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# Identifying the Barriers to Embracing Pre-owned Fashion

A Consumer Perspective

by

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## Abstract

**Title:** Identifying the Barriers to Pre-owned Fashion: A Consumer Perspective

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**Keywords:** Consumer Behavior, Pre-owned Shopping, Multichannel Retail

**Thesis Purpose:** This study aims to enhance the understanding of factors that discourage consumers from buying pre-owned fashion in a multichannel retail setting.

**Methodology:** Rooted in a qualitative and exploratory method, this study is further guided by an abductive approach. By embracing the essence of the social constructivist epistemology and a relativistic ontological standpoint, it delves into the intricate nuances of consumer behavior.

**Theoretical Perspective:** An extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior which additionally includes disruptions and Self-identity lays the foundation for this study. Additional theories regarding sustainable consumption and consumer behavior further support the research.

**Empirical Data:** The empirical material consists of eight semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with female participants in the age range of 22-26 years old. The data is presented according to the themes identified and whether the barrier is internal or external.

**Findings/Conclusions:** The study emphasizes the dynamic and multidimensional nature of the planned behavior process, where past experiences and barriers can influence decision-making within the second-hand and vintage market. The findings suggest that a key barrier is the considerable amount of investment of time and effort required during the shopping process. The importance of quality assurance and presentation online is accentuated due to the absence of physical interaction. Consequently, stemming from online and offline shopping, clear return and exchange policies are crucial. It was further found that there is a lack of information and awareness regarding the items and the market, resulting in misconceptions and uncertainty.

**Practical Implications:** This study offers four key recommendations to second-hand and vintage retailers which includes: improving customer experience, eliminating negative stereotypes, fostering trust in online platforms, and employing appropriate marketing strategies. Adopting these strategies could enhance pre-owned fashion consumption, improve customer engagement, and mitigate common retail disruptions in online and offline stores.



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Alicia Larsson



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Lund, 31st of May

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# 1. Introduction

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*The introductory chapter provides an overview of the study by first presenting a background of sustainable fashion consumption and related consumer behavior, followed by an explanation of the contemporary second-hand and vintage market. Afterward, the formulation of the research problem will be highlighted in a problem discussion based on existing research, leading to the development of research questions and the purpose of the report. The chapter proceeds to identify delimitations and furthermore clarify the study's practical and theoretical contribution. The chapter concludes with an outline of the report's structure.*

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## 1.1 Background

The global impact of Western consumption patterns cannot be overlooked, as their unsustainable nature poses a threat to the planet's future. This reality is exemplified by the fact that if the entire world were to consume in the same manner as the Swedish population, it would require 3.25 earths to sustain such a lifestyle (Gullstrand Edbring, Lehner & Mont, 2016). This is mainly due to the fashion industry being recognized as one of the most environmentally damaging industries due to its linear production process that entails high energy and raw material consumption and waste generation (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). In today's society, sustainability and fashion are often viewed as contradictory. While fashion is characterized by short life cycles, sustainability emphasizes longevity (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). This inherent discord has implications for our planet, with contemporary research predicting a rise in the negative environmental impacts of this industry in the upcoming decades (UNECE, 2018). Unfortunately, this increase in consumption has been accompanied by a decrease in the lifespan of each garment, with up to 40 percent of the apparel in our closets rarely seeing the light of day (UNECE, 2018). This reality exacerbates the issue of excessive clothing waste, highlighting the urgent need for consumers to be more mindful of their shopping practices and the industry's impact (UNECE, 2018; Spangenberg & Lorek, 2019). The ongoing overshooting of planetary boundaries demands attention and exploration through an academic lens, making it a crucial area of investigation for any scholar committed to advancing the field of alternatives to unsustainable consumption.

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 16).

Embracing sustainable consumption practices, such as shopping second-hand and vintage, has evolved as an effective approach as society places greater emphasis on achieving sustainability (Chua, Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020). As the market evolves, decision-makers no longer have direct contact with consumers leading to firms spending huge amounts of money to understand consumer behavior (Kotler, 1965). Given the continually evolving nature of market dynamics, it was recognized six decades ago that understanding the motivations driving consumer purchasing decisions constituted a challenging task (Kotler, 1965). In the contemporary retail

landscape, this remains a challenging endeavor (Arenas-Gaitán, Sanz-Altamira & Ramírez-Correa, 2019). On that note, Soron (2010) emphasizes the need to reconsider consumption habits and shift attention to the drivers that either permit or restrain individuals from consuming sustainably. Kahneman (2011) continues and underscores the complexity involved in human decision-making processes, illustrating that they are not solely rooted in rationality. Instead, these processes are notably shaped by a myriad of psychological elements. Throughout the buying journey, consumers encounter various influences that navigate through their psychological framework, ultimately leading to actual buying decisions (Kotler, 1965). For instance, Seo and Kim (2019) state that from a consumer viewpoint, those who value sustainability are more inclined to purchase from second-hand and vintage stores than those who are indifferent towards sustainability. Given variations in consumer behavior, this study aims to examine planned consumer behavior within the specific context of second-hand and vintage shopping.

### 1.1.1 The Contemporary Second-hand and Vintage Market

Physical retail stores have a longstanding history, and their tangible setting and the presence of physical merchandise, sales associates, and social interaction with other customers have been considered advantageous (Schramm, Swoboda & Morschett, 2007). In the last decade, there has been a significant surge in the consumption of second-hand and vintage goods in the global market, attributed to various changes in the marketplace (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Padmavathy, Swapana & Paul, 2019; Seo & Kim, 2019). Despite the benefits of physical stores, online second-hand and vintage shopping has become the most rapidly expanding sector in the global online shopping industry (Fernando, Sivakumaran & Suganthi, 2018; Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016). According to Padmavathy, Swapana, and Paul (2019), this trend has been driven by the rise of collaborative consumption, which has been facilitated by the emergence of new technologies that allow individuals to connect more easily. In contemporary consumer society, the second-hand market has emerged as a multichannel retail environment to keep up with the competitive retailing landscape (Padmavathy, Swapana & Paul, 2019). Despite the industry's immense expansion, customers have remained hesitant to buy second-hand and vintage clothing (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019).

## 1.2 Research Problem

As global consumption continues to surge, there is a concurrent rise in consumers' level of social consciousness (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Padmavathy, Swapana & Paul, 2019; Abbes, Hallem & Taga, 2020; Mohammad, Quoquab & Mohamed Sodom, 2021). Individuals are becoming increasingly aware of the implications their consumption patterns can have on the world and are taking greater responsibility for their social impact (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Leonidou, Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2022). As awareness grows, leading to a surge in the market for second-hand and vintage fashion (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Padmavathy, Swapana & Paul, 2019; Seo & Kim, 2019), there is a corresponding rise in the amount of literature focused on sustainable consumption. The existing body of literature on

second-hand and vintage fashion has primarily focused on understanding the motivations behind purchasing second-hand and vintage items (Roux & Guiot, 2008; Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Williams & Paddock, 2003). However, this focus overlooks an essential aspect of consumer behavior – the reason why individuals choose not to purchase second-hand and vintage fashion.

Connell (2010) has previously noted a scarcity of research concerning the barriers to sustainable clothing consumption. Since then, the body of literature on the obstacles has increased. A majority of studies in this domain have predominantly centered around green products and have examined the relationship between environmental concerns and consumption (Borusiak, Szymkowiak, Lopez-Lluch & Sanchez-Bravo, 2021; Park, Kwon, Zaman & Song, 2020; Ellen, 1994). Other researchers have focused on the social stigma surrounding second-hand shopping (Valor, Ronda & Abril, 2022), interventions for retailers and consumers (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016), barriers to purchasing second-hand in the form of furniture (Gullstrand Edbring, Lehner & Mont, 2016), the symbolic and psychological aspects to motivations and rejections of used fashion (Roux & Korchia, 2006) or only used a single channel, online-perspective (Padmavathy, Swapana & Paul, 2019; Brand, Jacobs & Taljaard-Swart, 2023; Chen, Zheng, Xu, Liu & Wang, 2018). Furthermore, while some research has centered solely on second-hand fashion (Herjanto, Scheller-Sampson & Erickson, 2016; Hristova, 2019), other researchers have had vintage fashion as their main focus (Stolz, 2022). In addition, previous studies lack the ability to capture the flexibility of perceptions and interpretative nature by using quantitative methods (Wang, Fu & Li, 2022; Seo & Kim, 2019; Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021; Henninger & Singh, 2017).

Despite the growing body of literature on sustainable consumption and consumer behavior, there remains a gap in understanding the motivations and attitudes behind individuals' decisions not to purchase second-hand and vintage fashion, regardless of the available channels – online and offline. There is especially a scarcity of research investigating the various consumer attitudes in contemporary society, indicating that newly emerged technologies and platforms provide a multitude of alternatives to engage in second-hand and vintage consumption. It is important to recognize that consumer behavior is constantly evolving, and the existing literature may not adequately reflect the developments and shifting preferences regarding second-hand and vintage shopping. Whereas understanding why individuals purchase second-hand and vintage, it is increasingly essential to understand why they refrain and the expected behaviors and barriers. Previous empirical studies have overlooked the role of consumers' anticipated behavior, which entails a need for a more focused and in-depth exploration of consumers' barriers when they plan to shop second-hand and vintage. Hence, this study seeks to broaden the understanding of planned behavior and barriers to second-hand and vintage shopping. By incorporating the concept of self-identity into the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to capture the diversity of behavioral intentions, the aim is to fill this missing piece in literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study will be the first to embrace the extended model to identify the barriers of consumers in the market of used fashion in a multichannel context. To capture the breadth of second-hand and vintage fashion consumption, the term "*pre-owned*" consumption is embraced.

### 1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to identify the barriers that prevent consumers from purchasing pre-owned fashion. More specifically, this research aims to identify the shortcomings in a multichannel retail environment to enable tailored intervention to the target areas of concern. The framework will draw inspiration from an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior, investigating the dimensions preventing consumers from purchasing pre-owned fashion.

To fulfill the aim of the study, the following research questions are developed:

**RQ1:** *What are the barriers that limit consumers' adoption of pre-owned shopping in a multi-channel retail environment?*

**RQ2:** *How do these barriers affect the motivation to engage in pre-owned shopping behavior?*

### 1.4 Delimitations

This study focuses on fashion based on two considerations. First, due to the high volatility of fashion trends (Reynolds, 1968; Holland & Jones, 2017). Fashion items quickly become outdated even when they are in good physical condition as consumers rather seek to be fashionable than value the products' durability, leading to a high level of donation of fashion items at second-hand and vintage stores (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). Second, considering that the consumer decision-making process varies across product categories (Seo & Kim, 2019), the intention is to capture multiple product categories within fashion by employing the inclusive words 'fashion' and 'apparel'. In this research, these are assumed to encompass clothing, shoes, and accessories. By using the term, it is possible to acknowledge the diverse range of options available and avoid limiting the focus to a specific product category.

In this study, sustainable shopping behaviors will be investigated, focusing on two main types – second-hand and vintage shopping. For simplicity, the term “pre-owned shopping” will be used to refer to these practices throughout the research collectively. The decision to group these two forms of shopping is based on their similar characteristics and overlap in contemporary retail channels, with vintage items often being found in second-hand stores (Seo & Kim, 2019).

### 1.5 Intended Contribution

From a theoretical perspective, this research aims to contribute to and enrich the literature related to consumer behavior concerning sustainable consumption. Herein, this study extends Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior by incorporating self-identity. This additional factor may make it possible to capture self-perception and past behavior in the exploration of

barriers to pre-owned fashion. The application of the extended framework is particularly valuable since existing literature has primarily focused on consumers' motivations for buying pre-owned clothing, neglecting the barriers that may hinder their adoption of such items. By shedding light on these barriers, the research aims to fill a gap in the literature and enhance the understanding of pre-owned consumption. Moreover, the study considers the contemporary retail landscape across multiple channels, providing a more holistic view of the topic. This comprehensive approach allows researchers to explore the dynamics between consumers, pre-owned fashion, and on- and offline channels available to consumers.

From a managerial perspective, this research aims to provide valuable insights to practitioners in the retail industry. By identifying the barriers that discourage consumers from purchasing pre-owned fashion, practitioners can gain a better understanding of consumer behavior within the field and develop effective and more tailored retail strategies to capture this market segment and address consumer concerns. The findings and contributions of this research can possibly apply and serve as guidance for other fashion retailers in similar contextual settings. Herein, the strategies to promote pre-owned fashion align with the broader goal of sustainable consumption. Encouraging consumers to choose pre-owned items over new products can reduce waste, promote circularity, and support the retailers' humanitarian missions. Therefore, the findings can guide practitioners in developing retail strategies that drive sales and, at the same time, foster sustainable and responsible consumption practices.

