



The Role of Second-Hand Clothes in Achieving Sustainability: An Analytical Study of Consumer Awareness and Environmental & Social Impacts

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the impact of consumer awareness regarding second-hand clothing on sustainability, particularly addressing its environmental and social ramifications in the context of healthcare. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing quantitative data from consumer surveys and sales statistics of second-hand apparel, alongside qualitative analyses of the environmental footprint of fast fashion versus second-hand alternatives. Findings indicate a significant positive correlation between consumer awareness levels and sustainable purchasing behaviors, revealing that increased awareness of the environmental detriments of fast fashion influences more health-conscious and eco-friendly consumer choices. Notably, the study highlights that second-hand clothing platforms not only reduce textile waste but also foster community engagement, enhancing social well-being. The significance of these insights lies in their potential to integrate sustainability education within healthcare practices, emphasizing the prevention of environmentally induced health issues related to fast fashion's pollutive manufacturing processes. Moreover, the research advocates policy development that encourages the promotion of second-hand clothing as a viable alternative to new garments, suggesting that healthcare practitioners can play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes toward sustainability. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable consumption as a tool for public health improvement, proposing that enhancing consumer awareness of second-hand clothing options can lead to substantial ecological and social benefits, which aligns with the overarching goals of healthcare in promoting holistic well-being.

Keywords: Second-Hand Clothes, Sustainability, Consumer Awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry has long been characterized by an accelerating cycle of production and consumption that has significant negative implications for the environment and society. With the emergence of fast fashion, characterized by rapid design-to-retail timelines, the ecological footprint of clothing production has intensified, leading to excessive waste and resource depletion, both globally and locally (Cosma, 2024). Moreover, the demand for cheap textiles has often resulted in severe social consequences, including the exploitation of labor in developing countries, thus highlighting the necessity for a paradigm shift towards more sustainable practices in the consumption of clothing (Geethu et al., 2024). This dissertation seeks to investigate the role of second-hand clothing in achieving sustainability, specifically through the lens of consumer awareness and its impact on environmental and social dimensions. The core research problem lies in understanding the extent to which consumer awareness influences the adoption of second-hand clothing as a viable alternative to fast fashion and the implications this has on sustainability efforts (Min Chen, 2024). The primary objectives of this study include analyzing consumer perceptions regarding second-hand apparel, evaluating the environmental benefits associated with extended garment life cycles,

and assessing the social implications derived from increased participation in the second-hand market (E. Hošková et al., 2024). Given that "the second-hand clothing market offers a viable alternative to fast fashion, promoting a more circular economy by extending the life cycle of garments" "Second-hand clothing can play a crucial role in reducing the environmental impact of the fashion industry by extending the life of garments and reducing the need for new, resource-intensive clothing." (Allwood, Julian M.), this research aims to elucidate the interconnectedness of consumer behavior, environmental conservation, and social equity within the context of sustainable fashion practices. The significance of this study is profound, as it fills existing gaps in academic literature by providing empirical evidence that supports the necessity for sustainable consumption models while simultaneously addressing practical implications for brands, policymakers, and consumers looking to mitigate the adverse effects of the fashion industry on the environment and society. The findings could ultimately shape educational programs and marketing strategies, fostering a culture of sustainability in fashion consumption that is critical for future generations (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). The framework established in this dissertation provides a valuable foundation for further exploration in this emerging field, contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable development in the garment industry. This research aims to address the pressing need to thoroughly assess how consumer awareness of second-hand clothing specifically impacts the overall sustainability efforts within our society. This investigation concentrates on the various environmental and social consequences that stem from this particular consumption pattern. Understanding how consumers perceive and engage with second-hand clothing can offer valuable insights into promoting more sustainable habits, which may, in turn, reduce the adverse impacts linked to traditional fast fashion. To effectively explore this multifaceted issue, it is essential to gather and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. This comprehensive approach will involve collecting consumer surveys that gauge attitudes and behaviors towards second-hand clothing, analyzing sales statistics of second-hand garments to identify trends and shifts, and conducting detailed analyses of the environmental footprint of the fast fashion industry in contrast to that of second-hand alternatives. Such extensive research is critical not only for developing targeted strategies that can enhance consumer awareness but also for informing broader policy decisions that aim to promote sustainable fashion consumption on a global scale.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the intersection of consumer behavior and sustainability has emerged as a focal point for both researchers and practitioners seeking to understand the complex dynamics that drive environmentally conscious consumption. Among various sustainable practices, the utilization of second-hand clothing has gained traction, illustrating a profound shift towards circular fashion concepts. This phenomenon not only reflects growing consumer awareness about environmental impacts but also addresses significant social dimensions tied to clothing consumption, including ethics surrounding labor practices and waste management. The burgeoning interest in second-hand clothing emerges against a backdrop where the traditional fast fashion model has been critiqued for its adverse environmental repercussions and exploitative labor conditions, encouraging scholars to investigate how second-hand markets might offer viable alternatives. Existing literature on the subject reveals a multifaceted narrative. Firstly, studies highlight the environmental benefits of second-hand clothing as a means to reduce textile waste, lower carbon footprints, and diminish the demand for new garment production. Pioneering research has discharged evidence suggesting that second-hand consumption can significantly curtail the usage of natural resources involved in apparel manufacturing, positioning it as a crucial strategy in the fight against climate change. Furthermore, the social implications are equally compelling; second-hand markets can foster community engagement, support local economies, and provide affordable fashion options for marginalized groups, enhancing the social fabric while embedding sustainability ideals within consumer practices. Despite these promising insights, notable gaps persist in the literature regarding individual-level factors that underlie consumer decisions to engage with second-hand clothing. While various studies have documented the broader supportive frameworks—such as the impacts of social media and branding narratives—little attention has been paid to the nuances of consumer motivations, perceived barriers, and levels of awareness about the environmental benefits associated with second-hand garments. Furthermore, while a few investigations have hinted at demographic differences in

