


---

**Article:**
Alevizou, P. orcid.org/0000-0003-2340-6444, Henninger, C.E., Stokoe, J. et al. (1 more author) (2021) The hoarder, the oniomaniac and the fashionista in me: A life histories perspective on self-concept and consumption practices. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 20 (4). pp. 913-922. ISSN 1472-0817

https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1916

---



# The Hoarder, the Oniomaniac and the Fashionista in me:

## A life histories perspective on self-concept and consumption practices

**Panayiota Alevizou* (primary contact and corresponding author)** (P.J.Alevizou@sheffield.ac.uk), Tel: +44 (0)114 2223423, University of Sheffield, Management School, Conduit Road, Sheffield, S10 1FL

**Claudia E Henninger** (Claudia.Henninger@manchester.ac.uk) Tel: +44 (0)161 3063901, University of Manchester, Department of Materials, Sackville Street Building, Sackville Street, Manchester, M13 9PL

**Jennifer Stokoe,** (Jennifer.stokoe@hotmail.co.uk) Tel: +44 (0)114 2223423, University of Sheffield, Management School, Conduit Road, Sheffield, S10 1FL

**Ranis Cheng** (R.Cheng@sheffield.ac.uk) Tel: +44 (0)114 222 3256, University of Sheffield, Management School, Conduit Road, Sheffield, S10 1FL

**Author biographies**

**Dr Panayiota Alevizou*** is a member of the SIG Sustainability (Academy of Marketing). The key pillars of her research are the engagement of consumers with eco labels and certifications and companies' sustainability communication strategies. She has edited and authored several books and has received the 2017 Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence.

**Dr Claudia E. Henninger** is one of the founding members of the SIG Sustainability (Academy of Marketing). Her research interest focuses on sustainability, fashion, and technology. Her recent work explores the circular economy, more specifically disruptive business model innovations. Claudia has edited various books on sustainable fashion and published in leading marketing and management journals. Her paper 'What is sustainable fashion?' received the 2017 Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence.

**Miss Jennifer Stokoe** is an e-commerce Executive at a sustainable fashion brand. She has a BSc in Psychology which influenced her focus on consumer behaviour in fashion whilst obtaining her MSc in Marketing Management Practice.

**Dr. Ranis Cheng** is a lecturer in Marketing in Sheffield University Management School. She has diverse research interests which revolve fashion marketing, SME marketing and sustainable entrepreneurship. She has published papers on corporate marketing, marketing used in SMEs. Her paper 'Marketing in SMEs: A '4Ps' self-branding model' has received Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence in 2017. She has also won a number of small grants in the area of SMEs marketing and Sustainable entrepreneurship.

*The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [P. Alevizou] upon reasonable request.

*The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

*The authors declare that this study is not affiliated with any third party funding bodies.

**Abstract**
Increased negative media attention has focused on the environmental impacts the fashion industry has on the natural environment, thereby calling for solutions, focused on clothing purchase, use and end-of-life treatment. This research explores the relationship between consumers and their clothing consumption (from purchase through to disposal), through the lens of *life histories*, and thus exploring what impacts on end-of-life clothes treatment. The novelty of this study lies within connecting fashion consumption practices with the self-concept in the context of clothing consumption (pre- purchase through to disposal), from an individual's life history perspective. This qualitative enquiry utilised life histories, thereby conducting 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews that were analysed through a grounded approach. Findings indicate that fashion consumption is heavily influenced by an individual's 'self', in that those that have a positive perception of themselves have reduced shopping habits, whilst those with a negative perception increase them. Our results show that our participants go through various consumption practices (hoarder, oniomaniac, and 'fashionista') that co-exist within them and are influenced by the individual's self. Our study calls for more intergenerational research exploring fashion consumption and disposal.

**Keywords**
The self, life history, fashion consumption, self-concept, Practice theory

## 1. Introduction

The *Fixing Fashion* Report (EAC, 2019) has put renewed focus on the fashion industry, highlighting that practices need to change, as current fashion consumption is causing a waste problem in the UK and other countries. The fashion industry is the third largest manufacturing industry, after the automotive and technology sector, and has embedded environmental costs linked to raw materials, energy, chemical use, and waste management (EMF, 2019). To overcome these challenges, the fashion industry is under pressure to counteract the current 'take-make-use-dispose' system and embed more circular approaches, thereby centring on the UN's (n.d.) Sustainable Development Goal 12 (*responsible consumption and production*). Circular approaches imply making use of idle capacities by, for example, extending the useful life of garments through sharing-in (e.g. family, friends) or sharing-out (e.g. swaps), or by ensuring that garments are donated or recycled. Currently the fashion industry loses approximately US$500billion annually due to garments being wrongfully discarded (EMF, 2017).

Although the fashion industry has received negative media attention over the last decade, there is light against this bleak backdrop of the 'take-make-use-dispose' system. The EAC (2019) outlines that the fast fashion paradigm ('take-make-use-dispose') that currently dominates has democratised the benefits of fashion, implying that it is for everyone. Thus, all segments of society can now engage in hedonic and psychological pleasure from the fashion consumption experience, thereby expressing who they are (actual self), who they want to be (ideal self), or who they want to be seen to be (social self) (McNeill, 2018). An individual's goals of their 'self' (actual, ideal and social) can have a strong influence on their modes of consumption and disposal behaviour (McNeill and Venter, 2019; Philip et al., 2019; Legere and Kang, 2020).