## 1.6 Outline of the Research

<b>Introduction</b>	The opening chapter offers an overview of the study, beginning with a brief on sustainable consumption and its academical relevance. It presents the research questions and the report's purpose and continue to outline the study's scope. It also identifies an unexplored area that the report aims to fulfill, including its practical implications. Finally, it summarizes the report's layout.
<b>Theoretical Review</b>	This chapter starts and uncover the journey of pre-owned fashion and dives into motives for why people consume pre-loved clothing. Furthermore, the chapter delves into key literature to ensure the study uses relevant theories and concepts. First, it explores barriers to sustainable fashion adoption. Then, it introduces the Theory of Planned Behavior as the research guide. Lastly, it discusses the relevance of Self-Identity's, concluding with a conceptual framework
<b>Methodology</b>	The methodology chapter provides a detailed roadmap of the qualitative research process and starts by explaining the chosen scientific and research approach, continuing with a description of the process of sample selection and the methods used for data processing and analysis. The section concludes by discussing limitations, ethical considerations, and quality.
<b>Analysis of Empirical Findings</b>	This chapter presents and analyzes relevant empirical data in the themes identified when sorting the material. The empirical data is structured into external and internal barriers supplemented by subcategories.
<b>Discussion</b>	This chapter showcases the results along with the extended Theory of Planned Behavior. Supporting research will shed additional light on the theoretical underpinnings of barriers against pre-owned fashion. The discussion is based on the four primary concepts identified in the conceptual framework.
<b>Conclusion</b>	In the concluding chapter, the analytical findings are synthesized and tied back to the introduction chapter. The discussion concludes with suggestions for further research in the particular field.

Figure 1. Outline of the Research

## 2. Theoretical Review

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*This chapter introduces pre-owned fashion consumption development and the motivations behind individuals' second-hand and vintage preferences. Furthermore, it delves into the literature to ensure the study utilizes relevant theories. First, it explores the obstacles hindering consumers from adopting sustainable fashion practices. Then, the Theory of Planned Behavior is introduced as a guiding principle for the investigation. Finally, the chapter examines the notion of self-identity, which enhances the Theory of Planned Behavior in this study, ending with a presentation of the conceptual framework.*

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### 2.1 The Emergence of Pre-owned Consumption

The trend of fast fashion is shifting as a result of the European Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan, which seeks to transition to a more sustainable economy – resulting in consumers increasingly demanding sustainable and responsible products (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). When environmental issues first came to the public's notice in the early 1960s, second-hand shopping began to emerge. However, these clothing items were often perceived negatively and associated with hippie culture, tie-dye patterns, and unsuitable for mainstream consumers (Henninger & Singh, 2017). In the twenty-first century, there has been a shift in societal values towards sustainability (Henninger & Singh, 2017), which has led to the emergence of vintage fashion as a growing trend in both Western nations and developing nations (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). The act of consuming fashion products is often seen as a means for individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, or desired social image. Herein, the consumption of sustainable alternatives has received increasing attention (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016). In response to this cultural shift, there is an increasing demand for sustainably produced and designed clothing items prioritizing longevity over disposability (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021).

With the growing prevalence of sustainable shopping, companies are undergoing a significant business transformation that involves the development of novel products and manufacturing systems with a circular approach (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). Businesses are driving this change to improve the value of their goods and obtain a competitive advantage in the market, subsequently boosting their profitability (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). Notably, the growth of social media platforms and online marketplaces has made second-hand and vintage more accessible than ever before, facilitated by the customer-to-customer platforms provided by e-commerce companies (Padmavathy, Swapana & Paul, 2019). Moreover, retailers have taken note, with an increasing number of incorporating pre-owned products into their business models (Henninger & Singh, 2017). In a recent move, H&M (2021) revolutionized the customer experience by offering a careful selection of pre-owned items from Sellpy on its website. Meanwhile, luxury brands such as Ralph Lauren have jumped on the vintage movement, adding unique pieces to their collections (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). Some thrift stores have also entered the battle by rebranding as “vintage” stores, regardless of the vintage characteristics of their merchandise (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). As a result,



there are now more sustainable shopping choices available to customers thanks to the booming second-hand market.

Consequently, the media has overused the term “vintage” to describe clothing from past collections without any specific timeframe or context other than not being part of the current season (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). In terms of pre-owned fashion, it is important to note that any previously worn items, regardless of their age, fall into the category of second-hand. In addition, it is noteworthy that the term “vintage” is not exclusively dependent on whether it has previously been worn or not. Instead, the age or rarity of the collections also plays a crucial role in classifying them as vintage (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). Despite their occasional use as interchangeable terms, Seo and Kim (2019) have distinguished between second-hand and vintage fashion. The distinction is not only conceptual but also operational. Second-hand fashion encompasses apparel that have been previously worn and are offered at a lower cost. On the other hand, vintage fashion represents unique fashion pieces that originate from a particular historical period or represent specific past fashion trends and are typically found in limited quantities (Seo & Kim, 2019). Additionally, the reasons behind purchasing these two types of fashion are different. While low prices are the driving force behind second-hand fashion, vintage fashion is often chosen for self-expression purposes. Despite the disparity between the two concepts in academic literature, this study will examine both under the umbrella term of *pre-owned*.

## 2.2 Motivations for Sustainable Fashion Consumption

In the field of vintage consumption, nostalgia has been identified as a significant motivator for individuals to engage with this form of pre-owned shopping (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012; Borusiak et al., 2021). This nostalgia is often linked to positive memories associated with certain eras or styles. Additionally, the desire for uniqueness and fashion involvement are also motivators for vintage consumption (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). Although this may be true, other scholars recognize that, in both second-hand and vintage shopping, eco-consciousness has emerged as a significant driver, with individuals opting for pre-owned items as a means of reducing their environmental impact (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012; Borusiak et al. 2021). Overall, the literature suggests that individuals engage with pre-owned shopping for a multitude of reasons, highlighting the complexity of consumer motivations in this field.

On another note, the main and interconnected factors influencing pre-owned consumption are frequently described as being economical and recreational motives (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Guiot & Roux, 2010; Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). With an additional category, Guiot and Roux (2010) classify pre-owned shopping motivations into three categories: economic, recreational, and critical. To build upon this, Ferraro, Sands, and Brace-Govan (2016) identify a fourth essential motivation to be included, namely fashion.

### *Economic Motives*

Motivations for shopping for pre-owned fashion are primarily driven by economic factors such as price consciousness. Consumers often seek a fair price, enjoy the satisfaction of finding a bargain, and manage their budgets by prioritizing expenses and appraising prices across different types of purchases. The lower cost of pre-owned goods, in comparison to new goods, also creates indirect price discrimination and attracts thrifty consumers (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Guiot & Roux, 2010; Borusiak et al., 2021; Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012).

### *Recreational Motives*

Recreational motives, on the other hand, involve the act of treasure hunting, originality, stimulation, social interaction, and nostalgic pleasures. Additionally, the experience of browsing, bargaining, and breaking away from daily routine are pleasures that are uniquely offered by second-hand and vintage retailers and are seen as a hedonic process at the heart of shopping pre-owned fashion (Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012; Guiot & Roux, 2010). Although social pressure exists to purchase new clothing (Connell, 2010), pre-owned consumption has attracted a community of enthusiasts and collectors who enjoy the thrill of the hunt and the possibility of finding items that represent their identity. This is mainly due to the distinctive features of pre-owned shopping, including improvisatory product sales and theatricality (Belk, 2001).

### *Critical Motives*

The critical motives for pre-owned consumption involve the process of consumers distancing themselves from the mainstream market due to moral or ethical reasons (Roux & Korchia, 2006). These include that customers refrain from a wasteful consumer society with a “throw-away” culture (Borusiak et al., 2021; Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016). On the other hand, ethics and ecology allow consumers to practice sustainable and conscious consumption practices. This has created a sustainable movement that expresses their concerns regarding excessive, wasteful, and environmentally harmful consumption practices (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Henninger & Singh, 2017).

### *Fashion Motives*

Moreover, the appeal of pre-owned clothing has grown considerably in the fashion community due to a demand for originality and authenticity (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). Ferraro, Sands and Brace-Govan (2016) found that fashion-conscious consumers perceive pre-owned clothing as an expression of authenticity and uniqueness. Simultaneously, an increasing amount of conscious consumers gravitate towards online retailers selling pre-owned fashion in their pursuit of timeless styles (Zaman, Park, Kim & Park, 2019). Complementing this, Aycock, Cho and Kim (2023) revealed that the drive to stay fashionable often outweighs economic considerations when millennials and Gen Z consumers shop for pre-owned items online. This motivation is strengthened by the desire to adhere to certain trends while simultaneously developing a singular and personalized fashion sense, thereby differentiate themselves from the mainstream (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016). Cervellon, Carey and Harms (2012) further distinguish fashionability from the act of treasure hunting. Here, ‘treasure hunting’ embodies the pursuit of unique pieces in second-hand

and vintage shopping, whereas consumers engaged in fashion tend to favor vintage apparel due to their trend-setting potential.

## 2.3 Barriers to Shopping Pre-owned Items

The previous chapter highlighted studies focusing on why people opt for second-hand and vintage clothing. However, the subject is more complex, with numerous obstacles standing in the way of fully embracing sustainable fashion habits. In accordance with Stern and Oskamp (1987), the identified barriers to sustainable consuming behavior in the literature will herein be categorized as external and internal. These categorizations are also discovered by Connell (2010), who, along with Stern and Oskamp (1987), highlights the scarcity of research on the barriers to pre-owned clothing consumption. While external factors are more generalized influences that are typically outside an individual's control, internal elements are specific to an individual and include personal attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge (Stern & Oskamp, 1987).

### 2.3.1 External Barriers

When it comes to external barriers to pre-owned fashion, there are numerous factors out of the consumer's control hindering the adoption (Connell, 2010). These external obstacles include concerns about quality and cleanliness, limited financial resources for more expensive sustainable clothing, inadequate availability of options in terms of stores, styles, sizes, and fit, as well as unappealing presentations of items, lack of information, stigma, and the time-consuming nature of pre-owned consumption (Ekström, 2012; Connell, 2010; Gao, Zhang, Wang & Ba, 2012). These external barriers will be explored further in the following discussion.

#### *Consumers' Uncertainty About Quality and Cleanliness in Sustainable Fashion*

Consumer uncertainty about knowledge, evaluation, and decision-making has led to ethical compromises among ethically-minded shoppers when buying fashion. Whereas there is extensive information on how to extend the life of clothing online, it is arguably more challenging for consumers to evaluate the quality and durability of fashion at the time of purchase. Customers frequently evaluate the quality of an item based on its texture and consumers generally perceive pre-owned clothing items as inferior (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016). Wang, Fu, and Li (2022) even mentioned that the stigma associated with pre-owned clothing, unclear origins, unsanitary conditions, and the embarrassment of shopping at second-hand stores are recognized as major barriers. Brand, Jacobs, and Taljaard-Swart (2023) and Roux and Korchia (2006) suggest that this apprehension stems from the personal nature of clothing since it has been in direct contact with another individual's skin.

By definition, second-hand clothing is suspect because it has already been on other people's bodies; it has been strangers' possession. No matter how thoroughly it has been washed, second-hand clothing records the trace of other bodies, other smells, other shapes. (Rulikova, 2020, p. 180)

Rulikova (2020) primarily suggested that this behavior holds true for physical stores where customers selectively inspect the items. However, she continues and asserts that apprehensions about cleanliness stretch beyond shopping in physical stores and observed similar patterns in online channels, which confirmed the fear of wearing fashion that has been especially close to another individual's body. Moreover, Roux and Korchia (2006) revealed that concerns regarding potential infection, health, and safety risks are also prevalent among customers of both physical and online second-hand and vintage clothing stores, particularly concerning items such as underwear. The presence of perceived or actual bodily traces on used clothing, including sweat stains or odors, may be interpreted as an unpleasant assertion of the previous owner's territory, leading to a prohibition against re-use (Roux & Korchia, 2006). Interestingly, this phenomenon of positive contamination is observed when clothing is obtained from family members, friends, or loved ones.

### *The Impact of Price*

Cost is often identified as a barrier to sustainable fashion, particularly when people do not see a clear environmental benefit or value for their money. However, if consumers believe tangible benefits justify the higher price, they may be more willing to pay a premium price (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). Research shows that financial incentives can sometimes overshadow other motivations, such as ethics or personal responsibility (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016). In fact, 30% of consumers prioritize price over ethical concerns, even when they are aware of issues such as child labor. To encourage sustainable behavior, the perceived value must outweigh the costs compared to other alternatives (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021).

Furthermore, some studies suggest consumers are more interested in second-hand goods for environmental and financial reasons, particularly when they cannot afford new items (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016; Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). On this note, Wang, Fu, and Li (2022) point out that buying used clothing can be seen as a sign of financial struggle, and the associated stigma could discourage people from participating. Although some researchers argue that eco-friendly products tend to be more expensive than new mass-produced items, Blas Riesgo, Lavagna, and Codina (2023) note that the shrinking price gap between new and used clothing has actually boosted interest in fast fashion. Connell (2010) agrees that sustainable products are becoming less accessible to consumers, leading many to view sustainable fashion as a luxury that is out of reach due to higher prices (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019).