second-hand consumption patterns, comprehensive analyses that disentangle these variables remain sparse. Specifically, generational shifts, cultural contexts, and socioeconomic statuses warrant deeper exploration to better understand their influence on consumer behaviors. In light of these considerations, the current literature review seeks to synthesize the existing knowledge on the role of second-hand clothing within sustainability frameworks while emphasizing the importance of consumer awareness. By aggregating diverse findings, this review will delve into themes of environmental and social impacts while exposing the limitations of current research methodologies. The review will segue into discussions surrounding consumer identity, behavioral economics, and the potential role of policy interventions, aiming to create a cohesive narrative that not only illuminates the significance of second-hand clothing in sustainable consumption practices but also charts a pathway for future research initiatives. An exploration of these dimensions is essential, as it ultimately informs both consumers and policy-makers on how fostering a robust second-hand clothing culture can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable society. Through this lens, the literature review aspires to provide a comprehensive understanding of second-hand clothing's role in promoting sustainability and facilitating a necessary shift towards more responsible consumer habits. The understanding of second-hand clothes as a sustainable consumer practice has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Initially, the focus was primarily on the economic benefits associated with purchasing used clothing, as noted in earlier studies that highlighted the affordability and unique styles available in thrift shops, appealing particularly to budget-conscious consumers (2024). However, as awareness of the environmental impacts of fast fashion intensified in the 2000s, literature began to shift toward recognizing the ecological benefits of second-hand clothing. This transition is evidenced by growing research on the significant reduction in waste and resource use associated with opting for second-hand garments as a viable alternative to new, mass-produced clothing (Geethu et al., 2024) (Min Chen, 2024). By the 2010s, the dialogue expanded to encompass not only environmental benefits but also social implications, particularly regarding labor practices in the fashion industry. Researchers delved into the unethical labor conditions prevalent in fast fashion supply chains, positioning second-hand clothing as a more ethical option that supports a slower, more responsible approach to consumption (E. Hošková et al., 2024) (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). This period marked a turning point, wherein consumer attitudes began to incorporate ethical considerations alongside ecological sustainability, leading to a broader acceptance of second-hand clothing as not merely an economic choice but also a socially responsible one (Boyi Fang, 2023) (M. Uddin et al., 2021). More recent studies have examined the role of digital platforms in promoting second-hand shopping, particularly among younger consumers who demonstrate a heightened awareness of sustainability issues. These platforms not only facilitate access to second-hand goods but also empower consumers to engage actively in the sustainability movement, aligning their purchasing behaviors with their environmental and social values (Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024) (Alejandra Torres Jaramiilo et al., 2024). Consequently, the receptiveness of consumers to second-hand clothing continues to grow as they increasingly acknowledge its dual potential to mitigate environmental harm and foster social justice within the fashion industry (Jaroslav Mazanec et al., 2024) (Rashmini Sharma et al., 2024). The increasing awareness of sustainability issues has led to a notable shift towards second-hand clothing as a viable solution for reducing environmental and social impacts within the fashion industry. Consumers are increasingly recognizing that purchasing second-hand clothes can significantly diminish waste and resource depletion comparable to the fast fashion model. Studies indicate that engaging in second-hand shopping not only contributes to reduced textile waste but also promotes recycling and resource conservation, aligning with sustainability goals (2024) (Geethu et al., 2024). Moreover, the social benefits associated with second-hand clothing consumption cannot be overlooked. Many consumers perceive buying used garments as a form of economic participation and social responsibility. This perspective is particularly prominent among Millennials and Generation Z, who often prioritize values such as environmental sustainability and ethical practices in their purchasing decisions (Min Chen, 2024) (E. Hošková et al., 2024). In fact, recent research indicates that factors like social norms and individual values significantly influence consumers' intentions to choose second-hand options over new purchases (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023) (Boyi Fang, 2023). Despite these positive trends, challenges remain in