This article explores general clothing consumption practices over an individual's life-time and the influence of those practices on the 'self' by further investigating if any changes in consumption practices might impact the 'self', which requires more attention (Albinsson and Perera, 2009; Fleetwood-Smith et al., 2019). Over consumption and disposal behaviour are key concerns, thus it is essential to understand the relationship between consumers and their clothing consumption (purchase through to disposal) through the lens of *life histories* as there is little research around the *lived experience* of clothing consumption (Fleetwood-Smith *et al.*, 2019; Kwon *et al.*, 2020). We address the following objectives:

1) To explore how consumers perceive their relationship with fashion consumption (purchase through to disposal) and whether it changes over their lives;

2) To explore how fashion consumption influences consumers' perceptions of the 'self' or vice versa, and whether their disposal behaviour is linked to aspects of sustainability.

### 2.1 Consumption and the 'Self'

Fast fashion has enabled consumers within all societal segments to enjoy fashion consumption (EAC, 2019) and utilise garments and accessories as a medium to express and display their personalities (e.g. McNeill and Venter, 2019). Consumption aids individuals in achieving personal and social value-laden goals; especially for possessions that are not necessities (e.g. luxuries), these goals may symbolise and communicate a desired identity or be part of one's social identity (Crane, 2012; McNeill and Venter, 2019). Although consumption theory provides insights into how consumers make use of possessions (garments) to communicate their identity, little is known about whether these consumption practices change over time or whether all 'identities' (actual, desired, social) are impacted (Dogan, 2015). Past research (McNeill and Moore, 2015; Fleetwood-Smith *et al.,* 2019; McNeill and Venter, 2019; Kwon *et al.*, 2020) predominantly focused on fashion orientation (e.g. sustainable, fast fashion) and its impact on the self (McNeill and Venter, 2019), and on the identification of clothing lifestyle segments and fashion identities (Park and Burns, 2005; McNeill, 2017). Clothing consumption practices (including disposal) over an individual's life (and lived) experience and how they influence the 'self' needs more research.

Consumption can be divided into *acquisition* (how consumers access, here, fashion products), *appropriation* (what consumers do with fashion products after acquisition), and *appreciation* (how consumers feel about their experience with fashion products over their useful life) (Warde, 2014). *Appropriation* and *appreciation* are closely linked with the self-concept, as clothing represents an individual's visual appearance and is often the first point of non-verbal communication between people, which highlights who they are (actual self) or who they want to be (ideal self) (Lundblad and Davies, 2016; Henninger *et al.*, 2017; McNeill and Venter, 2019).

Fashion has been explored as an example of a symbolic classification system where consumers' willingness to acquire fashion items increases with the popularity of an item (*appreciation)* and decreases with its decline (*devaluation*) (Evans, 2018; Kwon *et al.,* 2020). Consumer preferences do not necessarily lie with the object, but with what the object represents and in turn how it (the object) represents their 'self' (Kestler and Paulins, 2014; Legere and Kang, 2020). Fashion products do not only fulfil a function (e.g. being dressed), but also

embrace symbolic meanings (e.g. the first kiss, a successful interview), thus consumers match their self-concept with symbolic classifications and desired social meanings and representations (Johnson *et al.*, 2014; Henninger *et al.,* 2017).

Similar to fashion, consumption and the 'self' seem to be influenced by a temporal aspect, in that preferences may change and/or individuals may follow new fashion trends. However, it is unknown whether this may change with the 'self' being established over time or which 'self' is most impacted (Dogan, 2015; Legere and Kang, 2020). The 'self' is influenced and shaped during childhood, but remains flexible until early adulthood, at which point it can be influenced by, for example, peers or cultural exposure, before a dominant actual self is established (Kestler and Paulins, 2014; Park *et al.*, 2019). It could therefore be possible that consumption behaviours/practices may remain static and be less trend-led once the 'self' is established. Evans' (2018) '3Ds', could provide insights into why and how things may change over time:

- *Disposal*: the counterpart to acquisition, this refers to what happens to a fashion product at the end of its useful life;
- *Divestment: the* attachments formed in the appropriation stage can be reversed through negative experiences;
- *Devaluation:* at some point in time, a fashion product will lose attractiveness for the consumer.

Consumption behaviour can be influenced by the self-concept since people use goods as symbols to either enhance or protect their self-concept (McNeill and Moore, 2015; McNeill and Venter, 2019). Crane (2012) proposed that people view goods as part of themselves, which implies that individuals may not only identify themselves through material possessions, but also see their self-worth represented through these possessions. This also impacts on one's self-esteem, in that fashion items that no longer match an individual's self-image might be *devalued* and *disposed*, yet overall, there is a lack of research that focuses on disposal behaviour and fashion (Albinsson and Perera, 2009; Philip *et al.,* 2019). Self-esteem is defined as the overall subjective view individuals have of themselves (positive/negative), which results from frequent evaluations of the self-concept (Joung, 2013; Philip *et al.,* 2019). For individuals with inconsistencies within their self-concept, self-esteem can be increased in the presence of those with socially undesirable characteristics and reduced in the presence of those with socially desirable characteristics (McNeill and Moore, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2019).

Consumers tend to make inferences about others based on their consumption, which highlights the importance of nonverbal communication and self-expression (Crane, 2012; McNeill and Moore, 2015). These inferences are often influenced by family, peers, and mass media, as these different groupings shape an individual's personality and their 'self' (e.g. Birtswistle and Tsim, 2005; Park *et al.,* 2019). Past research has predominantly focused on children and women (mother-daughter) in connection with these inferences (Kestler and Paulins, 2014; Nairn and Spotswood, 2015; Park *et al.,* 2019), thereby leaving the individual's life history angle relatively overlooked, which will be explored in this article.

