

DIGITAL INFLUENCE AND SUSTAINABLE CHOICES: SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF SECOND-HAND FASHION IN PAKISTAN

Mariam Zaheer Qureshi^{*1}, Saba Hisham²^{*1,2}Superior University Lahore¹maryamzaheer2552@gmail.com, ²saba.hisham@superior.edu.pkDOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18921044>**Keywords**

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Corresponding Author: *

Mariam Zaheer Qureshi

Abstract

Fashion serves as a primary tool for individual expression and cultural ethos. While the modern world has opted a "fast fashion" revolution characterized by mass production and rapid disposal, the environmental implications including significant water wastage and carbon emissions have become undeniable. In response, sustainable fashion practices, particularly the consumption of second-hand clothing, have emerged globally as a promising solution to promote a circular economy. However, in the specific context of Pakistan, second-hand clothing has historically been seen with a significant social stigma, often viewed as a symbol of low socioeconomic status. This study investigates the contemporary shift in this perception, exploring how digital platforms and social media influencers are remodeling thrift fashion as a smart, stylish, and responsible choice among the Pakistani youth.

Using a quantitative research design, a survey was conducted among 265 participants, primarily undergraduate students from diverse educational backgrounds in cities such as Gujranwala, Lahore, and Gujrat. The research instrument employed a five-point Likert scale to measure Social Media Marketing Activities, Consumer Trust, Perceived Value (Affordability, Sustainability, Uniqueness), Social Influence, Engagement, and Purchase Intention. Data analysis was performed using SPSS 26, involving Cronbach's Alpha for reliability ($\alpha = 0.968$), correlation analysis, and multiple regression.

The findings reveal a significant cultural paradigm shift. Regression analysis indicated that Engagement ($\beta = .389$), Perceived Value ($\beta = .288$), and Social Influence ($\beta = .253$) are the strongest predictors of purchase intention ($p < .001$). Interestingly, traditional marketing and general consumer trust were not significant drivers, suggesting that the "thrift movement" in Pakistan is powered by peer-to-peer engagement and the perceived uniqueness of the items rather than standard corporate-style advertising. The model explained 75.2% of the variance in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.752$), demonstrating high predictive validity.

The study concludes that digital platforms particularly Instagram and TikTok are successfully destigmatizing second-hand clothing by associating it with aesthetic creativity and environmental consciousness rather than economic necessity. This research contributes to the limited academic literature on sustainable consumption in South Asia by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior, Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Social Influence Theory within a unique cultural framework. Practically, the study suggests that thrift

entrepreneurs should prioritize high-quality visual aesthetics and influencer collaborations to sustain this. Furthermore, it suggests the policymakers to integrate sustainability into educational curricula and support digital literacy for small-scale thrift entrepreneurs, fostering a more environment friendly fashion landscape in Pakistan.

Introduction

Fashion has always enjoyed a central position in social life. It is an expression of a person's individuality. It also represents the cultural values and ethos. Social class and status is also evitable through the choice of fashion and clothing (Shah & Asghar, 2023). In the past, fashion was based on hand crafted artisan pieces and changed in a slow manner. But today in this modern era, fashion is rapid paced and there is mass production of articles. This has brought a revolution in fashion industry but the trends are short-lived and consumers are interested in buying, consuming and discarding the clothing items quickly (Paço et al., 2021). This attitude in consumers has some serious repercussions for the environment. There is ample data that suggests that textile industry is one of the largest contributors to pollution. It is also responsible for polluting water bodies, water wastage and carbon emissions (Khan et al., 2023).

Sustainable fashion promotes practices that reduce waste through recycle and better technologically backed treatment techniques that extend the lifespan of garments (Rathore, 2023). Eco-aware consumers are also preferring eco-labels and promoting ethical purchasing behaviors (Plakantonaki et al., 2023). A major component of sustainable fashion is second-hand clothing. This is the concept of reusing, recycling or upcycling the previously owned clothing. It has played a significant role in reducing environmental pollution. It gives clothing a second chance and also eliminates the need of new production (Sepe et al., 2025).

When the data from different countries was obtained, it revealed that second-hand clothing is not merely a necessity. It has now become a trend among youth. There is an increased sense of environmental consciousness and eco-friendly choices (ÖGEL, 2022). The digital presence of thrift stores, flea markets and other selling

platforms has made second-hand clothing market more popular. It is widely seen as responsible choice and is endorsed by social media influencers and digital campaigns (Yeap et al., 2024).

The acceptance of second-hand clothing holds a different meaning in Pakistan. The flea market for second-hand garments is referred to as "Landa Bazaar" and is often seen in a condescending manner (Silva et al., 2021). This stigma finds its roots in cultural and social norms and judgmental behavior on part of people related to appearance and social class. Donning second hand clothing is a sign that one cannot afford new clothing (Zahid, Khan, & Tao, 2023).

Despite the negative connotation related to second-hand clothing, Pakistan is experiencing a strong shift in perception due to digital media influence. The users of social media in Pakistan account for more than seventy million. Most of these are young people who use TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Youtube (Hamza, Yonghong, & Ullah, 2023). There is a growing number of online shopping portals for thrift clothing. Instagram sellers and TikTok Thrift vloggers are encouraging youth to purchase second-hand clothing as these are stylish and affordable. They have instilled the idea that second-hand clothing is not something to be stigmatized rather it should be viewed as smart, fashionable and responsible choice (Khan, Ahmed, & Rashid, 2021). Digital content such as "Thrift hauls" and "Shan shah" are available on styling of thrift outfits.

Although these digital shifts are visible, academic literature in Pakistan has not kept pace with real-world changes. There is little research on how social media influences consumer acceptance of second-hand clothing in a society where stigma, class perceptions, and cultural norms strongly shape purchasing habits. The lack of academic research makes it difficult for entrepreneurs, marketers, and policymakers to understand how

digital platforms can be used effectively to promote sustainable fashion choices.

There is ample international research on relationship between digital influence, sustainable fashion choices and adoption of second-hand clothing but these are not applicable in Pakistani context due to cultural differences and social norms. Most available studies examine consumer behaviors in Europe, North America, and other developed countries. These societies already show high acceptance of second-hand fashion due to high level of awareness in relation to environment and sustainability, which is not the case in Pakistan. Although online thrift stores and influencer-driven campaigns are growing rapidly in Pakistan, academic literature does not explain how these platforms influence perceptions and shapes the attitudes of people. Understanding these cultural dynamics is crucial because acceptance of second-hand fashion is influenced by deeply rooted beliefs. The acceptance in the youth due to digital media influence is yet to be studied.

The purpose of this study is to explore how social media influences the acceptance of second-hand fashion in Pakistan. It aims to explicate the ways digital campaigns, online thrift platforms, and influencers affect consumer behaviors and attitudes toward sustainable fashion choices. The study also seeks to identify cultural, social, and generational barriers that shape acceptance or rejection of second-hand clothing. This research aims to generate insights that can support sustainable consumption and guide future digital marketing strategies in Pakistan's fashion landscape.

Literature Review

Sustainability refers to choices that satisfy the current needs of people in ways that do not compromise the needs of future generations. Sustainable fashion has gathered global recognition in both industry and academic discourse. This is owing to the increased concerns for environmental degradation and green gas emissions associated with textile and apparel industry (Ray & Nayak, 2023). It has been argued that fashion industry needs to revise its business strategies and renounce several practices that are harmful for the environment such as green

washing. A study suggests that more conscientious business strategies should be adopted for changing the perceptions of consumers and to promote responsible behavior in them. It emphasizes that the potential of circular economy in fashion industry must be fully explored (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022).

Another study conducted in Brazil has highlighted the need of pedagogical practices and introduction of projects that promote sustainable fashion and circular economy. It demands for mature level strategy and serious and concerted efforts for changing consumer behavior through education and curriculum changes (Sehnm et al., 2023).

A study conducted in Europe discusses the movement for adoption of sustainable fashion. It was being pushed mainly by millennials and Generation-Z through social media influencers and digital media platforms. They have pronounced it as "luxury fashion" and "smart choice". This study introduced triple-trick theory that explicates how digital media can influence the adoption patterns of consumers (Mohr, Fuxman, & Mahmoud, 2022).

Another research at Brazil indicates that there is voluntary adoption of simplicity by many environmental activists. They are inclined towards purchase of recycled or upcycled clothing and positively adopting sustainable fashion. They choose second hand clothing as their mainstream decision (Campos et al., 2023).