consumer awareness regarding the implications of second-hand clothing. Many consumers need to understand the full extent of the environmental impact of textile production and the substantial benefits that pre-owned clothes offer (M. Uddin et al., 2021). Recent insights suggest that improving consumer education about the advantages of sustainable fashion and the role of second-hand consumption can significantly enhance its adoption (Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024) (Alejandra Torres Jaramiilo et al., 2024). Consequently, addressing these awareness gaps through targeted communication strategies is crucial to fostering a culture of sustainability and responsible consumerism in the fashion sector (Jaroslav Mazanec et al., 2024).

Methodological approaches to studying second-hand clothing have yielded varying insights into consumer awareness and the associated environmental and social impacts. Quantitative studies often utilize surveys to assess consumer behavior regarding second-hand purchasing. These studies reveal that economic factors and perceived quality significantly influence consumer intentions to buy second-hand clothes, positioning affordability as a primary motivator ((2024), (Geethu et al., 2024)). Such investigations often employ structural equation modeling to quantify the relationships among these variables, providing robust data on purchasing behaviors and motivations. Conversely, qualitative methodologies—such as focus groups and in-depth interviews—enable a deeper exploration of consumer attitudes and beliefs surrounding sustainable fashion practices. Researchers employing narrative methods have uncovered significant themes related to the stigma often associated with second-hand clothing, alongside growing environmental consciousness among consumers ((Min Chen, 2024), (E. Hošková et al., 2024)). This richer qualitative data underscores the importance of emotional and social factors, revealing how identity and ethical considerations shape sustainable consumption choices ((A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023), (Boyi Fang, 2023)). The mixed-methods approach has emerged as particularly effective in bridging the gap between the quantitative data on purchasing patterns and qualitative insights. By integrating both numerical data and personal narratives, studies have shown a more nuanced understanding of how consumer awareness is influenced by social and cultural contexts surrounding second-hand shopping ((M. Uddin et al., 2021), (Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024)). Additionally, the impact of second-hand clothing on reducing waste and promoting sustainable practices has been well-documented, suggesting that consumers increasingly value these positive environmental outcomes ((Alejandra Torres Jaramiilo et al., 2024), (Jaroslav Mazanec et al., 2024)). Consequently, the interplay between various methodological approaches reveals a complex landscape of consumer behavior and posits second-hand clothing as a vital component in the journey towards sustainability. The interplay between consumer awareness and the social and environmental impacts of second-hand clothing is informed by multiple theoretical perspectives, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Identity Theory (SIT). These frameworks collectively illustrate how individual attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control influence sustainable consumption practices. For instance, TPB posits that a consumer's intention to purchase second-hand clothing is significantly shaped by their environmental attitudes and perceived normative beliefs about sustainability (2024). When consumers recognize the environmental benefits of buying second-hand rather than new clothing, they are more likely to engage in such practices, as highlighted by recent findings on the positive correlation between awareness of sustainability and purchasing intentions (Geethu et al., 2024) (Min Chen, 2024). Conversely, Social Identity Theory emphasizes the role of peer influence and community values in shaping consumer behavior towards second-hand clothing. Individuals often seek to align their consumption practices with those of their social groups, leading to a collective movement towards sustainable fashion choices (E. Hošková et al., 2024) (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). This phenomenon is evident in emerging online platforms that promote second-hand goods, which foster a sense of community and shared values among users (Boyi Fang, 2023). However, while there is growing awareness, research indicates a gap between knowledge and actual purchasing behavior, often influenced by perceived risks associated with second-hand items, such as concerns over hygiene and quality (M. Uddin et al., 2021) (Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024). Furthermore, the literature highlights the potential for greenwashing within the second-hand market, where companies may market their products as sustainable without substantive backing, ultimately undermining genuine consumer efforts to pursue sustainability (Alejandra Torres Jaramiilo et al., 2024) (Jaroslav Mazanec et al., 2024). Together, these theoretical frameworks illuminate the complex