**2.2 Fashion consumption and Practice Theory**

Practice theory focuses on how and why people are acting in a certain manner, taking into account cultural norms, influencers (e.g. family, peers), and habits that might have an impact on daily behaviours and/or more regular occurrences, such as shopping for fashion clothing (Rettie *et al.*, 2012; Moraes *et al.*, 2017). Practices can be described as the habits or ways in which individuals consume garments, and they can be shaped by material and procedural elements and meanings (Shove *et al.*, 2012). The former are enablers of practices, such as infrastructure and technology, which can link to the accessibility of fashion products and ways to discard them, whilst the latter can be personal or relational, and thus might be trend or lifestyle led. Practices, similar to the 'self', are developed and shaped by an individual's surroundings and influencers (Rettie *et al*., 2012; Moraes *et al.*, 2017). Practice theory provides an insight into changes that might occur over time in terms of the 'self' (childhood versus adulthood), and thus, what is considered 'normal' (Rettie *et al*., 2012; Park *et al.*, 2019). Practices here refer to the routinised and automatic everyday tasks that consumers perform (Nairn and Spotswood, 2015).

Practice theory has previously been applied in fashion research (Nairn and Spotswood, 2015; Philip *et al.*, 2019; Mukendi and Henninger, 2020) and is described as an ideal fit due to fashion styles and trends continuously changing, which is in accordance with cultural norms. The theory could provide insights into how and why consumers act in a certain manner: for example, how consumers *dispose* of clothing items that have been *devaluated* and whether this practice may change over a lifetime. In linking back to the introduction and the environmental problems that have been associated with fashion consumption over a garment's lifespan, individuals buy, use, care and dispose of these items in a way they know or deem 'normal' (Rettie *et al*., 2012).

This is influenced by their 'self', as one could, for example, recycle/donate garments in order to have a desirable social self, which might be motivated by cultural norms or habits (Moraes *et al.*, 2015).

Joyner Armstrong *et al.* (2016) argue that practice theory has the potential to foster change in that businesses can capitalise on current consumption practices (patterns) by making changes to them. What might be seen as different can become a new norm, and thus habitual and ordinary and, as such, might have a knock-on effect on other practices and the 'self' (Shove, 2003).

## 3. Methodology

We adopted a life histories approach, which focuses on how individuals account for and interpret their own experiences and practices over time (Musson 2004). The method provides insights into how people's identities are formed in lieu of changes in material and social networks (ibid). Braun-LaTour, LaTour and Zinkhan (2007) indicate that consumers' memories of their earlier life stages can reveal how their self-concept has developed in relation to a specific product and the way they connect with that product emotionally, whilst also highlighting how consumption practices may have changed. Thus, early memories are key symbolic experiences that often contain emotional content, which influences future behaviours (ibid). To access consumer memories and lived fashion consumption stories, semi-structured interviews were employed (Musson 2004). The interviews focused on exploring how our participants described their relationships with fashion consumption and whether these have changed over time, and how they see themselves now versus in their childhood. We prompted participants to share their fashion consumption practices as they lived through four key life stages (childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, present). Semi-structured interviews allow for questions to be adapted and for additional ones to be posed to gain more details, which can link information from different participants and see whether there are common themes emerging (Halldórsson and Aastrup, 2003).

We utilised convenience sampling to recruit 20 consumers (Table1) based on the following criteria (Buckley and Clark, 2012; Armstrong *et al.* , 2015):

- Female, as they are more trend-led and involved in fashion purchases than men;
- Broad age range to explore life experiences;

- Interest in fashion consumption.

Although convenience sampling is criticised, as it is biased, can over- or under-represent parts of a population (leading to broad age ranges), and is not generalisable (Robinson, 2014) – a limitation of this study – it provided an opportunity to easily access participants willing to share their life histories on clothing consumption (Miller, 2000). In order for participants to share personal memories, trust needed to be established, which justifies recruiting participants through the researchers' networks. To avoid any additional bias, participants, although recruited through the researchers' networks, were not personally known to the researchers prior to conducting the interviews, which lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. The longest interviews were conducted with older participants, who shared additional consumption stories. Interviews were carried out in public spaces, where participants felt comfortable to share their stories. After gaining informed consent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Insert Table 1 here

NVivo was used to manage and organise the data from the interviews. Data analysis followed the seven stages of Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), starting with familiarisation (re-reading the transcripts), then reflecting on the research, followed by conceptualisation (forming *a priori* codes that allowed for initial themes and patterns to emerge). These were carefully reviewed and catalogued before final categories were created. Table 2 provides an example of the developed coding scheme.

Insert Table 2 here

The researchers coded parts of the dataset individually prior to discussing emerging themes and patterns. Any discrepancies were reviewed and discussed before the lead author completed the data analysis. This allowed for intercoder reliability (Halldórsson and Aastrup, 2003).

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### *4.1 Childhood – Fashion Influencers*

All participants highlighted that parents/guardians and sometimes very close friends influenced their fashion consumption in early childhood, which might be partially explained as parents paid for the garments. Although participants stated that their style evolved, as you are generally *"more influenced when you're younger; as you get older you become more confident in yourself and you're happier in your own skin"* (P9), some indicated that they still hold onto some of these influences: *"when I was younger and she (mum) still sort of half bought my clothes, she's very into colour, so I do seek to buy more colourful clothes (...) partly because she tells me off for buying stuff that's black, white or grey"* (P1). This highlights that similar to the 'self', a sense of dress and clothing consumption is developed during childhood (Braun-LaTour *et al.*, 2007; Park *et al.*, 2019), when individuals are less self-assured in their actual self, and they are heavily influenced by their social groupings. Although this finding might not be new *per se*, it is vital in understanding the findings of this article and the emerging fashion consumption selves that can be present within an individual, either simultaneously and/or over their lifetime.

