

Qualifying infrastructures: Take-back systems in clothing retail

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New sight



Credit: Jessica Gow TT-arkivbild

A qualification process

Callon Michel, Méadel Cécile and Rabeharisoa Vololona. (2002) The economy of qualities. *Economy and Society* 31: 194-217

- **Qualities of goods and services emerge from trials**
- **Often with the help of measurement procedures**
- **Evolve as the product or service develops and changes along the qualification process**

Fieldwork

Company	Turnover ¹ / Global presence /employees	Take-back system-design	Data collection
H&M	19 644 ¹ Present in 61 countries ² 148 000 employees ²	With I:CO Collection boxes € voucher	Sustainability report, newspaper interview, videos, in-store observations
KappAhl	483 ¹ Present in 8 countries 4000 employees	With I:CO, collects in Collection boxes € voucher	Sustainability reports, interview sustainability manager, video, in-store observations
Lindex	373 ¹ Present in 18 countries 4870 employees	With charity (Myrorna) Over-the-counter € voucher	Sustainability reports, interview sustainability manager, video, in-store observations
Gina Tricot	226 ² Present in 5 countries 1821 employees	With charity (HumanBridge) Over-the-counter No compensation	Interviews sustainability manager, sustainability reports, in-store observations
Indiska	80 ¹ Present in 5 countries 368 employees	With charity (Myrorna) Collection boxes No compensation	Sustainability reports, interview sustainability managers (1-2), in-store observations
FilippaK	56 ¹ Present in 7 countries 134 employees	On their own, Over-the-counter 15% discount on next purchase	Sustainability reports, interview sustainability manager (twice) & store coordinator, in-store observations
Boomerang	23 ¹ Present in 6 countries 89 employees	On their own Over-the-counter 10% discount on next purchase	Interviews sustainability manager and marketing manager, in-store observations

¹ In millions of Euros, for fiscal year 2015

² For fiscal year 2013

Customers-related qualities

- **Easy to use systems**
- **A way to make space in wardrobes**
- **Opportunity for consumers to learn sustainable disposal habits**
- **Means to express concern, care and responsibility for the environment**
- **Ways to create a moral balance between what one gives and what one takes**
- **Combine the pleasure of endless possibilities to update and express themselves through fashion with environmental awareness and responsibility**

Retailers-related qualities

- **Practical efforts to close the loop**
- **Demonstrate that clothing retailers are ready to take their responsibilities when it comes to promoting sustainable consumption, respecting the planet's boundaries, and ensuring the long term future of fashion**
- **Lay ground for development of retrieving technology**
- **Sourcing strategy for secondary cotton**
- **<our view> Redeem a notoriously dirty industry with a miserable social record**

Circular fashion

- **Make fashion circular**
- **Make sustainability fashionable**



Qualification techniques 1/3

Creating action nets

- **Czarniawska (2004)**
- **Set-up boxes, bring back, collect (I:Co), Design, Buy, Produce, Sell, Use, bring-back.**
- **New bonds among clothes, brands, people, sustainability, ethics, companies, and else**



Qualification techniques 2/3:

Storytelling

- **Anthropomorphizing clothing**
- **Corporate storytelling**



Qualification techniques 3/3:

Exploiting the agency of things

- **Bennett (2010)**
- **Harness thing-powers of used textiles and clothes to make people bring their clothes back to the shop**



A performative definition of circular policy

- **Take-back systems become circular economy *in practice***
- **Neutralize alternative views of circular fashion**
- **Outcompete a public collection services**
- **Establish new social norms on disposal**
- **Preempts public policy on sustainability**

Take-away

Infrastructure qualification is an opportunity for corporations to influence public policy in directions that serve corporate interests

Thank you for your attention

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Appendix

The Breakup

- a story about garment life-cycle

av Bela Borsodi

för H&M

(1'56'')

“Well, of course I understand if you’ve moved on and **need** space, and even that you have changed, while I’ve remain exactly the same. Love is not forever. All I ask is, if part we must, we do so in a **responsible** way. If you just throw me out, it **damages** the planet. The earth simply cannot bear so many clothes ending their life as waste. H&M has a far better answer. They’ve started what they call their *Garment Collecting Program* to welcome any of us, of any brand, size, age or color, and in absolutely any state. You **simply come to an H&M store**, drop your old clothes in a collecting box, and the rest is entirely to them. The very best of us will find new homes after being **resold** as second hand. Others will be turned into **different products**, finding new work as cleaning cloths or rags. Garments in the worst condition can be transformed into isolation materials, or textile fibers, woven into cloth, reborn as fashionable new clothes of every conceivable kind, so every one of us will be reused, repurposed or recycled. This means **natural resources are saved** and together we can **reduce our environmental footprint**. H&M calls it a **closed loop** for textile fibers. This might not sound too exciting, but **what H&M is doing is jolly good for our planet, and for everyone**. Now, perhaps, you already know that.”

<trailer> Don't let fashion go to waste // Bring it to your local H&M store // H&M Conscious