The democratization of sustainable fashion through digital spaces has accelerated the adoption of second-hand clothing in multiple cultures and markets (Nel, Smal, & Munro, 2025). These global developments provide a useful foundation for understanding how Pakistan's emerging digital ecosystem may similarly influence consumer choices.

Fast fashion serves as a mode of production in the fashion industry that is associated with quick conceptual designs and mass production. There are various problems in fast fashion such as low quality of fabric high rate of consumer demand for trendy articles. The proponents of fast fashion argue that it has democratized fashion but it has some serious social and environmental repercussions (Webster, 2023). The fast fashion

industry has degraded the environment through production of solid waste. Waterbodies are also getting polluted due to chemical wastage. High carbon emissions and excessive use of water for washing have depleted the water reserves putting mankind and other existing creatures at greater risk for survival (Olivar Aponte et al., 2024). According to the UNCTAD, the fashion industry accounts for nearly 7 to 8% of global carbon dioxide output and consumes more energy than aviation and maritime shipping combined. The environmental hazards are amplified by the microfiber waste and short life cycle of the products (Williams, 2022).

These environmental and socio-economic issues have prompted increased advocacy for sustainable alternatives. Second-hand clothing, in particular, is regarded as one of the most effective strategies for reducing environmental harm because it extends garment life cycles, reduces landfill waste, and diminishes the demand for new production. Research consistently highlights that second-hand consumption reduces greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption by offering low-impact alternatives (Mukherjee, 2023)

Second-hand fashion has evolved in the past two decades and has undergone major transformation. A comprehensive study conducted in China suggests that the pre-loved industry is not only viewed as cost-saving option but has become a matter of choice due to authenticity, motive of responsible customer and eco-friendly reasons (Kim & Woo, 2022). Researchers argue that this requires a close collaboration between manufacturers and retailers in the value chain. This is needed to move the industry towards responsible and sustainable production and consumption models. The results of this study emphasize that low-cost collection and efficient management are critical business drivers in this regard. In a similar manner, responsible consumption and benefits are opportunities for consumers (D'Adamo et al., 2022).

Another researcher is of the opinion that second-hand clothing has both positive and negative effects. It can reduce the overall cost of living and provide some relief to the customers in face of inflation. Excessive second-hand consumption has

some rebound effects, it can produce similar issues as current overconsumption of clothing. This can be effectively controlled by the behavior management of the consumers (Luoma, 2025).

Digital technology has also contributed a lot towards the growth of second-hand fashion in the world. There are hurdles like contamination and poor hygiene of the clothing items. There is need to overcome this barrier to move towards sustainable choices and circular fashion (Kim, Woo, & Ramkumar, 2021).

The availability of online peer to peer platforms has played central role in the acceptance of second-hand fashion. Social media has transformed the marketplace and the way consumers engage with thrift clothing. The used clothing is presented as appealing, aesthetic items. Online pages and websites are socially acceptable and are validated by a large consumer audience. These have reduced the psychological hatred associated with traditional thrift markets and now they appear modern, trendy and accessible (Ottensstedt & van den Berg, 2022).

Influencers and content creators also contribute to the popularity of second-hand fashion and have changed the psychological perspective of the used garments. They share their views and opinions through their thrift hauls, styling videos, and sustainability narratives. Studies reveal that influencer endorsements reduce negative attitudes and increase consumer trust in second-hand products (Choufan, 2022).

Pakistan has a unique blend of socio-economic classes, cultural norms and values and regional differences. The consumption of second-hand clothing in Pakistan is driven by various factors. Most of the customers prefer buying thrift clothes because of the economic reasons. They find them economical and cheaper as compared to the brands. Moreover, they prefer these because of superior quality of fabric and long expected life. A few added that they avoid buying used clothes due to issues related to sanitation and social disgrace. None of them preferred these due to environmental reasons (Sajjad et al., 2021).

Another study exploring the growth of preloved industry revealed that younger generation has more consciousness associated with

environmental degradation. They prefer second-hand clothing as they are concerned about the climate change and its implications on the planet. This trend is only visible in youth. Most of the people still bought and preferred second hand clothing due to budget friendly reasons (Jawed et al., 2025).

A study conducted at FC College reveals how the rapidly growing digital world is creating opportunities for second-hand clothing. The emergence of Instagram thrift stores, Facebook resale groups, TikTok thrift content, and independent online thrift businesses has introduced second-hand clothing to a new market segment. The students prefer buying from online stores and prefer thrift clothing due to concerns related to rising inflation, being pocket friendly, and reasons such as more comfort and durability (Kamran, 2023).

There are many social, cultural and psychological barriers associated with the purchase of second-hand clothing. Clothing carries a deep hidden meaning, It represents your social class, respect and dignity is also associated with it. Research related to barriers and challenges related to thrift market reveal that people see thrift as “contaminated” and “undesirable”. Those purchasing it are stigmatized as belonging to poor economic background (Sajjad et al., 2021). In Pakistan, these perceptions are on a raise due to class-based differences and deep-rooted concerns about hygiene and social status.

Stigma arises from multiple cultural narratives. First, there is the notion that individuals who purchase second-hand clothing are unable to afford new garments. This suggests their low social status and economic inadequacy. Second, various cultural norms associate used clothing with lack of dignity and low self-esteem. There is an idea that “newness” is a symbol of success and cleanliness. Third, there are various religious and moral concerns. People believe that used clothing may carry physical contamination and spiritual impurity. These factors contribute to resistance among more traditional groups (Panju, 2024).

It is important to note that this stigma does not affect all groups equally. Generational differences play a substantial role. Younger consumers

especially the Gen-Z are showing greater openness to thrift consumption. However, older generations are still resisting second-hand fashion because of lifelong cultural conditioning (Darvish, 2024).

Consumer perceptions are continually shaped through peer influence and carefully curated content. Digital influence operates through multiple channels, it uses algorithms and influencer endorsements. User-generated content and community engagement are key driving forces (Zhang & Dong, 2021). The fashion industry has garnered great benefit from social media’s visual emphasis. It has used Instagram and TikTok to promote fashion through aesthetic and appealing content. These including outfit-of-the-day posts by the influencers and thrift hauls. These visual narratives play a powerful role in reframing perceptions because consumers tend to trust experiential, peer-oriented information over traditional advertising (Sasu-Boakye & Olsson, 2024).

Influencers play a great role when it comes to shaping consumer behaviors and opinions of people. They are considered credible and trustworthy and their opinions regarding any product are greatly valued (Mrisha & Xixiang, 2024).

In contrast to traditional celebrities, influencers use effective strategies and gimmicks to convince the audience. They build credibility through tools such as dialogue, continuous interaction with their audience. This one to one conversation persuades the audience and reduces psychological resistance (Harris, 2024). Influencers create visually appealing content to attract the audience. They create thrift hauls, DIY transformations, styling sessions. This reframes second-hand clothing from used to creative and trendy. The shift is mostly observed among younger consumers because they largely constitute the population using social media (Rachmad, 2025a).

The influencers normalise consumption of second-hand clothing by integrating it in their personal style and daily life dressing. Followers often mimic and recreate these identities. They, then, perceive thrift clothing as consistent with modern and eco-conscious lifestyles (Wahab, Alam, & Lahuerta-Otero, 2025). Endorsements by the social media influencers reassure the

customers that their thrift clothing is consistent with the modern societal trends. Several studies show that followers adopt dressing styles approved by influencers due to perceived similarity and social bonding (Rachmad, 2025b).

Social media influencers have reshaped the e-commerce and business marketing strategies. They provide contextual information of the origin, history and value of garment and highlight sustainable impacts and associated cost saving. They trigger FOMO and engage the niche audience. This how they reframe second-hand clothing as a smart consumer choice rather than a necessity (Prasanthi et al., 2024).

Online thrift stores are emerging as significant shopping portals within Pakistan's digital economy. There is a stigma associated with physical thrift markets such as *Landa Bazaar*. Online thrift platforms have successfully portrayed themselves as aspirational and aestheticised digital spaces. This has altered the social meanings attached to used clothing. These businesses operate not merely as retailers but as cultural intermediaries. It has redefined taste, value systems, and consumer aspirations (Bargain-Darrigues, 2023).