### *4.2.Adolescence – Revolutionary Fashionistas*

Data highlight that adolescence is characterised by a sense of revolution and breaking free, with participants exploring their own styles, but also following what is 'on trend', thereby showcasing a sense of belonging with in-groups. P17 mentioned that *"up to a certain age I'd have followed fashion, when I was younger say about 19 it would have been rah-rah skirts and things like that, especially if you were going out and going to clubs and (...) kind of keep in the trend".* During adolescence, fashion was also described as a political statement by some of our older participants, as "*the miniskirt was a radical thing and I think that whole era of fashion in relation to class is important because your class and your ability to buy things is a really important factor on fashion...*" (P19). This implies that the way in which these participants consume fashion not only reflects their actual self, which they are starting to create and establish, but also shapes their social self, by highlighting a sense of belonging through their dress code (McNeill and Moore, 2015; McNeill and Venter, 2019; Philip, Ozanne, and Ballantine, 2019).

The literature often terms trend-led individuals who are devoted to fashion as 'fashionistas' (Iverson, 2010; Henninger *et al.*, 2017), which is partially what we observed, yet there is also one variation. From the life histories told, becoming a fashionista can be seen as part of shaping one's identity, whether by following a certain movement (e.g. rave, punk),

consumption trend (first-, second-hand), or a lifestyle (e.g. veganism). Our participants are not necessarily trend-led in order to be fashionable, but to 'break free': *"as I am horrified in what she (mum) put me in, and obviously as soon as I could talk and choose things myself… I did"* (P12). They reject parents' choices, preferring to shop in stores that their friends like: "*when I was younger I used to buy from charity shops because I had a friend who was really into charity shops"* (P11). Thus, we see an act of defiance that some of our participants went through, which is influenced by childhood consumption behaviour, in that it is the opposite that can be observed.

Although research exists that highlights parental influence on children's clothing consumption through the lens of consumption socialisation, these publications seem to predominantly focus on information sharing (where to shop) and communication (how to shop) (e.g. Kestler and Paulins, 2014; Park *et al.,* 2019). Our research indicates that whilst fashion style may be influenced by peers, some of our participants have also consciously broken away from the same channels their parents have used. Similar to May and Koester (1985) we also found that in certain cases parental influences on clothing purchase decisions-making decreased with age whilst peer influence increased. Thus, the revolutionary fashionista self, provided our participants with an opportunity to start developing a self that *broke away* from parental boundaries and rules. It seems to be a key stage in the consumption process and influenced how our participants developed their relationship with clothes consumption and disposal during early adulthood.

*4.3 Adulthood – (Occasional) Fashionistas, Oniomaniac, Hoarder*

Adulthood is when our participants found their 'actual' self, and often a style they felt comfortable with: one that matched their self (Kestler and Paulins, 2014; Park *et al.*, 2019). This does not mean that social comparisons with others cease to exist, but that these comparisons are not as consequential as during adolescence (Demo, 1992). Various notions emerged: 1) whilst most participants wanted to break free in their *revolutionary fashionista* phase, during adulthood some thought better of their behaviour and reflected on the practices learned from their parents, and thus almost copied similar habits; 2) at the other end of the spectrum, some participants kept their *revolutionary fashionista* style and predominately remained *fashionistas*; 3) others felt they were finally able to do what they wanted, as they were free and had disposable income, and purposefully contradicted the practices learned from their parents. It is noteworthy that while we

found some participants going through multiple 'consumption types' simultaneously, others kept their acquired practices from earlier life stages. Based on the narratives we identified four 'consumption selves' which can be omni-present within a consumer: *the fashionista in their own right, the occasional fashionista, the hoarder, and the oniomaniac.*

4.3.1 The Fashionista-in-their-own-right self

Influenced by their adolescent years, some of our participants highlighted that they developed a certain style that is partially trend-led, but predominantly represents an image they seek to portray. Data show that with age, some participants became more confident with their actual self-image, and therefore less reliant on a social self-image, which affects how and what they purchase. P13 insists that she has not changed much in past years and continues to *"shop from high street shops quite often"*, yet wants to keep up with newer trends, which is why *"I recycle my wardrobe every 2-3 years".* On the other hand, a slightly older participant P19 remembers that *"I try and wear something that is my usual style, my style's very eclectic (...) fashion goes around doesn't it, it kind of meets here, then goes there then changes then comes back again"*. Although the two examples presented are very different, in that one is more fashion-led, renewing her wardrobe regularly, and the other consuming garments that match her eclectic-style, both remain true to themselves and follow meanings that reflect their actual selves as part of their practices (e.g. Rettie *et al.*, 2012; Moares *et al.*, 2017). Our data indicate that 'fashionistas-in-their-own-right' are in unison with the actual self and neither feel the need to detach themselves from the past, as is the case with the revolutionary fashionista, nor to change the path they have carved for themselves during this time; they remain confident in their choices and do not rely heavily on social group opinions. Thus, we found that in some cases, shopping practices and style are linked to being in harmony with the self, which is different to past research that suggested consumers align their consumption habits with their cognitive age (e.g. Birtwistle and Tsmi, 2005; Kestler and Paulins, 2014).

4.3.2 The Occasional Fashionista self

The occasional fashionista self is different to the other 'fashionistas' in that participants feel the need to occasionally break out of their usual consumption patterns, in order to gratify the social self and create a socially desirable image: *"Often if I've got an event coming up I'll want*

*something new (...) obviously I've got loads of clothes so I don't need to do that, also sometimes if I'm feeling down it cheers me up because I get the buzz"* (P6). Occasional fashionista behaviour can be linked to impulse buying, in that purchases are predominantly instigated when participants experience a misalignment between their actual and desired self: getting a 'buzz' therefore enhances their self-esteem. P7 insists that the 'down phase' of feeling dissatisfied with oneself is often evoked when she is spending extended time on social media, as social media sites allow for social comparison opportunities that can have negative impacts on self-esteem (e.g. Boardman *et al.,* 2019).