### *Concerns Regarding Availability*

Connell (2010) further elaborates on the limited availability of stores selling pre-owned apparel as a barrier to the expanding phenomenon of sustainable consumption. Blas Riesgo, Lavagna, and Codina (2023) concur, disclosing that a majority of their study's participants underscored the absence of second-hand stores nearby as a problem for them. In addition, Connell (2010) identifies the restricted availability of clothing items possessing desired attributes, particularly size, as a substantial obstacle, rendering them less competitive than brand-new fashion.

Furthermore, Brandão and Gonçalves da Costa (2021) emphasize the role of clothing as a means of self-expression imbued with social implications. They argue that attributes such as style, fit,

and quality are not commonly associated with sustainable fashion, sustaining the stigma that environmentally conscious clothing is unappealing, monotonous, or that it offers limited options. Consequently, negative perceptions of product attributes and variety may correlate with unfavorable attitudes, diminished social pressure, and a sense of decreased control over the challenges associated with engaging in sustainable fashion consumption (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). This, in turn, leads to inconvenience, as consumers who encounter difficulties in locating suitable clothing items are less likely to embrace sustainable fashion and may revert to consuming from mainstream stores (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021).

#### *Poor Product Presentation of Second-hand and Vintage Retail*

Connell (2010) underscores the increasing attention applied by contemporary consumers in their purchasing decisions and emphasizes that consumer attitudes are influenced by their experiences. To enhance customer experiences, both online and offline, retailers must provide comprehensive information on quality, assurances of product integrity, brand choices, and user-friendly product categorization to facilitate an improved understanding of available merchandise. Whereas some consumers enjoy the offered environment often showcased in second-hand and vintage stores, the layout and organization of the store can lead consumers to refrain (Connell, 2010). In terms of in-store merchandising, Connell (2010) identified barriers, including organization and specifically that second-hand stores appeared as big barns, not offering a pleasurable shopping experience, and the opportunity to find things is limited. Sorensen and Johnson Jorgensen (2019) reinforce this viewpoint, arguing that consumers tend to criticize stores offering pre-owned garments as they tend to have unpleasant odors, damaged clothing, and a disorganized store appearance.

#### *Availability of Information*

In the field of e-commerce, the arrangement and display of merchandise necessitate distinct considerations, primarily addressing informational insufficiencies (Gao et al., 2012). Consumer impressions are influenced by prior encounters (Hristova, 2019). To enhance customer experiences within both digital and in-store domains, it is essential for retailers to provide detailed and high-quality information, covering aspects such as product features, quality guarantees, and user-focused categorization based on personal preferences. This strategy enables consumers to better understand the available products. Information quality can be understood as the extent to which a product's informational components contribute to the facilitation of decision-making processes (Gao et al., 2012). Additionally, the accessibility of this information pertaining to the product plays a crucial role in shaping the seller's reputation, subsequently influencing consumer attitudes toward the retailer (Chen et al. 2018). It is important to note that Gao et al. (2012) contend that an overabundance of information may confuse consumers when making choices, leading to the recommendation that the provision of high-quality data should take precedence over sheer volume in order to influence consumer behavior positively. The inherent attributes may prove difficult to process in the context of products, necessitating personal engagement for comprehensive evaluation (Gao et al. 2012). Consequently, the online acquisition of such products presents a multifaceted challenge for consumers navigating the digital marketplace.

### *Overcoming the Stigma of Pre-owned Clothing*

Previous research identified that social norms play a great role in the decision not to purchase second-hand and vintage apparel (Connell, 2010; Ekström, 2012; Valor, Ronda & Abril, 2022). Herein, there is a stigma associated with consumer behavior, and these individuals are often inclined to sense embarrassment of visiting a second-hand store and wearing previously owned items. This is due to the stigma around second-hand clothing being seen as low-status (Henninger & Singh, 2017). Additionally, Harris, Roby and Dibb (2016) found social norms to be a determinant barrier to pre-owned shopping. Herein, they argue that this is mainly due to social pressure of personal appearance and purchasing newly produced clothing, much like Connell (2010) demonstrates. Not only does the social environment around consumers shape their decision-making when it comes to purchasing pre-owned fashion. Early experiences and historical location shape the worldview of generations, meaning that where you grow up and live may influence consumers' decisions (Rulikova, 2019). In her study, Rulikova (2019) further demonstrates how inhabitants have different purchase patterns depending on their social class. While the upper class living in larger cities tend to purchase from expensive brands, the middle class in smaller cities may opt for more second-hand, suggesting that the social pressure depending on the proximity plays a great role. On a similar note, Harris, Roby and Dibb (2016) identify early experience to shape the consumer, where this behavior needs to be established as family norms at an early age to be deeply rooted in the consumer's mind.

### *The Time and Effort Hurdle of Pre-owned Clothing*

Previous research has identified the time-consuming nature to be a barrier to purchasing pre-owned, and this may be seen as both internal and external barriers, depending on the situation and whether considered an intrinsic motivation or not. According to Sorensen and Johnson Jorgensen (2019), buying pre-owned clothing can be time-consuming because of disorganized stores, not always making it worth the time or expense. Due to the external environment influencing this obstacle, it is considered an external barrier in this research.

A potential obstacle, which may be interpreted as a result of various drawbacks associated with purchasing pre-owned clothing, encompasses the considerable time and effort necessitated for such transactions. Consequently, this can hinder consumers from adopting sustainable practices (Ellen, 1994; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019). This may be due to the lack of implementation of omnichannel and multichannel approaches, wherein businesses distribute their merchandise through both online and offline platforms (Hur, 2020). This aspect is often missing within the field of second-hand and vintage retail, primarily due to the restricted availability of items, which consequently results in a less seamless experience and necessitates a greater investment of time and effort (Hur, 2020). Moreover, because second-hand and vintage retailers face challenges in sorting, pricing, shifting, and marketing a large volume of unique items (Sweet & Wu, 2019), physical second-hand stores usually require much sorting and shifting. Herjanto, Scheller-Sampson and Erickson (2016) emphasize another perspective and believe that a lack of creativity can hinder individuals searching for pre-owned clothing. A lack of creativity may hinder an individual's ability to identify suitable items, as used clothing often necessitates adjustments for proper fit or repurposing for an entirely new function.

### 2.3.2 Internal Barriers

Despite the growing awareness of sustainability and the environmental impact of fast fashion (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016), consumers often face internal hurdles that hinder their willingness to embrace second-hand clothing (Connell, 2010). These internal barriers encompass various factors, including knowledge gaps, misconceptions, lack of confidence, concerns about online shopping, and psychological barriers (Ekström, 2012; Henninger & Singh, 2017; Roux & Korchia, 2006; Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). Herein, these internal barriers to pre-owned shopping will be further elaborated on.

#### *Lack of Knowledge, Stereotypes, and Misconceptions*

Connell (2010) found internal barriers as a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding of the environmental implications of production and the effects of various materials; and unfavorable opinions of sustainable apparel as being less fashionable, less well-fitting, and less comfortable. Furthermore, Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa (2021) found that environmental knowledge positively correlates to an individual's attitudes and intention to engage in sustainable consumption. On the contrary, Harris, Roby and Dibb (2016) highlight a clear lack of knowledge and understanding among consumers in the sustainable clothing sphere. This is also acknowledged by Connell (2010), who supports prior indicators of lacking knowledge among consumers. The author shed light on the limited awareness of the relationship between consumption, environmental issues, and apparel production. This includes limited awareness of sources for acquisition and especially the lack of information regarding materials and garments (Connell, 2010; Ellen, 1994). Hence, consumers tend to rely on mainstream companies to meet their consumption needs. Additionally, this matter regarding stereotypes and misconceptions of the sustainable clothing industry, and a lack of consideration leads consumers to disregard sustainable consumption. On this note, Sorensen and Johnson Jorgensen (2019) found that many of these consumers have never shopped second-hand, thus implying that these retailers face a significant issue regarding misconceptions, indicating an unfamiliarity where sustainable consumption is relatively new to the consumer. In general, with the complexity and effort it takes, consumers are less likely to engage in such behavior (Brand, Jacobs & Taljaard-Swart, 2023). This is confirmed by Valor, Ronda, and Abril (2022), who demonstrate that negative beliefs about second-hand shopping, such as the feeling of disgust, embarrassment, fear, and ugliness or that items are outdated are more prevalent among non-users of second-hand. In addition, Gao, Zhang, Wang, and Ba (2012) found that, especially in online purchases, these stereotypes can be formed and bias the consumer decision. This is due to the abundance of information leading to the difficulty of developing a perfect combination of attributes to fit their individual standards. Here, past experiences and an attempt to predict or recall outcomes are pointless, as it is impossible to reflect their true preferences and desired outcome accurately. On the other hand, other consumers weigh all attributes more reasonably to form a general idea, which helps to make a more accurate product assessment.

#### *Lack of Confidence in Online Processes for Pre-owned Shopping*

Another internal barrier to pre-owned shopping is the lack of confidence in online processes due to the potential risk that may arise that could exploit consumers' vulnerabilities. Especially

in online behavior, trust has been found to be a critical factor in users' behavior when engaging in activities such as shopping, sharing, and renting clothing. Herein, the more customers trust the other party they are interacting with, the more likely they will repeat a certain behavior (Brand, Jacobs & Taljaard-Swart, 2023). Another research by Chen, Zheng, Xu, Liu, and Wang (2018) revealed that reputation greatly influences customers' likelihood of purchasing second-hand online. This is based on the individual's character and the reliability of other attributes, shaped through direct or indirect interactions and influenced by the individual's perception of the other party. The sellers of pre-owned fashion with high reputations among consumers are found to be increasingly transparent, hence reducing the risk associated with the purchase and gaining more trust.

#### *Psychological Impact, Ownership, and Contamination*

Furthermore, Roux and Korchia (2006) found that while some consumers enjoy wearing previously owned apparel and view it as an act of purchasing and disposing of it, others view used clothing as essentially worthless. Although existing in the fantasy of consumers, this ultimately takes a toll on the customers' idea of themselves by having the idea that ownership is a way to mark the product. Thereby, they believe that apparel are inherently contaminated and can symbolically or physically violate the territory of the self. Interestingly, this additionally holds true for the relationship between an owner and an item. Roux and Korchia (2006) further explain this by demonstrating that some customers value unity and coherence with apparel with the sense of the self. Herein, a difficulty arises as the consumers acknowledge that apparel have had a life and history previous to them and would, therefore, entirely never be in their possession. As clothing reflects one's self-identity, this attachment becomes a barrier to purchasing pre-owned apparel.

## 2.4 Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen (1991) proposed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to comprehend and predict future human social behavior in light of the intricate consumer decision-making process. The TPB posits that consumer behavior is not a spontaneous act but rather a result of deliberate actions (Seo & Kim, 2019), and it has since become the most commonly applied theoretical framework in the social-psychological field (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that an individual's engagement in a particular behavior is likely if three key criteria are satisfied. Firstly, the individual should hold a favorable attitude towards the behavior. Secondly, the behavior should be perceived as positive by their peers. Lastly, the individual should have the capability to carry out the behavior with ease (Ajzen, 1991). These three factors – attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control – combine to form an intention, which subsequently influences behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Generally speaking, the stronger the intention behind something, the more likely it will actually occur (Ajzen, 1991).



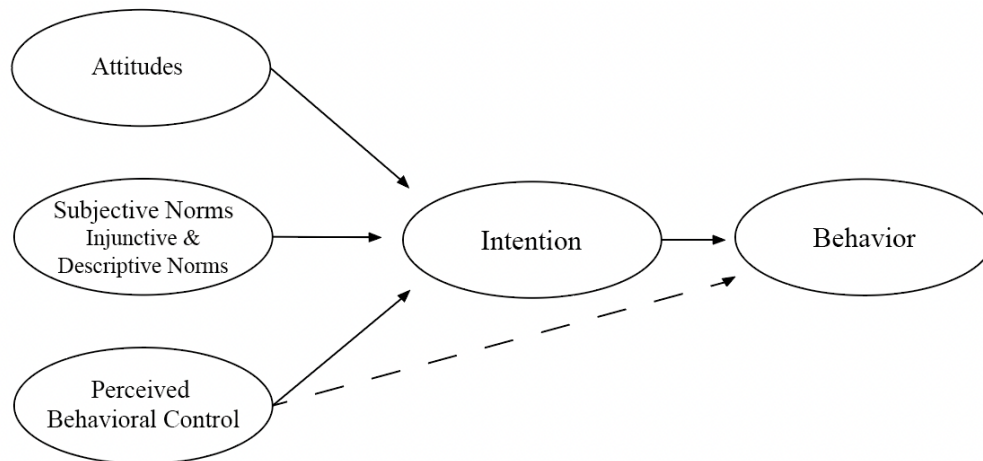


Figure 2. Theory of Planned Behavior, own figure inspired by Ajzen (1991)

### *Attitudes*

According to Ajzen (2005), the attitude toward a behavior represents a person's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of engaging in a certain behavior. Individuals form perceptions of an object by connecting it with specific attributes, such as other objects, properties, or events. Regarding attitudes toward a behavior, it is highly individual, and each belief connects the behavior to a particular outcome or attribute, such as the cost of performing the behavior. These attributes may already be valued positively or negatively, leading to the automatic formation of attitudes toward the behavior. Thus, individuals tend to favor behaviors with desirable outcomes and develop unfavorable attitudes toward those with undesirable outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of this research, attitudes are related to a person's feelings about purchasing pre-owned clothing, whether favorable or unfavorable. Previous studies have demonstrated that attitudes significantly determine intentions (Koay, Cheah & Lom, 2022). For instance, Borusiak et al. (2021) found that attitudes strongly influence individuals' willingness to engage in recycling behavior. A study conducted by Guiot and Roux (2010), which is more directly linked to the setting of this research, found that people who have negative attitudes toward used goods are more likely to refuse second-hand and vintage consumption.

