

AMONG VALUES, MEMORIES, AND EXPERIENCES: INVESTIGATING THE PATH OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHES AND THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE IN THRIFT STORES

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1. Introduction

The fashion market has been built on the logic of Fast Fashion (Xavier, 2020), a movement characterized by large-scale production, speed, low prices, excessive consumption, and unnecessary disposal (Dissanayake & Pal, 2023; Garcia-Ortega, 2023; Legere & Kang, 2020). In this scenario, garments have increasingly shorter lifecycles, quickly becoming obsolete (Persson & Hinton, 2023), driven by constant desires for new and different consumption experiences and the loss of utilitarian value of clothing items (André & Nilsson, 2024). Unwanted clothes follow various paths of disinvestment (Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018), potentially finding new users in this process (Jacoby et al., 1977; Karpova et al., 2021).

In the quest to find new users, it is essential to highlight the resale of items to commercial outlets that redistribute them (Turunen & Gossen, 2024). In this context, those who redistribute clothing aim to profit economically, whether through exchanges for new pieces, discounts on future purchases, or even vouchers (Sandberg, 2023). Another approach is clothing donation, driven by various motivations such as spiritual reasons (Sabah & Oflazoğlu, 2024), hedonism, and the satisfaction of contributing to a noble cause (Wu et al., 2023; Calfope et al., 2018). Additionally, clothing is commonly passed among family members, where pieces are shared among relatives and household members, reducing waste and unnecessary expenditure (Herjanto et al., 2016). This flow of garments among family members extends beyond donation to include exchanges and loans between members (Lang & Zhang, 2019).

Through these channels, second-hand clothing (SHC) finds new owners who accept them (Jacoby et al., 1977). Consequently, the clothing is given new meaning as its new user provides it with a fresh perspective, employs a new sense, and even assigns a different utilitarian value (Steward, 2020). The decision to use previously worn clothing can stem from various reasons: some people adopt SHC due to financial constraints, when they lack resources to purchase new items (Valk, 2020; Williams & Paddock, 2003), or out of a desire to save money (Lang & Zhang, 2019). Others choose SHC for socio-environmental consciousness reasons, as using them can contribute to reducing environmental impacts (Wu et al., 2023). Additionally, another characteristic that drives the search for these products is the emotional aspect involved in wearing second-hand clothes, tied to the tradition of passing clothing down among siblings, becoming a childhood memory (Machado et al., 2019; Sherry, 1990).

The interaction with second-hand clothes, acquired for different reasons, can be a determining factor in future exploration or continued consumption through thrift stores, which are shops specializing in the redistribution of SHC (Shahzad et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Machado et al., 2019). Thrift stores represent a business category that facilitates the buying and selling of second-hand articles, especially in the textile sector, characterized as a redistribution market that transforms unwanted goods into reusable items (Kim et al., 2021; Felipe & Feil, 2020; Steward, 2020). Previous experiences mark the cognitive, subjective, symbolic, and even affective factors inherent to each individual, allowing the recollection of events or even stimulating the first purchase at thrift stores (Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019). Consequently, the entire process of reminiscing can promote the desire to experience; however, this time, the consumer becomes the agent, thereby forming a consumption experience (CE) (Levistk & Oliveira, 2023).

For Scussel et al. (2021), CE occurs when mental processes facilitate consumer interaction with products, especially when there are prior experiences or recommendations, encompassing both the purchasing process and post-purchase interactions. As a lived experience, consumption experience can be characterized as a set of conscious feelings with diverse representative meanings (Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019). Thus, in the thrift store consumption process, the added values to each consumer's experience can be evaluated, such as economic, social, hedonic, and altruistic values (Holbrook, 2006).

Scientific discussions on the use of second-hand clothing have focused on: (i) investigating motivations and the structure of SHC behavior (Niston, 2022); (ii) understanding obsolescence and extending the lifespan, by analyzing the development of objective and subjective functionality of products in second-hand clothing stores (André & Nilsson, 2024); and (iii) exploring perceived triple risk - sanitary, aesthetic, and psychological - in the use of SHC in the consumer experience (Koay et al., 2024). Conversely, studies on the impact of prior SHC consumption on the thrift store consumer experience are still limited. Prior consumption may influence the intention to shop at thrift stores by creating familiarity with the SHC market, reducing associated stigma, and enhancing perceptions of the value and sustainability of items offered in the thrift store environment. Based on this context, the guiding question for the present research is established: How does prior use of second-hand clothing contribute to the consumer experience in thrift stores?

In general, investigating this dynamic can promote greater acceptance and normalization of second-hand clothing consumption by highlighting factors that reduce associated risks and maximize perceived benefits (Lee et al., 2021). It encourages social and environmental collaboration in ethical fashion (Pérez et al., 2022), enhances understanding of values and beliefs influencing consumption intentions (Kim et al., 2021), clarifies ego involvement in adopting SHC use (Zahid et al., 2023), as well as provides insights into economic drivers of consumption (Laitala & Klepp, 2018) and behavioral disposal processes (Hassan et al., 2022) that impact prior use of second-hand clothing.

In addition to this introduction, the article is structured into the following sections: i) theoretical framework, discussing consumer experience, thrift store experience, and the pathways of second-hand clothing; ii) study methodology; iii) results from data collection and analysis; and iv) conclusions of this study, highlighting theoretical and practical contributions, along with research limitations and directions for future studies.

2. Theoretical Framework

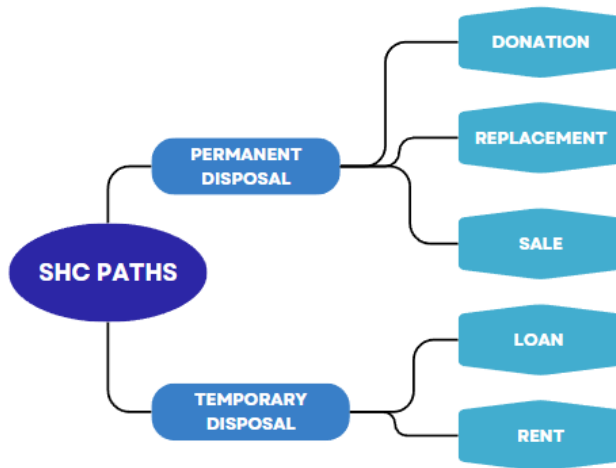
2.1 Paths of Second-Hand Clothing

Typically, second-hand clothing follows a path until it reaches a new owner, considering different disposal behaviors (Acquaye et al., 2023). This behavior refers to the process by which individuals choose to stop using items that still hold value (Wu et al., 2023; Jacoby et al., 1977). When relating disposal behavior to sustainability concerns (Wu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2020), the literature presents several trajectories that second-hand clothing can follow: i) donation (Pera & Ferrulli, 2024); ii) exchange (Wu et al., 2023); iii) sale (Ciechelska et al., 2024); iv) lending (Acquaye et al., 2023); and v) renting (Laukkanen & Tura, 2022). The first three sustainable disposal behaviors can be categorized as permanent disposal, while the latter two are considered temporary disposal, delineating the paths that second-hand clothing takes after initial consumption (Wu et al., 2023; Jacoby et al., 1977) (Figure 1).