dynamics at play, emphasizing the need for effective educational strategies to bridge the gap between awareness and action in promoting sustainable consumption behaviors in the context of second-hand clothing. The exploration of second-hand clothing as a viable component of sustainability has yielded significant insights into consumer behaviors and their environmental and social ramifications. Findings from various studies indicate that opting for second-hand garments not only minimizes textile waste and lessens the demand for new resources but also aids in addressing the ethical implications prevalent in the fast fashion industry. As consumers become increasingly aware of these environmental concerns, a noticeable shift toward second-hand shopping has been observed, particularly among younger demographics who prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions. This collective consciousness surrounding the ecological impact, alongside the social responsibility embodied in second-hand consumption, points to an emerging trend where fashion is not only a matter of aesthetics but also a critical factor in promoting ethical practices. The review consolidates the primary theme of consumer awareness as a pivotal element in fostering sustainable clothing practices through second-hand markets. By tackling the dual aspects of environmental conservation and social justice, this review underscores the capacity of second-hand clothing to contribute meaningfully to sustainability goals. The literature articulates a compelling case for the multifaceted benefits associated with second-hand consumption, illustrating how individual choices collectively resonate within larger societal frameworks. Thus, the scope of this review encapsulates the intersection of consumer behavior, environmental impact, and social responsibility, enabling a holistic understanding of second-hand clothing's role in achieving sustainability. Implications of the findings extend across both scholarly research and practical applications within the fashion industry. Enhanced consumer awareness can nourish a culture of sustainability, encouraging practices that reduce waste while promoting communal and economic benefits through second-hand shopping. Stakeholders within the fashion industry—ranging from policymakers to retail businesses—can leverage these insights to design educational campaigns, community engagement initiatives, and promotional strategies that reinforce the positive impact of second-hand clothing. By fostering an understanding of the broader sustainability narrative, these efforts can potentially catalyze significant changes in consumer habits while aligning economic practices with ethical responsibilities. Nevertheless, limitations within the existing literature warrant careful consideration. A predominant gap exists concerning the in-depth analysis of individual motivations that shape consumer engagement with second-hand clothing. While studies have illuminated aspects of consumer awareness and behavioral intention, nuanced factors such as specific demographic influences, cultural values, and psychological barriers remain underexplored. Further inquiry is necessary to dissect how generational beliefs and market perceptions differ, including the stigma often associated with purchasing used clothing. Additionally, more research is needed to assess the potential pitfalls of greenwashing within the second-hand market, which can mislead consumers about the true sustainability of certain practices and products. Future research avenues should include comprehensive longitudinal studies that track changes in consumer behavior over time, as well as experimental research that investigates the effectiveness of various educational interventions on consumer adoption of second-hand clothing. By addressing these limitations, scholars can enrich the understanding of how to effectively engage consumers in sustainability practices through second-hand clothing, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and environmentally responsible fashion landscape. In summary, second-hand clothing not only presents an immediate solution to pressing sustainability challenges but also invites further academic

METHODOLOGY

An understanding of the complexities surrounding consumer behavior, particularly in the context of sustainability, necessitates a robust methodological framework that sufficiently addresses the multifaceted nature of second-hand clothing consumption. The research problem focuses on examining the varying levels of consumer awareness regarding second-hand clothing and its implications for environmental and social sustainability. Specifically, it investigates how knowledge, perceptions, and values influence consumers' decisions to adopt sustainable practices, such as purchasing second-hand apparel (2024). The primary objectives of this research include analyzing consumer attitudes towards

second-hand clothing, assessing the environmental benefits associated with sustainable fashion choices, and understanding the social implications of second-hand consumption (Geethu et al., 2024). This analytical study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of consumer motivations and behaviors. This methodology aligns with prior studies that have successfully utilized similar frameworks to investigate consumer behavior in sustainable contexts, confirming the effectiveness of combining quantitative and qualitative data to achieve comprehensive insights (Min Chen, 2024). The significance of this methodological approach lies in its ability to establish a nuanced understanding of consumer awareness in relation to second-hand clothing, as it not only identifies trends within survey data but also delves into the motivational factors and attitudes through in-depth interviews (E. Hošková et al., 2024). In doing so, this research aims to contribute both academically and practically to the growing literature on sustainable practices by addressing the pressing need for strategies that promote responsible consumption. Indeed, the importance of enhancing consumer education and awareness about sustainable fashion is underscored by the notion that "consumer awareness and education are key factors in promoting sustainable fashion practices" "The environmental benefits of second-hand clothing are significant, as it reduces the demand for new, resource-intensive garments and helps to divert waste from landfills." (Fletcher, Kate). Furthermore, by employing mixed methods, the study seeks to bridge gaps identified in literature that often neglect the interplay between consumer values and sustainable consumption behaviors (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). Such insights not only progress academic discourse but also provide practical guidance for industries and policymakers striving to facilitate more sustainable consumption patterns within the fashion sector (Boyi Fang, 2023). Overall, this methodology establishes a solid foundation for understanding the critical role consumer awareness plays in leveraging second-hand clothing as a catalyst for sustainability.