### *Subjective Norms*

The concept of subjective norms refers to an individual's perception of social pressure from others. This social pressure is influenced by two factors: the individual's perception of what significant others expect them to do and their motivation to comply with these expectations (Ajzen, 1991). When others view a behavior negatively, it is referred to as an injunctive norm, which can discourage an individual from engaging in the behavior (Koay, Cheah & Lom, 2022). For example, Koay, Cheah, and Lom (2022) suggest that consumers are more likely to buy second-hand clothing if they receive positive feedback from their significant others regarding this behavior.

While the original TPB only captures injunctive norms, this research diverges from past research by investigating the influence of descriptive norms on behavioral intentions (Wong, 2019; Koay, Cheah & Lom, 2022). Whereas injunctive norms are assessed by considering how

much motivation a person has to comply with a certain normative belief, descriptive norms are based on the perception of how prevalent a certain behavior is among a particular group or community (Wong, 2019). The assertion made by Wong (2019), is that the degree to which an individual associates themselves with a specific group or person determines the influence that person or group's behavior will have on the individual's intentions. This idea is supported by Koay, Cheah, and Lom (2022), who argue that when consumers have significant others, such as family members, friends, and colleagues, who regularly purchase pre-owned apparel, the likelihood of the individual engaging in similar behaviors increases. This is further strengthened by Kotler (1965) and Kahneman (2011), who offer a different viewpoint on the phenomenon that the opinion of others can significantly shape consumers' purchase decisions. They specifically argue that individuals are inherently social beings who seek social validation, acceptance, and belongingness. Therefore opinions, recommendations, and experiences shared by others can have a profound impact on consumers' attitudes, preferences, and, ultimately, their purchasing decisions. In summary, Koay, Cheah, and Lom (2022) found that both descriptive and injunctive norms play a role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions toward environmentally-friendly products.

While Ajzen's (1991) concept of subjective norms refers specifically to an individual's perception of social pressure or influence to engage in a particular behavior, the concept of social capital by Bourdieu (1986) is deemed appropriate to enhance the understanding of social influence. As defined by Bourdieu (1986), social capital involves the resources and advantages individuals acquire from their social connections and networks to achieve their objectives, such as receiving advice or knowledge in the context of sustainable fashion consumption. Thus, while individuals are subject to influence and social pressure from others, resources obtained from others can also promote certain behaviors.

#### *Perceived Behavioral Control*

The third predictor of intention is the degree of perceived behavioral control which refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior in a given context (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (2005) suggests that individuals who lack confidence in their ability to carry out a certain behavior successfully are unlikely to form intentions to perform it. Moreover, even if such individuals hold favorable attitudes toward the behavior and believe that important others would approve of their performing it, they are unlikely to form strong behavioral intentions to engage in it if they believe that they lack the necessary resources or opportunities to do so. For instance, according to Koay, Cheah, and Lom (2022), certain studies have indicated that possessing essential resources, time, and opportunities is crucial for consumers who intend to purchase conscious products. In certain circumstances, the concept of perceived behavioral control may not accurately reflect the reality of the situation. This could occur when the individual possesses insufficient information about the behavior, when there have been changes in requirements or available resources, or when new and unfamiliar factors have been introduced into the situation (Ajzen, 2005).

Furthermore, perceived behavioral control is believed to encompass past experiences and anticipated barriers (Ajzen, 1991). Specifically, the usual assumption is that repeated

performance of behavior leads to habit formation. However, it should be noted that only when a habit is defined independently of (past) behavior can it legitimately be added as an explanatory variable to the TPB (Ajzen, 1991).

In order to achieve accurate predictions, several prerequisites must be satisfied. First and foremost, the measures of intention and perceived behavioral control must be aligned or harmonious with the behavior that is being anticipated. This means that intentions and perceived behavioral control should be evaluated concerning the specific behavior of interest. The relative significance of intentions and perceived behavioral control in forecasting behavior is expected to fluctuate between situations and behaviors. The dashed line in *Figure 2* signifies that perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention can directly predict the achievement of a behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), this can be explained in two ways. Firstly, when holding intention constant, the level of effort exerted to carry out a behavior successfully is likely to increase with perceived behavioral control. Secondly, there is a direct association between perceived behavioral control and behavioral achievement because perceived control can often act as a substitute for actual control. An illustration of this phenomenon is when two people have an equally high intention to perform a certain behavior. Whereas one has confidence in mastering that behavior and the other does not, it is more likely that the individual with higher perceived behavioral control will perform the behavior than the one that doubts their ability (Ajzen, 1991).

#### 2.4.1 Limitations of Theory of Planned Behavior

TPB has long served as a trusted framework for researchers seeking to understand intricate details of human behavior in diverse contexts (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). Moreover, practitioners have benefited from this theory by leveraging its insights to pinpoint potential motives and employ impactful techniques for inducing behavioral shifts (Ajzen, 2005). Nonetheless, despite its remarkable accomplishments, TPB has not been immune to scrutiny, as evidenced by some recent critiques leveled against it (Koay, Cheah & Lom, 2022; Liu, Liu & Mo, 2020).

TPB is premised on the notion that human beings typically engage in rational behavior by considering available information and implicitly or explicitly evaluating the consequences of their actions (Ajzen, 2005). However, the TPB's focus on rational decision-making based on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control neglects intrinsic factors that impact human behavior. Purchasing decisions are influenced by factors beyond rationalistic components such as culture, class, or reference groups and are not a result of largely rational calculations (Kotler, 1965), thereby constituting a drawback of TBP. With this in mind and the fact that Ajzen (1991) acknowledges that TPB is receptive to incorporating additional predictors, as long as they contribute to explaining the diversity in behavioral intentions, this research will extend TPB with the notion of self-identity following Rise, Sheeran, and Hukkelberg's (2010) work. Self-identity is incorporated in this research to strengthen the

discourse of sustainable fashion consumption as it is recognized by Sparks and Shepherd (1992) for its independence from attitudes and thus affects behavioral intentions on its own.

## 2.5 Self-identity Construction Through Consumption

With its significance attributed to its guidance in personal decision-making and life paths, the field of self-identity studies is rapidly expanding within the social sciences (Côté, 2006; Abdelal, 2009; Jenkins, 2014). This inclusion stems from expert suggestions emphasizing the importance of considering identity processes when forecasting intended actions (Rise, Sheeran & Hukkelberg, 2010).

The construction of the self is in contemporary society inseparable from consumption and has been extensively researched within the area of marketing (Belk, 1988; Vignoles, 2011; Wattanasuwan, 2005; McNeill & Venter, 2019). In fashion consumption, social identity is a commonly used concept describing how consumers utilize fashion to express and communicate their identity. Thus, it is also an integral factor to understand what limits consumers to make a purchase (Wattanasuwan, 2005; McNeill & Venter, 2019), and a determinant factor for why it is included in this study. Essentially, while clothing serves as a basic necessity, it has also become a means of expressing one's individuality while simultaneously providing a sense of belonging (Davis, 1994; Thompson & Haykto, 1997; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Soron (2010) argues that green consumption has become a ceremonial means of establishing a collective identity for those who recognize their environmental responsibilities but are otherwise unsure about their ability to create significant change. It can thus be seen as a reasonable but limited effort to align actions with environmental values within a domain where individuals feel some level of control. In this context, fashion serves as an extension of the self (Belk, 1988), as consumers utilize fashion items to construct, communicate, and confirm their social identities.

To provide a more clear understanding, it is important to note that self-identity and attitudes are often used interchangeably (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). When it comes to choosing sustainable fashion options, a consumer might hold a negative view of fast fashion due to its environmental impact and consider themselves as an "environmentally conscious consumer". However, the same person could occasionally show a favorable opinion towards fast fashion because of its style or other features. In this study, drawing upon the ideas of Sparks and Shepherd (1992), self-identity is explored and also distinguished from attitudes from two perspectives: (1) the possibility of determining self-identity from an individual's past actions and (2) how individuals perceive themselves.

### *Past Behaviors*

Scholars posit that an individual's leaning toward sustainable practices is predominantly influenced by their prior actions rather than cognitive processes outlined in the TPB (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). This intriguing perspective sheds light on the interplay between past experiences and decision-making in shaping environmentally-conscious habits. This idea comes from several studies that indicate past actions are the most reliable indicators of future

behavior and that individuals figure out their identity by considering past actions (Conner, Warren, Close & Sparks, 1999; Rise, Sheeran & Hukkelberg, 2010). Likewise, Ouellette and Wood (1998) suggest that behavior can provide insight into the sense of self, meaning that if humans have acted a certain way before, it will likely guide how they act in the future. Notably, frequent actions shape an individual's self-perception, making it significant to them. This implies that engaging in these actions communicates a message beyond the favorable or unfavorable views individuals might have regarding the execution of the action itself (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992).

### *Self-Perception*

In addition, how individuals view themselves is influenced by their perspective in various situations, which means that individuals integrate the meanings and expectations of a particular category into the self-image, thereby creating a set of guiding principles for identity-related actions which entail that individual preferences drive future behavior (Rise, Sheeran & Hukkelberg, 2010). Sparks and Shepherd (1992) discussed self-identity, particularly self-perception, in the context of environmental consumer behavior, highlighting that statements like “I see myself as a green consumer” or “I view myself as someone deeply concerned with green issues” can guide people in shaping their identities. Nevertheless, despite the fact that both self-identification and group identity are social identities, Rise, Sheeran, and Hukkelberg (2010) emphasized the importance of understanding the difference between the two. Self-identity involves understanding oneself and encompasses meanings, expectations, and activities related to being something specific, while a collective identity stems more from descriptive norms (*see Chapter 2.4 for more details*).

### *Self-Identity and its Role in the Theory of Planned Behavior*

Although self-identity plays a crucial role in shaping actions (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992), there are challenges to assuming that past actions directly determine future behavior. Ajzen (1988) suggests that the impact of past behavior on future behavior should be considered through key factors present in the TPB. Unlike the predictor of perceived behavioral control, self-identity can act as a mediator between past actions and future conduct, where self-identity initially affects a person's intentions (Conner, Warren, Close & Sparks, 1999). Whereas perceived behavioral control is only considered a determinant of past actions when a behavior has emerged into a habit (Ajzen, 1991), self-identity is concerned with past behavior beyond merely routine (Soron, 2010). As proposed by Sharma (2021), past experiences and the satisfaction from these significantly influence future purchases – suggesting that single experiences rather than habits can act as determinants of future conduct. The idea of self-identity is suggested as a possible factor in predicting actions and moderating the impact of past behavior on future actions. This makes self-identity a significant element in Ajzen's (1991) theory. To illustrate, the degree to which individuals view themselves as consumers of pre-owned apparel could forecast their intentions and subsequent actions. Supporting this notion, Sparks and Shepherd (1992) discovered that those who considered themselves “sustainable shoppers” were more likely to have a stronger intent to make sustainable choices.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

After conducting a thorough review of the literature, the aim is to investigate the disruptions that occur in the context of purchasing pre-owned fashion based on the theory of planned behavior with an additional dimension of self-identity. To achieve this aim, a conceptual framework is developed for guidance.