Permanent disposal refers to the act of transferring second-hand clothing definitively through sale, exchange, or donation, driven by issues such as size problems, changes in fashion

trends, or the desire for a new style (Prathibhani & Lakshika, 2023; Vieira et al., 2023). Donation represents the first behavior of permanent disposal. Donating SHC can hold unique value in promoting social well-being, reducing resource consumption, and minimizing environmental impact (Wu et al., 2023). Moreover, receiving second-hand clothes donated by someone known is easier, more natural, and more meaningful, as the recipient gains a better understanding of the garment's history (Shrivastava, 2021).

Figure 1.
Paths of Second-Hand Clothing



Source: Adaptado de Ciechelska et al. (2024); Pera & Ferrulli (2024); Acquaye et al. (2023); Wu et al. (2023); Laukkanen & Tura (2022); Jacoby et al. (1977).

According to Pera and Ferrulli (2024), individuals engage in clothing donation for various reasons, such as utility reasons due to limited wardrobe space, and hedonic reasons that promote positive feelings of moral altruism (Pera & Ferrulli, 2024; Kim & Childs, 2021). Regarding donation practices, individuals may donate clothes to family members, friends, charitable institutions, and philanthropic actions during environmental disasters (Hellstron & Olsson, 2024; Acquaye et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023; Paço et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2013; Albinsson & Perera, 2009). Thus, it can be argued that SHC donation exhibits attributes such as non-reciprocity, monetary devaluation, object uniqueness, genuine sharing, and functional, emotional, and social values (Hellstron & Olsson, 2024; Lee et al., 2021).

Next, the process of exchanging SHC offers individuals a way to extend the durability of their garments by swapping them for others (Lang & Zhang, 2019). This also provides them with the opportunity to find something different from their usual wardrobe and acquire new items (Lang & Zhang, 2019). Nowadays, it's common to find apps connecting people interested in exchanging clothes (Hellstron & Olsson, 2024; Wu et al., 2023; Shrivastava, 2021). Another form of exchange involves informal relationships fostered by social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook groups (Shrivastava, 2021; Salvalaio & Ashton, 2017). There are also clothing swap parties where the main goal is to give, receive, and socialize (Laitala & Klepp, 2018; Matthews & Hodges, 2016). This highlights that the exchange process is much deeper than mere transaction (Matthews & Hodges, 2016).

The final behavior of permanent disposal is selling. Commercialization involves redistributing second-hand clothing to third parties and occurs in the consumer's external cycle (Pera & Ferrulli, 2024). The most popular method is selling to thrift stores (Turunen & Gossen, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2023). To sustain this market, customers are the primary source of supply (Gopalakrishnan & Matthews, 2018). It's common for individuals to bring clothing items to thrift stores to receive discounts on other clothes, vouchers, or even earn extra income (Batista et al., 2021). Selling models, especially at thrift stores, helps reduce the environmental and social impact of the fashion industry by increasing the number of users per item and extending the clothing lifecycle (Hellstrom & Olsson, 2024). Thus, the effective circulation of second-hand items is promoted.

Borrowing, or lending clothes temporarily, is a behavior aimed at temporary disposal. The borrowing process provides individuals with the opportunity to try out new styles without bearing the cost of ownership (Vasques, 2017). Additionally, Laukkanen and Tura (2022) assert that borrowing clothing is highly beneficial as it allows individuals to save money: instead of purchasing the garment, they can use it temporarily, achieving their goal without committing additional resources. This behavior is common within family circles and friendships, where people are more comfortable lending clothes to close friends and relatives (Acquaye et al., 2023).

Lastly, clothing rental constitutes a behavior of disposal and a circular business model that aims to minimize excessive consumption (Hellstrom & Olsson, 2024; Lee et al., 2021). According to Batista et al. (2021), those seeking clothing rental services value access to items rather than ownership, meaning they can use them temporarily. Perceived benefits of using rental services include financial savings, entertainment, ecological considerations, and access to clothing suited for specific occasions (Wu et al., 2023; Laukkanen & Tura, 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Belk, 2014). Thus, this practice is quite common, especially for special celebrations such as parties, weddings, quinceañeras, and even everyday wear, offering various options ranging from renting individual pieces to monthly subscriptions (Laukkanen & Tura, 2022; Batista et al., 2021).

2.2 Consumption Experience

When experience is related to consumption, it can be understood as a specific event for the individual, characterized by emotional and affective relevance based on interaction with stimuli present in products and services used (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). The experience itself can generate satisfaction, pleasure, happiness, and joy for the consumer, being a pleasant psychological state formed by the mutual correspondence between the expectation of the experience and the actual experience (Peterson & Wilson, 1992). Thus, the consumption experience can be seen as a quest for entertainment, imagination, sensory stimulation, and satisfaction, resulting in a charming, extraordinary, and unforgettable experience through the act of consuming (Fontenelle, 2020).

In the studies of Rialti et al. (2018), it is mentioned that the customer typically tries out a product from an unfamiliar brand and, after this experience, shares content related to their experience, which can be either positive or negative. Experience is crucial in determining the customer's perception regarding their consumption process (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). By understanding the customer's needs, it is possible to better direct the journey of the experience they will undergo, making it more positive and valuable (Hellstrom & Olsson, 2024). According to Reis and Lay (2006), an experience is defined by the set of values and information that the individual can dispose of in a given circumstance, evoking nostalgic factors, principles, and motivations. Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2020) follow this same line of thought by proposing that customer value is the experience resulting from the relationship between the object and the subject. In other words,

consumption is not limited to the act of consuming itself but also provides services and, consequently, values (Holbrook, 2006).

However, this value deposit with each experience varies in a relative and interactive way (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2020), as it directly depends on the profile of each consumer who compares objects and analyzes the situation (Zeithaml et al., 2020). According to Holbrook (2006), customer value is divided into two or three types of distinctions, of which in this article we will use only two, each representing a dimension. In the first dimension, we have value that can be categorized as extrinsic value, in which the experience can be used to achieve an end (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2020), versus intrinsic value, in which the experience itself can achieve its own end (Li & Wen, 2019). The other dimension consists of self-oriented values, that is, values that the consumer experiences in the consumption experience, oriented towards the consumer's own good, versus other-oriented value, aimed at achieving the good of others, thus bringing a positive effect to the consumer (Holbrook, 2006).

