

The Rise of Second-Hand and Thrifting Shopping: Emerging Consumer Trends

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Abstract:

This study explores the emerging culture of thrifting and second-hand fashion consumption in India and Indonesia, with a specific focus on digital platforms like TThrift that enable sustainable consumer-to-consumer commerce. By analyzing motivations, barriers, and perceptions among Gen Z and young millennials, the research emphasizes how affordability, uniqueness, and sustainability drive adoption, while hygiene concerns, quality doubts, and social stigma remain significant obstacles. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a cross-sectional survey of 400–600 respondents with semi-structured interviews and social media content analysis to understand how thrift culture is being normalized. Literature findings highlight four strands of circularity in India—business models, cultural and faith-based reuse practices, consumer attitudes, and industry readiness. Market research indicates that second-hand fashion is gaining traction as both a sustainable lifestyle choice and a viable business opportunity, supported by increasing eco-consciousness, digital thrift boutiques, and government incentives. Globally, the second-hand apparel market is projected to expand rapidly, driven by rising sustainability demands and digitalization. Overall, the study concludes that platforms like TThrift can operationalize circular fashion by extending product lifecycles, reducing waste, and reshaping consumer behavior toward intentional, value-driven consumption.

I. Introduction

Thrift, every piece has a past, and every purchase creates a better future. By choosing second-hand, you're not just saving money—you're helping reduce waste, support circular fashion, and rewrite the story of style. Whether you're into vintage gems, minimalist staples, or bold statement pieces, Tthrift is here to help you find fashion that fits both your personality and your values. The platform operates on the principle that products retain value beyond their initial use cycle, and that enabling their resale can generate economic, social, and ecological benefits. By providing an accessible digital infrastructure, Tthrift allows individuals to list items for sale, discover affordable second-hand goods, and engage in transactions with verified participants. The range of products available spans apparel, electronics, household items, books,

and collectibles, catering to diverse consumer needs. The platform emphasizes user-friendly listing procedures, nationwide market reach, and reliable payment mechanisms to foster trust and encourage participation. In doing so, Tthrift aligns with the broader goals of sustainable consumption and waste reduction by extending product lifespans and diverting materials from landfills. By connecting individuals seeking to dispose of surplus goods with those in need of such items, the platform contributes to resource efficiency, reduced environmental impact, and community-level economic activity. The operational process involves account creation, item listing with descriptive and visual documentation, transaction facilitation through secure payment systems, and coordinated delivery mechanisms. Buyers benefit from cost savings and

access to unique or discontinued items, while sellers gain financial returns from underutilized assets. From a sustainability perspective, TThrift demonstrates how digital platforms can operationalize environmental stewardship through consumer-to-consumer commerce. As such, it serves as both a commercial entity and a case study in integrating economic viability with environmental responsibility in the online marketplace sector. The rise of digital resale marketplaces reflects a broader trend toward collaborative consumption, where ownership is fluid, and access to goods is prioritized over perpetual possession. This transformation is driven by multiple factors, including rising awareness of environmental issues, economic considerations in times of financial uncertainty, and advancements in e-commerce technologies. TThrift leverages these trends by providing a seamless interface for both sellers and buyers, thereby lowering the barriers to entry for participation in the resale economy. By reducing reliance on traditional retail channels, the platform decentralizes commerce, allowing individuals to act as micro-entrepreneurs while fostering a culture of reuse and value preservation.

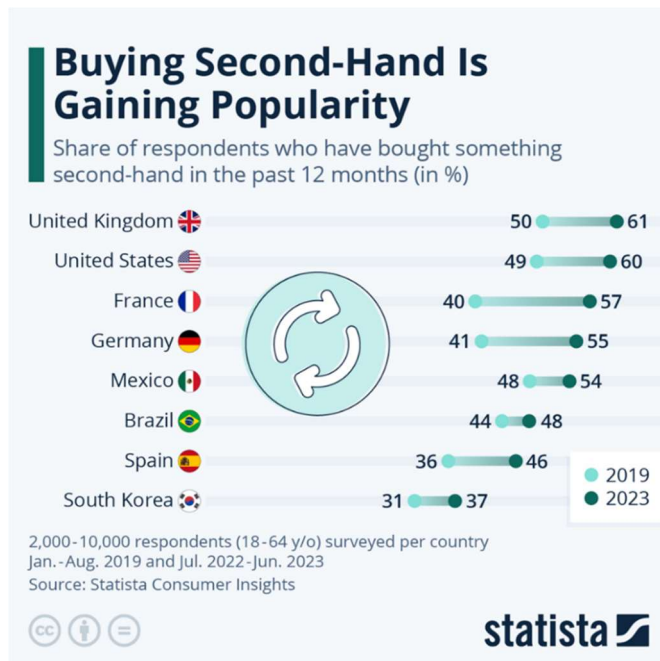


Figure 1. “Buying Second-Hand Is Gaining Popularity”-Statista

II. Literature Review

The articles outline circular fashion in India through examples such as upcycling, resale, and recycling and showing how value is shifting from linear use to reuse, repair, and recycling, backed with local examples. It highlights cost resilience, regulation, and consumer sentiment as drivers and explains circular fashion and highlighting economic and cultural drivers[1]. It is better as it adds a faith–culture lens, extending circularity beyond commerce into sacred textile reuse, covering gaps the