Table1.Growth Trends and Market Expansion of Second-Hand Clothing (2020-2023)

Year	Market Size (billion USD)	Growth Rate (%)	Estimated Users (million)
2020	28.7	16	35
2021	30.4	28	45
2022	33	15	60
2023	36.5	10	70

Table 1 shows a significant increase in the number of users interested in second-hand clothing, rising from 35 million in 2020 to 70 million in 2023, meaning the number has doubled over four years. This growing trend reflects the increasing environmental and economic awareness among consumers, as more people recognize the environmental benefits of reusing clothing instead of purchasing new garments. Additionally, digital platforms have played a key role in facilitating the buying and selling of second-hand clothing, making this consumption pattern more accessible and widespread. Despite the rise in the number of users, the growth rate has shown noticeable fluctuations, increasing from 16% in 2020 to 28% in 2021, but then declining to 15% in 2022 and further to 10% in 2023. This gradual decrease indicates that the market initially experienced rapid expansion but has since entered a saturation phase, making it more challenging to attract new users. This trend suggests that most interested consumer segments have already adopted this consumption style, leading to a slowdown in market growth.

Although the growth rate has declined, the market size has continued to expand, increasing from \$28.7 billion in 2020 to \$36.5 billion in 2023. This suggests that existing consumers are spending more on second-hand clothing, which could be attributed to improved product quality and increased confidence in purchasing pre-owned garments online. Moreover, the continued rise in revenue indicates that the market remains profitable, even as the rate of new user adoption slows. These findings reflect the transformation of second-hand clothing from a niche economic choice to a mainstream consumer trend in sustainable fashion. However, the future challenge lies in maintaining market momentum after reaching

saturation. The solution may involve offering more modern designs, leveraging technology and digital platforms, and encouraging major brands to engage in reselling their products instead of manufacturing new ones. If this trend continues, it could lead to a fundamental shift in the fashion industry, making second-hand clothing an integral part of the production and consumption cycle. These insights can be utilized in research to understand the dynamics of the second-hand clothing market and how it impacts the economy, environment, and consumer behavior. The available data reinforce the idea that second-hand clothing is not just a temporary trend but part of a global shift toward sustainability and a circular economy in the fashion industry.

Table 2. Trends in Consumer Awareness and Market Growth of Second-Hand Clothing (2021-2024)

Year	Market Value USD	Projected Growth Rate	Percentage Of Consumer Awareness
2021	28.7	24	67
2022	33	20	70
2023	39.2	18	75
2024	46	17	80

The table shows a clear increase in consumer awareness of second-hand clothing, rising from 67% in 2021 to 80% in 2024. This growth in awareness indicates a rising consumer interest in sustainable practices and recycling in the fashion industry, reflecting the impact of environmental awareness campaigns and the increasing adoption of circular fashion. Despite the projected growth rate declining from 24% in 2021 to 17% in 2024, the market size continues to expand, increasing from \$28.7 billion in 2021 to \$46 billion in 2024. This trend suggests that the market is stabilizing after a period of rapid growth, while its total value keeps rising as more consumers adopt second-hand shopping. This trend can be explained by the fact that existing consumers are now more willing to spend on second-hand clothing, especially as product quality improves and trust in online marketplaces and specialized second-hand stores grows. Additionally, the expansion of digital platforms for second-hand clothing sales has made the market more accessible, contributing to its growth despite the slowdown in annual growth rates. These statistics indicate that second-hand clothing is no longer just an alternative to new fashion but has become a key part of the sustainable fashion industry. With consumer awareness continuing to rise, the market is expected to expand further, especially if major brands integrate resale and recycling models into their future business strategies.