Figure 2.
Dimensions of Value

	Extrinsic	Intrinsic
Self-oriented	Economic Value	Value Hedonic
Other-oriented	Value Social	Value Altruism

Source: Adaptada de Holbrook (2006).

Based on the suggested dimensions, the main typologies of value are presented (Figure 2). The first is economic value, which occurs when the experience is enriched by the appreciation of excellence and quality (El-Adly, 2019). Social value is related to experiential behavior that leads the consumer to desire products that make a favorable impression on others and, consequently, enhance their esteem (Zeithaml et al., 2020). Hedonic value is specifically focused on individual pleasure and enjoyment, closely tied to the joy and satisfaction derived from a consumption experience (El-Adly, 2019). Finally, altruistic value occurs when an individual's behavior can impact others through ethically desirable practices, as well as charitable impulses (Holbrook, 2006).

2.3 Thrift Store Experience

Considering the previously described values, we examine in the literature the experience at thrift stores. Initially, there are experiences focused on hedonism, which involve sensations and emotions linked to the pleasure and happiness of the consumer (Sherry, 1990). According to Nistor (2022), there are four axes in thrift stores that stimulate hedonic factors: i) firstly, the leisure view, as it is seen as an activity to pass the time (Zaman et al., 2019); ii) secondly, the sensation of experiencing an adventure, as consumers feel like they are hunting for treasure (Felippe & Feil, 2020); iii) thirdly, the opportunity to discover something new, a find, which offers the possibility

of acquisition, generating a sense of pride and satisfaction (Machado et al., 2019); and finally, iv) socialization, since the thrift store is an environment that can be visited with friends and family (Wang et al., 2022). Another factor that complements Nistor's (2022) thoughts is nostalgia, stimulated by contact with items from previous decades, allowing the consumer to relive those times (Zaman et al., 2019).

One of the main reasons for acquiring second-hand items is economic value, as these pieces are more affordable due to being previously used (Valk, 2020). Another relevant factor in the saving process is the bargaining culture present in thrift stores, where negotiating prices and requesting discounts is common practice (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Furthermore, there is a perception that garments produced in the past are more durable, lasting longer (Sihvonen & Turunen, 2016), which avoids additional expenses and favors the economic process. By shopping at thrift stores, consumers save more compared to purchasing clothing at conventional stores, enabling them to allocate those savings to other areas of greater interest in their lives (Kim et al., 2021).

Another type of experience is the fashion experience. Thrift stores focus on vintage pieces, showcasing that old and classic items are in style (Ferraro et al., 2016). They also help revive old trends since fashion is cyclical, allowing old pieces to come back into trend (Kim et al., 2021). In thrift stores, there is also a chance to find items from renowned brands at affordable prices (Turunen & Pöyry, 2019), providing consumers with the experience of attaining the status that these brands can convey (Gopalakrishnan & Matthews, 2018). In thrift stores, by offering items that are no longer produced or are scarce, a sense of specialty, rarity, and uniqueness is attributed to the piece, generating a feeling of originality in the consumer (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Because of these benefits, thrift stores create a space where consumers can create and refine their style, reinforcing their personality (Ferraro et al., 2016).

Additionally, thrift stores embody the value of altruism, as reusing clothing is crucial to prolonging the lifespan of each offered product (Amatuni et al., 2023). The consumption of second-hand clothing has increased significantly, a result of growing awareness of the environmental impacts caused by excessive clothing disposal (Kim et al., 2021). This environmental awareness directs consumers to experience thrift store consumption, promoting adherence to a circular economy (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Kirchherr et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative nature with exploratory objectives, aiming to investigate a phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding of the process leading from the use of second-hand clothing to the consumption experience in thrift stores, based on basic qualitative research.

The research was conducted with consumers residing in a city characterized by a strong culture focused on Fast Fashion values (Dissanayake & Pal, 2023), offering a wide range of clothing options at low cost and with great variety (Dzhengiz et al., 2023; Garcia-Ortega et al., 2023). Specifically, the study was conducted in the city of Caruaru - PE, described as one of the three main cities comprising the Textile Hub of the Pernambuco Agreste region (Queiroz et al., 2023; Martins & Corteletti, 2022). This choice was made because the city presents a challenging environment for the consumption of second-hand clothing (SHC), thus making the consumption of thrift store items disruptive in this region (Feitosa, 2022).

Participants were selected through two methods. Firstly, a visit to a thrift store was conducted where the owner participated in the research and recommended two additional participants. Secondly, participants were also selected through the researchers' social circle.

Selection criteria included being over 18 years old, residing in Caruaru-PE, and being a consumer of thrift stores. As a result, six participants were selected (Table 1).

Table 1.
Research participants

Informant	Sex	Consumption time at a thrift store	Interview format	Average length of interviews
Informant 1	Feminine	3 years	1 st - <i>Online</i>	23 minutes
			2 st- <i>Online</i>	36 minutes
Informant 2	Masculine	12 years	1 st - <i>Online</i>	31 minutes
			2 st - <i>Online</i>	40 minutes
Informant 3	Feminine	20 years	1st- In person	36 minutes
			2st - In person	22 minutes
Informant 4	Feminine	6 years	1 st - <i>Online</i>	50 minutes
			2 st- <i>Online</i>	17 minutes
Informant 5	Feminine	2 years	1 st - <i>Online</i>	27 minutes
			2 st - <i>Online</i>	39 minutes
Informant 6	Feminine	4 years	1 st- <i>Online</i>	42 minutes
			2 st- <i>Online</i>	32 minutes

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews. This type of interview aims to understand participants' perceptions and experiences in depth, seeking to obtain detailed and intense responses that delve into the subjects' shared views (Duarte, 2005). The interviews were semi-structured, utilizing a guide that allowed participants to address other relevant points, thereby offering flexibility and freedom (Gil, 2010).

Interviews were conducted either in person or virtually. Each participant was interviewed twice: the first interview focused on their general experiences with thrift stores, while the second interview explored the journey of second-hand clothing, addressing issues related to these types of garments such as disposal aspects - donation, exchange, sale, loan, and rental. In total, 12 interviews were conducted. Data collection commenced on January 9, 2024, and concluded on June 29, 2024, resulting in 6 hours and 58 minutes of interview time, which were transcribed into 158 pages.

