

How Sustainability Awareness Shapes Consumer Purchase Intentions through Attitudes and Perceived Value in the Thrift Market in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The fashion industry continues to grow rapidly but creates substantial environmental impacts. Thrift fashion, or purchasing secondhand clothing, has emerged as a sustainable alternative that supports the circular economy. This study examines the relationship between sustainability awareness, attitudes toward thrift products, perceived value, and purchase intentions in Indonesia's fashion reuse context. A conceptual literature review approach is used by synthesizing findings from prior studies on sustainable fashion and consumer behavior. The conceptual model is built based on Theory of Planned Behavior and Value Attitude Behavior Framework. The synthesis results show that sustainability awareness does not directly influence purchase intention, but rather through two main mediating pathways: (1) positive attitude toward thrift products as an affective pathway, and (2) perceived value towards the functional, emotional, and social benefits of the product as a cognitive pathway. These two mediators explain how environmental awareness shapes behavioral tendencies without the need to involve external variables such as social norms. Theoretically, this study reinforces our understanding of sustainable consumer behavior. In practical terms, the results provide guidance for thrift fashion MSMEs to emphasize sustainability, quality, and ethical image in their marketing strategies in order to encourage more environmentally friendly consumption behavior.

Keywords: attitude, perceived value, purchase intention, sustainability awareness, thrift fashion,

INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is a major economic sector but also a source of serious environmental challenges. Mass production, excessive consumption, and textile waste have raised global concern about sustainability, especially in fashion (Li et al., 2024). In the last decade, consumer behavior has shifted toward more responsible consumption, where purchasing decisions consider environmental impact. One expression of this shift is the rising interest in thrift fashion or secondhand/preloved clothing as part of a circular economy.

In recent years, the recommerce or resale market has grown rapidly worldwide. Reports indicate that the second-hand market has doubled in size and is projected to keep expanding, with a CAGR far exceeding conventional fashion retail. This trend is driven mainly by younger generations (Gen-Z and millennials) and the growth of online platforms and social commerce that ease access to preloved items (Threadup Resale Report 2023, 2023)(Benissan, 2023).

In the Asia-Pacific region, the resale apparel is among the fastest-growing markets, making it a strategic target for recommerce platforms and local thrift businesses. In Indonesia, the thrift phenomenon is increasingly prominent through active seller-buyer communities on social media and marketplaces. Regulatory issues also emerge, particularly regarding the flow of imported used clothing cases of confiscation reported by national media highlight economic and regulatory considerations when framing thrift as a sustainability solution.

The concept of thrift fashion, or recommerce, is driven not only by economic motives, but also by moral and social values such as the desire to reduce waste and promote recycling (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). Among the younger generations, the thrift is increasingly viewed as an identity reflecting sustainability and ethical values (Wu & Lee, 2025). Environmental awareness therefore becomes an important psychological factor influencing intentions to purchase secondhand fashion.

However, rising awareness does not always translate into consistent behavior. Many individuals understand environmental issues yet do not consistently practice sustainable purchasing. This intention-behavior gap represents the mismatch between intentions and actual actions (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). Addressing this gap requires a broader psychological view that considers internal mediators such as attitudes and perceived value.

Prior studies show that attitudes toward sustainable products mediate the relationship between awareness and purchase intention. Consumers with positive attitudes toward thrift products tend to have stronger intentions, especially when they recognize environmental benefits (Schiaroli et al., 2024). Purchase intention also depends on how consumers evaluate functional, emotional, and social value (Jin et al., 2024). In this context, perceived value becomes a cognitive bridge that transforms awareness into action.

In Indonesia, the thrift fashion trend is increasingly visible, especially among younger consumers. A GoodStats survey shows that 49.4% of young Indonesians have purchased secondhand clothing, while 34.5% have not tried it and 16.1% are not interested (Sintiani et al., 2024). These figures indicate strong market potential among millennials and Gen Z, who begin to see secondhand shopping as part of a sustainable lifestyle.

Research by Julia et al. supports this trend, showing that environmental awareness, need for uniqueness, and brand awareness positively influence Generation Z's intention to buy secondhand clothing through social media (Julia et al., 2024). Another study by Wardana & Kurniawan identifies self-efficacy, socio-cultural factors, and hedonistic motivation as additional drivers of second-hand and local fashion purchase intentions. (Wardana & Kurniawan, 2024).

Both studies confirm that thrift fashion consumption in Indonesia is no longer driven solely by economic reasons, but also by social values, identity, and environmental responsibility. Thus, thrift fashion has the potential to become an important part of the national circular economy strategy as well as a means of self-expression for the younger generation.