Our Instagram society has fostered the 'take-make-use-dispose' system, with celebrities leading the 'I-can-only-be-seen-once-in-the-same-outfit' trend, which is (un)consciously adopted by consumer. P18 is quite vocal about being seen with new clothes at special occasions: *"I will make more effort to dress nicely and that obviously is for two reasons, how I want to feel but also the expectation of perhaps how I should look and how other people, if they make a judgement about me because of how I look. (...) I think that does put a bit of pressure on you to buy another item of clothing even if you felt you looked lovely in something you'd worn to the previous wedding and maybe the one before that".* What emerges quite dominantly here is that the occasional fashionista self is strongly influenced by external social groupings, as participants feel they are judged if they are not making new purchases, which could be enhanced through social media (Boardman *et al*., 2019). This suggests that the ideal and social self-image become more salient when the occasional fashionista is publicly self-conscious, with discrepancies occurring between these and the actual self-image (Lundblad and Davies, 2016; Moares *et al*., 2017; McNeill and Venter, 2019). These discrepancies lead participants to move away from their usual practices and temporarily adopt a different style. A novel finding here is that the interplay between the desired and social self can impact consumption practices and lead to fast fashion preference and overconsumption.

### 4.3.3 The Oniomaniac self

Similarly to the occasional fashionista, the oniomaniac sees making purchases as something that is instantly gratifying. Our participants discussed this self-manifestation by highlighting the coexistence of polarised emotions (e.g. excitement and guilt, happiness and anxiety). However, there is a key difference, in that the oniomaniac's consumption practice is on an intensive basis,

or appears in certain periods in time (rather than limited to a special occasion) and is accompanied by negative emotions (eg. guilt, anxiety). Younger participants (P5, P6, P9, P10) admit that they like buying things, as *"I think it makes me a lot happier buying new things and in particular new clothes and stuff… I'm absolutely obsessed"* (P10). Although they occasionally feel guilty about their habits, especially when they have been 'caught', they overcome this guilt by purchasing even more: "*My boyfriend always knows if I've been online shopping and not been able to afford anything, he says I get in a bit of a grouchy mood I get a bit annoyed so definitely it does [make me feel guilty]"* (P9).

Data highlight that there are two prerequisites for the oniomaniac's behaviour: 1) it can be seen as a continued defiant reaction to their childhood memory of consumption. For example, P16 indicated that they were limited for choice when they were younger, as their allowance for garment purchases was restricted. As an adult with disposable income they can now 'make up' for their lost experience and start purchasing, thereby still experimenting with their style and their actual versus desired self, which seem misaligned. 2) It is more prevalent in individuals, who experience self-discrepancies (temporary misalignment between the self–state representations) leading to various kinds of discomfort such as anxiety (Higgins, 1987) which may lead to periods of continuous purchases. P17 insists that she used to struggle with her purchase behaviour: "*why can't I just find one top, why do I buy tops or clothes and I stand in front of the mirror and I think 'don't make an impulse purchase, have a look, do you like it- yes, does it fit- yes, do you look nice in it –yes, are you going to wear it- yes' bring it home take it out of the bag, yes I like it, hang it up and then, by the time I come to wear it I don't like it or I do like it, it doesn't like me, I put it on and go 'why I've done it again!'"* Interestingly, the oniomaniac's behaviour is not influenced by social groupings, but seems to be a personal struggle instead, as participants do not make purchases to satisfy purely the social self, but rather it is seen to be connected with the actual versus desired self.

### 4.3.4 The Hoarder self

Joung (2013) describes the hoarder as an impulse buyer who fails to discard garments, and keeps them even though they no longer fit or are of no value. Similarly to past research, we found that our 'hoarders' kept items even though they were no longer worn, yet contrary to the literature, our 'hoarders' kept garments for emotional reasons and were not necessarily impulse buyers. P13

and P19 indicate that they keep various favourite childhood outfits, as they hope these can be heirlooms, passed down to their children, thereby providing them with the same symbolic meaning (e.g. happiness) (Johnson *et al.*, 2014) that they felt when wearing them: *"I've actually got a Biba dress from the early 70s (...) it's a crepe crushed raspberry colour and I have an emotional attachment to that because it stands for me and my life at a certain time... I do throw things away but I'm very reluctant... I thought my girls might want it at some point but no, no they didn't. But I wouldn't get rid of it because I have an emotional attachment to it."* (P19). It is noteworthy to highlight here that hoarding behaviour is closely aligned with disposal or the lack of it. This can be linked to the self-concept in that garments that have a positive emotional attachment, and thus evoke a feeling of happiness and satisfaction, could suggest a strong alignment of the actual and desired self (e.g. Rettie *et al.*, 2012; Moares *et al.*, 2017). P11 indicated that her body has changed, and thus, she is unable to wear some of her favourite garments, but rather than discarding them, *"I've got them at the back of my cupboard, just in case I'll be able to wear them again someday",* as this will allow her to hang onto the positive feelings associated with the garments. However, we have also seen negative examples, where items are kept as they remind the participants of a time that they do not want to go back to, which is different from what previous literature outlines.

Emotional attachment to garments is not the only indicator of hoarding behaviour. Some of our participants also indicate that hoarding is a practice that they have inherited from their parents, who used to keep things as 'heirlooms', or simply because they liked an item and hoped to wear it again.

