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Article:

Fu, X., Alevizou, P.J., Cheng, R. et al. (2025) Explore the meanings beyond motives behind second-hand clothing consumption practice: from the theory of practice perspective. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 29 (7). pp. 1320-1342. ISSN: 1361-2026

<https://doi.org/10.1108/jfmm-05-2024-0196>

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Explore the meanings beyond motives behind second-hand clothing consumption practice: from the theory of practice perspective

Abstract

Purpose - The consumption of second-hand clothing has gradually become a mainstream research topic within the framework of sustainable consumption. However, issues such as the widespread motivation-behavior gap, which are common in sustainable consumption, are also present in the research on second-hand clothing consumption. Researchers, from the perspective of the theory of practice within the Consumer Culture Theory framework, explore and summarize the richer construction of meaning in the practice of second-hand clothing consumption, beyond mere motivations or intentions.

Design/methodology/approach - The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 39 respondents aged 20 to 70 years old in the UK. The data was analyzed using reflective thematic analysis.

Findings - This study identifies and summarizes the meanings of active choice and reflective lifestyle, *co-created vintage*, *self-freedom*, *rebellion behind uniqueness*, *complicated sustainability*, *internal cycles based on emotional relationships and marginalization* in second-hand clothing consumption. It reveals a more complex construction of meaning and practice characteristics behind different motivations in the practice of second-hand clothing consumption. These meanings provide a deeper understanding of consumers' practices in second-hand clothing consumption that goes beyond mere motivations.

Originality/value - This study contributes to the under-researched area of the construction of various symbolic meanings in the practice of second-hand clothing consumption. Firstly, the application of the theory of practice enriches the research dimensions and perspectives of second-hand clothing consumption and related fields. Secondly, the explanation of deeper meanings beyond motivations can, to some extent, bridge the motivation-behavior gap, presenting a richer and more authentic picture of second-hand clothing consumption. Lastly, the focus on the issue of consumption disposal during the research process also enriches the content of sustainable consumption research, enhancing the understanding of the complexity of sustainable consumption.

Keywords Second-hand clothing, Sustainable fashion, Symbolic meanings, Theory of Practice, Consumer Culture theory.

1. Introduction

The quest for sustainability is not just a macro-level call by governments and international organizations but is also reflected in much academic research. To date, research on sustainable development has covered topics including policy development

(Zuo *et al.*, 2012), international cooperation (Robert and Diederichs, 2002), engineering (Thürer *et al.*, 2018), transport (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014), food consumption (Zhu *et al.*, 2013), the environment (McNeill and Moore, 2015) and many other fields and industries.

However, the fashion industry is currently facing criticism from environmental protection organizations, resource management organizations, and other non-governmental organizations. As the second largest polluting industry, consumers in the UK produce about £10 billion worth of clothing waste each year (Halliday, 2019), significantly impacting the long-term goals of sustainable development. The consumption of second-hand clothing can effectively improve the current situation of the fashion industry in achieving sustainable development. Although second-hand clothing consumption has gradually become an essential research topic under the framework of sustainable consumption (Valor *et al.*, 2022; Sohn *et al.*, 2021), understanding consumers' consumption meaning in this area remains lagging behind. A significant portion of research on sustainable consumption focuses on attitudes and motivations (Maichum *et al.*, 2016), but these studies, based on the assumption of rational decision-making in neoclassical economics, have certain limitations (Rettie *et al.*, 2012; Tadajewski, 2006), which are reflected in the unbridgeable attitude-action gap (Cooper, 2017), knowledge-action (Lehner *et al.*, 2016), value-action gap (Reid and Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019), and intention-action gap (Casais and Faria, 2022) in consumption research.

Research on second-hand clothing consumption has placed greater emphasis on rational approaches related to customers' ethical decision-making, such as focusing on economic factors (Williams and Paddock, 2003; Stone *et al.*, 1996) and hedonic aspects (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Belk *et al.*, 1988). Previous literature from the perspective of sustainable consumption also explore the influence of customer environmental concerns or environmental identity in second-hand clothing consumption (Brough *et al.*, 2016; Haws *et al.*, 2014). However, research on customers' motivations and factors for sustainable consumption can be applied across various related fields, and there remains an important consumer "black box" regarding these motivations and customers' actual practices in second-hand clothing consumption. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to reveal the "meanings" within second-hand clothing consumption practices, in order to enrich our understanding and knowledge of second-hand clothing consumption.

This research builds on consumer culture theory (CCT) and practice theory, which emphasizes meaning and disentangles causality from hermeneutic and stereotypical frameworks (Han and Sweet, 2021; Hungara and Nobre, 2021; Rokka, 2021), elucidating the meaning of second-hand clothing consumption practices in the UK. This paper makes several contributions to the literature. First, by applying the theory of practice within the CCT framework, this paper analyzes consumer behavior

using the practice of second-hand clothing consumption itself rather than motivational drivers as the unit of analysis, thereby enriching the dimensions and perspectives of research on second-hand clothing consumption and related fields. Second, this paper identifies a variety of complex meanings beyond motivational factors in second-hand clothing consumption, emphasizing the importance and research potential of symbolic meanings in sustainable consumption practices exemplified by second-hand clothing consumption. Finally, this paper situates second-hand clothing consumption within the broader context of sustainable consumption and focuses on the disposal aspect of consumption, thus enriching the content of sustainable consumption research and deepening the understanding of the complexity of sustainable consumption.

2. Literature review

2.1 CCT and second-hand clothing consumption

In recent years, the examination of consumer behavior has shifted towards a group-centric approach. Despite the challenges posed by the quantification of causal norms and the pervasive intention-action gap identified in consumer research (Essiz *et al.*, 2023; Tadajewski, 2006), the advent of the ‘cultural turn’ has introduced innovative methodologies. These include hermeneutic and qualitative frameworks that integrate the societal and cultural dimensions of consumption (Rokka, 2021). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) offers a nuanced understanding of consumption's cultural significance, the diversity of meanings within consumer practices, and the manner in which these are interpreted. CCT transcends viewing culture as a mere influence, instead focusing on the cultural meanings and co-creative processes within consumption, as well as the personalized narratives formed by consumers (Rokka, 2021).

Furthermore, CCT has delved into the consumer subculture associated with second-hand clothing consumption. This subculture is characterized by experiential practices and is perceived as a refuge from the coercive nature of consumer culture (Ulusoy and Firat, 2018; Goulding *et al.*, 2013). CCT, as a novel lens, allows for a fresh interpretation of second-hand clothing consumption within the UK market, considering the interplay and coexistence of multiple meanings that arise from such consumption.

In the realm of second-hand clothing research, CCT has been utilized to explore the marketization of these goods through social media (Juge *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, Han and Sweet (2021) have shed light on how consumers, within a sustainable second-hand clothing market, construct value and compassion, weaving together utilitarian and symbolic benefits through CCT. Despite these advancements, the application of CCT to second-hand clothing consumption is an area that remains relatively unexplored. CCT has the

potential to revitalize many established topics by questioning conventional perspectives (Hungara and Nobre, 2021), and its application to the age-old practice of second-hand clothing consumption holds much promise.