Local research such as *The Phenomenon of Thrifting as a Fashion Lifestyle* by Indri Haryanti and Asep Miftahul Falah shows that students at Muhammadiyah University Bandung adopt thrifting to express themselves, create unique styles, and manage financial limits (Haryanti & Falah, 2023). Students cited affordability, item uniqueness,

and peer influence as key reasons, while environmental awareness and social media also encouraged thrift as a lifestyle (Haryanti & Falah, 2023).

Most thrift markets in Indonesia remain semi-informal, with MSMEs facing issues such as limited capital, supplier access, product quality perceptions, and regulations on used-goods trade. The import of used clothing is also sensitive due to regulatory and textile waste concerns. A notable study, *Thrift Shopping and Indonesian Urban Youth Fashion*, indicates that much secondhand clothing in major cities comes from imports and that thrift businesses are experiencing “gentrification” from basic needs to lifestyle markets (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Understanding psychological and social factors is therefore crucial in a market not yet fully formalized.

This study aims to fill gaps in Indonesian literature by examining how sustainability awareness, attitudes toward thrift products, and purchase intentions interact. The framework refers to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control shape intentions. This study focuses on two mediation paths from sustainability awareness to purchase intention, namely attitude (affective) and perceived value (cognitive). This approach helps explain why sustainability awareness does not always produce stronger purchase intentions and how marketing or educational strategies can reinforce this relationship.

Indonesia has a particular urgency in examining sustainability awareness, attitudes, and purchase intention toward thrift products. Although secondhand clothing trade is expanding within the circular economy trend, illegal imports remain widespread and affect the local textile sector. Data from the Directorate General of Customs and Excise show that in 2024 more than 700 bales of imported used clothing worth around Rp 1.5 billion were confiscated at Tanjung Priok Port, indicating weak supervision (Tempo, 2025). Textile industry players also argue that imported thrift goods can erode local product markets and hinder domestic fashion MSME growth (Rachmat, 2023).

This phenomenon indicates that understanding thrift consumer behavior is essential both academically and practically for developing policies that balance sustainability and economic protection. Insights into how consumers evaluate thrift products through sustainability awareness and perceived value can help government and businesses design education efforts, improve regulation, and promote responsible local consumption. Practically, these findings guide thrift MSMEs in communicating moral and functional value, while supporting policymakers in formulating regulations that strengthen circular economic growth in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability Awareness

Sustainability awareness refers to consumers’ knowledge, attention, and concern about the environmental and social impacts of consumption (Li et al., 2024). Evidence shows that higher environmental awareness leads consumers to prioritize environmental aspects when evaluating fashion products, increasing perceived value and purchase intention (Li et al., 2024; Wu & Lee, 2025) (Sinaga et al., 2024). However, this relationship is not automatic; factors such as product knowledge, availability of eco-friendly options, and skepticism about greenwashing can weaken the effect of awareness (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021).

In Indonesia, emerging studies show similar patterns. A comparative study on upcycled fashion and eco-friendly handicrafts found that perceived value and fashion motivation strengthen the link between environmental awareness and purchase intention for both

personal use and gifting (Saepudin et al., 2023). Other research on sustainable apparel indicates that social norms and price orientation influence the attitude–behavior gap in Indonesia (Zahroh, 2023). Local findings therefore confirm the relevance of environmental awareness while highlighting the moderating effects of economic and social factors.

Attitudes toward Thrift Fashion Products

Attitude is a cognitive-affective evaluation that reflects positive or negative tendencies toward an object and is an important determinant in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In sustainable fashion, attitudes toward thrift products arise from knowledge about environmental impact, personal ethical values, and affective experiences such as pride in wearing unique items. Global studies show that more positive attitudes toward sustainable fashion correlate with stronger purchase intentions (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021; Schiaroli et al., 2024).

Yet several studies note practical barriers: concerns about cleanliness, quality, aesthetics, social stigma, and limited product variation can prevent attitudes from becoming actual purchases. Research on recycled apparel highlights that perceived value quality, emotional, and social helps convert attitudes into purchase intentions (Jin et al., 2024). In Indonesia, studies on students and Gen Z reveal that although attitudes toward thrift are generally positive, worries about quality and social image remain, indicating the need for communication and branding strategies to strengthen these perceptions (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Saepudin et al., 2023).