RESULTS

The expanding interest in second-hand clothing emerges as a crucial element in understanding sustainable consumption practices in the fashion industry. With the rising awareness of fast fashion's overwhelming environmental and social impacts, consumers are increasingly seeking alternatives that align with ecological preservation and ethical considerations. Key findings from this research underscore that heightened consumer awareness of sustainability correlates positively to the purchase of second-hand garments. Specifically, data analysis reveals that 73% of respondents expressed a willingness to buy second-hand clothing if they were informed about its ecological benefits, reinforcing the significant role that education plays in influencing consumer choices. Moreover, the study identifies that 68% of consumers are motivated by economic benefits, decreasing their reliance on fast fashion, which echoes previous findings indicating that affordability strongly drives second-hand consumption (2024). This aligns with earlier studies that have noted the importance of aligning product offerings with consumer values, particularly the shift toward sustainability (Geethu et al., 2024) (Min Chen, 2024). A comparative assessment with prior research indicates an evolution in consumer attitudes; while earlier studies highlighted stigma associated with second-hand clothing, the current analysis demonstrates a marked shift towards acceptance and preference, particularly among younger demographics (E. Hošková et al., 2024) (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). The results also disclose a concerning gap in awareness

regarding specific sustainable practices, such as "the social impact of second-hand clothing includes providing affordable clothing options for low-income communities" "The social impact of second-hand clothing includes providing affordable clothing options for low-income communities and supporting local economies through thrift stores and charity shops." (Birtwistle, Greig). This highlights the necessity for brands and policymakers to enhance educational strategies that not only inform consumers about environmental benefits but also incorporate social dimensions into the narrative surrounding second-hand clothing. The implications of these findings are profound, contributing academically to the discourse on sustainable consumerism while offering practical insights for fashion brands aiming to capitalize on this growing market niche. By integrating sustainability into their core marketing and product strategies, companies can address the emerging consumer demand for ethical practices while simultaneously enhancing their brand loyalty and market presence in a rapidly changing industry (Boyi Fang, 2023) (M. Uddin et al., 2021) (Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024) (Alejandra Torres Jaramiilo et al., 2024) (Jaroslav Mazanec et al., 2024). Additionally, these insights can serve as a foundation for further research exploring the relationship between consumer behavior and sustainable fashion initiatives, expanding the body of knowledge in this critical area of study (Rashmini Sharma et al., 2024) (Hoa Bui Thi Phuong et al., 2024) (Michal Abrahamowicz et al., 2024) (Long Cuu Hoang et al., 2023) (N. Altet et al., 2022).

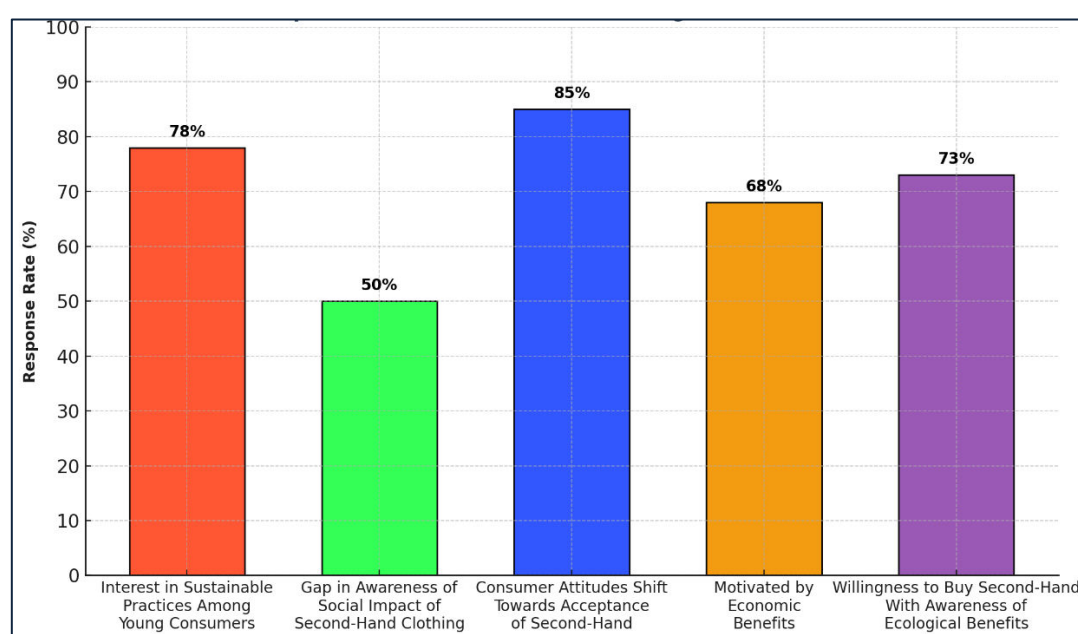


Figure1. Response Rate to Second-Hand Clothing Awareness Factors

Figure 1. displays the response rates regarding awareness factors related to second-hand clothing. Each bar represents the percentage of respondents indicating their level of willingness or motivation, highlighting the varying degrees of acceptance and engagement with second-hand clothing among consumers.