2.2 Theory of practice under the umbrella of CCT

CCT is not a static and uniform tool; it is more of an insight into the perspective and assessment of consumption itself (Joy and Li, 2012). Theory of practice is an important application within the CCT framework (Han and Sweet, 2021). Second-hand clothing consumption is considered a form of sustainable fashion consumption, and its connotations extend beyond sustainability to encompass multiple meanings (Han and Sweet, 2021). At the same time, meaning is crucial in the overall practice of consumption, and fashion consumption is inseparable from symbolic capital (Almila, 2016). Therefore, practice theory can serve as a key theoretical foundation for this study.

Based on the curiosity about meaning in consumption, the intentions-action gaps in second-hand clothing research, and the practice perspective of CCT, this study seeks to use the practice perspective within the framework of CCT to gain insight into second-hand clothing consumption in the UK market today. Practice theory has gained significant attention in the field of sustainable consumption (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014), and although Bourdieu does not mention in detail what constitutes practice, many practice scholars have contributed their own definitions and understandings. Reckwitz (2002) argues that practice encompasses physical activity, mental activity, material objects and use, know-how, emotional and motivational knowledge, and background knowledge in the form of understanding, while Shove *et al.* (2012) and Warde (2014) reduce it to material space, meaning, and competence.

Shove *et al.* (2012) define practice as material, competence and meanings exploring the meaning of specific practices directly by examining the symbolic and social meaning of products. Since practice analysis should follow the rule of 'practice-as-entity' (Reckwitz (2002), the meanings can be interpreted from materials and competence. Combining this meaning in goods with culture, consumers can construct their own identities and express resistance to certain conditions through specific consumption (Wright, 2003), which coincides with the emphasis on consumers' personalized narratives in CCT (Rokka, 2021). In a practice theory perspective, habits shape the beliefs of specific consumer groups regarding the rationality of consumption patterns (Anantharaman, 2017). The renewal and expansion of the second-hand clothing market, however, requires the development of new habits (Valor *et al.*, 2022). The study of habits within practice theory necessitates further interpretation of meaning. Additionally, practice itself is the unit of analysis, making consumers the carriers of practice rather than merely objects of analysis. This helps us move beyond the limitations of individual-centered theories, such as the

intention-action gap, allowing us to interpret second-hand clothing consumption from the perspective of meaning.

2.3 *The meanings of second-hand clothing consumption in the form of motivations*

Fashion and culture are closely linked, just like all symbol systems (Kuruc, 2008). A culturally significant symbol, fashion plays a significant role in how people construct and present themselves (Craik, 1994). In addition to being a visual symbol, fashion also serves as a symbolic representation of a person's abilities, subcultures, and even actual social trends (Kuruc, 2008). Research needs to concentrate on the actual consumer behavior, market, and cultural dynamics when attempting to understand the fashion consumer (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2015). While functionality is essential in a circular economy, symbolic meaning cannot be ignored throughout the consumption process because it is crucial (Camacho-Otero and Pettersen, 2018).

One of the fundamental types of fashion goods is the market for second-hand clothing (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1984). The meaning of buying second-hand clothing is frequently expressed by the consumer's motivations (Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Because of this, the majority of the research that has been done on the consumption of second-hand clothing has focused on the reasons why people buy certain items (Ek Styvén and Mariani, 2020; Laitala and Klepp, 2018; Guiot and Roux, 2010; Roux, 2006). Although some studies have creatively explored the influence of mindful consumption and egoistic participation on the intention to consume second-hand clothing, revealing the role of consumers' subjective meaning construction in this practice (Zahid *et al.*, 2023), they still focus on the motivations themselves. The meanings underlying these motivations, however, paint a more nuanced picture. For instance, many studies on the consumption of second-hand clothing have highlighted the meaning of seeking low prices as one of the meanings (Norum and Norton, 2017; Yan *et al.*, 2015; Williams and Paddock, 2003). Negative associations with low quality, low price, and recycled materials also appear to be mixed together (Adgüzel *et al.*, 2020), leading to the creation of a presumptive bias. For many new generations of consumers, however, the pursuit of low prices appears to be a strategy for maximizing utility (Hamilton, 2012), and there is an increased demand for high-quality clothing in the second-hand clothing sales channel itself (Ferraro *et al.*, 2016). Researchers frequently discuss the value of bargain hunting, thrifting, etc., in relation to low prices (Guiot and Roux, 2010). Similar to the pursuit of low prices, thrifting is frequently expressed through wiser shopping practices, resource recycling, etc. (Edbring *et al.*, 2016). At the same time, the shift in discourse from "second-hand" to "fashion" in influential fashion magazines such as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar when discussing second-hand clothing reflects the changing significance of second-hand clothing in the market (Valor *et al.*, 2022). It also emphasizes the importance of mapping the meanings that consumers construct in

second-hand clothing consumption practices, which is a crucial step in market significance transformation and market rationalization (Brandstad and Solem, 2020).

Consumption of second-hand clothing reveals nuanced economic meanings as well as symbolic associations with entertainment, nostalgia, and originality. When buying second-hand clothing, consumers may be surprised (Roux and Guiot, 2008) or enjoy themselves by unearthing allegedly orphaned items (Weil, 1999). Consumers can differentiate themselves from others while maintaining their identity by wearing second-hand clothing (Titton, 2015; Sweetman, 1999). The pursuit of uniqueness has been interpreted as a means of challenging social norms, frames, and standards of taste (Jensen and Ostergaard, 1998); the hippie or bohemian look of some second-hand clothing has been seen as both a symbol of low social standing and income (Camacho-Otero *et al.*, 2020). Vintage is frequently mentioned in research on second-hand clothing (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Roux and Giot, 2008). Vintage carries meanings of foreign, subcultural, and other non-mainstream cultural expressions (Koontz, 2010). Therefore, vintage consumerism requires an intellectual threshold based on economics and education, or even subcultural capital (Thornton, 1997), which necessitates the support of a particular social class, although vintage itself can embody rebellious meanings (Jenss, 2005; Bourdieu, 1984). This perception of low cost inherent in used clothing seems to be at odds with it.

Second-hand clothing also has a sustainable dimension in the current market environment (Medalla *et al.*, 2020), and with the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have shown a strong willingness to buy second-hand clothing (McKinsey and Company, 2021), and second-hand clothing with reduced raw material consumption is a practice of sustainable consumption (Reiley and Delong, 2011). In fact, for many young consumers, critical motivations, a sense of fashion, and sustainability factors have become the main drivers when purchasing second-hand clothing, rather than the economic motivations emphasized in traditional literature (Aycok *et al.*, 2023). The circular economy embodied by the second-hand clothing industry has also been considered a rebellion against consumption, even political rebellion and political consumerism (Camacho-Otero and Pettersen, 2018), and even though given many new meanings and metaphors, consumers seeking lower prices may instead spend the same amount of money on more clothing, resulting in waste. The meanings behind the motivations discussed above are fraught with contradictions, and many of these motivations are based on research on motivation and intention, while the widespread intention-action gap in consumer research (Reid and Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019) highlights the importance of understanding actual consumer practices. importance. Second-hand clothing, as a sub-sector of the fashion industry, is perhaps as critical as the fashion industry in terms of symbolic drivers (Han and Sweet, 2021), and so this study focuses on what it means to consume second-hand clothing.