Research shows that digital thrift businesses have transformed second-hand consumption globally by using unprecedented marketing strategies. They have applied branding strategies similar to mainstream fashion retailers (Adiyani & Khusyairi, 2025). They use professional photography and models for advertisement. The details about the condition of product selections, price, and storytelling elevates the perceived value of second-hand garments. This "curated thrift" model appeals to middle- and upper-middle-class consumers who previously avoided used clothing due to class-based stigma (Hadley, 2021). Traditional thrift markets are often associated with poor hygiene and sanitation. Lack of arrangement, and congested spaces further deteriorates the social acceptance of thrift stores. Online thrift stores detach the garments from such contexts by presenting them through clean, modern and aesthetic digital platforms (Scott, Szili, & de la Fuente, 2025). Online sellers elevate certain items by selective curation and aesthetic

display. These items are categorized as "vintage," "rare finds," or "pre-loved fashion". This increases the symbolic value associated with products and people buy them cheerfully to show their unique taste for vintage products (Podkalicka, 2022).

The online retailers for thrift clothing have established strong marketing and built trust through multiple consumer care strategies. These include return policies, ratings as per the condition of garment, transparent descriptions through categorization of clothes, and organic customer reviews. Trust and honesty is crucial in overcoming psychological resistance to purchasing used items (Calvo-Porrá, Orosa-González, & Viejo-Fernández, 2024)

In developed economies, thrift businesses are conceptualized as socio-cultural agents. These are visualized as channels who mediate between global sustainability activism and local cultural expectations. Also, these align well with the responsible consumerism culture (Freitas, Brescia, & Christino, 2025). Their role in Pakistan is particularly important because they challenge conventional fashion hierarchies and established class-based consumption patterns.

Consumer acceptance of second-hand fashion is greatly influenced by demographic factors, particularly age and gender. Research conducted in USA shows that younger generation are consistently more open to sustainable and second-hand consumption. There is also acceptance for second-hand products in women. The baby boomer generation was less convinced by the concept of sustainability. The only limitation of this study was it being self-reported (Nichols & Holt, 2023). Gen Z and younger millennials have been reported to show proclivity towards ethical consumption. It is pertinent to mention that this behavior is associated with their more exposure to internet and massive information available there. Moreover, preference for individuality makes them strong proponents of thrift fashion (Taborecka et al., 2025). A study in Indonesia compared a cohort of generation X, generation Y and generation Z. They found out that more concern for environmental sustainability was seen In Generation X and generation Y. However, the generation Z consumers tend to prefer experiences

over ownership and often reject the fast fashion culture of constant newness (Putri & Yeshika, 2024). Digital nativity in young consumers has made them comfortable with online platforms and they are now more receptive to online thrift shopping. They often use thrift shopping to construct non-mainstream identities (Vrablikova et al., 2024). Some studies also report their environmental concern. Sustainability messaging resonates deeply with the women and young generation and they are convinced to opt responsible consumer behavior (Bačiauskaitė, 2023). In contrast, older generations are reported to be less accepting of second-hand clothing. They are not much exposed to internet and digital media. Thus, digital influence may have limited impact on older consumers (Edberg & Köhnlein, 2025). Gender also shapes consumer attitudes toward adoption of second-hand fashion. Studies suggest that women are found to be more engaged in fashion-related consumption and are more receptive to the idea of purchasing second-hand clothing (Stankevičiūtė & Jarmalavičiūtė, 2025). On the other hand, men in some societies exhibit resistance due to cultural expectations. This is seen as sign of inadequacy, poor masculinity, class identity, and prestige. Studies in South Asia indicate that men often associate second-hand clothing with low-status masculinity, making them less likely to adopt thrift fashion (Tjokrosoeharto & Paramita, 2021)

It is pertinent to understand the psychological concepts and processes that govern the consumer acceptance of second-hand fashion. Consumers may associate second-hand clothing with hygiene concerns. This belief is particularly held by collectivist and religious societies. These societies value purity and cleanliness as these are religiously and culturally significant (Connysson & Landström, 2024). Transparency and honesty about detailed product descriptions, cleaning processes, and quality checks has helped in reducing these fears (Mobarak et al., 2025).

Research suggests that e-commerce platforms construct a model of the influence through visibility, authenticity, and interactivity in live platforms that affect the decision making of consumers. High-value items such as branded

thrift clothing reduce perceived risk and increase the willingness to purchase (Liu & Zhang, 2024). Clothing is an expression of social class, refined taste, and economic status. People use it to communicate their identity, status and group belonging (Chen, Hyun, & Lee, 2022). Second-hand clothing opposes the traditional status-quo that symbolizes new and branded clothes to high socio-economic status. The mindset shift from waste to sustainability and responsible consumption makes thrift clothing a positive thing (Zahid, Khan, & Tao, 2023).

When consumers are eco-friendly and internalize the sustainability practices, buying fast fashion based clothing can create cognitive dissonance and they may feel unease. Availability of thrift and second-hand options reduces this conflict as this aligns with their values of responsible consumption and adoption of green clothing (Bakiş & Kitapçı, 2023). Digital narratives that highlight environmental impact strengthen this alignment. Digital thrift stores replicate this enjoyment through various techniques. It makes use of curated drops, live sales, and storytelling (Koay et al., 2024).

The current study is grounded in three theoretical models—Social Influence Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. These frameworks are integrated to provide a robust foundation for the analysis of influence of social media on second-hand fashion acceptance. Social influence can be aptly described as anything that brings change in individuals' thoughts, feelings, communication, or behavior. This may result from the influence of others. It has been widely applied in human behavioral studies. This encompasses a litany of mechanisms ranging from general persuasion to compliance with social norms (Oliveira, Fagundes, & Silva, 2025). Kelman presented the social influence theory in 1958. He identified three mechanisms i.e. compliance, identification, and internalization in order to explain how influencers and digital communities shape the behavior of society (Goodwin, 1987). Consumers may be persuaded to purchase second-hand clothing due to trend pressure. They may also identify with influencer lifestyles, or due to activist movements,

they may internalize sustainability values (Mohd Kamal et al., 2020). There are various theories that highlight the behavioral engagement of consumer while making a decision. These include the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the earlier theory of planned behavior (TPB), and the later reasoned action approach (RAA). The TRA, TPB, and RAA suggest that the key determinant of action/behavior is one's behavioral intention to engage in that behavior. Behavioral intention represents a person's motivation behind the sense of her or his conscious plan. It influences their decision or self-instruction to exert effort to perform a certain behavior (Conner, 2020). Theory of Planned Behavior explains how the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence fashion choices. Digital platforms influence the choices of people and their attitudes towards thrift clothing by presenting thrift fashion in a positive manner. Subjective norms of people are also altered through influencer endorsement and peer or societal approval. Moreover, perceived control through easy online access also promotes the purchase of thrift clothing (Bosnjak, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2020). Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory is one of the most influential social theories. It has been successfully applied across the globe to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas, processes, and technology spread through a population or community (Yu, 2022). This theory provides the details regarding how innovations spread across a society. Online thrift stores and influencers act as torch-bearers of change in society. They accelerate the adoption of change among early adopters and eventually across wider networks (Min, So, & Jeong, 2021).

This integrated lens helps explain why second-hand fashion acceptance differs across demographic groups and why digital advocacy can be transformative in the Pakistani context.

The literature on sustainable fashion is growing universally at a high rate. However, much of this research is being conducted in western economies and remain conceptual (Persson & Hinton, 2023). These studies are limited in scope and do not represent the social dimensions of Pakistan explicitly..

There is ample research on international level that documents the motives of the consumer behind purchase of thrift clothing. They are mostly backed by environmental awareness and responsible consumption, value of money, price sensitivity and identity expression. However, fewer studies explore contexts where second-hand clothing is associated with cultural stigma. Also, the religious reservations in collectivist societies is overlooked. In societies with strong class distinctions and egoistic approach, the perspectives are different (Bosangit, Iyanna, & Koenig-Lewis, 2023), Such settings present fundamentally different psychological and social dynamics that remain underexplored.