For the analysis of texts from the interviews, Semiotic Analysis was adopted, using Peirce's three categories as a foundation to provide a more meaningful and symbolic understanding of the collected data (Braga, 1999). The first category is known as firstness/imaginary, where the elements constituting the phenomenon are analyzed, exploring hypotheses and ideas (Loeckx & Heynen, 2020). The second category is secondness/real, representing the concrete, tangible, and factual aspects (Thellefsen et al., 2018). Lastly, the third category is thirdness/symbolic, integrating the imaginary and the real, attributing symbolism and meaning to the analyzed elements (Thellefsen et al., 2018).

4. Results and Data Analysis

4.1 Disposal Behaviors and the Pathways of SHC

In general, the research subjects are aware that adopting appropriate disposal behaviors can contribute to sustainable development by extending the life cycle of clothes. Additionally, it brings hedonic meanings related to professional principles, providing a sense of personal fulfillment and well-being by aligning conscientious consumption practices with ethical values and social responsibility. Such implications are consistent with previous studies that highlight the benefits, feelings, values, and meanings associated with adopting sustainable practices in the disposal of SHC (Pera & Ferrulli, 2024; Vieira et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023).

The idea of reinventing and reusing, which is one of the main principles of ecology. Washing jeans, which causes a huge ecological impact, so the fact of trying to reduce the production of new pieces and reusing items that are already in circulation, which don't need that heavy industrial washing, makes you participate in reducing (Informant 2).

Individuals can discard SHC through donation, exchange, borrowing, sale, and rental.

4.1.1 Donation

The disposal behavior through donation can be considered unanimous among the participants. According to the literature, donation is popular within families, where, for example, siblings and cousins inherit clothing items that no longer fit family members but are still in good condition (Hellstrom & Olsson, 2024; Shrivastava, 2021). For instance, Informant 1 stated that they regularly donate to their sisters, while Informant 3 affirmed that the culture of family donation is predominant among siblings and cousins.

Those with large families, you know? We already used to, at least in my time, consume, use second-hand clothes, which goes from cousin to cousin. Actually, from sibling to cousin. No, it didn't fit someone or other anymore, send it to Aunt's house, because there it will fit one of the cousins (Informant 3).

Esse trecho da entrevista demonstra um dos motivos elencados por estudos anteriores para a doação de roupas: o descarte devido às mudanças no tamanho das peças usadas pelo usuário, tornando as peças antigas obsoletas, mas ainda plenamente utilizáveis por outra pessoa (Prathibhani & Lakshika, 2023; Vieira et al., 2023). Assim, a doação para um familiar próximo torna-se gratificante (Acquaye et al., 2023; Shrivastava, 2021). Donation also occurs within friendship circles. Both Informant 1 and Informant 5 highlighted that they donate to close friends, where there is no sense of embarrassment in receiving donated items. Similar to donations among family members, donations among friends can occur naturally and routinely. According to Pera and Ferrulli (2024), both forms of donation are the most commonly practiced among individuals.

When donations are directed towards an audience outside their close circle, Informant 6 stated that family values grounded in charity motivated them to donate clothing to financially constrained individuals. This rationale resembles the findings of Lee et al. (2013), indicating that individuals, encouraged by family members, may adopt the behavior of donating clothing to charitable institutions, philanthropic causes, or directly to vulnerable individuals. It is so common that participants hand over clothes they wish to discard so their mothers can pass them on to those

in need, as in the case of Informant 6: "Or else I give it to my mom, who then passes it on to neighbors who need some clothes" (Informant 6).

In addition to the previously mentioned reason for donating due to clothing size, research subjects also pointed out that they are motivated by the process of organizing closets and wardrobes (Informants 5, 6), as well as the awareness that there is no need to have an excess of clothing, especially when many items are outdated, as indicated by Informant 3: "Ah, if I'm using something very little, if I see here. Oh, this piece has been sitting here? Like a blouse, for example. It's been about 2 months since I wore it. So, for me, it doesn't make sense anymore." (Informant 3) For them, clothing needs to make sense, otherwise they pass it on.

It is observed that the behavior of donation, in the case of the research subjects, is widely accepted and practiced. In large families or among close friends, there is a tradition of donating clothes, motivated by the ongoing usefulness of the items. Other reasons for donation were linked to cleanliness, organization, and the avoidance of excess items that are no longer suitable or no longer fit the owner's lifestyle. Additionally, family values and charity influence the decision to donate to vulnerable individuals, highlighting the social and emotional significance of this sustainable disposal behavior, paving the way for second-hand clothes to find new owners.

4.1.2 Exchange

The act of exchanging second-hand clothes allows consumers to acquire garments without monetary investment and revitalizes underutilized clothing, which in turn goes to individuals or corporate entities participating in the exchange behavior (Lang & Zhang, 2019). Many consumers, if aware that a business facilitates the exchange of second-hand clothes, would engage in this behavior. Informant 6 states, "I asked because I have about 3 to 4 pieces, some perfect ones that I would like to exchange, and none here showed interest."

Overall, the research participants are not avid practitioners of exchange behavior. Informant 2 stated never having exchanged second-hand clothes. Informant 3, while not having engaged in exchanges themselves, is aware of a local enterprise focused on collaborative consumption that facilitates clothing exchanges. Such enterprises, embracing the sharing economy concept, encompass both clothing exchanges and rentals, particularly in the fashion context (Lee et al., 2021), as exemplified by Informant 3.

These findings indicate that the exchange behavior has not yet gained widespread adoption among second-hand clothes in the studied area. Although some participants express interest in engaging in exchanges, there is a lack of visibility for businesses implementing such practices. Only one participant is aware of a company facilitating exchanges, despite never having engaged in this type of transaction. The interest shown by participants suggests an opportunity for the collaborative market to implement systems for exchanging second-hand clothes

4.1.3 Sale

Selling second-hand clothes is one of the disposal behaviors that significantly contributes to the circulation and promotion of the lifecycle of garments that are still of quality and usable by others (Hellstron & Olsson, 2024; Pera & Ferrulli, 2024). For instance, sales can occur from one individual to another or from an individual to a thrift store. None of the participants reported selling second-hand clothes to other individuals. However, they shared different experiences related to selling to thrift stores. Informant 2, while never having sold clothes to thrift stores personally, is aware of the possibility because at one store where they are a customer, they witnessed other consumers bringing items and receiving discounts on other purchases. On the other hand, Informant

4 has sold second-hand clothes to thrift stores and mentioned, "they usually pay me for the clothes [...]. It's usually cash or a discount on other items." These accounts are consistent with previous studies, which discuss discounts as an alternative adopted by thrift stores to attract second-hand clothes from consumers and replenish their stocks with items at attractive prices (Batista et al., 2021).