Because consumers in the second-hand clothing market have multiple identities (Gopalakrishnan and Matthews, 2018), the practical meanings they generate are also multifaceted. Particularly in the case of second-hand clothing consumption, consumers become more direct producers by donating, gifting, or reselling, partially becoming what Kotler (2010) refers to as “prosumers”. In the process of acting as prosumers, they reassign value to the products (Henninger *et al.*, 2019). Consumers' understanding of value is a reflection of cultural capital and meaning (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Wright, 2003). The expansion of new product markets requires consumers to consciously and subjectively construct meanings for new items (Valor *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, this study will examine second-hand clothing consumption as a whole and analyze the meanings it conveys.

3. Methodology

The second-hand market provides a unique way of thinking about meaning and sustainability (Fahle *et al.*, 2023). This study addresses a critical research gap in the literature: while prior studies on second-hand clothing consumption have predominantly focused on motivations and intentions, they often overlook the deeper, symbolic meanings embedded in consumption practices, leaving an unresolved motivation/intention-behavior gap (Cooper, 2017; Lehner *et al.*, 2016). The primary objective of this research is to explore and interpret the multifaceted meanings behind second-hand clothing consumption in the UK, beyond mere motivational drivers, using the lens of practice theory within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) framework. This study aims to understand these practices qualitatively, rather than verifying logical relationships between behaviors. The interpretation of meaning within the second-hand clothing market is crucial for understanding fashion knowledge and holds interpretive centrality (Aspers, 2009). Furthermore, the cultural turn within CCT has attempted to make new contributions to the field of marketing through interpretive and qualitative approaches. Additionally, the meanings in fashion consumption are often conveyed through discourse (De Lassus and Freire, 2014). The qualitative nature of this study reflects its relativist stance and constructivist epistemology, which asserts that reality is multiple and must be understood through human practices (Stahl *et al.*, 2012; Madill *et al.*, 2000). This study employs a qualitative research design based on a constructivist paradigm, with data collection methods including semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation.

A total of 39 interview participants were recruited for this study (see Appendix 1). To align with the research objectives, the selection criteria for participants included: British residency, direct experience with second-hand clothing consumption (e.g., as buyers, donors, resellers, or industry workers), and willingness to share detailed personal narratives. No restrictions were placed on age, gender, occupation, or income to ensure a comprehensive exploration of meanings across diverse consumer groups. While some industry reports Statista (2024) and McKinsey and

Company (2021) indicate that younger people are more likely to purchase second-hand clothing, this study did not limit participants based on age, gender, occupation, or income to gain a comprehensive understanding of second-hand clothing consumption. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 70, and we ensured a balanced gender representation as much as possible. Convenience sampling was used, starting with the researcher's social networks and personal connections in Sheffield, gradually expanding to local businesses/organizations and those in other cities. The researcher also posted recruitment messages in Facebook groups, X (formerly Twitter) groups, and Instagram groups focused on second-hand clothing. The interviews, which lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, were conducted in English. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, with participants' personal information anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were developed iteratively, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of CCT and practice theory. Initial questions were designed based on key concepts such as materials, competences, and meanings (Shove et al., 2012) and refined through pilot interviews with five participants to ensure clarity and relevance to the research objectives. Adjustments were made to capture symbolic and emotional dimensions of consumption practices more effectively.

Additionally, we conducted non-participant observation over a one-year period in Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester, and London to collect ethnographic data. The observation focused on second-hand clothing stores and sales events, and the observation sites were selected based on their representativeness of second-hand clothing consumption in the UK, including urban centers with diverse retail formats (e.g., charity shops, vintage markets) and varying socio-economic contexts. The visual ethnographic data comprised photographs of 17 second-hand shops, charity shops, markets, and sales events (see Appendix 2). These photographs captured elements such as storefronts, layouts, in-store advertisements, products, and other features that could aid in the analysis.

Data analysis began with interpretation of participants' discourse and ethnographic data. This study employed reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within second-hand clothing consumption practices. RTA was selected for its flexibility and its emphasis on researcher subjectivity and reflexivity, which align with the constructivist paradigm underpinning this research. This approach prioritizes the researcher's active role in meaning-making, allowing for a nuanced exploration of symbolic and practical dimensions beyond predefined frameworks. The RTA process followed five key steps: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading and listening to transcripts and field notes; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes by grouping codes into potential patterns; (4) reviewing and refining themes

against the dataset; and (5) defining and naming the final themes, such as ‘active choice and reflective lifestyle,’ ‘co-created vintage,’ and others detailed in the results.

The coding and theme development process was conducted solely by the lead researcher using an inductive approach, ensuring themes emerged organically from the data rather than being imposed by pre-existing categories. Initial coding involved open coding of transcripts and ethnographic notes, identifying recurring concepts such as nostalgia, rebellion, and sustainability. This was followed by axial coding, where these concepts were grouped into broader clusters of meaning based on shared patterns. For instance, expressions of resistance to fast fashion were categorized under ‘rebellion behind uniqueness.’ Emotions expressed by participants were documented alongside codes to enrich the interpretive depth. Themes were iteratively refined by comparing coded segments and ethnographic observations, culminating in a thematic map that captured seven distinct meaning clusters aligned with the research objectives.

The analysis was theoretically grounded in Shove et al.’s (2012) tripartite framework of practice—comprising materials/place, competence/social norms, and meanings/values—and Bourdieu’s (2020) categorization of meaning. This framework guided the abstraction of symbolic and economic meanings from elements such as retail spaces, consumer experiences, and emotional narratives. For example, storefront designs and participant reflections on thrift were analyzed as material and meaning components, respectively, to construct themes like ‘complicated sustainability.’ Data analysis occurred concurrently with collection, allowing emerging insights to inform subsequent interviews and observations. Collection ceased once thematic saturation was achieved, ensuring all identified meanings—such as ‘self-freedom’ and ‘internal cycles based on emotional relationships’—were fully represented and aligned with the study’s aim to explore the complexity of second-hand clothing consumption practices.

4. Results

The insight and interpretation of the meanings reflected in second-hand clothing consumption is central to this study, in which we draw on the interpretation of consumer discourse and the analysis of spatial images to present the main findings in this section.

4.1 *The meanings of active choice and reflective lifestyle*

This study reveals that second-hand clothing consumption redefines value beyond cost-saving, challenging the low-income stereotype. Consumers prioritize use and economic value, enabling freer, deliberate choices over social status. This practice also reflects a smart lifestyle strategy, balancing financial pressures like educational loans with clothing desires, as evidenced below:

“...you know mothers and families that want in just a cheap kind of alternative, perhaps which might find shopping in charity shops to save money or shopping bitty

shops, because they want their quality or better value for the money. And same thing, students often don't have tons of money to spend on clothing. So vintage is a great way to change up your wardrobe without putting a huge pressure in your student loan." --P011, Female, 30s, Academic.