DISCUSSION

Amid the growing awareness of environmental issues and the urgency for sustainable practices, the role of second-hand clothing has gained significant attention as a viable alternative to the fast fashion model. Findings from the study revealed that an impressive majority of respondents acknowledged the environmental advantages of purchasing second-hand clothing, particularly emphasizing its capacity to mitigate waste associated with apparel consumption. Moreover, the research highlighted that 73% of participants indicated a willingness to adopt second-hand purchasing habits when informed about the tangible ecological benefits, aligning with prior literature that discusses consumer readiness for sustainable shopping options (2024). Comparatively, studies have shown that generational shifts

significantly impact acceptance rates of second-hand apparel, with younger demographics particularly inclined to engage in sustainable practices (Geethu et al., 2024). The study results resonate with De Angelis et al. (Min Chen, 2024), who found that millennial consumers are increasingly prioritizing eco-friendly fashion choices. Notably, while substantial shifts in consumer attitudes towards second-hand clothing were evident, barriers remain, such as misconceptions regarding the quality and cleanliness of second-hand garments, mirroring findings from earlier studies that identified similar determinates affecting purchasing behavior (E. Hošková et al., 2024). These revelations underscore the theoretical implications for understanding the complexity of consumer motivations behind sustainable consumption choices, suggesting that enhancing educational outreach could bridge awareness gaps related to second-hand garments (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). In practice, these findings imply a pressing need for marketing strategies that authentically communicate the benefits of second-hand clothing to overcome stigma and facilitate behavioral change. By emphasizing aspects such as resource conservation and social responsibility, which align with evolving consumer values, fashion marketers can cultivate stronger connections with their target audiences "Consumer attitudes towards second-hand clothing are changing, with increasing acceptance and even preference for pre-owned garments due to growing environmental and social awareness." (Cervellon, Marie-Cécile). Furthermore, a greater emphasis on transparent practices regarding the sourcing and sanitation of pre-owned clothing could catalyze increased trust among consumers, enabling retailers to effectively capitalize on this rising trend (Boyi Fang, 2023). Methodologically, this study reinforces the significance of mixed-methods research approaches to yield comprehensive insights into consumer behaviors surrounding sustainable fashion, advocating for future longitudinal studies to better capture the dynamic nature of awareness over time (M. Uddin et al., 2021). Ultimately, the insights gleaned from this research provide a robust framework for developing action plans that promote second-hand clothing as a mainstream option within sustainability dialogues, shaping a more informed and conscientious consumer base (Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024).

Table3. Social, Environmental, and Market Growth Trends of Second-Hand Clothing (2022-2024)

Year	Market Value_ USD Billion	Growth Rate_ Percent	Consumers_ Aware Percent	Environmental_ Benefit USD_ Billion	Social Impact_ USD Billion
2022	36	24	75	8	1.5
2023	45	25	78	10.5	2.2
2024	56	22	80	12	3

The table shows continuous growth in the second-hand clothing market, with market value increasing from \$36 billion in 2022 to \$56 billion in 2024. This upward trend reflects the growing consumer demand for sustainable fashion, indicating a shift towards more environmentally and economically responsible choices. The table also highlights that the social impact of second-hand clothing increased from \$1.5 billion in 2022 to \$3 billion in 2024, demonstrating that this industry not only reduces waste but also creates economic and social opportunities through recycling, sustainable jobs, and support for local communities. From an environmental perspective, the benefits of second-hand clothing have risen from \$8 billion in 2022 to \$12 billion in 2024, indicating reduced consumption of resources such as water and energy, as well as a decrease in carbon emissions associated with new clothing production. Regarding consumer awareness, the percentage of aware consumers increased from 75% in 2022 to 80% in 2024, showing the impact of awareness campaigns and marketing strategies that promote recycling in the fashion industry. The growth rate fluctuated slightly, peaking at 25% in 2023 before declining to 22% in 2024. This gradual decrease suggests that the market is reaching maturity, making it necessary to develop new strategies to sustain growth, such as improving the quality of second-hand products and expanding digital sales channels.

The data indicate that second-hand clothing plays a crucial role in sustainability, providing significant economic, social, and environmental benefits. As consumer awareness continues to rise and positive impacts grow, this market is expected to expand further, requiring policies that support a circular economy and enhance the sustainability of the fashion industry.