Compared to global literature, academic work on sustainable fashion and second-hand clothing in Pakistan is extremely limited. The few available studies tend to focus on economic or market-related dimensions. They pay little attention to cultural aspects, psychological drivers or digital influences (Husnain et al., 2025). Several knowledge gaps exist, many of which highlight the relevance and necessity of the present study. Pakistan is host to one of the largest informal second-hand markets in South Asia. But the scholarly literature does not often address consumer perceptions, stigma, or motivational differences. Existing studies treat *Landa Bazaar* as an economic portal rather than a cultural or social phenomenon (Pirzada, Mahmood, & Saif, 2022). This represents a significant gap in understanding the socio-cultural narratives attached to second-hand clothing. Online thrift stores have become rampant on Instagram and Facebook since 2018. Yet no academic study has examined the branding and marketing strategies of second hand clothing. It needs to be studied how they create desirability for thrift clothing through adding digital aesthetics. Moreover, the role of online shopping in reducing stigma and motivating people to opt sustainable options also needs to be understood. This gap is particularly important in the context of Pakistan's rapidly growing digital economy and youth-dominated social media usage.

Pakistani influencers have great presence on TikTok and Instagram. They play a major role in promoting thrift fashion. Yet, no empirical work

has explored the way influencers are shaping the social norms and cultural values associated with second-hand clothing. Moreover, there is need to thoroughly interpret the way Pakistani social media audience perceive thrift-related content. This remains a major gap addressed by the current research.

We are well aware of the social and cultural stigma associated with pre-loved garments. But it has not been studied systematically. Few questions related to origin of stigma and its variation across urban and rural areas need to be addressed. Moreover, we need an understanding of how the class differences, gender and age impact the stigma. It is also crucial to interpret the way digital platforms play their role in reducing or reinforcing a certain stigma. About 70 million of population in Pakistan is constituted by the youth. They also constitute the largest users population of social media. They are motivated by sustainability drives and eco-friendly or green movements by the social media activists and influencers. Despite these facts, their role as drivers of sustainable consumption remains un-understood. Their aspirations, digital identities and exposure to global fashion cultures require focused scholarly attention.

Methodology

A survey questionnaire was designed where Items were developed using existing scales adapted from literature related to sustainability attitudes, stigma perception and digital influence were utilized to get a well-rounded approach. Research instrument

was five point Likert scale. The questionnaire consists of 3 sections. The first two sections i.e. Section A and Section B deal with the demographic information of the participants. The forthcoming sections obtain information regarding Social Media Marketing Activities (5 items), Consumer Trust in Thrift Sellers (5 items), Perceived Value (Affordability, Sustainability, Uniqueness) (5 items), Social Influence (5 items), Engagement with Thrift Pages (4 items) and Purchase intention (5 items). Responses for sample were, Strongly disagreed, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. The survey questionnaire was designed using Google forms and distributed through WhatsApp among students. These students belonged to different academic levels ranging from Bachelors to P.hD. They also belonged from diverse educational backgrounds. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 26 was used to check reliability of the survey questionnaire and to analyze the data, i.e. demographic information, frequency, mean and standard deviation of the responses of participants. The ethical code of the institution was fully abided. Informed consent of the participants was obtained and voluntary participation was ensured. The names and identities of the participants remain confidential. Respondents could withdraw at any time. Data was stored securely, used solely for academic purposes. and was only available to the researcher for data analysis.

Analysis and Discussion

Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| 0.968 | 29 |

A total of 265 individuals participated in this survey. Their demographic information is mentioned as follows:

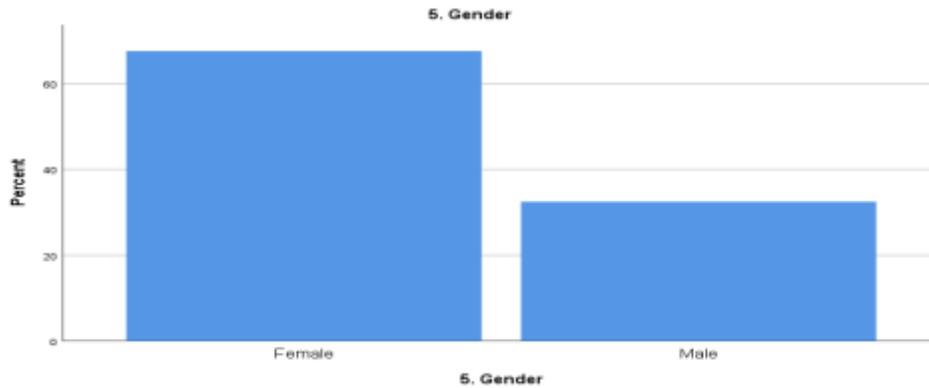
Table 2: Gender wise Demographic Information

| Gender | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Female | 179 | 67.5 | 67.5 |
| Male | 86 | 32.5 | 32.5 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table properties reveal that the total number of participants was 265. Out of which, 179 participants were female whereas 86 participants

were male. This constitutes 67.5 % of the participants were female and 32.5 percent were male.

Figure 1: Gender Distribution



The graph shown above also reveals the same information that out of 265 participants, 179

participants were female while the remaining 86 participants were male.

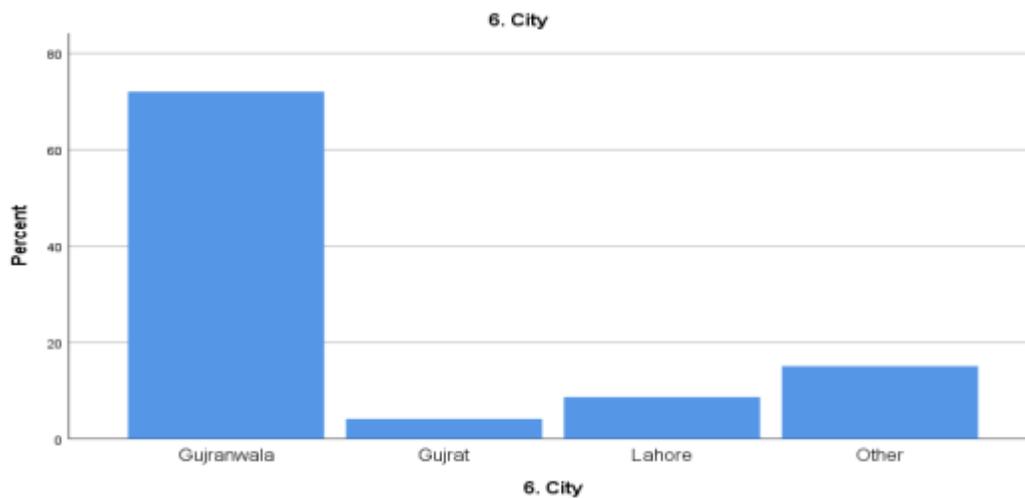
Table 3: City wise information

| Cities | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Gujranwala | 191 | 72.1 | 72.1 |
| Gujrat | 11 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| Lahore | 23 | 8.7 | 8.7 |
| Other | 40 | 15.1 | 15.1 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The table shows that out of 265 participants, 191 belonged to Gujranwala, 11 belonged to Gujrat,

23 were from Lahore while 40 participants belonged to other cities of Pakistan.

Figure 2: City wise information



The graph shows similar information that out of 265 participants, 191 belonged to Gujranwala, 11

belonged to Gujrat, 23 were from Lahore while 40 participants belonged to other cities of Pakistan.