This study also found that the pursuit of branded products is not simply behind showy consumption, but also that it may be that brand loyalty undermines consumers' judgement of first-hand or second-hand, and that the pursuit of big brands is therefore an extension of the brand's meaning, and that this is an example of consumers' smart shopping, as they spend less on what they like: *"I often buy fat face. If I see a good fat face dress in a second-hand shop, I probably will but it."* --P011, Female, 30s, Academic. Similar to the sense of choice presented by second-hand branded clothing, this sense of choice gives consumers the opportunity to implement consumption according to their own assessment of the value of the product and their lifestyle:

"And it's not about money because she has enough money and she's got a good job at the council. But she says, 'I just buy all my work clothing at the charity shop because I don't even like wearing them.' because she has to wear smart clothing so. She doesn't want to spend much money." -P018, Female, 30s, Corporate staff.

One finding that conflicts with so-called lower incomes was identified in this study among a group of middle-aged and older consumers. These consumers have a certain level of economic power and social status, but they consistently shop in charity shops, which some participants saw as a British cultural tendency and national character, a meaning shaped by British history:

"Perhaps because the war, WWII, cold war and something, the turbulence times in the war, old generation tend to avoid waste" --P007, Male, Mid 30s, Academic. When this reflection on the lives of fathers is interwoven with the consumption of second-hand clothing, it reflects the reflexive nature of the practice and may thus be combined into new types of practice:

"... like knitting, my grandma would knit clothing for everybody. So, when there's a baby born, she would net jumpers, everything. Then it starts to go down in my mom's generation... that's more sustainable, isn't it?... It's been worse for the environment in our generation, but maybe my children's generation, they're trying to bring it back the older ways. The more traditional the more we reuse, reduce, recycle" --P017, Female, 40s, Researcher.

Unlike the superficial low-price tendency, active choice and reflective lifestyle signify a deliberate re-evaluation of values, distancing from consumerism. Brand loyalty further encourages second-hand purchases, while regional habits distinguish this practice from mere thrift, highlighting its reflective depth.

4.2 The meaning of co-created vintage

While retro consumption is a recognized research category, this study views vintage as a co-created emotional and commercial meaning within practice

theory. It evokes nostalgia—defined by Sedikides et al. (2008) as affection for past lifestyles—serving as an emotional link to family and childhood, as evidenced below: *“Sometimes, old school style second-hand clothing can bring my memory with my father and brothers back home.”* --P020, Female, 20s, Corporate staff. Beyond emotion, vintage carries commercial significance, with London’s large second-hand markets branding themselves as ‘vintage markets’ (see Figure 1), reflecting a strategic business-consumer collaboration.



Figure 1. VINTAGE MARKET, This photograph was taken at SHS016 in London.

Some charity shops have also created a vintage meaning through their shop names and décor. Young people seem to be important agents within the field of this retro wave. Charity shops are not only creating a retro meaning but are also simultaneously attracting more young people into the shops, not only to spend money, but also to volunteer: *“We welcome more students to visit, and we also need more volunteers.”* --P031, Male, 20s, shop manager.

In this vintage tendency, many fashion brands opened up vintage lines for design and sale, a business practice that intertwined vintage clothing with a broad sense of fashion. At the same time, some emerging second-hand clothing shop owners are using a new vocabulary to describe the products they sell. They refer to second-hand clothing that is in line with current fashion trends as ‘modern second-hand/retro/vintage clothing’: *“This is not just vintage, I prefer to call them modern,*

modern vintage stuff. We have vintage, like clothing from 70s, 80s, we also have something new, the vintage stuff is more in line with current fashion trends.”--P034, Female, 20s, Entrepreneur. In this context, second-hand clothing seems to be the more generic language, but vintage is more than just so-called pure vintage, as these vintage clothing may only have been retired from high street fashion not so long ago:

“It just been taken to a second hand shop because clothing stores they only have a certain amount of space in their store, so want something goes out of fashion. A little like maybe they saw a fashion for 2 weeks. It has to go somewhere; it goes to the second-hand shops”--P020, Female, 20s, Corporate staff.

Moreover, the practitioners sift through the vast amount of second-hand clothing and label it as vintage, according to the aesthetics and fashion trends of young people:

“I would probably describe it as a more “modern” vintage store, rather than ‘old-fashioned’ or traditional vintage-something that would appeal to students and young people in Sheffield.” --P029, Female, 20s, Corporate staff.

Unlike the existing literature's definition of vintage, this study finds that in many scenarios of second-hand clothing consumption, vintage tends to be a textual expression of meanings co-created by sellers and buyers. In its narrow sense, vintage refers to historical products with aesthetic and evaluative thresholds. However, in this study, vintage encompasses personal habits and dependencies related to specific contexts and is also a marketing language and story created by merchants (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. This photograph was taken at SHS002 in Sheffield. The decoration of shop, from a vintage shop

4.3 The meanings of self-freedom

Unlike traditional commercialized clothing consumption, second-hand consumption is deeply embedded in community and lifestyle, fostering freedom, relaxation, and social bonds. In the UK, this manifests as family-oriented weekend activities at car-boot sales, as illustrated below:

"I would start on a Saturday regularly going walking down division street or things like that to get second-hand and look at things. And then as I've got older, I think when I was working full time, um, again, it was kind of like a relaxing hobby to do. Sometimes before I had children, I'd go to a different area sometimes and check out the charity shops in the area." --P017, Female, 40s, Researcher.

These second-hand clothing outlets can be used not only as family activities but also to reduce consumer anxiety. Whereas fast-fashion establishments are set up in such a way that consumers feel a great deal of pressure, second-hand clothing outlets are more casual and freer:

"I find fast fashion stores themselves to be very stressful, and I feel, you know, and they have horrible lighting and I don't enjoy the experience. I don't like being there. Um, and I kind of always leave feeling like an ugly, horrible person, not in terms of my ethics, in terms of like by how I actually look." --P005, Female, 30s, Corporate Staff.

Moreover, the places where second-hand clothing is consumed are often in specific communities, which, in the perspective of practice theory, are landscapes on the daily path of the practitioner, not the end of intend to do, which gives an unconscious freedom to the consumer's consumption itself: *"I tend to my Saturday morning routine tends to be, um, I go into crooks, which is where I live and just have a little pot around, have a coffee, and just go in and out of all of the different charity shops and just rummage around and see. So I might not need any clothing. I just think, oh, that's nice." --P011, Female, 30s, Academic.*

The leisure and entertainment attributes of second-hand clothing have been mentioned in existing literature. This study finds that some consumers have "de-commercialized" second-hand clothing stores. This significance not only highlights the social attributes of some second-hand clothing stores represented by charity shops but also emphasizes the community attributes of other second-hand clothing stores that are highly embedded in the community. This community attribute satisfies the entertainment aspect of consumption practices and frees consumers from standardized commercial environments.

4.4 The meaning of rebellion behind uniqueness

Much of the existing research mentions seeking for uniqueness as an important motivation for second-hand clothing consumption, but the meaning behind seeking for uniqueness is not explored. This uniqueness seems to be a combination of inherited characteristics from the hippie culture of the last century and a strong spirit of

rebellion. Boredom with and flight from similar fast-fashion products is the starting point for the uniqueness of second-hand clothing consumption:

"I just went there because I was going to charity shops because I like looking at different clothing and different varieties, whereas the high street, but like it was all the same" --P029, Female, 20s, Corporate staff.

