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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR POSITIVE ROLE MODELS IN INSPIRING NEXT GENERATION OF FEMALE TECH TALENT

New research has shown that whilst young women are aware of the availability of careers in technology, half hold a belief that they are 'unexciting' and more than two-thirds think that roles in tech are predominately linked to gaming and IT consultancy; according to research commissioned by leading luxury fashion e-commerce group [YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP \(YNAP\)](#) as part of their work to support digital education.

Outside of these sectors young women associate technology careers with engineering, architecture, telecommunications and even finance; with more creative industries such as retail, luxury, travel, fashion and beauty all coming bottom of the list in terms of their relationship with technology roles. Conversely, the majority of young men believe tech careers to be 'exciting' and have a more open approach towards STEM or ICT related subjects.

Despite its intrinsic link to apps, social and online platforms, only 8% of young women think that technology careers have a role to play in fashion, only 7% associate it with retail and just 5% think tech has a place in luxury. This is similar amongst young men, but interestingly, they have a slightly broader view of the roles involved.

The new research, which surveyed 1,000 young people aged 11 to 16 years old and 1,000 parents of the same aged children, is part of YNAP's ongoing work to support young women to further their digital education. The news follows a series of events powered by YNAP to encourage young people – especially young women – to consider careers in technology including a hackathon hosted at the company's West London Tech Hub where dozens of school children used coding to explore what tech careers could look like through a fashion lens, as part of its Imperial CodeLab initiative.

The partnership between YNAP and Imperial College London helps young people to learn about tech through the lens of fashion. It is therefore encouraging to find that almost 40% of young women who took part in the research said that they would be further motivated to study tech-related subjects at school, including science and maths, if they knew it could lead to careers in the fashion industry.

Deborah Lee, Chief People Officer, YOOX NET-A-PORTER Group, said: "It's common to think of someone working in isolation, writing line-after-line of code when we think about careers in tech, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Today, tech is a creative and flexible discipline, where consumer products and experiences are designed in a collaborative environment. This is especially true of tech and fashion, which together offer a wealth of opportunity which can only increase as these two industries continue to converge through e-commerce.

"We're proud to be ahead of the curve with women forming two thirds of our overall talent pool - double that of the tech industry average - but there is more work to be done. The key to changing the misperceptions highlighted in our research is for leading businesses like YNAP, our peers, industry bodies and key influencers to collaboratively shine a spotlight onto positive role models. This is especially true in terms of misperceptions amongst young women who are more likely to consider a career in tech less exciting than their male counterparts."

Marian Doyle, Headteacher at Sacred Heart School for girls, said: "To begin changing the perceptions that young women have about careers in technology, it is crucial to bring them to life in a way that is relevant, memorable and immersive. Telling girls these careers are fantastic is not enough, they need to be immersed in it and have the opportunity to interact with aspirational individuals who are doing the job, and can speak passionately about its benefits. The engaging nature of the YNAP Imperial CodeLab is what made it such a roaring success amongst the pupils in our school."

Young people aged 11 to 16 in the UK who took part in the study also said that their career choices and inspiration are influenced by their parents first, followed by teachers, the internet, friends and then TV shows and social media.

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The research showed evidence of this link, with parental views of technology careers reflecting those of the young people, highlighting the opportunity for creative, retail and fashion businesses to share greater knowledge and understanding of how studying coding as well as STEM and ICT subjects can lead to exciting careers in these businesses with both school students and their parents.

Parents are four times more likely to associate the world of finance with tech careers than they are to think about fashion; although consumers interact with the finance industry in a very similar way to fashion...through apps and online platforms.

Equally, less than 5% of parents in the UK associate the fashion industry with a successful career in tech, believing instead that tech roles are primarily for gamers and IT consultants. However, it is encouraging to see that this issue is purely around awareness, as the research found that 36% of parents would encourage their children to study tech-related subjects if they knew it would lead to career in fashion.

Deborah Lee, Chief People Officer, YOOX NET-A-PORTER Group, continued: "It's natural that the views of parents are likely to be passed down to young people and we can see it in our research. Mirroring the views of adults, outside of gaming, telecommunications and web design, young people aged 11 to 16 associate tech with engineering, architecture and finance – with only 5% thinking it has a role to play in the world of fashion.

"This is why initiatives like the YNAP Imperial CodeLab are so important to us. The partnership brings to life the opportunities that learning skills like coding can bring, all through creative classes and interactive, engaging content."

Susan Eisenbach, Professor of Computing, Imperial College London said: "Girls decide very young that going into computing is not for them. Through Imperial CodeLab and our partnership with YNAP, we hope to break down barriers and excite girls about careers in tech. By providing them with positive role models and equipping them with skills in problem-solving, creativity and computational thinking, we hope to inspire a diverse next generation of tech innovators."

In the UK, YNAP continues to proactively attract the next generation of digital artisans through initiatives like the [Imperial Codelab](#), Women in Tech and an investment in its West London [Tech Hub](#). The Tech Hub's first anniversary was honoured just last month with a [visit](#) from HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall during which they met schoolgirls from the local area participating in a YNAP Imperial CodeLab hackathon.