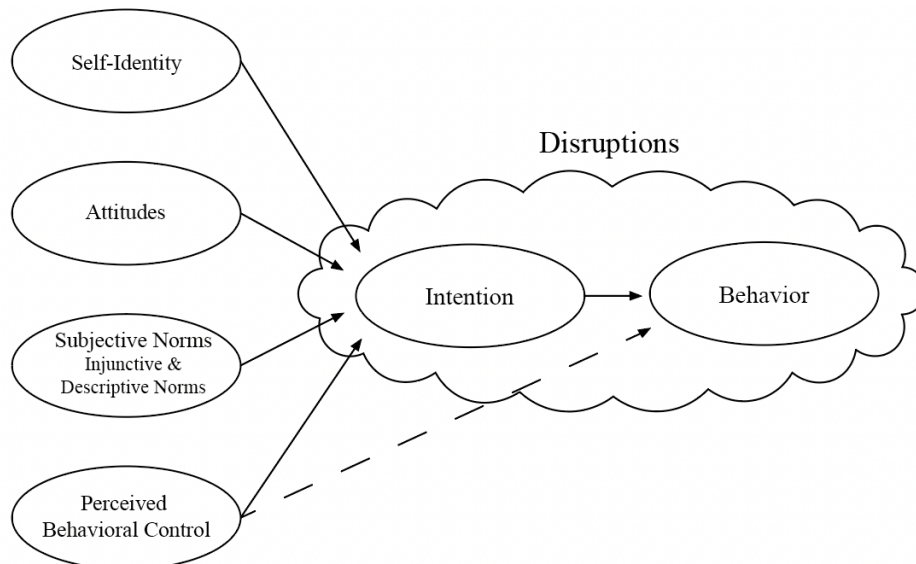


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

The figure illustrates the extended version of the TPB with an inclusion of self-identity and highlighting potential disruptions in consumer behavior. This framework will serve as the basis for analyzing empirical findings. Similar to the original model that often is used to explain motivations behind a certain behavior (Koay, Cheah & Lom, 2022), this framework demonstrates the key factors representing the underlying mechanisms through which these components interact to influence behavior. However, the conceptual framework includes the notion of self-identity as a fourth key factor highlighting self-perception and past behavior, encompassing that the process can be more dynamic than Ajzen (1991) suggested. The theory of planned behavior emphasizes intentions as the primary factor that influences behavior. Nevertheless, research has consistently shown that there is often a discrepancy between intentions and actual behavior, as presented by the author himself (Ajzen, Brown & Carvajal, 2004). This gap can occur due to various factors intervening in the stages that lead to the individual's intention to engage in a behavior and the actual behavior itself. McNeill and Moore (2015) posit that although an individual has strong intentions to purchase sustainable goods, these do not consistently translate into actions. In many instances, something occurs in the process that restrains a consumer from purchasing pre-owned fashion – thus, the need for the barriers to be investigated in this research. Those disruptions are demonstrated in Figure 3 as an additional dimension in the presented framework, illustrated through the cloud-shaped figure surrounding intentions and behavior. This dimension symbolizes two types of obstacles that may influence consumers; first, it captures the barriers that arise prior to an intention being formed. Herein, these barriers can manifest in the initial stages when individuals consider engaging in a particular behavior and hinder the formation of a strong intention to purchase pre-

owned fashion in the first place. Second, it also represents the obstacles that prevent individuals from translating their intentions to purchase pre-owned fashion into actual actions. These barriers occur after the intention is formed but impede individuals from following through and making the intended purchase. By visualizing these obstacles through the cloud-shaped figure, the framework emphasizes the importance of addressing and overcoming these barriers. Understanding this dimension is helpful for developing effective interventions to bridge the intention-behavior gap and promote the desired behavior.

### 3. Methodology

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*In the methodology section, the research's qualitative approach is outlined to offer a comprehensive view of the gathering of the empirical data. The section begins by describing the methodological strategy, followed by an explanation of the chosen technique and approach, the selection process, and the means of processing and analyzing the collected data. Lastly, the section delves into various methodological considerations, including limitations, ethical positions, and the overall research quality.*

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#### 3.1 Scientific Approach

In order to understand the methodology employed in this research, it is important to first consider the philosophical underpinnings that guided the researchers' approach. Specifically, assumptions and beliefs significantly impact how researchers view the work and determine the strategies employed in conducting the research (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). In the context of this study, the two fundamental philosophical concepts – ontology and epistemology – were especially relevant.

The study adopts a relativist ontology perspective to investigate the consumers' barriers to purchasing pre-owned fashion in a multichannel retail environment. Relativist ontology posits that there is no singular truth due to the myriad of perspectives and viewpoints on issues and facts (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As the perception of truth may differ across locations and change over time (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2015), it is essential to study diverse viewpoints to comprehend the phenomenon in question and bolster the study's credibility. The proposed ontological framework acts as the foundation for fundamental epistemological preconceptions. Being closely related to ontology, epistemology pertains to the researchers' conception of knowledge (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This investigation endeavored to gain insight into subjective experiences via the utilization of semi-structured interviews and focus groups and adopted a social constructivist paradigm. Rooted in the belief that reality is shaped by the interpretations and constructions of individuals, as opposed to objective factors, the social constructivist perspective maintains that reality is in a continuous state of being constructed and reconstructed by human perceptions and actions (Sallis, Gripsrud, Olsson & Silkoset, 2021). As a result, the findings presented in this study reflect the respondents' version of reality, resulting in limited generalization to other contexts. Consequently, a specific version of reality is put forth, which cannot be considered a definitive endpoint.

By adopting a relativist and social constructionist perspective, this study aimed to explore the barriers that restrict consumers' adoption of pre-owned shopping in a multi-channel retail environment and investigate how these barriers impact individuals' motivation to engage in pre-owned shopping behavior. The findings revealed that respondents' intent to behave was influenced by their unique experiences and beliefs, which allowed for the identification of patterns. For instance, a commonly held perception of the inferior quality of items in second-hand and vintage stores emerged as a significant barrier, leading individuals to exercise caution



in their future clothing purchases. Thus, instead of seeking a singular truth or definitive answer, this research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse viewpoints surrounding these phenomena, ultimately shedding light on the subject under investigation.

## 3.2 Research Design

The goal of research designs is to organize research activities, including data gathering, in ways that are most likely to accomplish the study objectives (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As qualitative research approaches are designed to describe, analyze, and interpret social phenomena to comprehend individuals' thoughts about the world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), it was deemed appropriate for this research. This is specifically due to the aim of comprehending the underlying thoughts and forces hindering consumers from purchasing pre-owned. Herein, quantitative methods were discarded since they would have failed to achieve the objective due to their emphasis on numbers rather than words (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). The suitability of this approach is further justified by the creative and reflective nature of qualitative research, which is aligned with the research question at hand (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). A qualitative research approach ultimately allowed for exploring novel aspects of the subject area and context that had yet to be examined. Consistent with Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), this study adopted an exploratory approach as the aim was to acquire depth in a relatively unexplored research topic within pre-owned shopping. Herein, there were knowledge gaps that needed to be filled, as seen in Chapter 1.2. The contributions to these gaps are presented in Chapter 6, which outlines the conclusion and implications. For instance, this research gave new insights into consumer perceptions of online alternatives to the consumption of pre-owned fashion.

### 3.2.1 Research Approach

According to Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019), it is not an easy task to classify a study as purely deductive or inductive since most studies incorporate elements of both approaches. Initially, the plan for gathering data involved an inductive approach. However, as empirical evidence was obtained, the study incorporated additional theoretical concepts, specifically the concept of self-identity, to emphasize the importance of self-perception and past experiences. Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019) characterize this fluctuation between theoretical and empirical elements as an abductive strategy, which proved advantageous since it prevented the research from being constrained by either a purely theoretical or empirical framework. This proved to be true for the discussion, illustrating how the theoretical structure directs the research. This way of structure based on the theory is influenced by empirical evidence in two ways – first, the conceptual framework was derived from empirical findings, and second, the discussion chapter is further structured following the themes identified during the data-gathering process. Furthermore, our analytical approach permitted the integration of the theoretical foundation into the topic guides while simultaneously uncovering novel insights during the data gathering that were not encompassed by the current theory. Herein, a key finding suggests that past experiences significantly influence future conduct. Arguably, negative experiences may create

prevailing uncertainties which can deter them from repeating such behavior. By doing this, the aim was to expand upon Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, employing it not just to grasp decision-making mechanisms but also to enhance the comprehension of planned behavior within the area of pre-owned shopping.

### 3.3 Data Collection

As marketing phenomena are intricate representations of human behavior that can change depending on the viewpoints of a person or a group, no specific phenomenon can be fully captured by a single research method (Davis, Golicic & Boerstler, 2011). In order to answer the research questions as detailed as possible, a multi-method research strategy has been utilized. This entails utilizing various methods to gather data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Davis, Golicic & Boerstler, 2011). According to Esteves and Pastor (2003), a multi-method strategy broadens the investigation's focus and improves the inclusion of contextual considerations that might be disregarded when depending on one single technique. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used in conjunction with this research. This strategy can be utilized to generate various perspectives on a specific phenomenon (Morgan, 1997; Stewart, 2007; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Using numerous techniques reduces the degree of uncertainty in data interpretations (Davis, Golicic & Boerstler, 2011; Beitin, 2012), leading to more compelling results as the data from the interviews strengthen the data from the focus groups. The application of focus groups in this research was deemed valuable in revealing consumer motivations and predicted behaviors, whereas the interviews resulted in deeper insights beyond what the focus groups could offer. The data from both methods complemented each other, providing a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the research topic. To ensure the analysis was theoretically supported, it is further consulted with published scientific articles from a wide range of time periods, as the subject matter is continuously evolving. By incorporating established theories and concepts from the existing literature, the research benefits from a solid theoretical foundation while also being able to capture contemporary perspectives.

#### 3.3.1 Sampling Technique

For the sample, a purposive sampling was combined with a non-probability sampling strategy. As proposed by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), this enabled us to determine whether the consumers fulfilled the predetermined criteria put forth. In order to achieve a heterogeneous sample in one sense, we purposefully sought participants from two different consumer cohorts – those who have previously purchased pre-owned clothing and those who have not. In the sense of age and gender, a homogeneous sample was desired to create informal discussions, as recommended by Wilkinson (1998). This study specifically targets females in the age range between 22 and 26. The reason for choosing this age range is that younger individuals tend to hold more environmentally conscious attitudes and knowledge and are more open to adopting sustainable ideas and behaviors (Wiernik, Ones & Dilchert, 2013). Additionally, as this generation is the largest, it is also found to have the biggest impact on retail

sales, thus being a powerful generation for research within the field (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). In terms of gender, young females were considered to be among the most fashion-conscious consumer groups as they are actively involved in developing their own fashion identities, making them an interesting target group for this study. For instance, they pay close attention to new fashion trends and place much effort into what they wear (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Herjanto, Scheller-Sampson & Erickson, 2016). Moreover, the sampling strategy can be of interest as it correlates with the findings of Horton (2018), who argues that young women play a vital role in the phenomenon of sustainable shopping patterns because of their increased sense of accountability for sustainable consumption and their prominent part in the fast fashion industry.

The empirical material stems from two focus groups consisting of four participants each and semi-structured interviews involving eight participants. The reason for comprising the focus groups of four participants in each aligns with Krueger and Casey (2015) and Krueger's (1998) recommendations that it makes it more comfortable for the participants and enables more in-depth conversations. The focus groups were held in Kävlinge and Malmö, gathering people in close proximity to make it more convenient for all participants. While this method made mobility easier, it also resulted in some participants already knowing each other. Wilkinson (1998) and Wibeck (2002) observed that participants in focus groups with pre-existing friendships are more likely to divulge experiences that they might not have shared in the presence of strangers. This tendency for participants to reveal confidential information was especially noticeable in the initial focus group, where members were acquainted and shared similar viewpoints. For the subsequent focus group, we considered the impact of existing relationships and ensured a mix of people who were unfamiliar with each other. Wilkinson (1998) contends that in focus groups where participants are not previously familiar with one another, the dynamic nature of the group encourages members to question, dispute, and stimulate each other, thereby facilitating the elaboration of responses. This study's findings align with this observation, as the second focus group generated more insightful perspectives.

In comparison to selecting a set sample size for this study, we deemed the sample size to be suitable as we reached saturation. Although the concept of theoretical saturation has been criticized (Bowen, 2008), Dworkin (2012) explains it as an essential factor to take into account when considering the sample size. As such, we decided to conduct two additional interviews even if there was thematic redundancy after the sixth interview. As the gathered data provided no additional theoretical insights, we deemed the data collection saturated.

The following tables (*Table 1, 2 & 3*) presents the respondents who participated in the research study.

Table 1. Interview Participants

Date	Name	Previously purchased pre-owned	Location	Age	Occupation	Time
5/4-23	IP1	Yes	Lund Alpha 1, 0025	26	Student	39 min
5/4-23	IP2	No	Lund Alpha 1, 0025	25	Student	48 min
5/4-23	IP3	Yes	Lund Alpha 1, 0025	25	Student	37 min
5/4-23	IP4	Yes	Lund, Alpha 1, 0025	24	Student	38 min
6/4-23	IP5	Yes	Zoom	24	Working	36 min
7/4-23	IP6	Yes	Zoom	26	Working	45 min
7/4-23	IP7	Yes	Zoom	25	Working	36 min
7/4-23	IP8	Yes	Zoom	24	Student	47 min

Table 2. Participants in the First Focus Group

Focus group 1	Date: 3/4-23	Location: Kävlinge	Time: 1h 15min
Name	Previously purchased preowned	Age	Occupation
IP9	No	22	Student
IP10	No	24	Student
IP11	No	24	Working
IP12	Yes	25	Working

Table 3. Participants in the Second Focus Group

<b>Focus group 2</b>	<b>Date: 4/4-23</b>		<b>Location:</b> Malmö	<b>Time: 1h 36min</b>
<b>Name</b>	<b>Previously purchased pre-owned</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	
IP13	No	25	Working	
IP14	Yes	25	Working	
IP15	No	24	Working	
IP16	Yes	24	Student	

### 3.3.2 Focus Groups

For the purpose of this study, we deemed focus groups to be an appropriate method for data collection as we aimed to obtain people’s opinions on pre-owned shopping and the potential barriers that would restrict their planned behavior. More specifically, according to Wilkinson (1998), focus groups are used in order to add richness in addition to the interviews. Furthermore, Morgan (1997) contends that focus groups are particularly suitable for topics of attitudes and decision-making in comparison to other methods. Thus, the suitability for the choice of method in this study is further strengthened.