*4.3.5 (Occasional) Fashionistas, Oniomaniac, Hoarder – Concluding remarks*

It is vital to highlight that although we saw distinctive 'consumption selves' emerging in our data, there is no one distinctive consumer type. Data have shown that our participants were moving in between types of consumption, depending on their personal circumstances and context. Some became occasional fashionistas, before transferring back into exhibiting hoarding behaviour. We noticed that within some participants different consumption types co-existed throughout their life histories, which presents consumer segmentation challenges for fashion brands. Thus, consumption behaviour can be influenced by 1) social groupings and norms, 2) perceptions (and alignment) of the self (actual, desired, social), and/or 3) practices learned during

the early life stages. Understanding consumption behaviour is a prerequisite to gaining insights into disposal behaviour, as deviance, emotional attachment (positive/negative), and impulse buying can link to different ways of disposing garments.

4.4 Disposal behaviour and sustainable practices

We were unable to match disposal practices to a certain participant, which may not be surprising, seeing as consumers can almost fluidly move between the different types, and may therefore keep garments for 15 years, or less than a month (P14), or may sometimes discard them straight away (P12) (Table 3).

Insert Table 3 here

What we found, was that garments with emotional and/or financial value were kept longer, whereas those that either evoked no response or were of no value were discarded after a couple of wears or immediately. Norum (2015) proposes three types of disposal practices: disposal in landfill, charity donations, or re-selling (secondhand shop), with each option depending on the value attached to the garment. Interestingly, we found that family and friends play a key role; whilst previous literature (Weber, Lynes, and Young, 2017) has highlighted that personal reuse in the form of hand-me-downs is common, it has not been linked to consumption types and the impact on the self. Our participants who show hoarding behaviour, for example, are seeking to keep certain items within close social circles and provide them as heirlooms, indicating that garments not only have emotional value, but are also part of their identity, and therefore shape their self. In linking a garment back to one's self, a few of our participants feel uncomfortable with seeing these garments on strangers: *"it would freak me out quite frankly"* (P1). Hand-me-downs can also be common family practices, with P18 remembering that she had a *"white dress (...) a bit lacy and it had two red ribbons down the front and I loved that dress and then I grew out of it and then my mother said my sister could have it and she said 'I'm not wearing that' and I was devastated because I loved that dress"*. P18 highlights that she kept the tradition, even though she has also seen negative reactions towards wearing second-hand family-owned garments. When discussing disposal practice participants referred to the way their parents' disposed of clothes in their childhood or adolescent years, which most seem to have adopted.

An aspect that participants agreed on is that the last resort for disposal should be landfill, with charity shops having been identified as the most suitable option. No matter if participants have hoarder tendencies, are (occasional) fashionistas (in-their-own-right), or oniomaniacs, they all seem to discard of garments on a regular basis whilst keeping some items for longer than others, which could be good indicators of the consumption phase they have been in.

## 5. Conclusion

Fashion consumption has been frequently explored in connection to the self, due to the proximity of clothing to the self (e.g. Lee and Sontag, 2010; McNeil and Venter 2019). We join this discussion by exploring fashion consumption (practice) and the self, from a *lived experience*, *life history* perspective and echo previous studies in terms of the dynamic, multifaceted and complex nature of the self.

This article addressed two questions, with the first one seeking to explore how consumers perceive their relationship with fashion consumption and disposal and whether this changes over their lives.

Firstly, as we highlighted in our findings, fashion consumption for our participants was strongly linked to their individual self-concepts, thus we found that whilst during childhood the self and clothing consumption might be influenced by social influencers, adolescence sees a relative break from the norm and learned practices, before the self is fully established. In addition we highlight that participants' relationship with clothes is affected (negatively/positivity) from their childhood and adolescent years *lived experience*. When discussing their consumption and disposal clear references were made by our participants to the earlier life stages implying a great influence of established norms and social groups. Literature highlighting the influence of parents and especially mothers on fashion consumption is rich (e.g. Kestler and Pauling, 2014; Park *et al*., 2019) and sees a strong influence on consumer identity. Past studies seem to imply that girls are *pulled away* from the practices of their mothers potentially due to different fashion agendas (e.g. Rawlins, 2006). Our study supports that notion and evidences it with *our fashionista selves*. However, we also found participants *attached* to fashion practices from earlier life stages. This was particularly noticeable in their disposal practices, which matched the ones followed during their childhood and adolescent years. Apart

from family practices informing clothing use and disposal we found emotional responses to their disposal practices ranging from: *refusing to detach* from specific items and exhibiting hoarding behaviour or handing down clothes; *renewing the wardrobe* usually leading to donations and recycling; and in some cases of *rejecting clothes* by landfilling them. Here, we need to stress the importance of conducting more intergenerational studies in understanding clothes value and disposal. Future studies may wish to explore what type of garments end up in landfill and which become heirlooms and why.

Secondly, unlike previous research that might have seen distinctive fashion consumption preferences (e.g. fast fashion, second-hand, sustainable), our life histories research has shown that consumption types are relatively fluid and can co-exist simultaneously or across different life stages, depending on personal circumstances and the interplay of the 'self (actual, desired, social). Thus, we contribute to the literature by supporting the notion of multiple selves (McConnell, 2010), in addition to the notion of multiple fashion consumption practices. Our title encapsulates this contribution, highlighting that a consumer may make choices without belonging solely to one fashion classification. This realisation presents both a challenge and an opportunity for fashion businesses. As such, future studies may wish to explore the relationship between individuals' purchase behaviour and consumer fashion classifications, as this will shed light on consumption practices and subsequently how they are disposing of garments at the end of their life, which could also form an area of future research.