These consumers often express these views with a clear sense of boredom and rebellion, a rebellion that cannot simply be understood as a rebellion against fashion, for it may also be a rebellion against the commercial environment, against being manipulated by it, so that second-hand clothing consumption is not just seeking for uniqueness, it is also a radical discourse expressing dissatisfaction with the modern environment:

"I like the fact that I can get items that are in the trends. I hate just wearing clothing that everyone's wearing. I don't want to be a sheep."--P020, Female, 20s, Corporate staff.

The rebellion against commercialized markets is amplified by second-hand shops' eclectic interiors, blending Western and non-Western styles with bohemian and hippie-inspired elements like 'love and sex' imagery (Hipplanet, 2020), starkly contrasting fast fashion's uniformity. Unlike prior studies treating uniqueness and rebelliousness separately, this research shows their interplay, resisting both fashion commerce and standardized retail norms. The diverse retail spaces further shape this meaning, warranting future study.

4.5 The meanings of complicated sustainability

Beyond uniqueness and rebellion, second-hand retail spaces emphasize sustainability through natural decor like live greenery and wooden walls, as seen in one sample shop. Recycled sawdust fitting rooms and explicit promotion of sustainable consumption reinforce this ethos. Yet, consumer discourse reveals a nuanced sustainability, where consuming less and resisting excess define a moderate approach, as shown below:

"Whether advocating the consumption of second-hand clothing or the extremes of vegetarians, these are not reasonable to me. It's just a matter of reducing consumption. No matter what, excessive is not good. Regardless of whether we eat meat or vegetarian food, whether it is buying new clothing or second-hand clothing, control our desires and do not overdo it." --P004, Male, 40s, Shop Owner.

Promoting sustainability through in-store advertising has become an in-store communication strategy for many second-hand clothing retailers. The interpretation of the meaning of sustainability also reflects the complexity of 'recycling', as these consumers see second-hand clothing as more consumable because of its recycled nature, and they see no problem in buying large quantities of clothing when there is a complete recycling system:

"I am really addicted to fashion items, and luckily we have charity shops and donation points, so we can buy what I like without guilty." --P003, Male, 70s,

Academic. Thus, unlike the significance of recycling, which may have a rebound effect, some consumers see sustainability in terms of extending the life cycle: *"I've got a jacket, a weather jacket from when I was in Sweden from 1979... but I wouldn't buy another weather suit because I don't need another weather suit."* --P003, Male, 70s, Academic.

While recycling is an important component of the 3Rs, in the sample for this study, 'reuse' and 'reduce' appear to be consistent at the level of interpretation of second-hand clothing consumption, while 'recycling' at the level of consumption may lead to the opposite result. Moreover, second-hand clothing consumption, at the level of sustainable meaning, again demonstrates a highly reflexive sense of practice, with some participants suggesting that prejudice against second-hand clothing has always existed, and that buying and wearing second-hand clothing once seemed to represent a low-income social dilemma, but that this act of consumption now seems similar to the underlying logic of Van Buren's show-off consumption, except that it "flaunts" sustainable attitudes and aspirations in life, rather than social class:

"When I wore second-hand clothing in the school, you can see many students just looked at me...It is really embarrassing...And so I became proud of it to a point that I would tell people that I'm buying second-hand clothing and telling people they must buy second-hand clothing', and that's because of what I study about the environment in the city." --P010, Female, 30s, Corporate staff.

Although sustainability is an important characteristic of second-hand clothing, this study finds that while the meanings of reuse and reduce may be consistent in terms of meaning construction, they might have opposite tendencies at the level of consumption practices. The attribute of reuse might stimulate consumers' desire to purchase. Additionally, the construction of sustainability as a meaning has become an attribute that can be "showcased," which to some extent separates the practice of second-hand clothing consumption from negative connotations such as low price and low income.

4.6 The meanings of internal cycles based on emotional relationships

This study also looks at the significance shown by the disposal phase in the study of second-hand clothing consumption as a whole. Many consumers emphasized that when they did not need the clothing, they would donate them to charity and never throw them in the trash. This view reinforces the sense of sustainability mentioned earlier. And behind this donation, there is still a reflective meaning reflected. Some consumers reflect on their consumption habits and make changes by clearing their clothing:

"...now if I see some things that I bought but are useless, I often think that if I didn't buy these things, money could be spent more meaningfully. ...I will often consider environmental issues and over-consumption issues that have been discussed in recent years."—P002, Female, 30s, PhD candidate.

Apart from donations, re-sale is also a solution. In addition, many consumers prefer to give their clothing to relatives and friends, or even swap them with friends. Some consumers even have special themed parties to swap their clothing:

“You know, we don't need to go out and buy something new because we are a big group of friends. And we have loads of things to share between us, because we're all kind of the same size.” --P009, Female, 30s, Academic.

In this context, clothing are imbued with emotional meaning and they embody a very close emotional distance. A consumer then imagines that his children will be able to wear his clothing in the future:

“I still have it, I kept this because I suppose I thought maybe one day my child might actually wear it or you know, it's a different way of looking at it, and keeping it, I suppose is a vintage piece, isn't it?” --P006, Male, 20s, Retailing.

When we realize the emotional significance of this, something interesting emerges from this study. When referring to how to dispose of clothing, one consumer made it clear that he had his own set of criteria and that this reassessment of the value of the clothing would influence the way he ended up disposing of them: *“I do sell some things on eBay. Very cheap, but just because I don't want to throw them away and I usually save up any money that I make from that I'll save up and then take on holiday or something like that. Yeah. I don't really throw anything away, and for clothing I think, they are good, but don't fit me anymore, I'll give to friends.”--P032, Female, 20s, Cafe waitress.* And it is not uncommon for such ties of emotional closeness and revaluation to be made: *“So she gives a big bag (of clothing) to my mom and says can you take that's all going to charity shop, but you look through it first and take what you want and then take the rest to charity shop.”--P017, Female, 40s, Researcher.* At this stage, the identity of the consumer changes from that of a mere consumer to that of a producer, and the emotional meaning they assign to the clothing and the emotional distance from the destination of the new clothing (charity shop, other purchasers, family/friends) determines the way in which they ‘produce’ them. Thus, dispositional behaviour not only gives consumers the opportunity to reinforce reflective meanings, but also allows them, as producers, to develop new practices based on the meanings they interpret.

Although donating clothing to charity is a form of sustainable consumption, this study finds that many consumers re-evaluate the value of their clothing in practice and give them to others based on the closeness of their relationships. In this process, they construct the identity and meaning of being a “producer”, enriching the scope of second-hand clothing consumption practices.

4.7 The meanings of marginalization

This study also revealed some very interesting phenomena. As the consumption of second-hand clothing has become more vintage and sustainable, they have gone

beyond their traditional status of being plain and have gone up in price. This increase in prices does not seem to come as a surprise to those involved:

"...vintage clothing have become very middle class and middle-class people got more disposable income..." --P004, Male, 40s, Shop Owner. But consumer responses were very different. The word 'ridiculous' was used by some consumers: *"I don't go to the charity shop anymore, you know, the price is ridiculous..." --P015, Female, Mid 50s, Retail staff;*

Some consumers have used 'crazy':

"so a lot of them have gone crazy high prices, there are some charity shops you can go to where the price is also..."--P030, Female, 40s, Cleaning staff.