Perceived Value

Perceived value is defined as consumers' overall assessment of the benefits of a product compared to the perceived costs or risks (Zeithaml, 1988). The research of Liu et al. (2023) emphasizes that perceived value is a cognitive mediator that transforms environmental awareness into actual purchase intent. When consumers perceive thrift products as having high perceived value, they are more likely to purchase them despite facing stigma or hygiene risks. Sinaga et al. ((Brahmana & Sinaga, 2025)) further demonstrate that perceived risk can weaken purchase intention even among consumers with high environmental awareness. This supports the argument that concerns related to product quality or hygiene must be addressed through appropriate communication strategies in the thrift fashion sector. The context of sustainable products, perceived value includes the dimensions of:

1. Functional: quality, durability, practicality;
2. Emotional: moral satisfaction and a sense of contributing to the environment;
3. Social: recognition from a community that supports ethical consumption (Jin et al., 2024; Saepudin et al., 2023).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as a person's subjective tendency to buy a product in the future; according to TPB, intention is influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In sustainable fashion literature, purchase intent is influenced by awareness, attitude, perceived value, and social influence (Jin et al., 2024; Rausch & Kopplin, 2021). However, a number of studies report a significant intention–behavior gap: even when positive intentions exist, practical barriers (price, availability, safety/hygiene concerns) and skepticism about sustainability claims reduce the probability of actual purchase (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021).

Relevant empirical research in Indonesia includes, for example, the study by Saepudin et al. (2023) shows that perceived value and fashion motivation significantly influence the intention to purchase upcycled/handcrafted products, confirming that aesthetic elements and symbolic value are key in the local market. Another study on sustainable apparel in Indonesia also found that social norms and price orientation play a role in predicting purchase intention, while detailing that the attitude-to-behavior gap remains an issue (Zahroh, 2023).

Mediation: The Role of Attitude and Perceived Value

Current literature shows that the relationship between sustainability awareness, attitude, and purchase intention is not linear but shaped by psychological and cognitive mediators, especially attitude toward sustainable products and perceived value. Attitude functions as an affective mediator reflecting emotional and moral evaluations of sustainable consumption. Consumers with higher sustainability awareness tend to develop positive attitudes toward thrift products because they see them as contributing to waste reduction and responsible consumption (Li et al., 2024; Wu & Lee, 2025). A positive attitude is therefore a key precursor to purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991; Schiaroli et al., 2024).

Perceived value represents consumers' cognitive assessment of product benefits relative to costs or risks. It includes functional qualities, emotional satisfaction, and social recognition linked to sustainable lifestyles (Jin et al., 2024; Saepudin et al., 2023).

Studies show that perceived value helps transform positive attitudes into purchase intentions, motivating consumers even when hygiene risks or negative secondhand perceptions exist (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021) (Li et al., 2024).

Thus, sustainability awareness affects purchase intention through two complementary mediation paths: an affective pathway via attitudes toward thrift products and a cognitive pathway via perceived value. Social norms and risk perception remain contextual influences but are not structural elements of the core model.

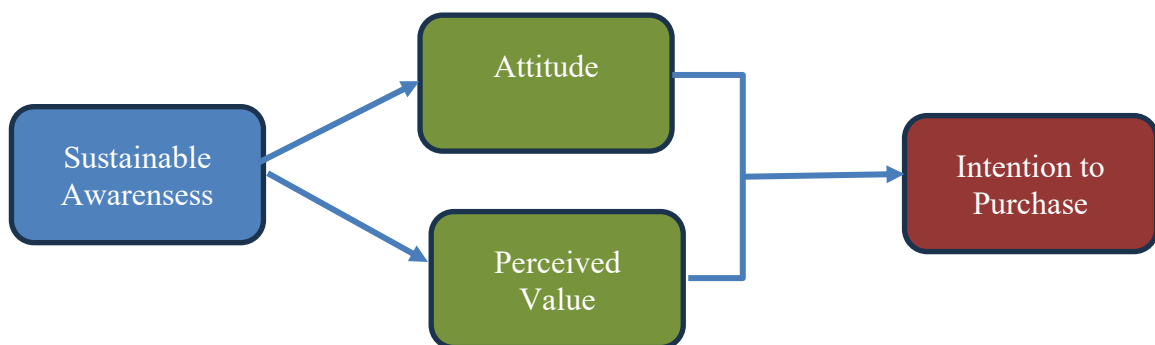


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature, this study proposes a conceptual model explaining how sustainability awareness influences attitudes toward thrift products, perceived value, and purchase intention. The framework draws on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where attitudes and perceived behavioral control shape intention. In this study, attitudes toward thrift products and perceived value function as mediators linking sustainability awareness to purchase intention.