Thirdly, we explored how consumers' consumption behaviour influences the self, or vice versa. We found that the *occasional fashionista* and the *oniomaniac* selves are especially prone to intensive (periodic) fashion consumption based on their current mood and the [mis]alignment between the 'selves' (actual, desired, social). In some cases, participants report an internal battle in terms of their consumption. They perceive the need for more clothes as *artificial* and *imaginary* driven internally (e.g. bad/good mood) or externally (e.g. by their social circles) and struggle to keep a balance and reduce their consumption. We also highlighted the key role of social media in probing this type of consumption behaviour. Fashion businesses and marketers should focus more on changing current social pressure associated with the 'I-can-only-be-seen-once-in-the-same-outfit', by educating consumers of the implications of fast fashion overconsumption and indicating that this selfie-trend is counterproductive to the sustainability goals that the fashion industry seeks to achieve.

Finally, past research has predominantly focused on the mother-daughter unit rather than focusing on the role the father and/or the family plays in educating and/or passing down their practices, which highlights another area of research, as currently research on consumption and disposal practices with male participants is limited (Bubna and Norum, 2017). In general terms, understanding why garments are disposed of and/or landfilled has managerial implications in that businesses could provide more solutions to change their consumers' practices, such as offering services that extend the useful life of the unwanted garments (e.g. re-commerce, donation, swapping).

Although we cannot generalise our findings, due to a relatively small sample size (a limitation of the current study) and utilising convenience sampling, our research provides valuable thinking points about fashion consumption practices, the self throughout an individual's life cycle.

**References**


Albinsson, P.A. and Perera, B.Y. (2009) From trash to treasure and beyond: the meaning of voluntary disposition, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8(6): 340-353.

Armstrong, C.M., Niinimäki, K., Kujala, S., Karell, E., and Lang, C. (2015) Sustainable product-service systems for clothing, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 97: 30-39.

Banister, E.N., and Hogg, M.K. (2003) Negative symbolic consumption and consumers' drive for self-esteem, *European Journal of Marketing*, 38(7): 850-868.

Birtwistle, G., and Tsim, C. (2005) Consumer purchasing behaviour, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour,* 4(6), 453–464.

Boardman, R., Blazquez-Cano, M., Henninger C.E., and Ryding, D. (2019) *Social Commerce*, Palgrave: London.

Braun-LaTour, K.A., LaTour, M.S. and Zinkhan, G.M. (2007). Using Childhood Memories to Gain Insight into Brand Meaning, *Journal of Marketing*, 71(2), 45-60.

Bubna, J.M., and Norum, P. (2017) Male apparel disposal*, Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 21(2): 235-246.

Buckley, C., and Clark, H. (2012) Conceptualising fashion in everyday lives, *Design Issue*, 28(4): 18-28.

Crane, D. (2012) *Fashion and its social agendas: class, gender, and identity in clothing,* University Press Chicago: Chicago.

Demo, D.H. (1992) The self-concept over time, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18: 303-326.

Dogan, V. (2015) The effect of materialism and proximity of clothing to self on the ratio of feeling younger, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39(5): 564-573.

EAC (2019) *Fixing Fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability*, Parliament (online): https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/report-files/195204.htm, 20/02/2020.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson. P.R. (2015). *Management and Business Research*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

EMF (Ellen McArthur Foundation) (2017) *A new textiles economy: redesigning fashion's future*, EMF (online): https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/publications/A-New-Textiles-Economy_Full-Report.pdf, 20/02/2020.

EMF (Ellen Macarthur Foundation) (2019) *What is the circular economy?*. EMF (online): https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/what-is-the-circular-economy, 20/02/2020.

Evans, D.M. (2018). What is consumption, where has it been going, and does it still matter? *The Sociological Review*, 67(3), 499-517.

Fleetwood-Smith, R., Hefferon, K., and Mair, C. (2019) 'It's like… it's me': Exploring the lived experiences of clothing attachment during wear, *International Journal of Fashion Studies,* 6(1): 41-62

Hall, C.S. and Gardener, L. (1957) *Theories of Personality*. Wiley, NY.

Halldórsson, Á., and Aastrup, J. (2003) Quality criteria for qualitative inquiries in logistics, *European Journal of Operations Research*, 144: 321-332.

Henninger, C.E., Alevizou, P.J. and Oates, C.J. (2016). What is sustainable fashion? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, *20*(4), 400-416.

Henninger, C.E., Alevizou, P.J., Goworek, H., and Ryding, D. (eds) (2017) *Sustainability in Fashion*, Springer: Heidelberg.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological review*, *94*(3), 319.

Iverson, A. (2010) *In Fashion*, Clarkson Potter Publications, NY.

Johnson, K., Lennon, S.J. and Rudd, N. (2014). Dress, body and self. *Fashion and Textiles*, 1(20): 1-24.

Joung, H.M. (2013) Materialism and clothing post-purchase behaviour, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(6), 530-537.

Joyner Armstrong, C. M., Niinimäki, K., Lang, C., and Kujala, S. (2016). A Use-Oriented Clothing Economy?. *Sustainable Development*, 24,18–31.

Kestler, J.L., and Paulins, V.A. (2014) Fashion influences between mothers and daughters, *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 42(4): 313-329

Kwon, T.A., Choo, H.J., and Kim, Y.K. (2020) Why do we feel bored with our clothing and where does it end up? *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 44: 1-13.

Lee, Y.A., and Sontag, S. (2010) As assessment of the proximity of clothing to the self scale for older persons, *International Journal for Consumer Studies*, 34: 443-448.

Legere, A. and Kang, J. (2020) The role of self-concept in shaping sustainable consumption, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 258:1-12

Lundblad, L. and Davies, I.A. (2016) The values and motivations behind sustainable fashion consumption, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 15(2): 149-162.

McConnell A.R. (2010) The multiple self-aspects framework, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(1): 3-27.

McNeill, L. (2018). Fashion and women's self-concept. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 22(1), 82–98.