The narrative from Informant 5 brought up a new perspective on second-hand clothing (SHC) in thrift stores that was not mentioned by the other participants, which is consignment of the items:

Generally, the ones I know are all consignment-based, where I leave that piece there. If it doesn't sell, they return it. Alternatively, they send a list with the price, and that piece stays there for a certain period. If it doesn't sell, it is returned to you, and you only get paid for what was sold (Informant 5).

Informant 5 adds that they have not yet consigned any of their pieces but have contacted thrift stores that engage in this activity to present the pieces they wish to consign and are awaiting feedback to progress with this sustainable disposal behavior.

However, Informant 6, who expressed an intention to dispose of items through selling to thrift stores, admitted to having asked thrift stores if they purchased second-hand clothing from customers, but all responded preferring items from other regions to obtain higher value for each piece. Informant 1 mentions having limited knowledge about selling items to thrift stores, having seen advertisements from companies but not delving deeper into how this market operates. Besides being more common, the behavior of donation instead of selling to third parties shows that the consumer seeks to satisfy their feelings of altruism rather than reciprocity, thus prioritizing emotional value over financial returns for the pieces (Pera & Ferrulli, 2024; Kim & Childs, 2021; Lee et al., 2021).

This analysis reveals that the sale of second-hand clothing (SHC) to thrift stores is a recognized practice among participants, with different experiences and perceptions. While some report positive experiences of selling directly to thrift stores, receiving compensation in cash or discounts on new purchases, others consider consignment as an interesting alternative. However, perceived challenges exist, as some thrift stores prefer to acquire items only from external regions, which can impact the willingness of local consumers and overlook the availability of sustainable products within the community itself. Additionally, selling can be seen as a pursuit of financial return, whereas donation is often linked to charitable motivations.

4.1.4 Loan

The behavior of lending clothing requires mutual familiarity and trust in caring for and respecting the shared item (Acquaye et al., 2023; Shrivastava, 2021). Informant 6 stated that they often lend clothes to a sister, facilitated by their close relationship. This has even become a playful saying, with a catchphrase "there's going to be a loan" when their sister discovers a new piece in the wardrobe. Similarly, for Informant 4, lending clothes is common practice and originated from the behavior of family members who also lend clothes among themselves or with friends. This behavior can be beneficial for reducing purchases for specific events, mixing pieces to create different styles, and fostering a sense of sharing and trust (Laukkanen & Tura, 2022; Shrivastava, 2021).

However, there were cases like that of Informant 2, where a negative borrowing experience caused them to lose confidence in lending their clothes. This risk can have a negative impact on borrowing behavior compared to the benefits described in the literature, such as cost reduction (Vasques, 2017). In this context, Informant 5 stated, “I have a very close family member who always borrowed clothes from me, and often she didn't return them or when she did, they were a bit wrinkled, stained, or had some issue, so I stopped lending them.”

So, some informants point out that the major barriers to lending clothing items are: I) delays in returning them; II) returning damaged items; and III) not returning the items at all. Furthermore, a negative experience can be enough to discourage the adoption of sustainable disposal behavior through lending.

This study highlights that lending clothes among family and friends is common and can be motivated by closeness and a sense of mutual trust. For some participants, lending clothes is a regular practice that strengthens bonds and allows for financial savings on purchases for specific events. However, negative experiences like those described show significant barriers to adopting this behavior broadly. These challenges include concerns about the integrity of the borrowed items and the reliability of their return. These issues can negatively influence people's willingness to participate in clothing lending practices, even in the face of the economic and sustainable benefits described in the literature.

4.1.5 Rent

SHC rental is one of the most popular models of collaborative consumption, satisfying consumers' hedonic and/or utilitarian reasons (Lee et al., 2021). As posited in the literature, one of the reasons for renting clothes is social events such as graduations and weddings (Laukkanen & Tura, 2022; Batista et al., 2021). According to Informant 2, it is these social events that prompt him to rent clothing. Being a professor, he often attends multiple graduations at the end of the year where he considers it important to dress well. Despite already owning some suitable clothes for these occasions, he believes rental shops offer attire options that provide a more appropriate and sophisticated look. Additionally, the cost is more accessible and appealing compared to purchasing items that are worn only occasionally and during a specific time of the year.

The results show that clothing rental is valued for its convenience and economy. The practice provides access to pieces that complement the wardrobe for specific occasions and predetermined periods, offering an appropriate look for the intended use, allowing consumers to experiment with different styles in a more affordable, sustainable way without the cost of purchasing.

4.2 The First Experience in Second-Hand Clothing Shopping

At this point, it becomes evident that all participants who shop at thrift stores have had some prior experience with second-hand clothing. As noted with Informant 1, when asked if their previous use of second-hand clothing influences their purchases at thrift stores:

It has always been very natural for me to wear second-hand clothes. This has been happening since I was younger, even as a child I received donations from other people. So, I've never had a problem wearing used clothes or buying them. Some people look and say, "Oh my God, it's used clothes." But for us, that has never been an issue. Because it's something we're already accustomed to. (Informant 1).

Informant 1 describes the regular exchange of clothes among her sisters as something everyday and normal. She shows that using second-hand clothes is a natural and habitual part of her life. Similarly, Informant 3 shares the same view, stating, "I don't mind, to me it's so normal." On the other hand, Informant 5 reports that her perception of second-hand clothes was shaped during adolescence, influenced by fashion presented in magazines by influencers promoting the use of circular fashion. This example in her youth helped her to have no prejudices and to see the use of second-hand clothes as something natural and commonplace. These elements substantiate Zamam's (2019) argument that influencers promoting the use of second-hand clothing can have a significant impact on this market.

Comparing these experiences with Machado's study (2019), a contradiction is apparent because the author suggests that the initial reason people shop at thrift stores is a nostalgic feeling, recalling childhood memories of passing clothes between siblings and relatives. However, all participants in the study mentioned experiencing collaborative consumption (SHC) during childhood but do not view it nostalgically as something that needs to be relived. For them, it remains a common practice that they have continued into adulthood. A clear example is Informant 4, who recalls frequently visiting her grandmother's house as a child, where she would meet her cousins and they would often exchange clothes, especially if someone forgot something. She mentions that she still does this today and adds that it was her mother who taught her, saying: "Both lending and borrowing {...} I think it was my mother who started this" (Informant 4).

