



Understanding the Young Consumers' Existing Practices of Using Second-hand Clothing: Perspectives from a Developing Country

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Keywords: Young consumer, Fashion product, Second-hand clothing, Circular fashion, Sustainability

Introduction and Literature Review: Second-hand clothing products are considered fashionable, fun, unique, nostalgic, affordable, and environment-friendly (Yan et al., 2015). The global trend of second-hand clothing consumption is significantly increasing and contributing to the sustainability initiatives of the global fashion supply chain (Herjanto et al., 2016). Used clothing was the 551st most traded product worldwide in 2020, with an overall trade amount of \$3.87 billion (Simoes, 2023). In contrast, the fashion industry is one of the leading sources of environmental pollution. The state of environmental pollution caused by the fashion industry has no recovery but rises day by day. In this crisis, second-hand clothing can act as a remedy by helping achieve a circular economy. The core concept of the circular economy is recovering value from tangible commodities through a narrower closed loop of reuse and restoration which could increase economic and environmental performance (Ashby, 2018). Even though the industry is heavily challenged by sustainability worldwide (Su et al., 2023), consumers from different parts of the world react differently to this issue. The degree of consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward sustainable products may vary due to differences in economic development and cultural values (Su et al., 2023). This study employed a qualitative approach and aimed to understand the young consumers' existing practices of using second-hand clothing in the context of a developing country (Bangladesh).

Researchers have found that affordability, quality, and design variety are the factors that affect the second-hand undergarment trade (Chipambwa et al., 2016). Although second-hand products are gaining popularity, some consumers still refuse to shop for these products mostly because of the embarrassment of using products that used to be associated with poverty (Ferraro et al., 2016). Prior researchers have concentrated their studies on the history, consumption and disposal, and impact of second-hand clothing (Herjanto et al., 2016). Researchers analyzed the antecedents, consequences, and implications of a second-hand shoppers' motivation scale (Guiot & Roux, 2010). These motivations and barriers for second-hand product consumption were explored mostly in western developed countries (Peña-Vinces et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022) and countries with small economies (Chipambwa et al., 2016; Na'amneh & Al Husban, 2012). But little is known about second-hand shopping motivations and its connection to achieving a circular economy in the context of Bangladesh, a country with a rising economy. Bangladesh's domestic retail consumer market is the ninth largest in the world (Devnath, 2022) and lacks in-depth studies regarding the young consumers' existing practices toward second-hand clothing. Thus, this study seeks to bridge the research gap by exploring and understanding young consumers' existing practices concerning second-hand clothing.

Methodology: A qualitative research design was chosen to gather insights from young consumers in Bangladesh, and in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposive sample approach. The participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique. The sample size was decided upon based on the saturation of the data (Hodges, 2011), and a sum of 20 interviews was conducted. Interviews were

conducted in person and through online meetings (Zoom, WhatsApp, etc.). The respondents included twelve males and eight females, with ages ranging from 22 to 26. The participants were asked questions like, “In your day-to-day life, how many times have you used second-hand clothing?”, “What are your thoughts about using clothes that have been used before?”, “Are you aware that recycled clothing can reduce and minimize carbon footprints and chemical pollution in the environment?”. After gathering the data from participants, the authors thoroughly transcribed each interview before analyzing the interview texts. Together, the authors of this study analyzed the data, developed codes, found themes, and wrote up the findings (Iqbal & Su, 2021; Su et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion: The themes that emerged from the interview data are organized as a conceptual framework, as illustrated in Figure 1. Based on the data, young consumers’ several existing practices