Furthermore, the method enables the researcher to gain knowledge about the root causes of people’s opinions (Wilkinson, 1998). While individual interviews are characterized by frequent questions about the reasoning behind their thoughts, the focus group method rather allows participants to question one another about their opinions. This proved valuable for this research as respondents could either challenge each other’s views and emotions or build upon them. In line with the social constructionism perspective, this type of conversation serves as a rich source of information as it is generated by individuals’ built-in interaction with others (Beitin, 2012; Wilkinson, 1998). Thereby, this approach may have uncovered a range of perspectives that might not have been obtained through a simple question-and-answer format, and it arguably reveals a range of thoughts and greater depth than other methods (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019; Morgan, 1997).

Considering the potential impact of social dynamics on responses (Beitin, 2012; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), we created a welcoming and friendly environment for the focus groups. As the initial phase of the focus group sets the tone and agenda for the upcoming conversation (Stewart, 2007), we began with an introduction to the topic and an attempt to create a trusting environment for the participants. Additionally, as all participants were Swedish

natives, we decided to hold the conversation in Swedish to ensure everyone felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and emotions. According to Stewart (2007) and Welch and Piekkari (2006), using the first and local language is the optimal decision to enable participants to articulate their true opinions.

Moreover, all focus groups were conducted in person. This approach was chosen because it allows for more natural interaction and group dynamics among participants. Focus groups that are held in person also allow researchers the opportunity to observe nonverbal cues and facial expressions, which can provide crucial information about the participants' opinions and emotions (Stewart, 2007). For instance, it was possible to distinguish situations where participants had something to say in addition to what had been previously said. Herein, we made an effort to give these participants the word for further contributions. While realizing that total equality is not always attainable and can impede natural discussion, we made an effort to ensure that each participant in the focus groups had an equal opportunity to participate. To protect the study's credibility and prevent anyone or a small number of people from dominating the discussion, it was crucial to have balanced contributions. However, it is essential to remember that focus groups cannot be conducted with completely equal participation because doing so would impede the discussion's natural flow (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). An attempt to minimize respondent dominance was to initially reassure the value and necessity of the opinions made by all participants (Stewart, 2007).

#### 3.3.2.1 The Role of the Moderator

It is worth emphasizing the important aspect of moderator involvement during focus groups (Morgan, 1997; Stewart, 2007). During the focus group interviews, we bore in mind that we sought a rather semi-structured approach as we wanted to some extent guide the conversation while not interfering with or disturbing the flow of the conversation. Moreover, we decided that one researcher would act as the moderator and present the topic and questions related to the study while the other researcher would elaborate and ask follow-up questions when necessary and keep track of recording the data. With the semi-structured approach to the focus groups, utilizing a mix of open-ended and rather closed questions, we had the ability to dive deeper when necessary and to discard areas already covered, benefitting one of the advantages of the method.

#### 3.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to the focus groups, eight interviews were conducted. These follow-up individual interviews were appropriate to provide further detail and depth to the topics discussed during the focus groups, which is a significant reason to combine the two methods (Morgan, 1997; Beitin, 2012). Qualitative interviewing is primarily focused on gaining insights from the respondent's viewpoint, encompassing not only their perspective but also the underlying reasons behind it (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

One-half of the interviews were conducted in person in a private and quiet setting, whereas the other half was conducted on Zoom due to the distance between us and the participants. Digital interviews were deemed a valuable addition because of their flexibility and convenience (Gruber, Szmigin, Reppel & Voss, 2008), enabling us to gather sufficient material for the study. One drawback, however, was the connectivity issue; where in one instance, we experienced an issue with the connection. However, it was quickly established and functioning again, and thus we could proceed with the interview and pick up where we left off.

When conducting qualitative interviews, researchers have a choice of determining the structure of the interview. This can either be semi-structured or unstructured (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). For this study, we deemed semi-structured interviews to be most suitable based on two reasons; first, it is more suitable when two researchers are involved in the interviewing process. Second, it allowed us to follow a guide while also being able to ask follow-up questions when needed. It also enabled the participant, to some extent, to lead the conversation, meaning that based on the given answers, the conversation could take new turns or delve into additional topics (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). However, we also utilized closed-ended questions mainly to obtain demographic information about the participants, such as name, age, occupation, and whether they had previously purchased pre-owned fashion. In order to acquire a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences, we further adopted the non-directive methodology advised by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015). This method included laddering up and down strategies, asking "why?" and looking for concrete instances.

According to Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019), it is important that the interviews enable the interviewees to comprehend the participants' perspectives on their social surroundings and that the interviews are conducted with a degree of flexibility. In the interview guide (*see Appendix 3*), we thus created a flexible structure for the topics and questions we wished to cover to be able to gather data sufficient to answer the research questions. To initiate the interviews, we began to introduce ourselves and the topic to the participants to mitigate any tension and to establish familiarity with one another. Much like the focus groups, we decided that one of us would act as the moderator asking questions, while the other one asked follow-up questions when necessary and kept track of recording the interviews. As for the focus groups, all of the interviews were conducted in Swedish, as it was the participants' native language. This enabled the interviewees to be more comfortable and to delve into the conversation, expressing their true opinions (Stewart, 2007).

#### 3.3.4 Development of Topic and Interview Guides

To adhere to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson's (2015) recommendations, a guide (*see Appendix 3*) was utilized during both the focus groups and the interviews to center the discussion around a specific topic and provide direction and assistance. The topic guide was constructed to facilitate a natural conversation during the interviews while also making it easier to ask follow-up questions to encourage participants to expand on their answers. Initially, we

asked questions that began with a broad perspective and delved deeper into the topic using the laddering method as recommended by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson. (2015).

The questions were designed to relate indirectly to several aspects of the theory to obtain information about consumers' barriers to pre-owned fashion. We carefully selected 31 questions that were relevant to our research objective. These questions were phrased to encourage participants to share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. Herein, we included follow-up questions such as "What do you think?" And "How do you feel about...?". Moreover, to adapt the phrasing more to everyday language and get even more insights from the participant's views on the barriers to pre-owned shopping, we used synonyms for barriers, such as "concerns" and "obstacles". According to Wilkinson (1998), this prompts more effective communication, and, especially in focus groups, this enables researchers to gain insight into the conceptual worlds of the participants on their own terms due to the naturalistic conversation between participants.

Furthermore, in creating the topic guide, we developed questions with inspiration from the key factors within the framework of TPB (Ajzen, 1991), the self-identity concept, and general questions regarding pre-owned shopping and potential barriers. The questions developed were indirectly connected to each part of the theory, enabling us to draw conclusions about consumers' barriers and to shop for pre-owned. Specifically, we wanted to draw attention to how the respondents plan to act in regard to pre-owned shopping through previous experiences and their thoughts and opinions regarding the matter. Thus, the topics at hand were inspired by attitude, norms, perceived behavioral control, self-identity, and more direct categories covering the barriers against pre-owned shopping. For instance, the question "Why do you consume fashion? For whom?" serves as an opening question inspired by the 'subjective norms' aspect of Ajzen's (1991) framework to uncover the role injunctive and descriptive norms play in initiating a behavior among the participants. This is then followed by follow-up questions depending on the answer; (1) "Do you experience any external pressures to consume a certain type of clothing or style?", (2) "How come? Who influences your decision?"; and (3) "How do you think other people perceive individuals who purchase pre-owned clothing?".

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the focus group and semi-structured interviews were first translated into English and then transcribed to prepare them for analysis. In order to effectively structure and thematize the gathered material, Rennstam and Wästerfors' (2018) recommended approach of sorting, reducing, and arguing was adopted as guiding principles throughout the analysis process.

According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), sorting is the step in the process of data analysis. This is essential to avoid any chaos that can result from dealing with unstructured qualitative data. This allowed us to understand the data better, grasp the topic, and determine whether the raw data were relevant to the study. Furthermore, sorting facilitates the analysis



process by arranging the empirical data according to categories which subsequently serve as a framework for the analysis of the findings (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). This was done by coding the gathered data, which was then divided into categories. In the results section, we highlight instances where participants agree and expand upon each other's remarks. The sorting was based on themes where recurring keywords or expressions were used to categorize the material (*see Table 4*). To avoid replicating categorizations made in previous research, we sought to generate new and original knowledge that could contribute to existing research, such as the impact of returns. Additionally, the material was recategorized multiple times. This involved reviewing the material to ensure the accuracy of the interpretations and that we had not overlooked any important data. Herein, we added categories that were not discovered in the first review, which then became the theme "the contradicting self".

Reducing, the second step in the analysis process, entails scaling down large amounts of data to pinpoint the most relevant information for the study, putting the selected material aside. This process made it easier to gain a better overview of the material and resolve the issue of representation, given the impossibility of reproducing all of the documented data. Given that the researcher cannot choose only the material that pleases them, reducing can be a sensitive and brutal process (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Herein, we excluded frequently mentioned statements considered unrelated; for example, multiple participants reported engaging in selling fashion themselves which are not relevant to the purpose of this research. Subsequently, we adopted an illustrative reducing method as recommended by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), which aims to provide a clear representation of the phenomenon that aligns with the purpose of the study. Moreover, when utilizing the illustrative reducing approach, we identified excerpts that specifically highlighted the categories to illustrate the phenomenon to the best ability (*see Table 4*). The criteria for the selected quotes included their representativeness of the data and their ability to reinforce arguments. In addition, the quotes had to align with the research objectives and serve as a starting point for the analysis. Following the data reduction, only essential and relevant material remained, which were then appropriately conceptualized and labeled into themes.

The third step, arguing, involves theorizing the sorted and reduced material. To avoid belittling the findings, Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) stress the importance of arguing for the significance of the study's outcomes. This step addresses the problem of authority and serves to eliminate the issue by providing justifications for the importance of the findings. In this study, we made an effort to consistently back up empirical findings with existing theories or present them in contrast to these theories. Theorizing does not necessarily involve confirming something but may rather entail proposing a new perspective or presenting an approach or concept from a different point of view, such as the understanding beyond a rationalistic perspective of consumer behavior in this research. In this stage the research contribution is determined. The creation of theory is a convincing argument for the importance and value of empirical findings (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). More specifically, this creation is part of a sensemaking endeavor, giving the findings meaning and understanding (Weick, 1995). According to Weick (1995), this is interpretative in nature and created through communication and narratives, thus suitable for the phenomena. This type of sensemaking in research involves

interpreting data, identifying patterns, and creating narratives that provide meaning and insights. Furthermore, given that we had been continuously working with the material during the reducing and sorting process, theorizing was facilitated, with ideas and themes taken out to ensure a clear definition of the research contribution and the fulfillment of the study's purpose.

Table 4. Identified Themes

Themes	Quotes from interviews
Quality and Cleanliness	"It's not dirty but it looks a bit gross and very oversized. And that it's old, or at least it looks old"
Rarity and Price	"Not everything is super cheap, and some things even increase in value because they can't be bought anymore"  "There are a lot of brands there and the clothes are quite expensive, and then it might not feel worth it because you might be able to find new similar garments for the same money"
Accessibility and Availability	"Above all, there isn't the range or the trends that are in right now [...] and there's a very small range of second-hand shops here"
Returns	"When you shop from Tradera or Blocket or another second-hand store online and nothing fits, you can't return it"
Layout and Presentation	"Sometimes when you go into second-hand stores, it's just full of stuff everywhere so it doesn't feel like you are walking into a store, but more like you're walking into someone's storage room and rooting around"
Time and Effort	"Considering that sorting clothes is a bit more of a process because it can be 20 different items hanging on a clothes rack, time and patience are very important resources"
You Are the Company You Keep	"I have really started shopping second-hand quite a lot since I moved to Stockholm [...]. I would say it has become a big city trend, mostly in Södermalm, where everyone looks the same and everyone wears vintage or second-hand clothing."
Ignorance	"I don't know if you can return it, but it doesn't feel like it. Or, I assume that you can't. I think that when you buy used clothes online, you don't really have all the information and you may not have the same rights as when you buy new clothes"
Trust	"Since it's an individual who sells on Tradera, it depends on how much they have posted in their ad themselves. And if I notice that it's a sketchy ad, then I probably won't buy it"

The Contradicting Self	“I probably cut back mostly because I think today’s consumption is quite sick [...], but then the fact that I still buy a lot of fast fashion is probably because the money is limited now as a student”
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### 3.5 Limitations

A constraint of this investigation lies in the context-dependent nature of the research subject, concentrating exclusively on the Swedish market. This focus may not accurately reflect the attitudes or behaviors of potential consumers in different countries or settings. In line with typical qualitative research, the applicability of the findings to more general contexts is somewhat constrained. As this research adopts a relativist ontology, it suggests that there is no single truth, and it may vary across locations and change with time. In addition, because this study employed a non-probability sampling, it further entails difficulties in determining the probability of the larger population (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Nevertheless, the specificity and contextual emphasis of the study offers a comprehensive insight into the research phenomenon, serving as an advantage and may provide guidance in similar settings.

