

The Cultural Shift in Pre-owned Fashion as Sustainable Consumerism in Vietnam

Authors : Lam Hong Lan

Abstract : The textile industry is said to be the second-largest polluter, responsible for 92 million tonnes of waste annually. There is an urgent need to practice the circular economy to increase the use and reuse around the world. By its nature, the pre-owned fashion business is considered part of the circular economy as it helps to eliminate waste and circulate products. Second-hand clothes and accessories used to be associated with a 'cheap image' that carried 'old energy' in Vietnam. This perception has been shifted, especially amongst the younger generation. Vietnamese consumer is spending more on products and services that increase self-esteem. The same consumer is moving away from a collectivist social identity towards a 'me, not we' outlook as they look for a way to express their individual identity. And pre-owned fashion is one of their solutions as it values money, can create a unique personal style for the wearer and links with sustainability. The design of this study is based on the second-hand shopping motivation theory. A semi-structured online survey with 100 consumers from one pre-owned clothing community and one pre-owned e-commerce site in Vietnam. The findings show that in contrast with Vietnamese older consumers (55+yo) who, in the previous study, generally associated pre-owned fashion with 'low-cost', 'cheap image' that carried 'old energy', young customers (20-30 yo) were actively promoted their pre-owned fashion items to the public via outlet's social platforms and their social media. This cultural shift comes from the impact of global and local discourse around sustainable fashion and the growth of digital platforms in the pre-owned fashion business in the last five years, which has generally supported wider interest in pre-owned fashion in Vietnam. It can be summarised in three areas: (1) global and local celebrity influencers. A number of celebrities have been photographed wearing vintage items in music videos, photoshoots or at red carpet events. (2) E-commerce and intermediaries. International e-commerce sites - e.g., Vinted, TheRealReal - and/or local apps - e.g., Re.Loved - can influence attitudes and behaviors towards pre-owned consumption. (3) Eco-awareness. The increased online coverage of climate change and environmental pollution has encouraged customers to adopt a more eco-friendly approach to their wardrobes. While sustainable biomaterials and designs are still navigating their way into sustainability, sustainable consumerism via pre-owned fashion seems to be an immediate solution to lengthen the clothes lifecycle. This study has found that young consumers are primarily seeking value for money and/or a unique personal style from pre-owned/vintage fashion while using these purchases to promote their own "eco-awareness" via their social media networks. This is a good indication for fashion designers to keep in mind in their design process and for fashion enterprises in their business model's choice to not overproduce fashion items.

Keywords : cultural shift, pre-owned fashion, sustainable consumption, sustainable fashion.

Conference Title : ICFSCI 2024 : International Conference on Fashion Sociology, Culture and Identity

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : February 19-20, 2024