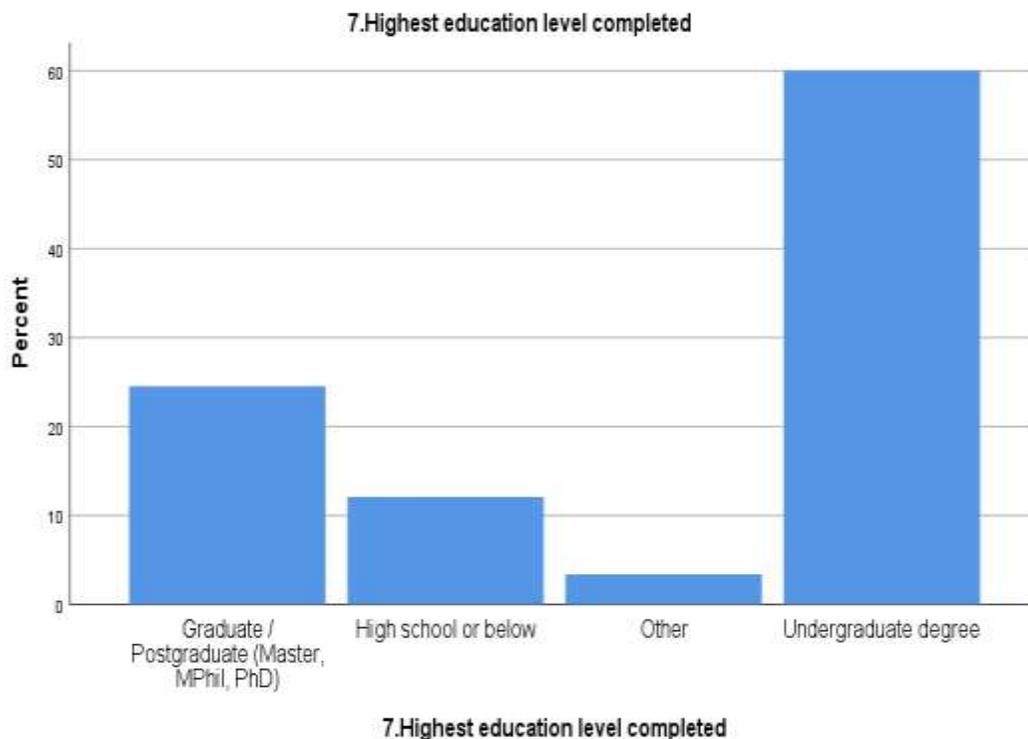
Table 4: Academic Qualification

| Academic Qualification | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Graduate / Postgraduate (Master, MPhil, PhD) | 65 | 24.5 | 24.5 |
| High school or below | 32 | 12.1 | 12.1 |
| Other | 9 | 3.4 | 3.4 |
| Undergraduate degree | 159 | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The table shows that out of 265 participants, 65 were seeking Higher Education i.e. 16 years of Education. 32 participants belonged to high

school. 159 undergraduate students took part in the survey while 9 participants were from other level of education.

Figure 3: Academic Qualification



The graph shows that out of 265 participants, 65 were seeking Higher Education i.e. 16 years of Education. 32 participants belonged to high

school. 159 undergraduate students took part in the survey while 9 participants were from other level of education.

Table 5: Monthly Personal Income

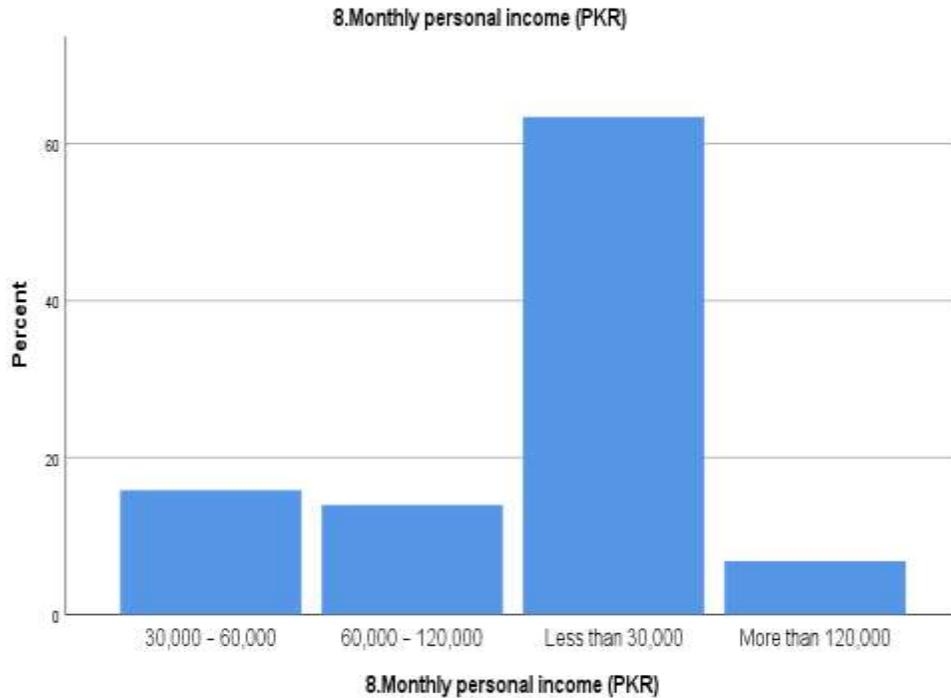
| Monthly Personal Income | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| 30,000 – 60,000 | 42 | 15.8 | 15.8 |
| 60,000 – 120,000 | 37 | 14.0 | 14.0 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Less than 30,000 | 168 | 63.4 | 63.4 |
| More than 120,000 | 18 | 6.8 | 6.8 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The table shows the monthly income range of participants. Out of 265 participants, 42 were earning between 30,000 to 60,000 rupees. 37 participants reported earning between 60,000 to

1,20,000 rupees. 168 participants reported a monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000 whereas 18 reported earning more than Rs.1,20,000.

Figure 4: Monthly Personal Income



The graph shows the monthly income range of participants. Out of 265 participants, 42 were earning between 30,000 to 60,000 rupees. 37 participants reported earning between 60,000 to

1,20,000 rupees. 168 participants reported a monthly income of less than Rs. 30,000 whereas 18 reported earning more than Rs.1,20,000.

Table 6: Social Media Platform Usage

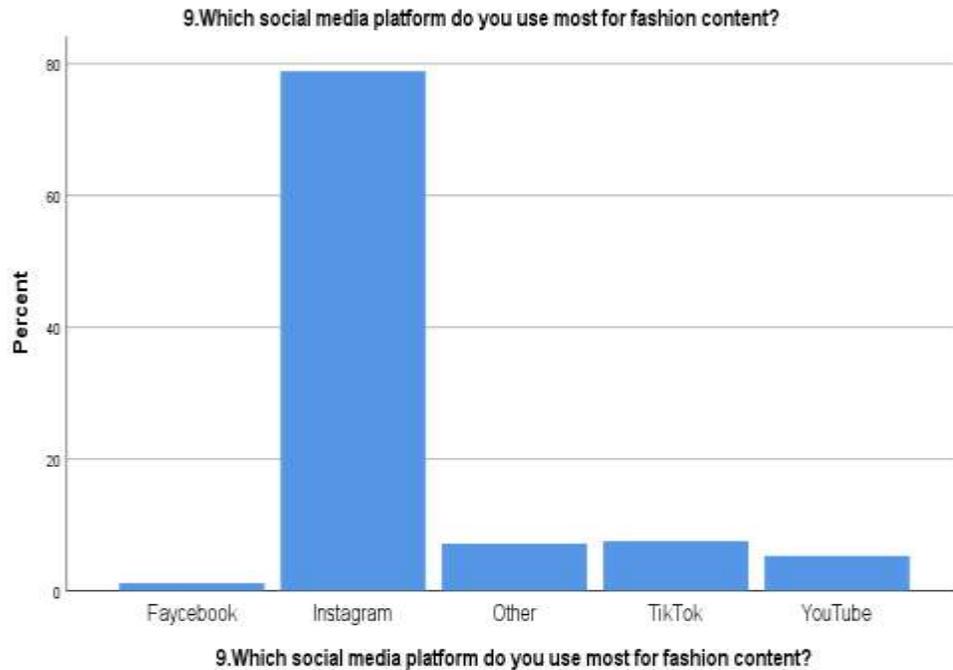
| Social Media Platform | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Facebook | 3 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Instagram | 209 | 78.9 | 78.9 |
| Other | 19 | 7.2 | 7.2 |
| TikTok | 20 | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| YouTube | 14 | 5.3 | 5.3 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

This table shows the social media platforms used by the participants. Out of 265 participants, 209

reported using Instagram frequently whereas only 3 reported having used Facebook. 20 participants

were using TikTok. YouTube was used by 14 participants whereas other platforms were used by 19 participants.

Figure 5: Social Media Platform Usage



This graph shows the social media platforms used by the participants. Out of 265 participants, 209 reported using Instagram frequently whereas only 3 reported having used Facebook. 20 participants

were using TikTok. YouTube was used by 14 participants whereas other platforms were used by 19 participants.