In fact, most consumers consistently believe that second-hand clothing shops such as charity shops should be humane because they see them as positive unlike other clothing shops:

"I see it as I just say it as positive things. It's donating money to charity isn't as opposed to the fat cats who run the big companies. And I think it's a positive thing in that way."--P030, Female, 40s, Cleaning staff.

But the current rise in prices, in the context of Brexit and the economic downturn, seems to have lacked its human face and become the privilege of the rich, while filling many ordinary consumers with anxiety:

"But as we see, the change in price and the second-hand market is it? It's going more towards like vintage items and high end shoppers. It's quite worrying because these families who are of a working class, where would they go to shop you know and with the current political state in the UK with Brexist, and not knowing where our economy is going. A lot of families will be worried." --P020, Female, 20s, Corporate staff.

However, as previously analyzed, the new meanings constructed in the practice of second-hand clothing consumption have to some extent weakened its traditional attributes of low cost and social welfare. As implied by the "modern vintage" concept created by many merchants, the prices are not low. Even many charity shops have gradually increased their prices in their marketing activities, marginalizing a portion of consumers and leading these consumers to construct a sense of being marginalized.

5. Discussion

Through our research, we found that the meanings carried by second-hand clothing consumption are highly complex and variable, and that they reflect not only the shifting meanings that second-hand clothing has historically held, but also new zeitgeist and social-cultural idiosyncrasies. The study thus echoes Arnould and Thompson's (2005) call through CCT to focus on real consumer behaviour and gain insight into the meaning of consumption in dynamic markets and cultures. Moreover, second-hand clothing consumption, within the framework of sustainable consumption, symbolic meanings not only cannot be ignored (Camacho-Otero and Pettersen, 2018)

but even play an important role in the formation and growth of final practices. Through the analysis of participants' discourses and the interpretation of retail spaces, the meanings summarized in this study include the meanings of active choice and reflective lifestyle, co-created vintage, self-freedom, rebellion behind uniqueness, complicated sustainability, internal cycles based on emotional relationships and marginalization in second-hand clothing consumption practice.

The economic meanings seem to be consistent with previous research on the pursuit of low prices by consumers (Norum and Norton, 2017; Guiot and Roux, 2010). However, in the context of sustainable consumption and today's market trends, the motivation behind the pursuit of low prices, while still reflecting concerns about hygiene and the ills of the traditional second-hand clothing industry, at the same time presents the significance of consumers trying to take control of their right to choose. Consumers have reconstructed clothing and reinterpret its meaning, and this reinterpretation of meaning has allowed consumers to reassess the value they place on clothing, and as a result they see buying second-hand clothing as a very smart choice (Edbring *et al.*, 2016). Spending less on clothing is a 'restructuring of assets' for some consumers, so they can 'invest' in other things in their lives that they enjoy more. In addition, low prices and frugality seem to be a 'wisdom of the fathers' in the minds of today's consumers, who, having divested themselves of the frenzy of consumerism, are reflecting on their own consumption habits in second-hand clothing consumption, and thus consuming more sustainably. It can therefore be argued that second-hand clothing consumption gives consumers the opportunity to reflect, and therefore has a strong sense of reflection.

In terms of symbolic meanings, vintage is a term that is frequently referred to in the field of second-hand clothing research (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; DeLong *et al.*, 2005; Jenss, 2004). In this study, vintage is no longer a specific product with an authentic nature that requires a high aesthetic threshold (Beverland and Farelly, 2010), but a symbolic meaning co-created by consumers and practitioners in the field with a vintage look as a means of expression. It symbolizes consumer nostalgia, fashion aesthetics, and defiance. More importantly, this nostalgia and retro cannot be understood as a simple motive, but this study finds that this retro meaning is slowly growing in second-hand clothing consumption, that it is created by practitioners and consumers together, and that it is a co-created language of meaning based on adaptation to the new market environment and cultural context, in line with the narratives interpreted by the agents in the field when confronted with second-hand clothing consumption purpose. Thus, we can even understand the vintage in second-hand clothing consumption in relation to (Beverland and Farelly, 2010): whether it is authentic or not, if the consumer perceives it as vintage, it is. From this perspective, we can even understand consumers as so-called prosumers (Kessous *et al.*, 2016; Kotler, 2010), who are involved in the definition and design of products. In the power

that consumers display in second-hand clothing consumption, we are thus able to capture a rebellious sense of uniqueness and the consumer's quest for a freer lifestyle. We cannot therefore simply understand second-hand clothing consumption as a way for consumers to pursue entertainment (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Roux and Guiot, 2008), they are a rebellious gesture to relax (Camacho-Otero and Pettersen, 2018), and therefore simply understood as both entertainment-seeking and purely defiant motives is incomplete, as second-hand clothing consumption, in the narratives analyzed in this study, is a vehicle for social change (Kjellberg *et al.*, 2013), a secular arena with social and political implications. Furthermore, sustainability takes on a more complex meaning in second-hand clothing consumption, and we are therefore unable to simply define consumers' second-hand clothing consumption in pursuit of sustainability. Differences in consumers' interpretations of sustainability in second-hand clothing consumption can affect not only the way they consume but also the consequences of their consumption. Therefore, in order to further develop sustainable consumption, it is not enough to study the motivations alone; a deeper understanding of the meanings will allow us to more clearly map out the sustainability strands in consumption practices.

Finally, echoing the call of Turunen *et al.* (2018), this study also looks at the context of disposal in consumption. In this part of the analysis, we find that consumers assign a unique emotional meaning to products that have a different emotional distance from each other, a meaning that allows consumers to revalue second-hand clothing and thus influence their disposal behaviour. This finding is similar to Henninger *et al.* (2019) in exploring UK consumers' engagement in swap events in reassessing product value; it further enriches the context of this affective meaning and disposal hierarchy.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to a better understanding of the meanings presented in British second-hand clothing consumption in contemporary market and cultural contexts, allowing us to unpack the complex narratives underpinning consumer motivations through the lens of CCT and practice. It reveals, on the one hand, the new, complex, intertwined, and conflicting clusters of meanings that second-hand clothing consumption takes on in new contexts and, on the other hand, brings new insights into many of the inherited, "old" perspectives on second-hand clothing consumption through a new lens (Hungara and Nobre, 2021). Although this study has a limited sample size and focuses only on the UK market, its findings fill a gap in CCT's research on second-hand clothing and provide a new framework for future quantitative analysis and variable design.

Specifically, our first contribution is to reinterpret second-hand clothing consumption by combining CCT and practice theory perspectives. It enriches the application scenarios of CCT and practice theory and also provides new perspectives and directions for future research. Our second contribution is that this study enriches

the motivational and causal research that has dominated previous second-hand clothing studies by moving away from the limitations of the causal framework and discovering complex clusters of meanings behind seemingly simple motivations: impeding meanings, the meanings of active choice and reflective meanings, vintage as a co-created meaning, meanings of self-freedom, the unique meaning of rebellion, complex sustainability meanings, emotional meanings. These meanings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of specific consumption practices and provide new insights into the further development of sustainable consumption, thus offering the possibility of avoiding, to a certain extent, the intention-action gap in sustainable consumption. Our third contribution lies in our understanding of the language that carries meaning. They are linguistic expressions of complex groups of meanings, meanings co-created by various practitioners in the field, and the lack of clear boundaries between different motives because of the interweaving and sharing of meanings. While in practice, policymakers and practitioners should be clear about the use of the language of the market, we cannot ignore the power of the complex meanings behind this language.