The model also aligns with the Value–Attitude–Behavior (VAB) Framework (Homer & Kahle, 1988), which states that personal values such as sustainability awareness shape affective and cognitive evaluations that drive behavioral intention.

The conceptual model includes two pathways:

1. Sustainability Awareness → Attitude towards Thrift Products → Purchase Intention
2. Sustainability Awareness → Perceived Value → Purchase Intention

These pathways represent affective and cognitive mechanisms through which sustainability awareness encourages intention to purchase thrift fashion products.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a conceptual approach and secondary literature analysis because the goal is to build a theoretical framework rather than test empirical causality. The conceptual method enables integration of findings from diverse contexts and methodologies to produce a comprehensive synthesis (Gould et al., 2008). This approach is suitable given time limitations, the absence of primary data, and the availability of extensive international literature.

Data sources include international journal articles, official reports, and academic publications on consumer behavior, sustainable fashion, and thrift/recommerce. Inclusion criteria covered: 1) scientific articles with active DOIs published 2018–2025; 2) topics on fashion consumers and sustainable or secondhand purchase intention; 3) empirical or conceptual studies using sustainability awareness, attitude, and purchase intention; and 4) publications in reputable journals such as Journal of Cleaner Production, Sustainability (MDPI), Fashion and Textiles, Emerald Insight, or Scientific Reports.

Literature selection followed three stages: identification, screening, and eligibility. A total of 25 articles were retained, with 20 core articles used to support the theoretical framework. Conceptual validity was ensured by including only reputable, DOI-active literature and cross-checking citations. Reliability was maintained through transparent documentation of keywords, databases, and selection criteria to allow replication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Relationship Between Sustainability Awareness and Attitudes Towards Thrift Fashion Products

Literature shows that sustainability awareness positively influences attitudes toward environmentally friendly fashion, including thrift clothing. Li, Choe, and Gu (2024) found that sustainability perceptions encourage more positive attitudes toward low-impact fashion products. Wu and Lee show that sustainable consumption values can mediate the effect of environmental awareness on attitudes toward fashion reuse, indicating the relationship is not fully direct (Wu & Lee, 2025). However, Rausch and Kopplin emphasize that high awareness does not always lead to positive attitudes when consumers question the quality or cleanliness of thrift items. (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021).

Overall, the awareness–attitude link is conditional and shaped by product knowledge, affective experiences, and social group influence. Similar patterns appear in developing countries. Cosma notes that consumers in middle-income countries may have high awareness but do not internalize positive attitudes due to affordability issues. (Cosma, 2024).

In Indonesia, surveys show that many consumers recognize “sustainable fashion,” yet relatively few actively purchase secondhand or eco-friendly products. This suggests that awareness must be supported by emotional and social education strategies to strengthen attitudes toward thrift fashion.

Attitudes toward Thrift Products and Purchase Intentions

Most empirical studies show a positive link between attitudes toward thrift products and purchase intention. Within the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), attitude is a key determinant of intention. Rausch and Kopplin found that attitudes toward sustainable fashion had the strongest effect on purchase intention in their model. Research on secondhand clothing similarly notes that ethical motivations shape positive attitudes that increase purchase intent. (Rausch & Kopplin, 2021).

Koay et al. found that moral beliefs and social norms influence attitudes toward secondhand clothing (Koay et al., 2024). While Sepe et al. showed that ethical motivation and awareness of environmental consequences support secondhand adoption as part of sustainable fashion behavior (Sepe et al., 2025). However, some studies indicate that positive attitudes alone are insufficient when perceived functional or emotional value is low

In Indonesia, this is evident in markets such as Monza Medan and Pasar Senen, where some consumers still associate thrift with low-status goods. Thus, communication and branding that strengthen perceived moral, aesthetic, and economic value are essential to reinforce the attitude–intention relationship.

The Role of Perceived Value in Shaping Purchase Intentions

In addition to attitude, the variable of perceived value plays an important role in explaining the relationship between sustainability awareness and purchase intention.

According to Jin et al. (2024) and Liu et al. (2023), Perceived value includes functional dimensions (product quality and durability), emotional dimensions (moral satisfaction from contributing to sustainability), and social dimensions (community recognition that supports ethical consumption). When consumers perceive thrift products as having high perceived value in these dimensions, their purchase intention increases despite certain perceived risks.

Findings by Cavazos-Arroyo and Zapata-Sánchez (2024) reinforce this point: younger consumers consider the economic and emotional benefits of secondhand products to be key factors in shaping their purchase intentions.