Meanwhile in Italy, most recently the Fondazione Golinelli Summer Coding camp powered by YNAP (2 - 6 July), saw students code a customised tech gadget called Circuit Playground which has the ability to interact with surroundings and detect temperature, light, sound and movement, demonstrating the endless creative possibilities enabled by technology.

Over 2000 students have participated in digital education activities led by YNAP since 2017, with girls making up more than half of those taking part.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP

YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP is the world's leading online luxury fashion retailer. The Group is a Global company with Anglo-Italian roots, the result of a game-changing merger, which in October 2015, brought together YOOX GROUP and THE NET -A-PORTER GROUP; the two companies had revolutionized the luxury fashion industry since their birth in 2000.

YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP is a unique business with an unrivalled offering including multi-brand in-season online stores NET-A-PORTER and MR PORTER, and multi-brand off-season online stores YOOX and THE OUTNET, as well as numerous ONLINE FLAGSHIP STORES, all "Powered by YNAP". Through a joint venture established in 2012, YOOX NET -A-PORTER GROUP has partnered with Kering to manage the ONLINE FLAGSHIP STORES of several of the French group's luxury brands.

In 2016, YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP joined forces with Symphony, an entity controlled by Mohamed Alabbar's family, to establish a ground-breaking joint venture to create the Middle East's undisputed leader for online luxury retail.

Uniquely positioned in the high growth online luxury sector, YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP has an unrivalled client base of more than 3 million high-spending customers, over 840 million visits worldwide and consolidated net revenues of € 2.1 billion in 2017. The Group has offices and operations in the United States, Europe, Middle East, Japan, China and Hong Kong and delivers to more than 180 countries around the world.

For further information: www.ynap.com

Linkedin: [YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP](#) | Twitter: [@YNAP](#) | Instagram: [@YNAP](#)

About YNAP's Tech Hub

YNAP opened a new [Tech Hub](#) in White City, West London in 2017, part of a £1 billion investment in technology and operations which reaffirmed the Group's commitment to the UK. The office in White City Place is 70,000 sq.ft. and houses over 500 technologists with a further 100 jobs added by 2019. The office was designed by British architects, Grimshaw, and has a future-focused environment to reflect YNAP's unique position at the intersection of fashion and technology. The Tech Hub was designed to inspire and facilitate disruptive innovation such as the development of work on artificial intelligence and new mobile enhancements to the customer experience, creating a new London centre for digital expertise. See [link](#) for video of Tech Hub.

About YNAP and Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising the technology industry and will entirely transform the luxury customer's experience. AI elegantly allows us to better understand and serve our customers with precise and timely personalised recommendations of relevant product, content and services. YNAP has been exploring the opportunities AI can bring to its customers for some years and has run a number of increasingly successful tests. For example, YNAP is currently experimenting with a virtual personal stylist: a system that learns what types of clothes combine well for an outfit (drawing on the work of YNAP stylists) and can cross-reference suggestions with a customer's purchase history. Customers who search for certain products are suggested complementary products creating an outfit to their taste. The system could potentially help customer care and personal shoppers create and recommend outfits to customers based on, for example, location, trips and activity. In the future, YNAP aims to offer every customer an entirely bespoke version of its online stores based on the data they volunteer. Data from customers' diaries, purchase history and even open data such as weather and location could, at the customer's request, be used to recommend the right products, services and content for them or even for gifting to family and friends, creating the ultimate luxury shopping experience, all powered by AI.

Nothing replaces the human touch - this is about harnessing new technologies to enhance the customer experience. For example, YNAP is developing a system to provide the YNAP customer care team with AI technology to help them better serve customers by providing the right information and suggest best service actions based on customer history.

About YNAP and Imperial College London

YNAP is committed to developing the next generation of digital talent by investing in education, sharing knowledge and working with its local communities. In the UK YNAP has partnered with London's renowned Imperial College London to teach local children aged 8-14 the basics of coding.

The project, named Imperial Codelab Powered by YOOX NET-A-PORTER GROUP, aims to increase the number of children, especially young girls, who have access to coding classes and promote the opportunities that gaining digital skills can bring.

Students attend 15 hours of classes at Imperial each term and the initiative now reaches up to 150 young coders each week from over 150 different schools, of which 70% are female.

YNAP funds the initiative and in addition occasionally hosts standalone classes at its Technology Hub. Members of the YNAP technology team frequently volunteer their time to run the sessions and share their experience. Over 300 hours of teaching have been delivered to date.

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About YNAP and Fondazione Golinelli

The partnership is part of a broader commitment to sustainability, giving young talent a platform for expression, whilst highlighting the endless creative possibilities technology allows.

Two summer camps organised by Fondazione Golinelli powered by YNAP will take place this summer in Italy. The first camp, held from 2 to 6 July, saw students aged 14 years - 16 years from different schools in the Bologna area participate. The day revolved around creativity and innovation, as the children were taught to code a customised tech gadget called Circuit Playground in a fun, intuitive way. The second camp will take place from 3 to 7 September 2018.