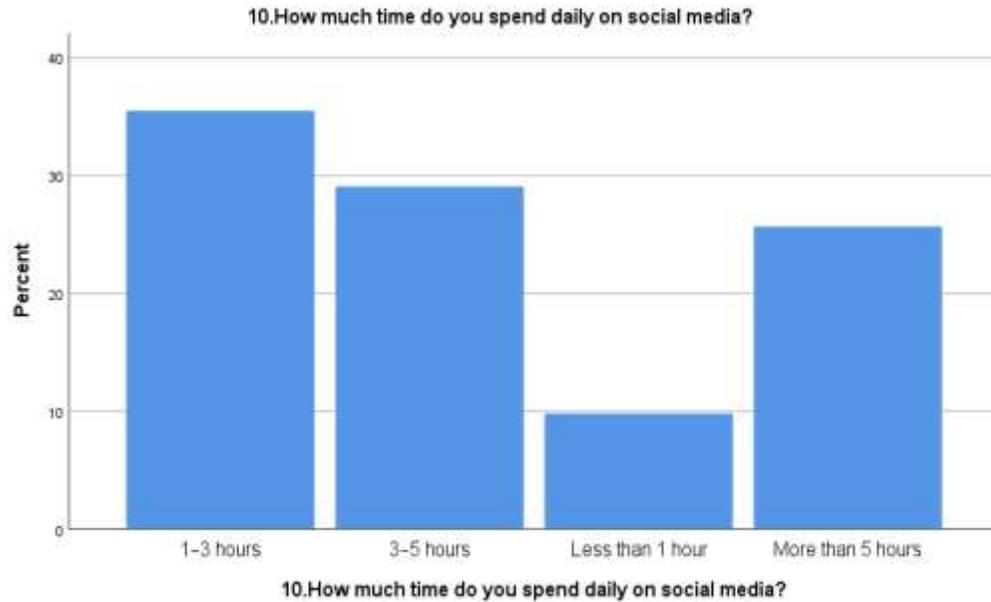
Table 7: Time Spent on Social Media

| Time Spent on Social Media | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| 1-3 hours | 94 | 35.5 | 35.5 |
| 3-5 hours | 77 | 29.1 | 29.1 |
| Less than 1 hour | 26 | 9.8 | 9.8 |
| More than 5 hours | 68 | 25.7 | 25.7 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The table displays information about the number of hours spent by participants on social media. 94 participants reported spending 1 to 3 hours on social media. 77 participants claimed spending 3-

5 hours. 26 participants said that they spent less than 1 hour on social media while 68 participants reported spending more than 5 hours on social media websites and platforms.

Figure 6: Time Spent on Social Media



The graph displays information about the number of hours spent by participants on social media. 94 participants reported spending 1 to 3 hours on social media. 77 participants claimed spending 3-5 hours. 26 participants said that they spent less than 1 hour on social media while 68 participants reported spending more than 5 hours on social media websites and platforms.

The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section dealt with the screening

questions whereas the 2nd section dealt with questions related to demographic data of the participants. The third section consisted of six subsections containing 4 to 5 questions. These were Likert scale (1-5) type questions with 1 corresponding to Strongly Disagree, 2 corresponding to disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5 corresponding to Strongly Agreed.

The statistical representation of each sub-section is displayed as follows:

1. Social Media Marketing Activities

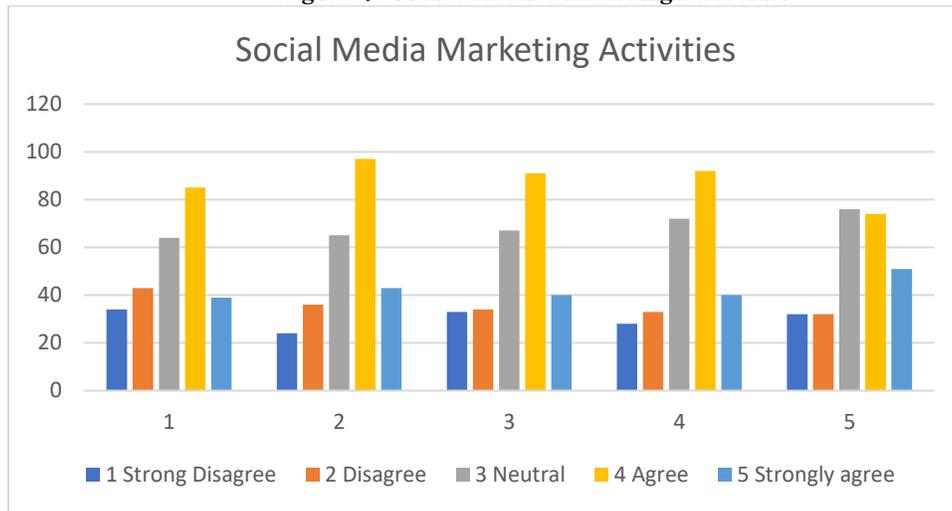
This section consisted of 5 questions:

Table 8: Statistical description of social media marketing activities

| Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|------|----------------|-----|
| I regularly see thrift/second-hand clothing promotions on my social media feed | 3.20 | 1.246 | 265 |
| Social media ads make me more aware of second-hand fashion | 3.37 | 1.174 | 265 |
| Thrift pages share creative content that grabs my attention. | 3.27 | 1.228 | 265 |
| I often come across influencer promotions of thrift fashion. | 3.31 | 1.185 | 265 |
| Videos or reels of preloved outfits increase my interest in buying second-hand clothes. | 3.30 | 1.252 | 265 |

This table represents the Mean, Standard Deviation and Total no. of responses by the participants.

Figure 7: Social Media Marketing Activities



This is the graphical representation of frequency of each response from Question no.1 to Question no. 5 of the first subsection of the questionnaire.

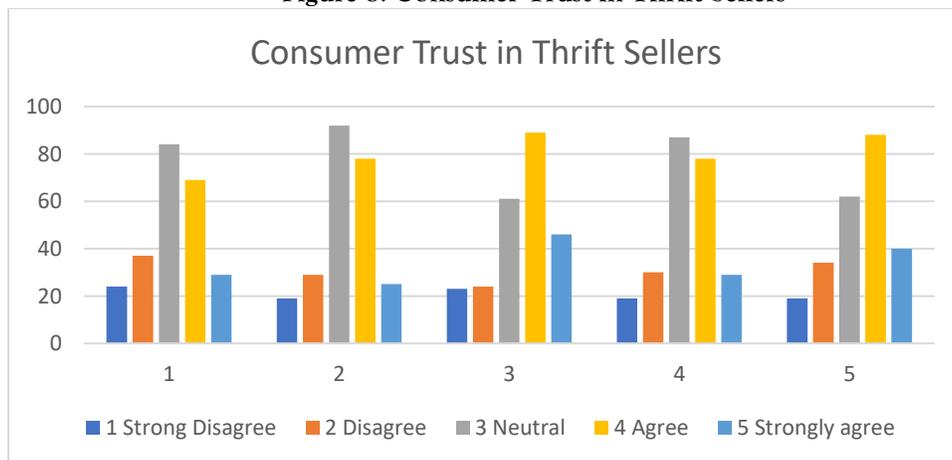
2. Consumer Trust in Thrift Sellers

Table 9: Statistical representation of Consumer Trust in Thrift Sellers

| Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|--|------|----------------|-----|
| I feel confident when buying from Instagram/Facebook thrift sellers. | 3.03 | 1.201 | 265 |
| I believe thrift sellers deliver what they promise | 3.20 | 1.121 | 265 |
| Thrift sellers provide clear and honest product information | 3.28 | 1.050 | 265 |
| I trust reviews and ratings posted by other customers | 3.49 | 1.171 | 265 |
| I think online thrift stores handle customers fairly. | 3.28 | 1.080 | 265 |

This table represents the Mean, Standard Deviation and Total no. of responses by the participants.

Figure 8: Consumer Trust in Thrift Sellers



This is the graphical representation of frequency of each response from Question no.1 to Question no. 5 of the second subsection of the questionnaire.