McNeill, L., and Moore, R. (2015) Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39: 212-222.

McNeill, L. and Venter, B. (2019). Identity, self-concept and young women's engagement with collaborative, sustainable fashion consumption models. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 43, 368-378.

Miller, R.L. (2000) *Researching life stories and family histories*, Sage: London

Moraes, C., Carrigan, M., Bosangit, C., Ferreira, C. and Mcgrath, M. (2017). Understanding Ethical Luxury Consumption Practice Theories. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(3), 525-543.

Musson, G. (2004). Life Histories. In: Cassell, C., and Symon, G. (Eds.). *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Mukendi, A. and Henninger C.E. (2020) Exploring the spectrum of fashion rental, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, ahead-of-print

Nairn, A. and Spotswood, F. (2015) "Obviously in the cool group they wear designer things" A social practice theory perspective on children's consumption. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(9/10), 1460-1483.

Norum, P.S. (2015) Trash, charity, and secondhand stores, *Family and Consumer Science Research Journal*, 44(1): 21-36

Park, H.J., and Burns, L.D. (2005) Fashion orientation, credit card use, and compulsive buying, *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 22(3): 135-141.

Park, S., Choi, Y.J., and Lee, Y. (2019) Understanding fashion communication between Korean middle-aged mothers and daughters, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 43: 58-67.

Philip, H.E., Ozanne, L.K., and Ballantine, P.W. (2019) Exploring online peer-to-peer swapping, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice,* 27(4): 413-429.

Rawlins, E. (2006). Mother knows best? Intergenerational notions of fashion and identity. *Children's Geographies*, *4*(3), 359-377.

Rettie, R., Burchell, K. and Riley, D. (2012). Normalising green behaviours. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28(3/4): 420-444.

Robinson, O.C. (2014) Sampling in interview-based qualitative research, *Qualitative research in Psychology*, 11(1): 25-41.

Shove, E. (2003). Converging Conventions of Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 26(4): 395-418.

Shove, E., Pantzar, M. and Watson, M. (2012) *The Dynamics of Social Practice*, SAGE, London.

Sontag, S.M. and Lee, J. (2004) Proximity of Clothing to Self-Scale, *Clothing and Textiles Journal*, 22(4): 161–77.

UN (n.d.) Sustainable Development Goals, UN (online): https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs, 19/02/2020.

Warde, A. (2014) After taste: Culture, consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 14(3): 279-303.

Weber, S., Lynes, J., and Young, S.B. (2017) Fashion interest as a driver for consumer textile waste management: reuse, recycle, or dispose, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 41: 207-215

Table 1 - Demographic Details of Participants

| ID | Age | Profession | Number of shopping occasions/month (including traditional purchases and swaps) |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | 22 | Student Union employee | 3 |
| P2 | 23 | Mental Health Supporter | 2 |
| P3 | 23 | Cabin Crew | 15 |
| P4 | 23 | Marketing | 10 |
| P5 | 24 | Fundraising for Charity | 10 |
| P6 | 25 | Midwife | 2 |
| P7 | 25 | Finance | 3 |
| P8 | 26 | 3D printing | 4 |
| P9 | 27 | Marketing | 10 |
| P10 | 27 | Logistics and Warehouse | 4 |
| P11 | 28 | Language therapist | 2 |
| P12 | 28 | Council employee | 7 |
| P13 | 38 | Council employee | 5 |
| P14 | 46 | Teacher | 3 |
| P15 | 46 | Teacher | 2 |
| P16 | 49 | Childminder | 4 |
| P17 | 55 | Retailer | 1 |
| P18 | 58 | Doctor | 2 |
| P19 | 68 | Retired (solicitor) | 5 |
| P20 | 68 | Retired (solicitor) | 1 |

Table 2 – Coding scheme example

| Quote | Descriptive code | Analytic code | Emerging pattern |
|---|---|---|---|
| *"No my fashion sense when I was younger was awful, and not helped by my mother [...] I never used to wear dresses but I think I got that from my mum, my mum never really wears dresses" (P11)* | - Impact of dress style based on parent<br>- Change of dress<br>  ○ Breaking away from early dress<br>- Lifecycle: childhood | - 'Self' evolves over time reflected in changing dress<br>- Positive/negative influence of parent | - Revolutionary Fashionista self |

Table 3 - Perceptions of Product Life Span and Disposable Practice

| ID | Age | Life span of clothes | Disposal Practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | 22 | Annual clear out | Charity |
| P2 | 23 | After few wears | Family, charity, bin |
| P3 | 23 | After wearing them 10 times | Charity |
| P4 | 23 | A few years | Charity |
| P5 | 24 | Some new clothes end up going to charity | Gives clothes to mother and then mother donates to charity |
| P6 | 25 | Looked "tatty" | Resell, charity |
| P7 | 25 | A few years | Family, charity |
| P8 | 26 | Item dependent. Some items after wearing them once | Charity, resell, bin |
| P9 | 27 | After few wears | Charity, bin |
| P10 | 27 | 6 months | Charity |
| P11 | 28 | 5 years | Charity |
| P12 | 28 | Mood dependent: some straight away and others are kept for years | Resell, friends |
| P13 | 38 | 3-5 years | Charity, family |
| P14 | 46 | Some more than 15 years and others less than a month | Bin, charity, friends |
| P15 | 46 | 3-5 years | Charity |
| P16 | 49 | Item dependent | Friends, charity |
| P17 | 55 | Item dependent - sometimes with the labels still on | Charity, friends or mending |
| P18 | 58 | 2 years | Friends |
| P19 | 68 | Looks "worn out" | Friends, charity, mending |
| P20 | 68 | More than 10 years | Charity, storage |