Participants still engage in borrowing and swapping, although less frequently than in childhood, as these occur in specific and significant situations often related to standards and specific requirements of the circumstances in which they will participate. These practices demonstrate how the use of second-hand clothing becomes integrated into the participants' lifestyles, influenced by past experiences and the cultural and social acceptance of this practice that persists into their adult lives.

However, when interviewing participants about their first experience purchasing SHC, all of them indicated having prior contact with this type of clothing through various means mentioned earlier. This suggests that their previous exposure to SHC made them comfortable with the situation and did not cause any discomfort. However, it was also evident that other factors influenced their decision to try the thrift shopping process, as in the case of Informant 1, who bought her first second-hand piece at a church bazaar she attends. Describing her experience, she mentions that "it was more for the purpose of a social action, and therefore, the items were very low-priced at 2, 3, and 5 reais [...] I really bought them just to help out with the cause" (Informant 1). In this context, Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2020) note that the consumer experience is influenced by the value created in the relationship between the individual and the object, as exemplified by the circumstances experienced by Informant 1, demonstrating an altruistic value oriented towards others by realizing that their consumption behavior can positively impact others (Holbrook, 2006). This intrinsic experience generates feelings of hedonism and satisfaction from contributing to helping someone (Wu et al., 2023; Calíope et al., 2018), and it also involves spiritual aspects (Sabah & Oflazoğlu, 2024).

Informant 3 had a similar experience during a religious festival, where he describes a street filled with stalls, and an elderly man selling clothes from a wheelbarrow caught his attention. What stood out to Informant 3 was not a sense of altruism, but rather a strong interest, curiosity, and a need to investigate. At the age of 14, he vividly remembers the experience even twenty years later: "I remember it was like 5 reais, it was a beautiful knitted coat, white with some classic black stripes. I thought it was incredible, and even more wonderful because it was such a find" (Informant 3).

Thus, he experienced the hedonistic value in his first purchase, feeling like he was on a treasure hunt (Felippe & Feil, 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022), and felt satisfaction and pride in finding such a special piece (Machado et al., 2019). Participant 4 also recounts that the first second-hand piece she used was bought by her aunt at a church bazaar when she was a child.

These three narratives, although not referring to thrift stores but to bazaars, are significant experiences in the process of circular fashion consumption, as they represented the first time these individuals recognized the monetary value of Second-Hand Clothing (SHC) and realized it was feasible to acquire them, regardless of their reasons for doing so. It is important to emphasize that social causes play a significant role in introducing SHC consumption, as three elements influencing their acquisition process were identified: I) being already part of that institution, as in the example of Churches; II) social pressure, where if everyone is helping, there is a felt need to collaborate as well; III) empathy towards the promoted cause; IV) curiosity and interest in the event promoted.

However, one of the values frequently mentioned by almost all participants in their first thrift store experiences was economic value, which extends beyond monetary concerns to the consumer's ability to achieve their own goals (Holbrook, 2006). For instance, Informant 5 sought quality and durability in her first purchase, describing it as follows: "The piece was unique, from abroad, and I liked the price and quality... an exclusive Colcci print... beautiful, with a more hippie style, you know" (Informant 5). Because it's more economical to shop at thrift stores than conventional stores, consumers can enhance their quality, brand choices, and personal style improvements (Prathibhani & Lakshika, 2023; Ribeiro, 2021; Valk, 2020; Vieira et al., 2023). In the case of Informant 2, economic value was also the focus during his first thrift store visit. He decided to go because he was attending a camp where there would be a paint war event, necessitating cheap and simple clothing that he wouldn't mind getting dirty. A friend suggested buying clothes at the thrift store for the camp, allowing him to achieve his goal at a low cost.

Thus, in the narratives of their first experience buying Second-Hand Clothing (SHC), it is evident that these occurred under various contexts and circumstances that influenced the act of purchase. It was observed that there was always a trigger that led participants to acquire SHC, for which they paid a monetary value. Some of these triggers included humanitarian causes, social circle pressure, economic factors, influence from social media, and curiosity about the subject. All these elements guided the informants to buy SHC, despite having previously used this type of clothing obtained from others; this prior experience was crucial in mitigating any discomfort in paying for used clothes.

It is important to highlight that, although the informants had already used clothes previously obtained from others, the act of purchasing and realizing that thrift store items have a monetary and utilitarian value initiated a new phase that expanded consumers' perception of circular fashion consumption. At the moment of their first purchase, each informant highlighted values that enriched their experience positively. Three main values were perceived: altruism, hedonism, and economic value. Depending on the participant, one value was lived more intensely, sparking a desire to repeat the experience.

4.3 Thrift Store Shopping Experience

According to the data collected through the conducted interviews, characteristics of the values attributed to the consumption experience—economic, hedonic, social, and altruistic—were identified, following Holbrook's (2006) proposal. These values, when experienced while shopping at thrift stores, prompt consumers to desire to relive the experience, delving deeper into second-hand consumption and experiencing and discovering new values. According to their frequency,

these values serve as means of positive confirmation to increasingly stimulate thrift store shopping. However, as described by Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2020), the values seen from Holbrook's theory are very broad, making it difficult to identify the elements that compose it. This part of the analysis aims to present subcategories of values that complement Holbrook's (2006) studies by applying the perspective of thrift store shopping experience.

One of the initial values perceived when experiencing thrift store shopping is economic value, as all participants pointed out this type of value. Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2020) describe this type of value as self-oriented and extrinsic, as it enhances consumers' purchasing power, enabling them to achieve their goals (Holbrook, 2006). Within this economic value perspective, sub-values can be observed, such as the quality of the item (Prathibhani & Lakshika, 2023; Vieira et al., 2023), thereby building reliability value for the customer. Additionally, the fact that some items are from recognized brands brings perspectives of durability (Karpova et al., 2021), demonstrating the value of longevity in consuming these pieces. Above all, cultivating the positive experience of good value for money at the time of purchase carries a sense of fairness, as mentioned by Informant 3:

And for the opportunity to thus acquire quality pieces from more expensive brands, which have better fabric, better tailoring, so you can acquire them at the thrift store for a much lower price than the market, so I think it's more or less like that (Informant 3).