The limitations of this study are primarily methodological. Since this study mainly employs qualitative methods, the researcher needs to deeply understand the meanings conveyed in the discourse of the research subjects. However, as the research team is not composed of British individuals, this cultural difference may affect the analysis and interpretation of the study. Additionally, there is still insufficient diversity in the sample, as consumer perceptions of price are influenced by factors such as income level and place of residence. Future research could focus on the relationship between location and second-hand clothing consumption. The study also includes some business samples, but the number of businesses that effectively participated is still limited. Future research could further analyze specific second-hand clothing consumption patterns, potentially expanding to explore the seller's perspective or retail models.

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Appendix 1 Interview protocol

1. Wardrobe

- (1) Could you please use a few words to describe your wardrobe?
- (2) Why do you use these words?
- (3) (*Pick up one randomly*) When was the last time you worn it? And why wouldn't wear it anymore?
- (4) Which is your favorite item in this wardrobe? And why?

2. Favourite

- (1) Could you please tell me why this one is your favourite?
- (2) Why did you buy it at that time?

3. Second-hand

- (1) Which one is your favourite second-hand clothes?
- (2) Could you please tell me why this is your favourite second-hand clothes?
- (3) Can you recall the scenes and related occasions when you first bought second-hand clothes?
- (4) Could you please tell me how often you buy second-hand clothes? and total spend?
- (5) What do you think about the current second-hand clothing market? is it getting popular?
- (6) What are the main barriers or difficulties for consumers to buy second-hand clothes?
- (7) Could you please use a few words or sentences to describe your current habit of buying clothes?
- (8) Could you please share your story about buying clothes in different stages of your life?
- (9) In terms of lifestyle, could you please describe your current lifestyle briefly?
- (10) In addition, what kind of lifestyle/life you are chasing for?

4. Places of practice

- (1) As a purchase habit, where do you usually get second-hand clothes from?
- (2) How do those shops/platforms influence your shopping experience?
- (3) Could you please use a few words to describe the most important factors that second-hand clothing channels attract you?
- (4) Normally, in what kind of occasions, you would wear second-hand clothes? and why?

5. Background knowledge

- (1) The first time you bought second-hand clothes, what did you know about them?
- (2) What about now? what do you know about them?
- (3) What's your opinion about the fashion industry's impact on society or environment?

- (4) What's your understanding about sustainability?
- (5) What do you think about ethical/green/sustainable consumption? Is second-hand clothing consumption included? Why?
- (6) Through buying second-hand clothes, do you consider yourself as ethical/green/sustainable consumer? and Why?
- (7) In your opinion, what are the most urgent needs of UK's society on sustainability?

6. Social/symbolic meanings

- (1) In your opinion, what do second-hand clothes mean to you?
- (2) What kind of consumers would likely to buy second-hand clothes? and why?
- (3) What do you think about the fashion trend currently? And do you think second-hand clothing fit that trend?

7. Social norm and value

- (1) Could you please briefly describe the habit of fashion purchase or dressing style of people you are familiar with?
- (2) Do you think how their habits or styles affect yours?
- (3) When you wear second-hand clothes, what were the reactions of people close to you?
- (4) In terms of current social/ecological issues surrounding the fashion industry, who do you think should be responsible for these? And why?

Appendix 2 Codes for observation data (Partial 2)



Appendix Figure 1: Photograph was taken at SHS002 in Sheffield

Appendix Table 1: Example of Observation data

Descriptive Notes (texts and photos)	Reflective Notes
1. Softer light	This light makes it easy to relax, but with some of the darker colours, it is somewhat difficult for consumers to identify period specific differences and quality flaws.
2. Cartoon character ornament	This ornamentation adds interest and shows uniqueness to the style of the shop.
3. Staff wearing diy second-hand denim jackets	This costume for the staff reinforces the shop's unique image and also acts as a 'walking' model to showcase the shop's clothing.
4. Stained wooden floor	The mottled wooden flooring conveys a vintage and welcoming atmosphere.
5. Animal specimens (not sure if they are genuine, they may be artefacts)	This ornamentation adds interest and shows uniqueness to the style of the shop.
6. Posters with nude elements	This poster conveys an element of youth and rebellion.
7. Small black sculpture	This sculpture conveys an element of uniqueness and rebellion.

8. Foreign cultural elements charm	This ornamentation adds interest and shows uniqueness to the style of the shop.
9. Poster for the 90's animated film Tom and Jerry	The content of animated films, which were popular worldwide in the 90s, can bring the shop closer to the consumer and add to the fun of the shop.

Response Letter for “Explore the meanings beyond motives behind second-hand clothing consumption practice: from the theory of practice perspective”

Manuscript No.: JFMM-05-2024-0196

Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management

Dear Editors and Reviewers,

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the time and effort you have dedicated to reviewing our manuscript. We appreciate the valuable feedback you have provided, which has been instrumental in improving the quality of our research.

We have carefully considered all the comments and suggestions provided and have made the revisions to the manuscript. We have marked the changes of the manuscript in **red color** to make them easy to identify.

Below, we provide a point-by-point response to the reviewers' comments. For your convenience, the *comments* from the review panel were adjusted in **italic** and our responses were provided in normal font in **blue color**. Thank you again for the valuable revision opportunity.

With deep gratitude,
The authors

Authors' Responses to Associate Editor's Comments

From Associate Editor :

Manuscript ID JFMM-05-2024-0196.R1 entitled "Explore the meanings beyond motives behind second-hand clothing consumption practice: from the theory of practice perspective" which you submitted to the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, has been reviewed. The comments of the reviewer(s) are included at the bottom of this letter. The reviewer(s) have recommended publication, but also suggest some minor revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the reviewer(s)' comments and revise your manuscript. To revise your manuscript, log into <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jfmm> and enter your Author Centre, where you will find your manuscript title listed under "Manuscripts with Decisions." Under "Actions," click on "Create a Revision." Your manuscript number has been appended to denote a revision. You will be unable to make your revisions on the originally submitted version of the manuscript. Instead, revise your manuscript using a word processing program and save it on your computer. Please also highlight the changes to your manuscript within the document by using the track changes mode in MS Word or by using bold or coloured text. Once the revised manuscript is prepared, you can upload it and submit it through your Author Centre. When submitting your revised manuscript, you will be able to respond to the comments made by the reviewer(s) in the space provided. You can use this space to document any changes you make to the original manuscript. In order to expedite the processing of the revised manuscript, please be as specific as possible in your response to the reviewer(s).

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manuscript. Please delete any redundant files before completing the submission.

Because we are trying to facilitate timely publication of manuscripts submitted to the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, your revised manuscript should be uploaded as soon as possible. If it is not possible for you to submit your revision in a reasonable amount of time, we may have to consider your paper as a new submission.

Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management and I look forward to receiving your revision.

Sincerely,
Assoc. Prof. Osmud Rahman
Associate Editor, Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management
orahman@torontomu.ca, osmudr123@gmail.com

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript and for the insightful feedback provided by the reviewers. We appreciate their constructive comments, which have significantly strengthened the paper. Below, we address each reviewer's comments on the methodology section, outlining our revisions and presenting the updated text. All changes are incorporated into the revised manuscript, with modifications highlighted for clarity.