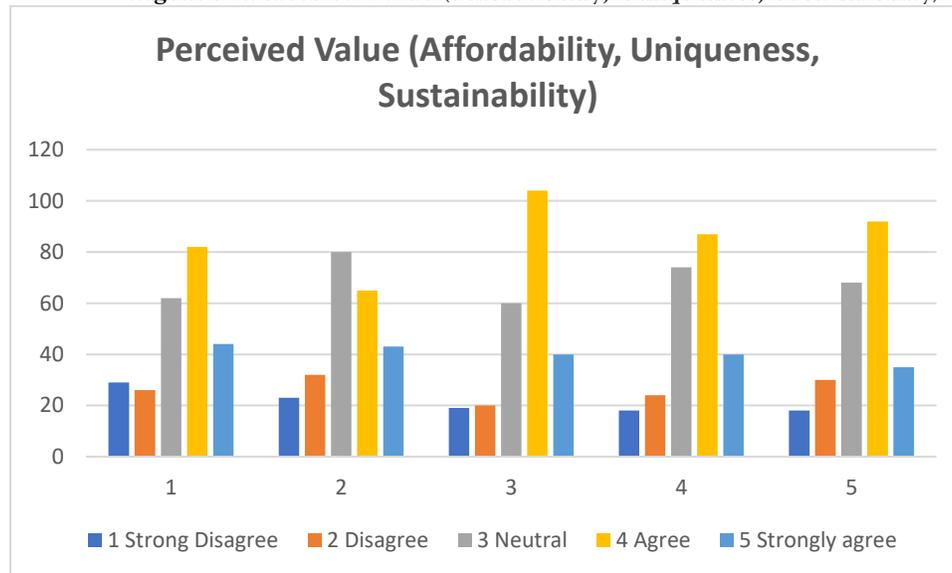
3. Perceived Value (Affordability, Uniqueness, Sustainability)

Table 10: Statistical representation of Perceived Value (Affordability, Uniqueness, Sustainability)

| Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|--|------|----------------|-----|
| Buying second-hand fashion is affordable for me. | 3.41 | 1.155 | 265 |
| I can find unique styles in second-hand clothing that are not available in regular stores. | 3.51 | 1.108 | 265 |
| Second-hand clothing provides good quality for the price | 3.45 | 1.131 | 265 |
| I consider second-hand clothing an environmentally friendly choice. | 3.51 | 1.118 | 265 |
| Overall, second-hand clothing gives me better value compared to fast fashion | 3.42 | 1.126 | 265 |

This table represents the Mean, Standard Deviation and Total no. of responses by the participants.

Figure 9: Perceived Value (Affordability, Uniqueness, Sustainability)



This is the graphical representation of frequency of each response from Question no.1 to Question no. 5 of the third subsection of the questionnaire.

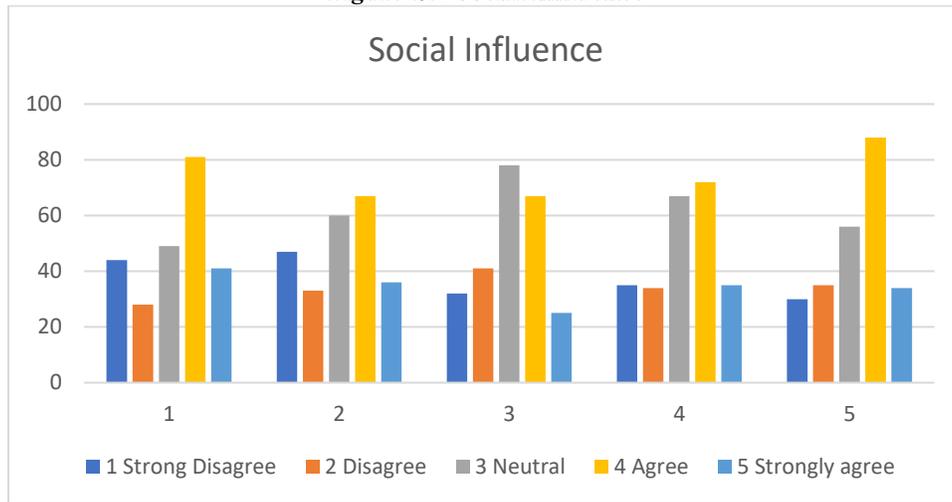
4. Social Influence

Table 11: Statistical Representation of Social Influence

| Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|------|----------------|-----|
| Recommendations from friends increase my interest in thrift shopping. | 3.39 | 1.230 | 265 |
| I am more likely to buy if an influencer endorses a thrift store. | 3.34 | 1.176 | 265 |
| Positive comments from buyers encourage me to trust thrift sellers | 3.55 | 1.093 | 265 |
| Seeing peers wear second-hand clothing makes it socially acceptable | 3.46 | 1.104 | 265 |
| Fashion influencers can change how I perceive second-hand clothing | 3.40 | 1.104 | 265 |

This table represents the Mean, Standard Deviation and Total no. of responses by the participants.

Figure 10: Social Influence



This is the graphical representation of frequency of each response from Question no.1 to Question no. 5 of the fourth subsection of the questionnaire.

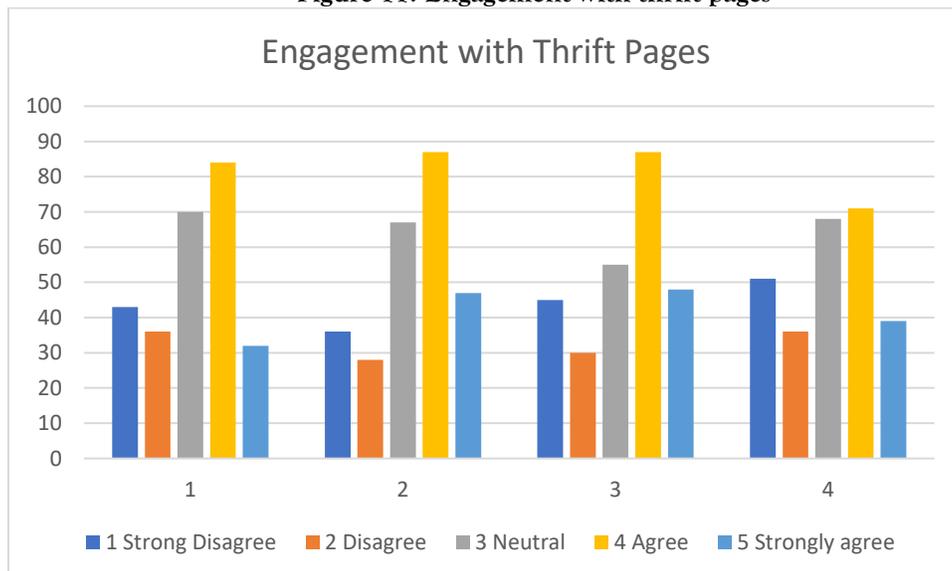
5. Engagement with Thrift Pages

Table 12: Statistical Representation of Engagement with thrift pages

| Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|------|----------------|-----|
| I often like or share posts from thrift sellers. | 3.10 | 1.257 | 265 |
| I save posts about second-hand clothing for future reference. | 3.31 | 1.265 | 265 |
| I message thrift sellers to ask for details about clothes | 3.24 | 1.340 | 265 |
| I participate in online thrift giveaways, sales, or auctions. | 3.04 | 1.329 | 265 |

This table represents the Mean, Standard Deviation and Total no. of responses by the participants.

Figure 11: Engagement with thrift pages



This is the graphical representation of frequency of each response from Question no.1 to Question no. 4 of the fifth subsection of the questionnaire.

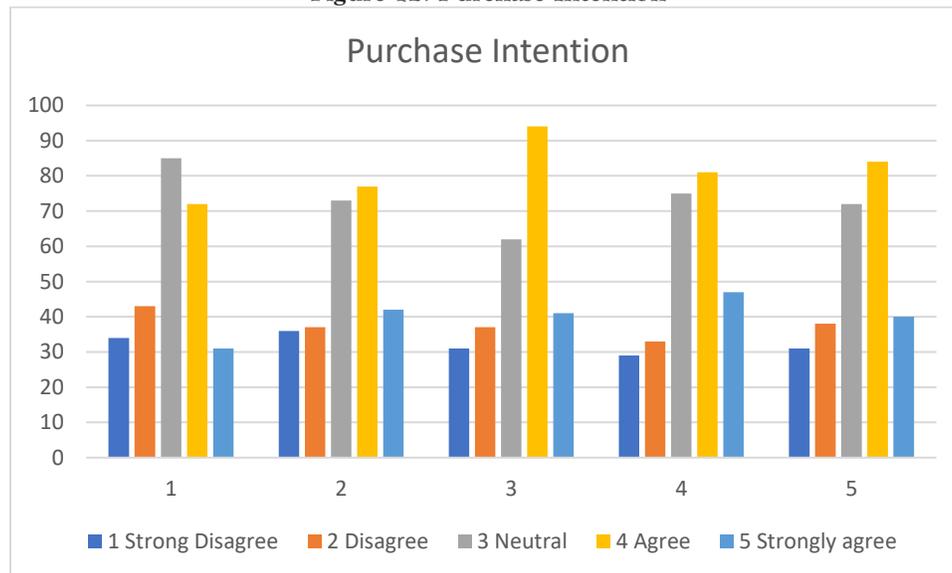
6. Purchase Intention

Table 13: Statistical Representation of Purchase Intention

| Questions | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|--|------|----------------|-----|
| I intend to purchase second-hand clothing in the next 3 months. | 3.09 | 1.189 | 265 |
| I will likely buy second-hand clothes instead of new ones when possible. | 3.20 | 1.255 | 265 |
| I am open to trying thrift shopping if I haven't already | 3.29 | 1.226 | 265 |
| I would recommend second-hand clothing to my friends and family | 3.32 | 1.218 | 265 |
| I see myself continuing to buy second-hand clothing in the future | 3.24 | 1.216 | 265 |

This table represents the Mean, Standard Deviation and Total no. of responses by the participants.