The fact of finding clothes from exclusive brands, with quality and that match your personality (Karpova et al., 2021; Vieira et al., 2023; Zeithaml et al., 2020), makes informants feel like they have discovered a kind of treasure, as many say, "a gem." When this happens, certain feelings like satisfaction and pride for their accomplishments are released (Machado et al., 2019). In this situation, consumers feel the value of self-fulfillment, for having achieved such a feat. This value falls within the realm of hedonic value, being self-oriented and intrinsic, as it is an experience focused on the consumer themselves and achieving satisfaction in meeting all expected expectations (Holbrook, 2006; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2020). Before finding these "gems," however, consumers go through a journey of searching and hunting, a kind of treasure hunt that creates anticipation, generating the element of surprise (Felippe & Feil, 2020; Zaman et al., 2019), which enhances the value of enjoyment, as seen in the words of Informant 2:

Since childhood, being a sticker collector, that surprise of opening it up, seeing what's inside, is way cooler. It's bizarrely better. When you have the slightest idea that you might find something, you could end up finding nothing [...] or, you might stumble upon an incredible piece for 50 reais, 25 reais, 10 reais. It's the experience of surprise that brings you so much more joy in making that purchase (Informant 2).

Another aspect highlighted in hedonism by informants 5, 6, 3, and 2 is their comfort in the environment of second-hand clothing shopping (El-Adly, 2019). Thus, thrift stores are considered by them as a welcoming environment, where from the first experiences, these individuals were able to establish a sense of value and belonging with those who are part of this community, as Informant 2 expresses: "Is the experience that you're buying, the service, the ambiance. Everything changes, everything changes, everything changes. So, the fact that you stay and belong to the community, let's call it that, of thrift store shoppers, brings an instant connection" (Informant 2). Therefore, both hedonic and economic values are perceived from the very beginning.

The fact that the items are of good quality and branded not only enhances economic and hedonic values but also affects social value. This aspect is focused on conveying a positive image to others and, consequently, enhancing self-esteem (Zeithaml et al., 2020). Thus, by shopping at thrift stores, given their affordability, these consumers can elevate their status by wearing branded clothing (Turunen & Pöyry, 2019; Gopalakrishnan & Matthews, 2018; Kim et al., 2021), which is important to some of the informants. This is why Informant 3 points out: "Because it's usually a brand that has added value, right? Let's put it that way." Such brands symbolize recognition and prestige.

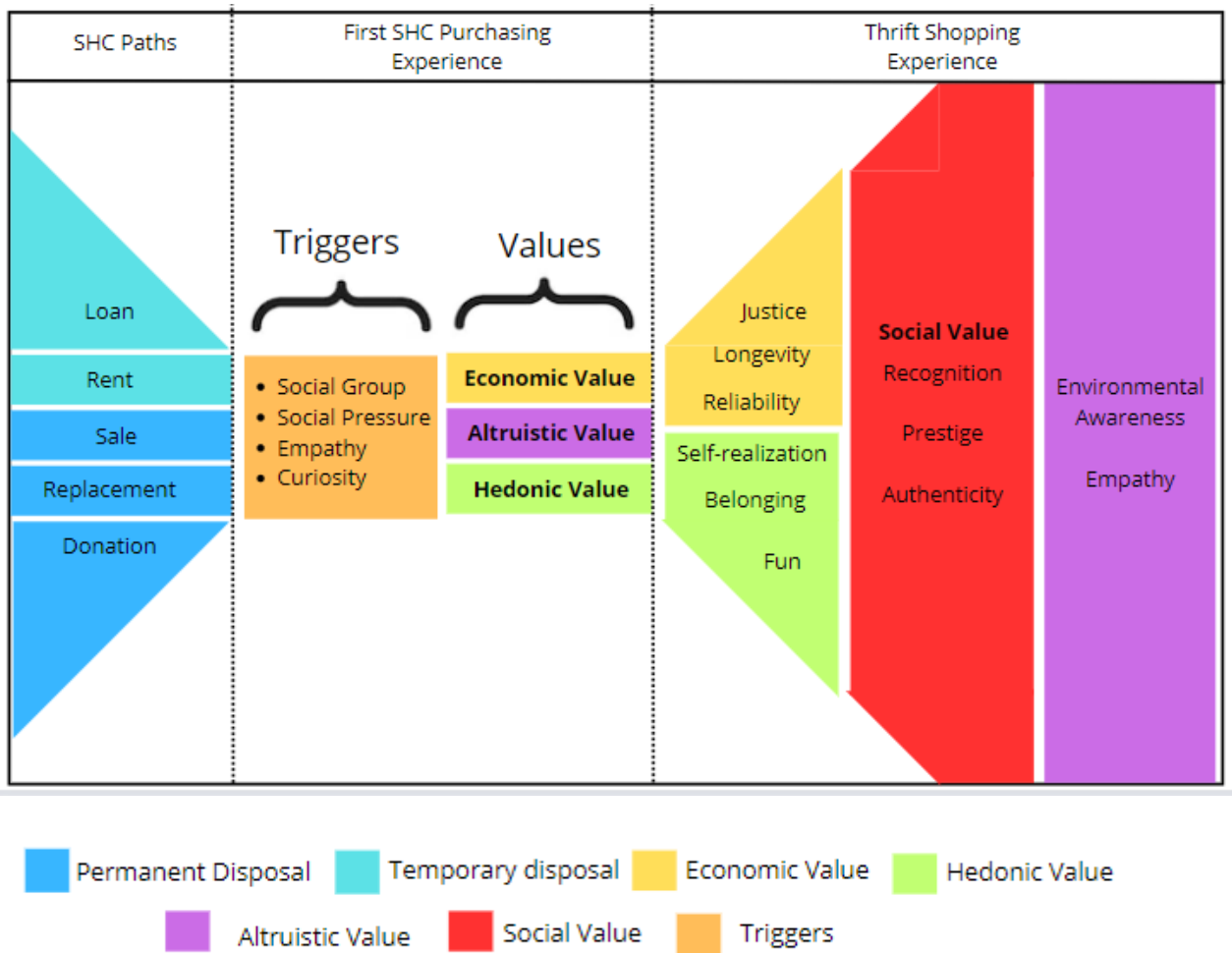
Also, when shopping at thrift stores, consumers can refine their style (Ribeiro, 2021; Valk, 2020), allowing them to clearly convey their personality and the image they wish to project to their social group (Ferraro et al., 2016). Enabled by the increased access to clothing due to thrift store prices, Informant 6 clearly illustrates this point: "I only think about what it can provide me in terms of comfort and the image I want to convey to others, based on who I am." When this type of experience occurs, it provides the consumer with the value of authenticity, allowing them to showcase their personality. However, it's important to note that the social value doesn't necessarily emerge during the consumer's first experience of thrift store shopping; it may develop after a certain frequency of visits, when they start finding unique items and putting together outfits that align more cohesively with their personality. As they feel comfortable and confident in expressing themselves through their thrifted clothing, showcasing it to their social circle and receiving a certain level of approval, the social value is perceived and strengthened.