previous article did not address. It improves on this by adding a faith–culture perspective, highlighting how even ritual textiles are being diverted into circular systems through community actors, which broadens the scope beyond commercial fashion[2]. This paper adds more value by shifting focus to consumers especially Gen Z and analysing their perceptions, motivations, and cultural barriers. The research paper focuses on consumer psychology (Gen Z), revealing attitudes and cultural frames that determine future adoption and focusing more on Gen Z perceptions, linking culture and consumer intent [3]. It is better as it goes beyond consumer views to the industry scale, identifying systemic barriers and proposing digital solutions—making it more comprehensive and advances further with industry-level barriers and a digital roadmap for systemic change. This paper assesses circular readiness in India’s textile sector, identifying over 30 barriers across supply chains, consumer engagement, and compliance [4]. The paper is weaker as it only repeats global pandemic thrifting trends, it focusing more on consumer behaviour during the pandemic and this paper shows how affordability, brand appeal, and uniqueness drove second-hand clothing adoption. However, its insights remain generic, drawing on global contexts like Helsinki and Surabaya, with limited India-specific analysis [5]. This paper is better as it introduces cultural adaptation theory and the role of social media, giving more conceptual depth, this paper situates thrifting within cultural adaptation theory, explaining it as a coping mechanism during economic and social change. It emphasizes how social media accelerated thrift culture blending affordability with sustainability goals [6]. This paper is better as it situates thrifting within the Indian millennial context, emphasizing eco-benefits and fast-fashion alternatives, which makes it more locally relevant, this paper positions thrifting as an eco-friendly alternative for Indian millennials. It highlights the role of recycling, reuse, and reduced textile waste, while also situating thrifting as a lifestyle choice aligned with sustainability [7].

III. Methodology

The above literature review examines how circular fashion and thrift shopping has evolved in India. The first methodology is predominantly qualitative relying on secondary literature, descriptive case examples and cultural policy interpretation. The initial methodological approach is largely qualitative and conceptual, drawing on secondary literature, descriptive case studies, and cultural or policy-based interpretations. The second methodology uses quantitative consumer research through structured surveys and statistical analysis because it allows researchers to capture the attitudes, motivations and behavioural intent especially among specific groups like Gen Z using data-driven evidence. By measuring attitudes, motivations, and behavioural intentions—particularly among demographic groups such as Gen Z—this approach

moves beyond descriptive insight to evidence-based analysis. The use of numerical data reduces subjectivity and enables clearer assessment of adoption potential, which purely qualitative methods cannot reliably achieve. The third and most advanced methodology employs a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative consumer surveys with qualitative interviews, expert opinions, and industry-level data. This approach not only captures consumer perceptions but also explains systemic and operational barriers related to supply chains, regulation, technology, and compliance. Through data triangulation across multiple stakeholders, it enhances validity, practical relevance, and policy applicability. Consequently, mixed-methods research emerges as the most robust methodology for comprehensively understanding and advancing circular fashion adoption in India.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Article 1: Second-hand Apparel Market Size, Trends & Forecast 2025 to 2035:

Recent studies show that India’s second-hand and thrift apparel market is growing strongly, currently valued at about USD 3.5 billion with a projected CAGR of ~13%. This rise is driven by urban youth, sustainability awareness, and rising interest in affordable branded clothing. Global momentum further supports this trend, with the worldwide second-hand apparel market expected to reach USD 138–210 billion in the next decade. Demand in India is highest for women’s categories such as dresses and tops, and regions like West India are showing rapid adoption. Digital resale platforms and social-media-driven fashion culture are also accelerating market expansion. Key challenges include quality assurance, sourcing consistency, and remaining stigma toward “used” items in some areas. Still, the affordability and circular-economy appeal of thrift fashion make it an increasingly accepted choice. Overall, feasibility is strong for curated, well-branded thrift and resale ventures in India.