Figure 12: Purchase Intention



This is the graphical representation of frequency of each response from Question no.1 to Question no. 5 of the sixth subsection of the questionnaire.

Correlation Analysis

Different statistical tests were performed on IBM SPSS Statistics 25 Software to draw results from the responses of surveys. The results are displayed in tables with explanation.

Table 14: Pearson's Correlation

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Marketing | 1 | | | | | |
| 2. Consumer Trust | .709 | 1 | | | | |

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| 3. Perceived Value | .705 | .762 | 1 | | | |
| 4. Social Influence | .703 | .758 | .826 | 1 | | |
| 5. Engagement | .640 | .710 | .644 | .699 | 1 | |
| 6. Purchase Intention | .667 | .717 | .775 | .790 | .777 | 1 |

There were strong and statistically significant positive correlations among all study variables ($p < .01$). Marketing showed strong associations with Consumer Trust ($r = .709$) and Purchase Intention ($r = .667$). Consumer Trust displayed a very strong correlation with Perceived Value ($r = .762$). Perceived Value exhibited a very strong relationship with Social Influence ($r = .826$) and

Purchase Intention ($r = .775$). Social Influence also had a very strong correlation with Purchase Intention ($r = .790$). Furthermore, Engagement was strongly correlated with Purchase Intention ($r = .777$). These results suggest that higher levels of marketing, trust, perceived value, social influence, and engagement are consistently associated with increased purchase intention.

Table 15: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .867 ^a | .752 | .747 | .52744 |

The model summary indicates that the independent variables collectively explain that there is sufficient proportion of variance in Purchase Intention. The multiple correlation coefficient was high ($R = 0.867$), suggesting a strong positive relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. The model described

75.2% of the variance in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.752$), with a similar adjusted value (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.747$), indicating model stability and minimal overfitting. The standard error of estimate (0.527) shows that the model predicts purchase intention with acceptable accuracy.

Table 16: ANOVA Table

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Regression | 218.204 | 5 | 43.641 | 156.874 | .000 ^b |
| Residual | 72.051 | 259 | .278 | | |
| Total | 290.255 | 264 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase_Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement, Marketing, Perceived_Value, Consumer_Trust, Social_Influence

The ANOVA results showed that the overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 259) = 156.874$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the set of independent variables (Marketing, Consumer Trust, Perceived Value, Social Influence, and Engagement) collectively account

for a substantial proportion of variance in Purchase Intention. The model therefore provides a statistically valid explanation of the factors contributing to consumers' purchase intention toward second-hand fashion.

Table 17: Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -.215 | .133 | | -1.619 | .107 |
| Marketing | .035 | .052 | .033 | .667 | .505 |
| Consumer_Trust | .007 | .063 | .006 | .113 | .910 |
| Perceived_Value | .323 | .067 | .288 | 4.783 | .000 |
| Social_Influence | .285 | .070 | .253 | 4.092 | .000 |
| Engagement | .382 | .047 | .389 | 8.173 | .000 |

The regression coefficients exhibited that three predictors had a statistically significant effect on Purchase Intention: Perceived Value ($\beta = .288$, $p < .001$), Social Influence ($\beta = .253$, $p < .001$), and Engagement ($\beta = .389$, $p < .001$). Engagement turned out to be the strongest predictor, followed by Perceived Value and Social Influence. In contrast, Marketing ($\beta = .033$, $p = .505$) and

Consumer Trust ($\beta = .006$, $p = .910$) were not significant predictors of Purchase Intention. These results indicate that consumers' purchase intentions toward second-hand fashion are primarily guided by the value they perceive, the social influence they experience, and their level of engagement with related content, rather than traditional marketing efforts or trust perceptions.

Table 18: Independent samples t-test

| Variable | p-value |
|--------------------|---------|
| Marketing | .252 |
| Consumer Trust | .045 |
| Perceived Value | .209 |
| Social Influence | .082 |
| Engagement | .039 |
| Purchase Intention | .029 |

The independent samples t-test was conducted to examine group differences across the study variables. The results indicated no significant differences between the groups in Marketing ($p = .252$), Perceived Value ($p = .209$), or Social Influence ($p = .082$). However, significant differences were found in Consumer Trust ($p = .045$), Engagement ($p = .039$), and Purchase Intention ($p = .029$). These results suggest that while perceptions of marketing, value, and social influence are similar across groups. However, levels of trust, engagement, and purchase intention differ significantly.

The findings strongly suggest that global research support the notion that social media shapes consumer behavior and attitude by introducing

new trends. It has entirely changed the values and identities that people associate with things (Yu et al., 2025). In Pakistan, digital influence plays a revolutionary role because it provides a safe and socially acceptable haven. It creates a visually appealing environment for using second-hand clothing. It has significantly destigmatized thrift as a category that was traditionally associated lower-class identity.

The strong correlation between digital exposure and purchase intention confirms that visual aesthetics play a great role in changing the behavior of Pakistani Youth. Moreover, Pakistani youth are at the forefront of adopting second-hand fashion as they are constantly connected to the digital world. Moreover, they have an aspiration to

maintain their individuality and uniqueness. They also seek for affordable fashion in face of rising fast fashion costs. Their exposure to global sustainability trends is also a factor that cannot be ignored.

Gen Z and younger millennials have been reported to show proclivity towards ethical consumption. Moreover, preference for individuality makes them strong proponents of thrift fashion (Taborecka et al., 2025). The Pakistani youth demographic also supports this trend. They have asserted that they value affordability and personal unique style over the traditional as concept of new clothing and its association with high social status. The finding show that there are outdated assumptions that thrift consumption in Pakistan is the hallmark of poor people. Instead, digital platforms have made thrift consumption a symbol of creativity and uniqueness.

This research has various theoretical implications. It contributes to limited Pakistani literature on sustainable fashion. There is no research that demonstrates a theoretical framework integrating three theories in a cultural context. This research also highlights how digital platforms play an important and critical role in reshaping identity-driven consumption.

This research offers many practical implications for thrift business owners. They should employ high-quality aesthetics and visuals to improve acceptance of thrift clothing among all age groups. Collaboration with micro-influencers and influencers can significantly help with their business growth as this is the new trend among youth. To attract the elite and educated society, they should highlight sustainability benefits to promote conscious consumerism. They should build trust through transparency and mentioning the condition of clothes, ensure hygiene through washing and frequent quality checks.

It also has some implications for influencers. As they are being followed as role-models by the youth, they should focus on creating content that normalizes second-hand clothing. This shows their social responsibility and agility. This research also offers implications for policy makers and stakeholders. The educational policy makers should promote sustainability campaigns in

universities to encourage eco-friendly and responsible choices. The environmental protection departments should encourage recycling and circular fashion awareness among youth and other age groups. The Ministry of Information Technology and Human resources departments should support small online thrift entrepreneurs through digital literacy programs.

Conclusion

The study concludes that that digital platforms are reshaping the meaning, perception, and acceptance of second-hand clothing among young Pakistani consumers. Through influencer culture, aesthetic branding, and sustainability narratives, social media has created a new fashion identity that challenges long-standing stigma. The findings reveal strong support for the role of digital influence, aligning with global literature and established theoretical frameworks.

The study asserts that digital spaces not only promote thrift fashion but also catalyzes a cultural shift toward sustainability, affordability, and individuality among Pakistan's youth.

The research also reinforces that acceptance of second-hand clothing is not merely influenced by environmental concerns but is deeply connected with self and class identity, aesthetic expression, economic solutions, and social validation facilitated by digital spaces. The integration of Theory of Planned behavior, Social Influence Theory, and Diffusion of Innovation reveals that behaviors are greatly shaped by digital content and this significantly increases purchase intention of thrift clothing by the youth.

These insights demonstrate that digital platforms serve as revolutionary spaces where stigma is dissociated. Moreover, digital portals become central in diffusing trends across a society and making sustainable practices visible in cultures.

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