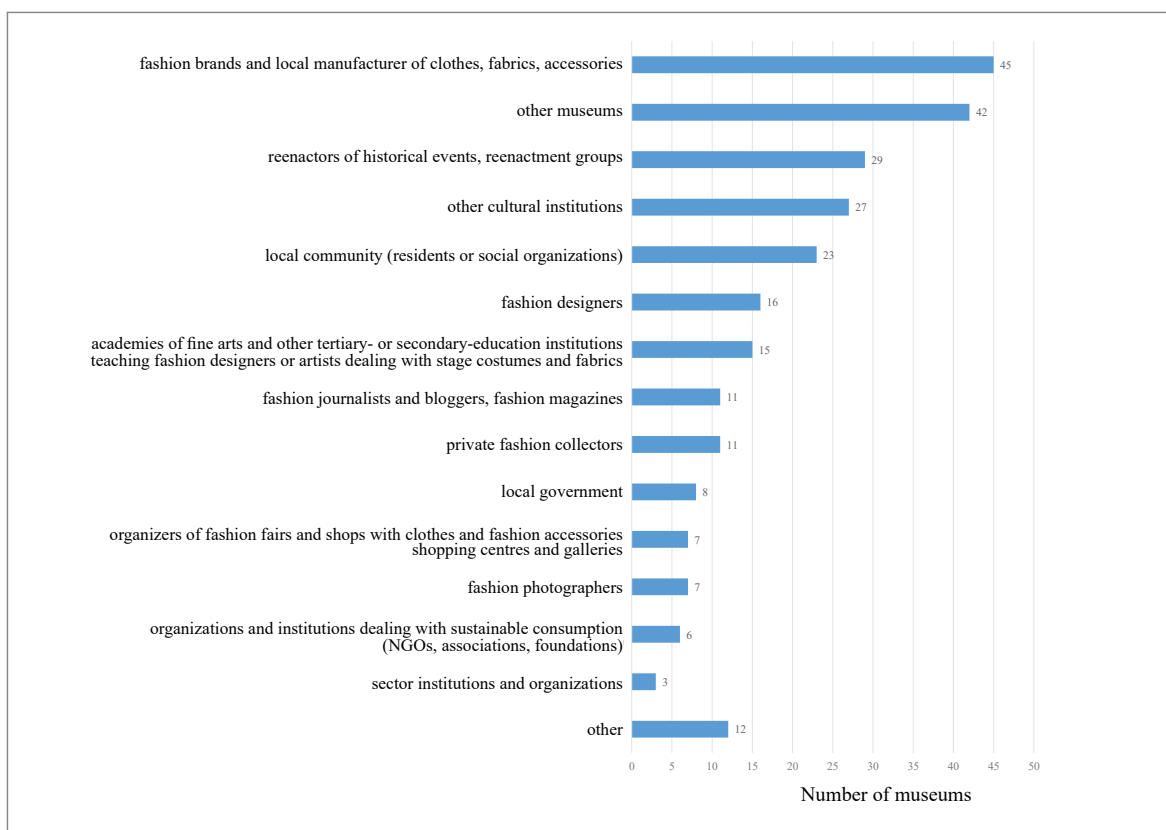
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Chart 12. Museums promoting topics related to fashion, clothes, fabrics/textiles, and accessories and to their designing, production, sale, and consumption as part of their education and promotion on-site activity in 2019–2021



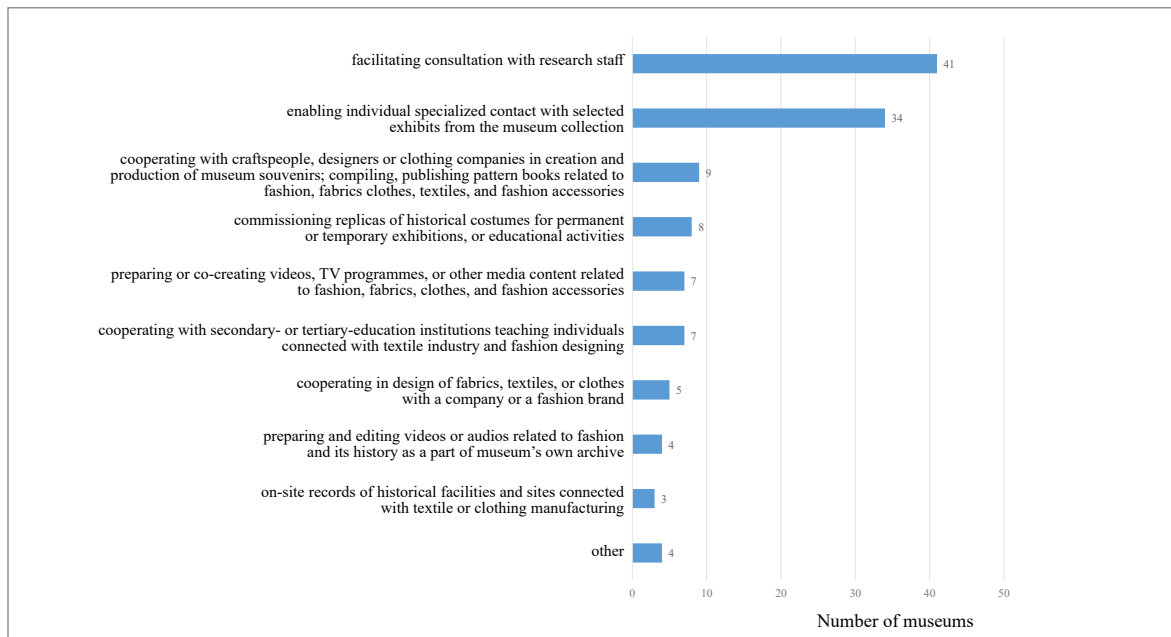
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Chart 13. Museums running online activities aimed at disseminating topics of fashion, clothes, fabrics/textiles, and accessories, and those related to their designing, production, sale, and consumption