Finally, we have the value of altruism. It's interesting to note that altruism typically leads a person to purchase their first second-hand item, often promoted through charity events that involve humanitarian causes. However, when we shift to direct consumption at thrift stores, this value tends to diminish in the initial moments and purchases, as other values such as economic, hedonic, and social take precedence. Nevertheless, it resurfaces when the consumer begins to develop environmental consciousness, realizing that their purchases of used clothing can positively impact the environment, as highlighted by Informant 5:

So I started leaning more towards buying from thrift stores because I saw that they were good quality pieces. [...] And they always had a more favorable price for me initially, it wasn't initially about contributing to the environment, it was more about buying unique pieces from that perspective [...]. But what has maybe changed a bit is knowing the importance for environmental issues (Informant 5)

Recognizing, therefore, that environmental concerns are not initially prominent in the beginning of thrift store shopping experiences, gaining significance over time through consistent purchasing, as Machado (2019) reflects in their studies. By shopping at thrift stores, individuals undergo a transformation of self-awareness by shifting their values, becoming more empathetic towards the environment they live in, and starting to consider it when making consumption decisions, thereby making more conscious choices during purchases (Amatuni et al., 2023; Kirchherr et al., 2017). Thus, based on the presented findings, we have developed a theoretical model (Figure 3).

Figure 3.
Theoretical Model



In the initial phase, we observe the various paths taken by second-hand consumers (SHC). These paths include temporary disposal, where clothes are temporarily set aside, borrowing or renting, and permanent disposal, where once items are passed on, the connection with the clothing is permanently severed. The informants in the study had already engaged in both discarding and acquiring second-hand items through these pathways, experiences that occurred both in their childhood and adult lives. Therefore, this prior exposure is an important factor in generating familiarity when they are faced with situations that lead them to purchase second-hand clothing.

The initial purchase of second-hand clothing is crucial because it marks the individual's recognition of the monetary value and utility of these clothes. It also represents the first step towards engaging in circular fashion. It's common for many of these initial experiences to be facilitated by charitable and philanthropic institutions, making it easier to reach a target audience because individuals may already have some connection with these institutions, creating triggers that lead to making such purchases. Several triggers identified are part of a social group, such as religious institutions organizing charity bazaars to raise funds for noble causes. Being part of such institutions creates social pressure to contribute to the cause. Additionally, feelings of empathy

towards the social movement can arise, along with curiosity to understand what is being promoted and how it is being implemented.

In this initial experience of purchasing used clothing, both in thrift stores and charity bazaars, three types of values were identified: hedonism, altruism, and economic value. These experienced values are important in fostering the desire to continue purchasing used clothing and exploring other buying avenues, increasingly delving into the world of thrift stores and supporting sustainable fashion.

During the first purchases at thrift stores, two visually perceptible values were noted: economic value, with its subcategories of fairness, longevity, and reliability, and hedonism, encompassing values of self-fulfillment, enjoyment, and belonging, perceived immediately at the time of purchase. The social value emerges shortly after, as the consumer refines their style and receives approval from their social circle. This social value includes subcategories such as authenticity, recognition, and prestige. Finally, individuals undergo a transformation and develop environmental awareness by realizing that thrift store shopping contributes to circular fashion, thereby generating the value of empathy, which falls within the realm of altruism values.

5. Conclusions and Contributions

This study investigated how prior use of second-hand clothing contributes to the consumption experience in thrift stores, drawing theoretical support from previous studies by Jacob et al. (1977), Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), Holbrook (2006), and Machado (2019).

The current research offers theoretical contributions by identifying subcategories for the values proposed by Holbrook (2006), specifically within the context of thrift store consumption in Caruaru - PE. The introduction of subcategories such as reliability, longevity, sense of fairness, self-fulfillment, enjoyment, belonging, recognition, prestige, authenticity, and environmental empathy contributes to a more detailed understanding of Holbrook's (2006) theory, making it more practical and specific for the context of second-hand clothing (SHC) consumption. By exploring behaviors of permanent and temporary disposal based on Jacoby et al.'s (1977) framework, the paths of second-hand clothing were determined. These pathways of disposal and acquisition demonstrate different forms of interaction with second-hand clothing, which can influence perceived familiarity and the value attributed to these pieces, triggering consumers to acquire SHC. This set of values and their subcategories, along with behaviors of permanent and temporary disposal and triggers, contributed to the construction of a theoretical model that systematically presents the consumer experience cycle in thrift stores.

The trajectory is compelling as it demonstrates how consumers initially engage with second-hand clothing and how this practice can evolve into something more conscientious and engaged with sustainability. This process not only influences individual purchasing behavior but also contributes to shaping a more responsible and circular consumption culture. Furthermore, identifying the common use of second-hand clothing among family and friends, stemming from the various paths taken by SHC, can be used to reassure potential consumers that wearing used clothing is not outside their reality. Trigger points, often influenced by factors external to the thrift store market, are crucial for the initial purchase of SHC. Thrift stores can consider forming partnerships with charities and philanthropic institutions, collaborating with social media influencers, and even incentivizing their existing clientele to bring in new customers through discounts or referral programs. Moreover, it was noted how values emerge throughout the second-hand consumption experience, allowing for anticipation and intensification of certain values such as social value, which can be demonstrated through style enhancement and diverse fashion

propositions. Reinforcing altruistic values regarding environmental concerns and highlighting how the consumption of second-hand clothing can positively impact the environment are also significant strategies. By emphasizing these aspects, thrift stores can appeal to consumers who are increasingly conscious of their environmental footprint. In summary, leveraging these insights can empower thrift stores to not only attract but also retain a diverse clientele by fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the values associated with second-hand clothing consumption.

While we have identified both theoretical and practical contributions, this study presents limitations that indicate the need for future research to deepen our findings. For example, we only considered the positive factors throughout the interaction process with SHC, from the paths taken by used clothes to the moment of the first SHC purchase experience in thrift stores. These three moments are crucial in influencing circular fashion trends; however, it is also necessary to analyze negative factors, as they can influence decisions not to engage with SHC.

Furthermore, this research focused predominantly on thrift stores, suggesting a more in-depth analysis of how charity bazaars contribute to people's initial experiences with purchasing second-hand items. This exploration could delve into operational details and the variables involved. It would also be relevant to investigate the types of social causes supported by these bazaars, enabling comparisons between them. Additionally, a more detailed study could address triggers influencing second-hand purchases. Furthermore, conducting a quantitative research incorporating the subvalues identified in this study would validate perceptions and assess their impact on purchase decisions, while also examining whether these subvalues intensify over the consumption period.

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