Authors' Responses to Reviewers' Comments

From Reviewer #1:

Additional Questions:

3. Methodology: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?:

Gap and Research objectives should be clearly defined and presented as so, is not enough describe them.

We thank you for emphasizing the need to clearly define the research gap and objectives. We agree that a mere description was insufficient. To address this, we have revised the methodology section to explicitly state the research gap (the under-explored symbolic meanings beyond motivations in second-hand clothing consumption) and the primary objective (to interpret these meanings using practice theory within CCT), positioning them as the study's foundational rationale (Please refer to Page 7 for details).

The second-hand market provides a unique way of thinking about meaning and sustainability (Fahle et al., 2023). This study addresses a critical research gap in the literature: while prior studies on second-hand clothing consumption have predominantly focused on motivations and intentions, they often overlook the deeper, symbolic meanings embedded in consumption practices, leaving an unresolved motivation-behavior gap (Cooper, 2017; Lehner et al., 2016). The primary objective of this research is to explore and interpret the multifaceted meanings behind second-hand clothing consumption in the UK, beyond mere

motivational drivers, using the lens of practice theory within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) framework. This study aims to understand these practices qualitatively, rather than verifying logical relationships between behaviors.

What was the selection criteria for the interviews and the spaces?

We appreciate your suggestion to clarify the selection criteria. We have added specific details on the criteria for interview participants (e.g., British residency, experience with second-hand clothing) and observation spaces (e.g., representativeness of UK retail contexts), enhancing the transparency and replicability of our sampling approach (Please refer to Page 7 for details).

A total of 39 interview participants were recruited for this study (see Appendix 1). To align with the research objectives, the selection criteria for participants included: British residency, direct experience with second-hand clothing consumption (e.g., as buyers, donors, resellers, or industry workers), and willingness to share detailed personal narratives. No restrictions were placed on age, gender, occupation, or income to ensure a comprehensive exploration of meanings across diverse consumer groups. ... Additionally, we conducted non-participant observation over a one-year period in Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester, and London to collect ethnographic data. The observation sites were selected based on their representativeness of second-hand clothing consumption in the UK, including urban centers with diverse retail formats (e.g., charity shops, vintage markets) and varying socio-economic contexts.

When describing the methodology clearly referred to the clusters of meanings by their names.

We are grateful for this insightful comment. To strengthen the connection between methodology and results, we have revised the methodology section to explicitly name the clusters of meanings (e.g., 'active choice and reflective lifestyle,' 'co-created vintage') within the description of the reflexive thematic analysis process (Please refer to Page 7 for details).

Data analysis began with the interpretation of participants' discourse and ethnographic data. This study employed reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within second-hand clothing consumption practices. ... The RTA process followed five key steps: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading and listening to transcripts and field notes; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes by grouping codes into potential patterns; (4) reviewing and refining themes against the dataset; and (5) defining and naming the final themes, such as 'active choice and reflective lifestyle,' 'co-created vintage,' and others detailed in the results.

From Reviewer #2:

Comments:

The author has addressed most of the questions and concerns; however, further clarification is needed on the following points:

1. *Clearly explain the method of reflexive thematic analysis.*

We thank you for requesting a clearer explanation of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). We have added a detailed description of RTA, including its definition, rationale (flexibility and researcher subjectivity), and alignment with our constructivist paradigm, to provide a comprehensive understanding of its application (Please refer to Page 8 for details).

Data analysis began with the interpretation of participants' discourse and ethnographic data. This study employed reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within second-hand clothing consumption practices. RTA was selected for its flexibility and its emphasis on researcher subjectivity and reflexivity, which align with the constructivist paradigm underpinning this research. This approach prioritizes the researcher's active role in meaning-making, allowing for a nuanced exploration of symbolic and practical dimensions beyond predefined frameworks. The RTA process followed five key steps: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading and listening to transcripts and field notes; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes by grouping codes into potential patterns; (4) reviewing and refining themes against the dataset; and (5) defining and naming the final themes, such as 'active choice and reflective lifestyle,' 'co-created vintage,' and others detailed in the results.

2. *Describe how the coding was conducted and how data was categorized into various themes?*

We appreciate this comment and have expanded the methodology to detail the coding process (open coding followed by axial coding) and theme categorization, including an example (e.g., 'rebellion behind uniqueness') to illustrate how data was organized into thematic clusters (Please refer to Page 8 for details).

The coding and theme development process was conducted solely by the lead researcher using an inductive approach, ensuring themes emerged organically from the data rather than being imposed by pre-existing categories. ... Initial coding involved open coding of transcripts and ethnographic notes, identifying recurring concepts such as nostalgia, rebellion, and sustainability. This was followed by axial coding, where these concepts were grouped into broader clusters of meaning based on shared patterns. For instance, expressions of resistance to fast fashion were categorized under 'rebellion behind uniqueness.' Emotions expressed by participants were documented alongside codes to enrich the interpretive depth. Themes were iteratively refined by comparing coded segments and ethnographic observations, culminating in a thematic map that captured seven distinct meaning clusters aligned with the research objectives.

3. *Specify the number of researchers/coders involved in the coding process, and indicate whether an inductive, deductive or other coding method was used.*

Thank you for this suggestion. We have specified that coding was conducted by the lead

researcher alone, using an inductive approach, and provided a brief rationale (consistency with RTA and resource constraints) to ensure clarity and rigor (Please refer to Page 9 for details).

The coding and theme development process was conducted solely by the lead researcher using an inductive approach, ensuring themes emerged organically from the data rather than being imposed by pre-existing categories. This single-coder approach was adopted to align with the reflexive nature of RTA, which emphasizes the researcher's interpretative role, and due to resource constraints typical of an independent study. Initial coding involved open coding of transcripts and ethnographic notes, identifying recurring concepts such as nostalgia, rebellion, and sustainability.

4. *Explain the development process of the interview questions listed in Appendix 1.*

We are grateful for this feedback. We have added a concise explanation of the interview question development process, highlighting their theoretical grounding, iterative refinement through pilot testing, and focus on capturing symbolic and emotional meanings.

The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were developed iteratively, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of CCT and practice theory. Initial questions were designed based on key concepts such as materials, competences, and meanings (Shove et al., 2012) and refined through pilot interviews with five participants to ensure clarity and relevance to the research objectives. Adjustments were made to capture symbolic and emotional dimensions of consumption practices more effectively.

5. *Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?: The results are clear and adequate, though slightly lengthy.*

We thank you for noting the clarity and adequacy of the results while suggesting a reduction in length. To address this, we refined the "Results" section by streamlining each subsection (4.1 to 4.5) to enhance conciseness. Specifically, we shortened analysis segments by eliminating redundant descriptions and consolidated illustrative details, achieving an overall reduction of length across segments while preserving the analytical depth. Please see the details on page 9 (the first paragraph in 4.1), p10(the last paragraph in 4.1), p10 (the first paragraph in 4.2), p13(the first paragraph in 4.3), p14(the last paragraph in 4.4), p14(the first paragraph in 4.5).