Authors' own study

Chart 14. Museums cooperating with their socio-economic environment in activities related to fashion, clothes, fabrics/textiles, and accessories, and to their designing, production, sale, and consumption in 2019–2021 (N = 95)



Authors' own study

Chart 15. Museums permitting clothing companies, fashion designers, and craftspeople to draw inspiration from their museum collection in 2019–2021 with forms and ways of making them accessible/support (N = 47)

organizers of fashion or craft fairs. Another attractive option was offering the possibility to try on and have a photograph taken in a reconstructed historical costume (9 museums). Apart from the enumerated activities, museums also prepared museum classes.

Facing the pandemic museums increased the activity allowing to share 'fashion-related' content online. In 2019–2021, as many as 39% from among 147 museums popularized the discussed topic benefitting from virtual means (a higher share than of those who were involved in disseminating them in the traditional form). This involved predominantly online presentation of collection objects (25% of the museums) and publication of texts, articles, blogs, and vlogs on the discussed topic on museums' website (19%).

A peculiar form of cooperation of museums with the clothing and textile industry is the sale of their products in a museum shop. As many as 124 of the investigated museums, i.e., 84%, ran museum shops or bookshops, of which 2/3 sold items related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories.

Museums as a part of the fashion ecosystem

The conducted research allowed to identify the main groups of entities, individuals, or institutions museum cooperate with when conducting activity related to fashion, fabrics, clothes, textiles, and fashion accessories. In 2019–2021, 65% of the museums cooperated with the outside environment.

The most frequent form of cooperation involved fashion brands, local manufacturers of clothes, fabrics, and of accessories (31% of the museums), while other museums (29%)

eagerly cooperated with reenactors of historical events and reenactment groups (20%), or other than museums cultural institutions (18%) and the local community and its organizations (16%). The next place was taken by individuals and institutions related to education on the discussed topic, designing of fashion or its presentation (academies of fine arts and other tertiary- or secondary-education institutions teaching fashion designers or artists dealing with stage costumes and fabrics: 10%; journalists and bloggers as well as fashion magazines: 7%). 7% of the museums cooperated with private fashion collections.

An important dimension of the museums' relations with their environment is cooperation with craftspeople and manufacturers of clothes and fabrics aimed at providing them with an opportunity to present their products or sell them. Bearing in mind the fact that the major part of the discussed period suffered the pandemic restrictions, more focus was put on outdoor events held by museums. Almost ¼ of the museums mounted such events. The total number of such events identified stood at 55 (counting the number of the events by name, not by edition numbers), of which over 75% were cyclical. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in subsequent years the number of events (editions) significantly varied (in 2019: 53 events; in 2020: 14 events; in 2021: 38 events). The most prominent category of the events was connected with folk culture and folklore (82%).

About a third of the museums enabled drawing inspiration from their museum collection to clothing companies, fashion designers, and craftspeople; at the same time, different modes and forms of knowledge sharing, access to exhibits, etc., were applied. The details in this respect are contained in Chart 15.

In the analysed structure what vastly dominate are consultations with research staff (28% of the museums) as well as enabling individual specialized study of selected collection items (23%). The remaining forms were of a much smaller relevance, although their varied range should be pointed to. Museums also benefitted from the knowledge, experience, and resources of external entities. A fifth of the analysed institutions commissioned conservation of fabrics, clothes, or fashion accessories from the museum collection from external entities. The museums' environment also provided inspiration and knowledge to museums.

Closing remarks

Based on the nation-wide survey results, the paper discusses the character of Polish museum collections related to fashion, as well as issues of extending museum collections with new objects related to this topic. Attempts have been made to emphasize that apart from the most visible display initiatives museums become involved in many other fashion-related activities, also online, cooperating with the clothing industry and fashion designers, affecting the first directly or indirectly, inspiring new clothes' designs, or supporting the industry, and enabling the sale of its products.