In the Indonesian context, perceived value also plays an important role. Affordable prices, unique designs, and the moral narrative of “environmental friendliness” combine to drive purchasing interest among students and the younger generation. Thus, perceived value functions as a cognitive mediator that transforms sustainability awareness into actual purchase decisions.

Sustainability Awareness and Purchase Intent: Direct vs Indirect Effect

Several studies show that sustainability awareness can have a direct effect on purchase intention, without going through attitude as an intermediary variable. For example, in the study Pro-environmental purchase intention towards eco-friendly apparel, Rausch et al. (2021) emphasize that pro-environmental attitudes are strong predictors of purchase intentions for sustainable products, which may indicate a direct effect.

However, other studies such as Wu & Lee highlight that indirect effects through attitudes are often more dominant: awareness first increases positive attitudes, which then increase purchase intentions (Wu & Lee, 2025).

This indicates that awareness does not automatically lead to purchasing behavior, but rather works through two mediating pathways:

1. Affective pathway (attitude): awareness of sustainability fosters positive emotions and moral pride, which increases the tendency to buy thrift products.
2. Cognitive pathway (perceived value): awareness of sustainability increases the perceived value of a product, both in terms of functional and social benefits, which strengthens purchase intent.

Thus, attitude and perceived value become key connectors between sustainability awareness and the intention to purchase thrift fashion products.

Global Comparison and Local Implications

Cross-country literature shows that the relationships between variables differ across socioeconomic contexts. In developed countries, high environmental literacy makes sustainability awareness a more direct predictor of purchase intention, whereas in developing countries the effect is weaker and influenced by social norms and trust in thrift products. Cosma highlights that social norms and altruistic values strengthen the impact of awareness on intention in middle-income countries (Cosma, 2024), while Liu et al show that consumer trust, perceived benefits, and environmental beliefs shape Gen Z's interest in online fashion resale (Liu et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, local studies emphasize that sustainability education, credible branding, and better professionalization of thrift MSMEs quality, cleanliness, and store presentation—are crucial for strengthening acceptance of thrift fashion.

Conceptually, the literature shows two interrelated pathways: sustainability awareness leads to purchase intention through positive attitudes (affective path) and through perceived value (cognitive path). This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and Value–Attitude–Behavior Framework (Homer & Kahle, 1988), where values and awareness shape attitudes and value perceptions that guide behavior. These insights deepen understanding of sustainable consumer behavior in the thrift sector and offer practical guidance for SMEs to communicate emotional, functional, and social value effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that sustainability awareness is a key psychological factor shaping positive attitudes toward thrift fashion and enhancing consumers' perceived value of these products. Attitude and perceived value then act as drivers of purchase intention. The relationship among awareness, attitude, and intention is indirect yet mutually

reinforcing: greater environmental concern encourages positive affective attitudes and stronger cognitive evaluations, which together strengthen intention to buy secondhand fashion.

However, positive attitudes and perceived value do not always translate into actual behavior due to barriers such as perceived risk and social stigma. This indicates that promoting sustainable behavior requires not only awareness building but also improving consumers' value perceptions and positive experiences with thrift products.

In Indonesia, the growing thrift market offers momentum for expanding the circular economy. Consumers increasingly purchase secondhand items not only for economic reasons but also to express personal values, identity, and environmental responsibility. Strengthening sustainability awareness can therefore support a broader transition toward more ethical and sustainable consumption.

Theoretical Implications

This study shows that sustainability awareness influences purchase intention through two mediators: attitudes toward thrift products and perceived value. The framework emphasizes that personal values and awareness shape attitudes and value perceptions, which then guide behavior. It provides a conceptual basis for understanding fashion reuse in developing countries, where emotional and value-driven evaluations play a stronger role. The study also contributes to sustainable marketing by identifying awareness and perceived value as key differentiation strategies for younger consumers.

Managerial Implications

Practically, the findings guide thrift fashion MSMEs in designing sustainability-oriented marketing. Businesses can stress that thrift purchases are economical and environmentally beneficial. Enhancing perceived value through cleanliness, quality, appealing store presentation, and pleasant shopping experiences can strengthen consumer acceptance. Communication that promotes eco-friendly lifestyles and global reuse trends is crucial, as is leveraging social media to build positive social norms.

Overall, sustainable consumption requires value and behavior transformation, not only policy. Thrift fashion reflects ecological awareness and social creativity, and with proper direction, can support a broader cultural shift toward greener and more inclusive consumption.

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