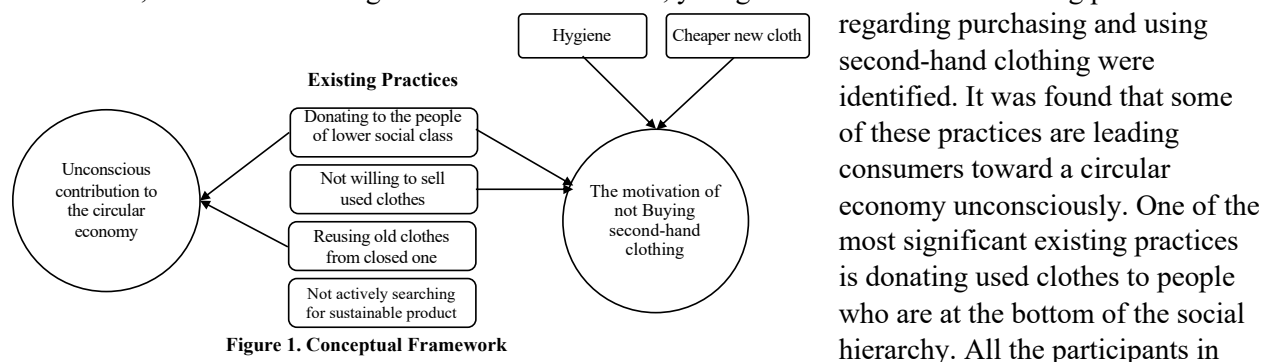


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

this study have donated their clothing to people they consider “poor” and “needy”. For example, P2 said, “When the clothes are not fitting my size, I donate them. I think it is my responsibility to society as poor people can’t buy clothes regularly”. Another participant (P8) said, “I donate clothes. Poor people need clothes in harsh weather. Also, it helps me make space in my wardrobe”. As consumers always donate used clothes to people who belong to a lower social class, this practice psychologically inhibits them from buying and using second-hand clothing. After being asked if the interviewees had ever tried to sell their old clothes, it was found that most of them preferred donating over selling their used clothes. Selling used clothes is not preferred by many; also an unnecessary hassle and an embarrassing practice. “I would not prefer selling these clothes for a few bucks. Rather, I would donate them to someone who needs it.”, said P7. Participants shared some of their logic for not buying second-hand clothing, including hygiene and less price of new clothes. One of the participants said, “I won’t buy. It’s difficult. In other countries, people may think that new clothes are highly expensive, so they buy used clothes. But in our country, new clothes are cheap”. On the other hand, almost all the participants stated that they happily wore used clothing when it was from their family members or close ones. One of them said, “I like 90’s and early 2000’s classic design. So, I wear a lot of my dad’s clothes. They look fashionable and feel great”. The shared nostalgia and emotional influence were visible in the consumers’ expressions. Despite second-hand clothing being a potential answer to ecological stress, the majority in Bangladesh do not actively search for environment-friendly solutions while purchasing or reusing a cloth. When people go to the market to buy a piece of clothing, they think of fashion, price, and product quality. But the expected sustainable purchase behavior is not in practice yet. P10 expressed, “No, I hardly think about the environment when I choose clothes. I always think about design, trends, and fashion. I know about

environmental pollution and all, but to be honest, I don't think of it often when I buy something". By donating and reusing clothes, consumers in Bangladesh are gradually moving towards a circular economy while remaining unconscious of it. Most existing practices and behavior regarding donating and using second-hand clothing are not performed because of environmental awareness or other sustainability concerns. The clothing donation practice in Bangladesh is more a cultural, social, or economic phenomenon rather than a conscious environmental sustainability movement. So, the consumers of Bangladesh are unconsciously contributing to the circular economy. "I have never thought about this (sustainability) before, but it sounds fun. When I buy cloth, I try to figure out if they will look good on me, but I never thought about what impact it has on the environment. It is brilliant that somehow, we are helping the environment by reusing and donating," said P13.

This study contributes to the literature on second-hand clothing practices of young consumers in developing economies. The findings of this study may be helpful to clothing companies and the government in formulating sustainability and circular economy policies. This study focused only on the young consumers' practices, whereas future research can address practices and perspectives of the consumers of other demography, i.e., other age groups.

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