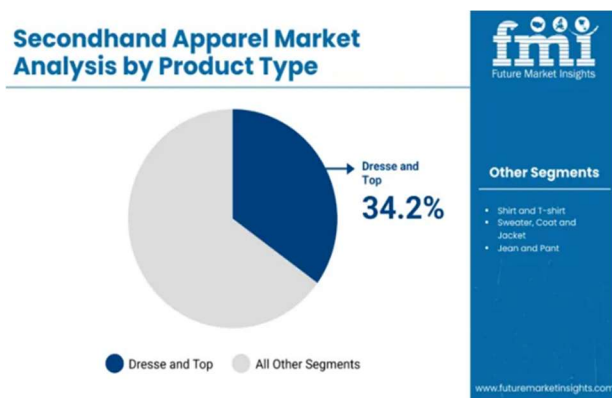


Figure 2. Second-hand Apparel Market Size, Trends & Forecast 2025 to 2035

B. Article 2: Second Hand Apparel Market - Global Industry Analysis and Forecast (2025-2032):

According to the Stellar Market Research report, the global second-hand apparel market was valued at USD 59.87 billion in 2024 and is forecast to grow at a strong 12.59% CAGR from 2025 to 2032. By 2032, the market is expected to reach USD 154.61 billion, showing substantial long-term expansion. This growth is largely driven by rising consumer demand for sustainable and affordable fashion options. Increasing environmental awareness is encouraging shoppers to adopt circular and low-waste fashion habits. The rapid rise of digital resale platforms has further boosted accessibility and convenience in the second-hand market. These platforms also expand reach across regions, age groups, and income segments. Social media trends and influencer-driven thrift culture are accelerating acceptance globally. Overall, the market signals a strong global shift toward resale, reuse, and circular fashion models.

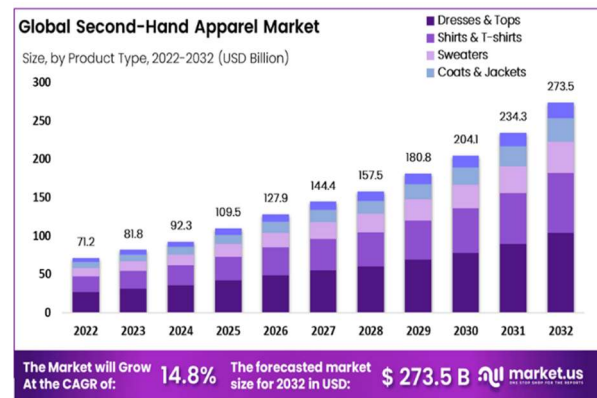


Figure 3. “Second Hand Apparel Market - Global Industry

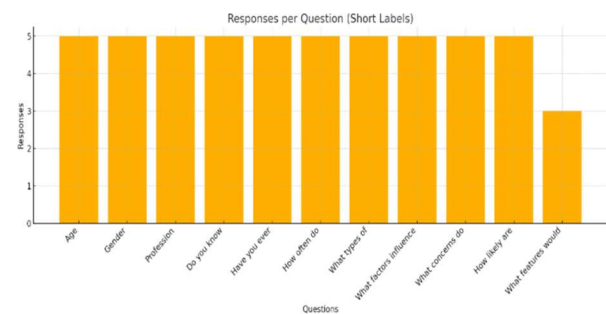


Figure 4. "Market Survey"

V. Findings from Market Survey

The survey findings show that all respondents fall within the 18–25 age group, with a balanced mix of male and female participants, indicating strong youth engagement in thrift-related behaviour. Most respondents were already aware of what thrift stores are, though only a few had actually purchased from an online thrift platform. Purchasing frequency remained low, with most

participants reporting that they “rarely” or “never” buy second-hand items. Clothing and accessories emerged as the preferred categories for potential thrift purchases. Key motivators included lower prices, sustainability benefits, and the appeal of unique or vintage pieces. Major concerns centred around hygiene, quality, sizing issues, and the absence of return policies. Participants showed mixed future interest, ranging from low to moderate likelihood of shopping online for thrifted items. Suggested improvements included cheaper pricing, expansion into more product categories, and platform upgrades to build trust and convenience.

VI. Conclusion

The overall findings conclude that thrifting and second-hand consumption are rapidly transitioning from niche behaviour to a mainstream sustainable choice, particularly among Gen Z and young millennials in India and Indonesia. Digital platforms like TThrift are enabling this shift by extending product lifecycles, reducing textile waste, and making fashion more affordable and accessible. Literature insights show that economic value, cultural practices, and digital adoption collectively shape the growth of the thrift ecosystem. Although factors like affordability, sustainability, and uniqueness strongly motivate participation, challenges such as hygiene concerns, stigma, and quality perceptions still require

strategic intervention. Building trust through better curation, transparency, and awareness campaigns is essential. Market research also confirms strong industry potential driven by eco-conscious consumers and expanding digital infrastructure. As the global second-hand market grows, these platforms hold the capacity to significantly advance circular fashion. Ultimately, the study concludes that second-hand systems can meaningfully reduce environmental impact and promote more intentional, responsible consumer behaviour.

References

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