

## Sharing Matters - LENA The Fashion Library

### Fashion and Sustainability: Exploring the Consumption Experience of Renting Clothes

I am very grateful to have received the Royal Holloway Travel Award 2018-19. The award contributed towards funding a research trip as part of my dissertation for MA Consumption, Culture and Marketing at Royal Holloway.

The dissertation explores the contemporary debate of access versus ownership, within the specific context of fashion and sustainability. The fashion industry today is highly unsustainable, with increasing concerns regarding its environmental impact as a result of overconsumption and subsequently high levels of waste. Having previously studied and worked in the fashion industry, I was keen to investigate alternative business models and novel consumption practices facilitating the progression of the fashion industry towards a more sustainable future. One area of which I found particularly promising being access-based consumption.

An example of access-based consumption being applied in fashion is the phenomenon of the fashion library. A fashion library is a subscription-based fashion rental model in which a monthly membership fee allows members to borrow a specific number of items of clothing for a set amount of time. Rather than owning the clothes, the idea is that the customer can access and use them when necessary, after which they can return them to the library for others to use, in a shift away from the throwaway culture often associated with fast fashion. Access-based consumption has proven successful across many industries yet within fashion it remains a very niche segment of the market. After identifying this gap as an area for further exploration, I found that the current research on this topic focused on the perspective of the fashion library as a business model, as opposed to exploring the phenomenon of the fashion library from the perspective of the consumer and their consumption experience. Since there are currently no fashion libraries based in the UK, my research took me to the nearest and most relevant case, [LENA The Fashion Library](#). LENA is one of the few fashion libraries in the world and the first of its kind to open in the Netherlands, in 2014.

I used the travel award to fund my travel and accommodation to Amsterdam for the week during which I trialled the fashion library. This gave me the opportunity to explore the concept of the fashion library through the exploratory method of introspection, enabling me to obtain a first-hand account of the consumption experience of renting clothes from a fashion library, in an attempt to make a valuable contribution through the insight into the mind of the consumer. Using researcher introspection as a research method meant I was able to fully immerse myself within the phenomenon, generating rich data through capturing behind the scenes experiences, and providing insights into the taken-for-granted aspects of our lived experiences. I was fortunate enough to spend the first day of the trip as a participant observer at the library, and spent the remainder of the week wearing the rented clothing around Amsterdam and documenting the consumption experience through written and recorded diary entries. This type of research would not have been possible without traveling to Amsterdam to trial the library first-hand, and as such, the Royal Holloway Travel Award provided an opportunity which significantly contributed to the quality and findings of my research project, for which I am very grateful.