The analysis has thus led to identifying four major types of museum operations related to fashion in Polish museums: 1) activities targeted at collection development and conservation; 2) display activities; 3) other museum activities involving inspiring, disseminating, educating; 4) providing opportunities for promotion and direct sale of fashion sector products. All the activity types are parallelly undertaken by the institutions particularly active within the fashion realm, which seems to be the resultant of a number of conditionings, both internal (activity scale, museum's profile), and external (organizer, location). The question requires further more thorough qualitative and quantitative analyses. They should concern both attempts at explaining the intensity of fashion-related activities undertaken by respective museums, particularly those leading in Poland, as well as directions and character of those activities. A question which poses an extremely interesting issue is, e.g., whether it is depending on their operations' scale, location, or museums' peculiar profiles (e.g., ethnographic or open-air museums) that a certain type of institutions involve with different activities.²² Furthermore, it is essential to conduct a qualitative analysis of the survey showing definite examples of collection extension and activities of respective museums.²³

Abstract: Coinciding with a lively topical debate on the presence of textiles, fabrics, clothes, and fashion accessories in museum collections and activities, the paper aims at showing a wide range of projects and initiatives undertaken in recent years by Polish museums. The presented analyses and conclusions are based on the results of the national survey on museum operations in 2019–2021 conducted by the paper's Authors jointly with the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections in the first quarter of 2022, and allowing to review this phenomenon nationally.

The survey's goal was to consider various formats of the presence of such objects and references to them in museums, both those of a more traditional character (e.g., including fashion-related exhibits in the museum collection, their conservation, studying, displaying in exhibitions), as well as of a newer character (e.g., cooperation with clothing companies and fashion designers, holding fashion shows, workshops, and fashion-related contests).

Keywords: fashion, fabrics, textiles, clothes, fashion accessories, museum collection, museum activity, Poland.

Endnotes

- * The article was written as a result of the implementation, in the years 2019–2023, of the research project "Fashion market in the context of sustainable development", financed by the National Science Center granted on the basis of decision no. DEC-2018/31/B/HS4/02961, contract no. UMO-2018/31/B/HS4/02961. The authors would like to thank the Reviewers for interesting comments and suggestions that were used during the final editing of the text.
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- ² See B. Gibała-Kapecka, 'Interdyscyplinarność sztuk projektowych', in: *Podręcznik projektowania ubioru*, ed. by A. Pyrkosz, Kraków 2018, pp. 9-29. In the present paper the word 'fashion' is understood broadly as the entire body of activities and related materials, objects, artefacts connected with designing, manufacturing, displaying and sale, acquiring and using fabrics, clothes, and accessories, both ordinary and made by outstanding designers (from custom tailoring and luxury clothes to everyday wear, homemade or mass-produced).
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- ¹⁰ M.R. Melchior, op. cit.
- ¹¹ Por. E. Klekot, *Kłopoty ze sztuką ludową. Gust, ideologie, nowoczesność*, Gdańsk 2021.
- ¹² After *Słownik wyrazów obcych* [ed. by E. Sobol, Warszawa 1995, p. 419] we understand this concept as *dresses which set direction to the world fashion [...] designed by the leading fashion houses as well as the art. of designing such attires*, fully aware that the concept has broader and narrower meanings. See P. Szaradowski, *Francja elegancja. Z historii haute couture*, Wrocław 2016.
- ¹³ B. Svensson, 'In conclusion: museums dressed in fashion', in: *Fashion in Museums...*, pp. 197-205.
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- ¹⁹ P. Szaradowski, 'Sposoby na modę', *Muzealnictwo*, 55 (2014), pp. 135-141; *idem*, 'Wystawy mody i ubiorów w muzeum – zagadnienia i problemy metodologiczne', *Muzealnictwo*, 58 (2017), pp. 181-187; A. Dalbiak, 'Muzeologia mody w Polsce na przykładzie praktyk kolekcjonerskich i wystawienniczych Centralnego Muzeum Włókiennictwa w Łodzi', *Powidoki*, 1 (2019), pp. 76-81.
- ²⁰ D. Folga-Januszewska, op. cit.
- ²¹ The adopted periodization reflects overall history of Poland. The Authors are aware that in the analysis of the fashion-related collections and activities other time segmentations may be applicable, particularly in view of the approach to collecting and displaying fashion-related objects. For the Anglo-Saxon context see J. Clark, A. de la Haye, *Exhibiting Fashion. Before and After 1971*, New Haven-London 2014.
- ²² The topic was thoroughly presented in the paper M. Murzyn-Kupisz, J. Działek, D. Hołuj, 'Fashion-related activities in museums: factors and determinants of Polish museums: involvement with the fashion sector', presented at the 10th *European Workshop on Applied Cultural Economics*, held at the University of Turin in 8-10 September 2022.
- ²³ See D. Hołuj, M. Murzyn-Kupisz, 'Dress, fashion, textiles and related artefacts in the collections and current activities of museums in Poland. Qualitative analysis of a national survey', *Museology and Cultural Heritage*, 2022 (being reviewed).

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Word count: 4853; **Tables:** –; **Figures:** 15; **References:** 23

Received: 07.2022; **Reviewed:** 08.2022; **Accepted:** 09.2022 **Published:** 10.2022

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0016.0471

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Competing interests: Authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Cite this article as: Murzyn-Kupisz M., Hołuj D.: INITIAL DIAGNOSIS OF ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH TEXTILES, CLOTHES, AND FASHION ACCESSORIES UNDERTAKEN BY POLISH MUSEUMS. *Muz.*, 2022(63): 173-184

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