Another limitation regarding interviews is that we can never be sure how natural the interactions are because the researcher controls the focus group and interview discussions (Davis, 1994; Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). To establish a naturally flowing and spontaneous discussion as possible, we tried not to interfere with the conversation to the best possible extent, asking questions and follow-up questions when it was deemed appropriate and necessary. A noteworthy remark is that respondents might be influenced by social desirability bias, which means their answers could be influenced by what they perceive as socially desirable rather than their true opinions. According to Bryman, Bell & Harley (2019), this may be especially true regarding topics that are perceived as ethical. Herein, Tomşa, Romoñi-Maniu & Scridon (2021), found that the perception of sustainable consumption is significantly related to ethical behavior, making it an important concern in given answers of this study. However, to minimize the risk of social desirability bias among participants, we sought to emphasize the importance of their true perceptions and behavior rather than refined ones. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the potential discomfort experienced by participants, especially when sensitive subjects are up for discussion, since this can impact the quality of data collected. This became more clear during the second focus group session, in which certain participants, unfamiliar with one another, were questioned about the consistency between their stated beliefs and actual behaviors concerning sustainable consumption. It is recognized that a certain stigma surrounds the practice of sustainable consumption, and efforts were made to approach the topic with empathy and consideration.

## 3.6 Methodology Review

### 3.6.1 Quality of the Data

This study appraises its trustworthiness using four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994, cited in Bryman, Bell & Harley 2019). These criteria highlight the notion that multiple truths exist, rendering them appropriate for this study which lies under the notion of social reality. The evaluation of the quality of qualitative research varies from that of quantitative research, where reliability and validity are the commonly used terms (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). Instead, the concept of trustworthiness served as the starting point for analyzing the quality of this study, suggesting alternative but comparable terms to some of the quantitative criteria (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). Additionally, researchers of qualitative studies frequently discuss the use of reflexivity as an indicator of the study's quality and degree of transparency (Alvesson, Hardy, & Harley, 2008), thereby constituting a fifth criterion for this research.

Maintaining credibility in qualitative research entails adhering to best practices and accurately presenting respondents' data in the study (Bryman, Bell, & Harley, 2019). Additionally, the researcher's comprehension of the social context or phenomenon under investigation is vital in enhancing the study's credibility. To achieve this, respondent validation was utilized to ensure that the transcriptions aligned with the participants' views. At the same time, the participants were given the opportunity to make comments and suggest changes if needed, ultimately reducing bias (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In one instance, one respondent wanted to clarify a quote by adding information. Other than that, there were no inaccuracies between the participants' thoughts and our notes. Furthermore, the involvement of two researchers enabled active participation in data analysis, ensuring an accurate representation of participants' perspectives and ideas. Because we also utilized audio recordings of interviews, it facilitated cross-checking and enabled us to review interpretations for the highest possible credibility.

Transferability relates to the potential for generalizing the study's findings to other contexts (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), which is difficult in qualitative research. The study contributes to the development of a particular concept and may apply to similar marketing scenarios. However, the limited sample size of the study and the interpretative nature constrains its representativeness and transferability to other settings. Nonetheless, the findings of the data collection enabled transferability through a thick description by further contributing to the understanding of consumer behavior within retail.

Furthermore, dependability aims to establish the research's trustworthiness. It emphasizes maintaining all research records and documents and ensuring their accessibility (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). To enhance dependability, we kept a record of the research process, from the beginning until the end, which is presented in detail in the methodology chapter by outlining the decision-making process. In addition, the transcripts were safely stored to further enhance dependability. Furthermore, the study was continuously reviewed in an attempt to optimize it.

Simultaneously, the challenge of replicating qualitative research stems from the mutable nature of human behavior, making it impracticable to establish an objective response (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Consequently, the study's credibility remains somewhat ambiguous, as it fundamentally aims to delve into singular experiences and perspectives.

Confirmability prioritizes objectivity in research. While attaining complete objectivity may prove challenging, researchers should minimize the influence of personal values and beliefs on data interpretation (Bryman, Bell, & Harley, 2019). To improve confirmability, we made a conscious effort to set aside personal biases and ensure that the study's results were as objective as possible. The data underwent categorical coding and transformation into themes, reducing the risk of cherry-picking. Furthermore, topic guides for the data collection were created to avoid leading questions and briefly introduced the topic not to influence any answers given.

Finally, reflexivity assesses the research's quality, which Olmos-Vega et al. (2023, p. 1) define as "a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes". This definition underscores the importance of researchers' awareness of potential biases and preconceptions that may impact the analysis process. To ensure reflexivity, the practice of "reflexive writing" is utilized, which involves journaling and documenting the research process. This entailed maintaining a journal of all supervisor meetings and reflecting on the writing and findings throughout the process, and debriefing the data and results regularly with our supervisor.

### 3.6.2 Ethical Considerations

Regarding ethical concerns, this research adheres to the four fundamental ethical principles established by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017) for humanistic and social science research. These principles encompass the following aspects: information, consent, confidentiality, and usage requirements.

A potential concern with the sample, as noted by Singh and Wassenaar (2016), involved the personal relationships between some participants and us researchers. It could have been challenging for these people to decide not to participate, putting the requirement for voluntariness in jeopardy. We took steps to protect all participant's privacy and well-being in order to address this problem. Before the interviews and focus group began, participants were asked to review a consent form (*Appendix 1 and 2*). The consent form further explained the research purpose, highlighted their rights, and granted permission for recording and that the participant would be anonymous. This was brought up prior to the interviews, where the respondents were reminded of their rights and to give verbal consent. By doing so, we fulfilled the information and consent requirement, ensuring that respondents were fully aware of their role in the study and the conditions surrounding their participation (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

Furthermore, with recommendations from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017), confidentiality obligations were upheld to protect the privacy of the participants and to ensure that the information obtained during the study remained inaccessible to unauthorized individuals. In this study, we aimed for de-identification, making it impossible to link information to individuals' identities. This was achieved by refraining from documenting the names of interviewees in the transcriptions and only using key codes (IP followed by a number). However, focus groups present a unique set of ethical challenges because what participants tell the researcher is inevitably shared with the other group members. As a result, substantial privacy invasion issues are raised (Morgan, 1997). The consent form verbally approved by the interviewees explicitly stated the commitment to de-identifying the data and to give the participants pseudonyms, as well as their consent not to disclose any information about other participants or the study.

Throughout the study, we have strictly adhered to the ethical principle of utilizing the information solely for the purpose of the investigation in which the interviewees have participated (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018), thus fulfilling the usage requirement. We clearly highlighted that the data would be safely archived solely for the purpose of this research and inaccessible to anyone unauthorized.

## 4. Analysis of Empirical Findings

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*In this chapter, the relevant empirical data is presented and analyzed in the themes identified when sorting the material. The empirical data is structured into external and internal barriers supplemented by subcategories. The analysis discusses disruptions in consumer behavior in online and offline channels interchangeably.*

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Although customers are concerned about the social and environmental effects of their consumption habits, the findings indicate that simply encouraging consumers to consume sustainably would not be sufficient to bring about the required changes in consumers' future purchasing habits. Similar to Harris, Roby, and Dibb (2016), this study's research findings are categorized as either external or internal barriers. External barriers are those independent of consumers, including quality, price, returns, availability, social connections influencing individuals, product presentation, and lack of time due to unstructured stores and limited items. Internal barriers are those relating to consumers themselves and include personal attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge. In this research this includes a lack of knowledge, limited trust, and how individuals identify themselves with pre-owned fashion.

### 4.1 External Barriers

#### 4.1.1 Quality and Cleanliness

A commonly discussed barrier regarding the consumption of pre-owned fashion is the issue of hygiene. It is no secret that eye-catching, convenient, and unique designs can tempt people into buying something they did not originally need or intend to acquire. However, pre-owned shopping may lack this appeal since the items are already used, leading many individuals to avoid such purchases. This unwillingness stems from two aspects of hygiene; first, the actual cleanliness of the product, and second, the psychological hurdle of owning something old.

All participants expressed concerns about the actual cleanliness of pre-owned apparel. IP8 specifically mentioned, "When I buy used clothes, I always wash them before wearing them, even if they look clean, which I don't do with new clothes." IP2 also shared concerns about in-store hygiene, saying, "I don't buy used clothes, partly because the smell is important to me. Some stores selling pre-owned fashion have a terrible odor, like an old warehouse". However, IP8 also highlighted a positive aspect of pre-owned clothing, noting, "In second-hand stores, I often find better quality items because they have already had a previous owner, proving that the material is durable enough to be resold. In contrast, when buying new, some clothes wear out quickly, and you have to get rid of them after a short time".

Hygiene concerns related to the psychological barrier of owning used items were also prevalent in the discussion and seemed to be difficult to overcome. If a person is uncomfortable with the idea of wearing something used, it will likely persist despite any rational arguments. For

example, IP16 talks about her feelings towards previously worn clothing, saying, “Even if you wash it at a high temperature, the thought of someone else having used it bothers me. The closer the clothing has been to the body, the more it grosses me out. I even find jackets unappealing because they have been in someone else’s home and hung there”. Moreover, the type of clothing also plays a role in people’s perception of hygiene. IP1, for example, shares their thoughts on hats and says that “I do not find them hygienic because they have been used before, and I worry about getting lice”. IP3 has similar concerns about shoes, explaining, “It is somewhat disgusting because you do not know who wore them before. Feet can be a bit gross, and there might be old sweat particles in used shoes. You cannot wash shoes as easily as, say, shirts or pants”. In these arguments, there is a notable barrier that is deeply rooted in the participants’ minds, and as mentioned, it may be a difficult barrier to overcome. Although these hygiene concerns are not unjustified, they might be exaggerated. Despite the efforts taken by companies to clean and provide guarantees for their customers, some individuals continue to experience psychological barriers. Hence, it might take greater education and awareness to mitigate these concerns and increase the perception of pre-owned clothing.

#### 4.1.2 Price and Rarity

It is no secret that there are advantages and opportunities to finding hidden gems, unique items, and lower prices when shopping for pre-owned fashion. Despite this, price and rarity are found to constrain customers from purchasing pre-owned. This theme relates to the cost of products and the rarity of second-hand and vintage items. While some individuals indicated a willingness to pay more for rare items, others found it challenging to afford or justify such a purchase. Moreover, certain participants may be hesitant to invest extra money in pre-owned apparel they perceive as lower quality or less long-lasting than new ones. This obstacle could be intensified as some pre-owned apparel may rise in value due to their scarcity or restricted supply, driving their prices even higher.

Nevertheless, a fascinating and contradictory discovery involves examining the dual role of price as a strong incentive and a considerable challenge in purchasing pre-owned fashion. IP7 posited that cost is frequently the primary driver for her decision to acquire pre-owned clothing. Similar to this, IP6 confessed, albeit with some embarrassment, that her preference for pre-owned items is predominantly driven by their affordability and fashionable nature, as opposed to any commitment to sustainability or ethical considerations as she would like. While this suggests that IP6 may hold contradictory beliefs about her priorities while shopping, it can be interpreted that she is sensing societal pressure to express her aspirations to be a more conscious consumer. However, IP6 continued to explain that price can also be a reason why she deters from purchasing pre-owned by stating, “Not everything is super cheap, and some things even increase in value because they cannot be bought anymore”. This is especially true for high-end fashion that is highly sought after, or “items that are not produced anymore and thus become overpriced”, as explained by IP6. On the other hand, the findings unveiled divergent perspectives, and for some individuals, the high expense of certain pre-owned items may not justify their purchases. IP8 specifically said that “there are tons of brands out there, and the



clothes can be pretty pricey. It might not feel worth it because you could probably find new, similar items for the same price at other stores selling new clothing”. Similarly, in one of the focus groups, the cost of pre-owned fashion emerged as a recurring topic. There was a collective opinion that the price of certain pre-owned items made them unworthy of purchase, revealing that price is a complex and multifaceted issue when it comes to purchasing pre-owned fashion:

IP14: It depends on the price. If there’s only a 400 SEK difference and the original price is super high, I’m sorry, but I wouldn’t buy it used because it would feel fresher to buy it new.

IP13: Yes, totally! And I’d want the option to return or exchange it if there was something wrong with the product or whatever.

The question of price and rarity can be summarized that, on the one hand, some participants, such as IP7, expressed how price is a significant motivating factor for purchasing pre-owned fashion. This may be due to the less expensive price of pre-owned apparel than new ones, making them more accessible and affordable for some customers. Other participants, such as IP6, admitted that they primarily purchase pre-owned fashion for trend and price reasons rather than sustainable or ethical ones. However, it can, in some instances, be difficult to justify purchasing pre-owned items. This is especially true when similar or identical items are offered at comparable price rates. This entails it may not always be a straight relationship between the price of the items and their perceived value. This is demonstrated by the participants’ perceptions that buying particular pre-owned apparel, such as overpriced items, was not worth the money spent.

