

Clothes Library (Lånegarderoben)



1. Summary

Country/Geographical Area	Sweden, Stockholm area
Level of implementation	Local
Scale	Roll-out
Waste fraction / Specific Waste Type	Textiles
Target Audience	Inhabitants in the Stockholm area, focused around the suburb Midsommarkransen with about 8000 inhabitants
Objective	To avoid overconsumption by lending out clothes like books in a library.
Initiator/coordinator	The culture association KREATIVITET.
Other key actors involved	Various designers and clothes companies as sponsors.
Duration	September 2010 - ongoing
N° Pre-waste report	36
Drafted by	Karlskrona municipality
Contacts / URL	info@lanegarderoben.se www.lanegarderoben.se (in Swedish)

2. Context

A survey published in 2011 shows that Swedes consume about 15 kg of textiles a year. Of those 3 kg is given to charity, 8 kg are thrown away and the rest is accumulated in other ways. The report also shows that the import of clothes and textiles has increased with 40% the last 10 years together with the consumption of textile products. The main problem with increased consumption of clothes is the environmental impact during the production. Huge amounts of natural resources, water, energy, transports and chemicals.

3. Strategy

Objectives

Lånegarderoben wants to give an inspiring alternative to the commonplace (over)consumption of clothes. At the same time they want to present an alternative to conventional consumption, letting people share clothes rather than buying them for themselves. Lånegarderoben is an example of an innovative service meeting the demand of a traditional need. The clothes library concentrates on quality clothes, trying to get people away from buying new, and is not competing with the second hand business.

Preconditions

Lånegarderoben started as an art project during the « Skankaloss » festival in the city of Gagnef 2009. The idea of a clothes library was highly appreciated among the participants and the culture association KREATIVITET was founded to take the idea further. The concept was introduced at an even in Stockholm House of Culture (<http://en.kulturhuset.stockholm.se/>) during the Stockholm fashion fair in February 2010. In September the official opening took place in the suburb Midsommarkransen. From central Stockholm you reach Midsommarkransen in 10 minutes by subway.

Procedure

Lånegarderoben works as a library where you borrow clothes instead of books. A membership costs 600 SEK (70 Euro) for 6 months. You can then borrow three items for up to four weeks at a time. You can change as often as you like, but can only have three at home at the same time. You get care and washing instructions and ruined items have to be replaced. The clothes has to be returned washed and ironed, except for tuxedos and more delicate clothes where an extra fee for dry cleaning is taken out.

Instruments

The instruments used are much voluntary work. The clothes are mainly donated by small (and some large) designer companies. Lånegarderoben is in this way also helping to promote small designers in a win-win situation.

Timeframe

Lånegarderoben started in September 2010 and is planned as a permanent action.

4 .Resources

Financial Resources

Much of the work is done on a voluntary basis by the members of KREATIVITET. The membership fees are used to pay for the localities and some mending where professionals have to be consulted. Also internet costs and insurances are covered by the fees.

The clothes are donated by the sponsors, mainly newly produced clothes, but also some vintage second hand, not to compete with ordinary second hand shops.

Human Resources

All work is done on a voluntary basis by 9 members of KREATIVITET and occasionally also others who help out. Occasionally others help out.

Equipment

The clothes are donated by sponsors listed on the webpage. There is also a computer with the program for keeping track of the borrowed items, and managing the web page.

Communication tools

The customers are mainly concentrated to the area of Midsommarkransen, and KREATIVITET is working together with other associations in the area working in the field of sustainability. Much of the communication is thus made during networking. They of course also have a Web page, and make occasional press releases when something special is happening.

They have a graphic profile that is always used in communication and are very keen to give quality information so not to "wear out" the recipients.

Allocation of resources over time

This is a long term project, and membership fees are regularly paid. Discussions are ongoing on how to get more resources, for instance cheaper (sponsored) localities, as this is the main cost.

5. Evaluation

Results

- Participation

So far about 150 active members and 150 casual, but rising (newly started). There is also networking ongoing with associations in the vicinity with the same interests (Fair Trade café etc).

- Avoided waste quantities

Difficult to estimate as there is no real statistics yet (see recommendations & monitoring).

Impacts

- Avoided Costs

For a young active consumer the fee of 70 Euro a month is quickly compensated by borrowing from the library. As there is no good statistics for the moment the exact avoided cost can not be calculated. The same applies for the avoided production cost.

- Avoided CO₂ equivalent

Unfortunately this is also very hard to estimate as the monitoring is not yet fully developed.

- Social Benefits

The benefits for the consumers are that they do not have to buy as many clothes. They also have the possibility to try out clothes before buying one for themselves. Of course in the short term some producers get less work, but in the long term the idea is that this should be compensated by repair business and purchases of higher quality.

Continuation over time

So far the library has been closed during summer months. Due to the voluntary work the opening times for the moment (autumn 2012) are Thursdays 17-20 and the last Saturday of the month 12-16.

Difficulties encountered

The main difficulty is to fully finance the action. As there is no external input of economic resources, membership fees need to cover all expenses, and there is a limit for how much you can take out by each member.

Monitoring system

There is an IT-based system to keep track of who has borrowed what, but it does not collect any statistics on avoided quantities (does not distinguish between different kind of clothes).

6. Lesson learnt & recommendations

Opportunities & challenges

It is a challenge to have the correct mix of clothes that people are ready to borrow and use. It has shown over time that most people are looking for smart looking everyday clothes, and not so much party clothes as was expected. In the beginning, mainly people already into the “green” thinking used the library, but this is changing towards more “ordinary” people, mainly younger women.

Key factors of success

It is important to be updated to the world of fashion to be able to work together with good designers. The brand of Lånegarderoben is very important. You need to work in a very professional manner to get contacts with good designers. It also has to be an area where many persons pass by daily. The premises are important, and the sponsors always want to check them out. Also important is that there should be companies and associations in the neighbourhood to cooperate with.

Recommended improvements/adaptations

If the business expanded it would be possible to have a contract with a washing firm, even perhaps a tailor company for repairs. This would make it easier for the customers and leading to a more even standard.

Recommended indicators & monitoring

The first level would be to get the IT-based tracking system (like item no 147 borrowed by member 46) designed to collect statistics, ideally how many kg/year that are borrowed instead of purchased. Then it would be possible to get a (rough) estimate of environmental gain. Economic gain is more difficult to measure as clothes vary a lot in price.

7. Comparison with similar actions

In different location/context

Clothes libraries have recently been open in Gothenburg, Malmö (2 places), Norrköping and Umeå. All of these have support from the municipalities (free premises, employment projects) which differ from Lånegarderobens conditions.