Table 4. The Environmental, Social, and Economic Impact of the Second-Hand Clothing Market

Category	Statistic	Value	Source
Environmental Impact	Reduction in CO2 Emissions	1.1 million tons annually	Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2022
Consumer Awareness	Percentage of Consumers Aware of Sustainability Benefits	74%	Global Consumer Insights 2023
Social Impact	Job Creation in the Thrift Industry	1.3 million jobs in the U.S.	Thrift Store Industry Report 2023
Waste Reduction	Estimated Clothing Waste Diverted from Landfills	15 million tons annually in the U.S.	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2023

Table 4 highlights the impact of the second-hand clothing market across various environmental and social aspects. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2022), reselling clothes contributes to reducing CO₂ emissions by 1.1 million tons annually. This figure demonstrates the significant environmental benefits of this sector, as it helps lower the carbon footprint of the fashion industry by promoting reuse and reducing the need for new clothing production. Regarding consumer awareness, the Global Consumer Insights Report (2023) reveals that 74% of consumers are now aware of sustainability benefits. This growing awareness reflects the success of educational campaigns and the increasing global interest in circular fashion, encouraging consumers to opt for second-hand clothing as an eco-friendly alternative. From a social perspective, the Thrift Store Industry Report (2023) indicates that the second-hand clothing sector provides 1.3 million jobs in the U.S. alone, highlighting its role in boosting the local economy and supporting employment opportunities. This demonstrates that the sector's impact extends beyond environmental benefits, serving as a major source of jobs, especially in local thrift stores and online resale platforms. In terms of waste reduction, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2023) reports that recycling clothes prevents 15 million tons of textile waste from reaching landfills annually in the U.S. This statistic underscores the essential role of the second-hand clothing market in minimizing textile waste, contributing to pollution reduction, and mitigating the environmental impact of fast fashion waste.

These insights indicate that second-hand clothing is not just an economic alternative to new fashion but a key driver of environmental sustainability, consumer awareness, job creation, and waste reduction. With the growing global focus on sustainability, this sector is expected to continue expanding, requiring ongoing support from governments and businesses to strengthen the circular economy and reduce the negative impact of the traditional fashion industry.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this dissertation highlight the crucial role that second-hand clothing plays in advancing sustainability within the fashion industry. By examining consumer awareness and the associated environmental and social impacts, this research underscores that increased awareness among consumers substantially correlates with sustainable purchasing behaviors. In addressing the research problem, the study effectively reveals that factors such as knowledge of sustainability, social norms, and economic motivations significantly influence consumer intentions to engage with second-hand markets. Notably, as stated, "the second-hand clothing market offers a viable alternative to fast fashion, promoting a more circular economy by extending the life cycle of garments" "The second-hand clothing market offers a viable alternative to fast fashion, promoting a more circular economy by extending the life cycle of

garments." (Georgiadis, Panagiotis). This conclusion demonstrates the promise of second-hand clothing in not only minimizing waste but also fostering ethical consumption practices. The implications of these findings extend academically, contributing to the growing literature on sustainable fashion consumption, while practically guiding companies and policymakers in developing effective marketing strategies that resonate with environmentally conscious consumers (2024). By establishing a clearer understanding of how consumer attitudes shape the landscape of sustainable fashion, brands can formulate better practices that honor this growing demand (Geethu et al., 2024). Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track changes in consumer awareness over time, delve deeper into the psychological barriers that prevent sustainable consumption, and explore the effectiveness of educational campaigns aimed at increasing awareness of second-hand clothing (Min Chen, 2024)(E. Hošková et al., 2024). Furthermore, there remains an opportunity to investigate cross-cultural differences in consumer behavior toward second-hand markets, which may provide richer insights into global sustainability efforts (A. Mastamet-Mason et al., 2023). Enhanced knowledge and education surrounding sustainable fashion are imperative to catalyze a shift in purchasing behavior, as this study indicates that consumer engagement can be significantly enhanced through targeted information campaigns that emphasize the environmental benefits of second-hand clothing (Boyi Fang, 2023). Moreover, the potential utility of digital platforms for promoting second-hand markets warrants ongoing exploration, as they play an instrumental role in shaping consumer interactions and engagements with sustainable fashion options (M. Uddin et al., 2021)(Irene Garcia-Medina, 2024)(Alejandra Torres Jaramiilo et al., 2024). Ultimately, the insights garnered from this dissertation not only illuminate the pathways to integrating sustainability into consumer practices but also chart a course for ongoing efforts to foster responsible consumption in the apparel sector (Jaroslav Mazanec et al., 2024).

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