#### 4.1.3 Returns

The findings further revealed a collective attitude among the consumers that returns and exchanges are an important aspect that sometimes prevents them from purchasing pre-owned fashion. The participants highlighted the importance of easy returns and exchange policies for pre-owned fashion and the necessity for this, especially in digital instances where there is limited availability to try on and inspect the products, leading them to not conduct a purchase. IP7 stated, “I like the peace of mind that comes with knowing I can return or exchange something if it doesn’t meet my expectations. With pre-owned items, there’s no guarantee that I’ll be able to do that in comparison to when buying new clothes”. In contrast to many of the mainstream fashion stores selling new fashion, where there oftentimes are clear policies and an expectation of exchanges and returns, this seems to not be the case for second-hand and vintage stores. Although there are evidently many assumptions regarding this matter and that the customers do not research their rights, some online marketplaces do not offer such services. On that note, when the respondents were asked about these forums and online sellers, IP3 stated, “When you shop from Tradera or Blocket (online C2C platforms selling pre-owned items) and when nothing fits, you can’t return it”. Herein, the lack of access to try on products prior to purchase can present a considerable challenge for online shopping, causing consumers to exhibit resistance towards acquiring pre-owned fashion items through this channel. This also

holds true because of the effort consumers must make to find clear and straightforward information regarding the sizing and fit, especially in online purchases. IP4 noted, “I bought a pair of jeans online, and because it was only a picture, it was difficult to say how it would fit on me. And then when they didn’t fit, I could return them, but it wasn’t worth the cost since they were so cheap in the first place”. This uncertainty appears to be a shared concern among the participants. During a focus group discussion, IP14 highlighted, “you must reach a certain order value to qualify for free returns. For instance, if you buy a shirt for 50 SEK and the return cost is almost the same, it doesn’t make sense to return it.” Similarly, IP1 talked about her dissatisfaction with a purchase and mentioned, “It costs more to send it back than to keep it or even get back what I originally paid. [...] I gave it to a friend because it wasn’t worth the money to return it.”. The respondents in this study emphasized that the perceived impact of return costs becomes especially significant when purchasing pre-owned fashion. This heightened concern can be attributed to the relatively lower monetary value of pre-owned fashion, as the return costs become a more significant percentage of the total expenditure. As such, it is crucial to delve deeper into the relationship between pre-owned clothing purchases and return costs to understand consumers’ priorities and decision-making processes better.

Despite the prevalence of negative beliefs among the majority of participants concerning returns associated with purchases of pre-owned fashion, a minority of respondents did convey positive experiences. For instance, IP6 stated, “I have always been able to return it actually. But it has only been with large and well-known companies, so it has actually gone very well”. Although she has been satisfied with the return policies, she continued and admitted that “it’s always a gamble”. Having that said, it can be understood that despite having previously returned used clothing successfully, she still feels insecure about the process.

#### 4.1.4 Accessibility and Availability

In larger cities, there are often numerous stores selling pre-owned fashion, often offering a variety of options. On the contrary, the findings reveal that in less populated areas, the options are limited, leading to difficulties for customers to find affordable and sustainable alternatives to fast fashion. This study shows that the location where someone lives can significantly influence their incentives for pre-owned clothing. IP8 clarified this notion by stating that:

Before moving, I didn’t really buy a lot of second-hand or used items, almost none at all. I kind of thought it felt a bit old and like those typical second-hand stores you would find in Sweden. Plus, now that I’m living in a larger city, where people are super fashionable, it seems like the quality of clothes that are offered might be better than in smaller towns, where people might not be as into fashion.

This is further strengthened by IP4, who answered the question on which resources she needed to buy pre-owned fashion and stated:

Perhaps accessibility, because if you go down to town here (Lund), there are some second-hand stores, but there are more regular shops. So if it had been just as easy to find a second-hand store nearby, it would have been easier to buy if you just want something at the moment while being in town.

Another obstacle encountered by those interested in pre-owned clothing is the limited variety in sizing. In the majority of the stores selling pre-owned fashion, the items offered are often handed in by the previous owners, resulting in a scarcity of available options. Therefore, locating the perfect fit can be a difficult task, especially for individuals who do not conform to standard sizing. The scarce availability of diverse sizes constrains the number of people who can purchase pre-owned clothing, suggesting it to be an exclusive experience for some. IP3 shared her frustration, stating, “So I’ve checked out Sellpy before, but most of the time the sizes just don’t work for me. You know, when you finally find something cool and it is like, ‘Oh great, of course, it is an XS’”. IP3 continued by mentioning her excitement when influencers advertised their apparel for sale on digital platforms, only to be disappointed by the wrong sizes. Another participant found it more convenient to search for specific sizes online, remarking, “It’s actually simpler to search online for something specific, if I want leather shoes in size 38 from a certain brand, I can probably find it. But if I go to a store, there is no guarantee they will have it in stock.” (IP4). However, IP7 highlighted the drawbacks of online sizing, explaining, “Usually, there’s only one size available, so you cannot just order two and try them on at home, which makes it tough to figure out if something will fit or not. But when you’re at a store, you can just try it on right away and know for sure.”

The availability of used clothing is also greatly influenced by current fashion trends. Due to the seasonal nature of fashion, stores selling pre-owned may accumulate a surplus of products that are no longer in trend, making it challenging to find more modern and trendy items. When asked why they do not simply choose pre-owned items, IP14 responded, “The main issue is that you just don’t find the variety or the latest styles in second-hand or vintage shops. I mean, there is no shortage of T-shirts and jeans, but they are mostly outdated. Because of this, I tend to lose interest pretty fast”. Building upon this line of reasoning, IP5 further expressed that:

You need to be informed and up-to-date about second-hand stuff because trendy clothes can be pretty rare. They do pop up from time to time, but I don’t always have the patience to wait for more fashionable items to show up in those stores. When that happens, I just look for new clothes instead.

Some participants have mentioned loving the hunting rush and the uncertainty of actually finding something interesting and useful for them. It is a pleasant way of spending time for those who appreciate doing shopping in a slow and relaxed manner. However, it was evident that more creative individuals tend to consume more pre-owned fashion. For example, IP2 stated that:

For example, when I need a black T-shirt, I could go to a thrift store. But the thing is that I know exactly what I want and it makes it difficult. My friends who go thrifting a lot,

they just browse and find appealing items, and I guess that is where our goals kind of differ. That is why I think it's hard for me to find items, just because I'm super specific and don't just shop for fun. It's easier if you're more creative in your style. Spontaneous purchases versus planned ones can make a huge difference in finding those one-of-a-kind pieces people want.

This indicates that people who value uniqueness and are open to different styles are more likely to find fashionable and distinctive pieces in second-hand or vintage shops. These individuals are increasingly detached from prejudices, which allows them to find rare items. Conversely, those with more definite and inflexible ideas of what they desire tend to encounter difficulties while making purchases in second-hand and vintage stores. Due to their unwillingness to experiment with their style, individuals could have problems discovering products that properly meet their needs.

#### 4.1.5 Layout and Presentation

The stores themselves play a great role in stimulating the decision-making process, as most of the participants agreed that the layout of second-hand and vintage stores tends to be messy. For example, IP6 said that "Sometimes when you go into second-hand stores, it's just full of stuff everywhere so it doesn't feel like you are walking into a store, but more like you are walking into someone's storage room and rooting around". IP1 went even further and said that her intention got abruptly even before entering the store as she stated that "I wouldn't have gone in there if I had felt that this is not a good environment at all, I just get very overwhelmed by all the clothes and things everywhere and that nothing is sorted in categories". Having said that, it is evident from the comments made by IP6 and IP1 that the cluttered and chaotic appearance of such stores can be off-putting for potential customers. A more critical examination of this issue reveals that the layout and atmosphere of these stores may unintentionally create a barrier for potential customers, who might feel overwhelmed and disoriented upon entering. Customers may find it challenging to navigate the store and find particular items due to the lack of structure and categorization of items, as highlighted by IP1. This may result in a bad shopping experience and deter customers from returning to these shops in the future.

On the same note, all participants agreed that a positive atmosphere inside the stores through appealing design and decorations, as well as pleasant music, light, and smell, is a driving force. Simultaneously, the lack of it is an obstacle. Noteworthy, they also agreed that this structured layout is quite uncommon when shopping for pre-owned clothing. On the question of what is lacking from second-hand and vintage retailers today, the participants in one focus group discussed the layouts:

IP16: They can probably make it easier by color coordinating and hanging the clothes in order of size.

IP14: I also think that the premises could have improved the impression so much, I mean, paint the wall in a lovely beige color or something. Right now it is really like you have

entered a room and they have just dumped a lot of stuff. I think that you would have to make second-hand stores more like regular stores to increase the flow of customers. I mean it is often not so nicely decorated or organized in second-hand stores.

IP15: When I enter a store and find the items appealing, it doesn't cross my mind to question the item's freshness.

IP16: I think you should make it more like a regular store, with the same concept as stores that sell new clothes and modernize.

From this discussion, it is evident that many pre-owned retailers are currently lacking in key areas that are crucial for creating a positive shopping experience. These shortcomings include organizing, store layout, and overall aesthetics, all of which can deter potential customers and negatively impact sales. In terms of organization, retailers selling pre-owned fashion often fail to implement effective color coordination and size arrangements, resulting in a disorganized and confusing shopping environment. In these cases, some participants find it more challenging to find what they are searching for and tend to become frustrated and less likely to conduct a purchase. Additionally, the overall appearance of many of these retailers leaves much to be desired. Interiors that are outdated or poorly maintained may give potential customers the impression that the store and the items are unclean. IP14's suggestion of painting the walls in a pleasant beige color highlights the importance of creating a visually appealing space that encourages customers to feel at ease and explore the store's offerings. Lastly, the outdated layout of many stores can be another barrier to attracting customers. As IP15 mentions, an attractive presentation of goods is crucial for creating a positive perception of the store. By modernizing their layout, pre-owned and vintage stores can better showcase their merchandise. In contrast, one positive aspect was found regarding this phenomenon as one participant said that she fancied the layout of second-hand and vintage stores and called it charming aesthetics. IP3 specifically said, "The lighting may not be 10/10. The changing rooms may not be as good as those in more renowned retail stores. But there is also some charm in that, I think, that it doesn't become so sterile, but that it's cozy." Although she thinks it is charming, she highlights that it is not as good as the premises of big retailers.

In terms of the digital aspect of buying pre-owned clothing and whether the layout makes an obstacle, it is crucial to consider factors like image quality and information. Regarding the quality of images, IP2 states that "If you look at Sellpy (a platform selling pre-owned fashion online), it doesn't look aesthetically pleasing as the clothes hang wrinkled". The negative perception of wrinkled items might lead consumers to question their appealingness. Many participants shared similar opinions on this matter. However, IP7 focused on the difference in presentation between new and used apparel and stated:

For me, it is about clothes not looking as nice as when you buy them new, where the setting is white and fresh, I believe that you could do the same with second-hand clothes. Sometimes it feels like you do not show used clothes fairly [...] I do not buy from platforms with pictures of wrinkled clothes hanging on a mannequin.

IP7 believed that used apparel are not fairly presented, which could be a significant deterrent for potential buyers. The lack of appeal in the presentation may make customers feel that the retailer does not value the items, thus undermining the confidence consumers have in buying pre-owned clothing. In such instances, it can potentially make in-person shopping preferable in this regard. This is particularly true for those who, like IP5, often shop for pre-owned clothing. IP5 expressed frustration with the online experience, stating, “I dislike purchasing used clothes online, as you never can see how it will fit on a person. Being able to see a model’s height and the size they are wearing is invaluable, as it helps decide if the item will suit you or not”. This suggests that online platforms selling pre-owned fashion may not present items fairly and provide enough information about the products, making it difficult for customers to make informed decisions. In this case, it is especially the phenomenon of not seeing how the apparel fit on a person in combination with measures, which can be a barrier for those who want to ensure that the items they purchase will look good on them. Physical stores may be preferred as this participant can try the apparel before purchasing them.

This research revealed that both physical and online stores have shortcomings in their layouts. While the flaws are somewhat alike, they manifest differently due to the inherent nature of the shopping environments. In physical stores, customers often feel overwhelmed by the disorder of clothing items. This issue is less prevalent in online alternatives; however, both digital and physical stores struggle with how to display their items. Modernizing the presentation in both channels is crucial, as participants desire a customer experience similar to shopping for new fashion. Lastly, online stores tend to provide less information compared to their offline counterparts.

#### 4.1.6 You Are the Company You Keep

A consumer’s attitude towards buying used fashion derives from different aspects, whereas one, which was recurrently referred to in interviews, was the social value obtained from friends. When participants were asked to briefly describe if something motivated them to buy pre-owned clothing or not, it did not take long for participants to mention their social connections. During one of the focus groups, the participants discussed whether they got influenced by their friends and family:

IP13: I mean, it’s very trendy these days and I would say that it affects me.

IP14: Yes, and I think it depends on the group you surround yourself with. Our parents, for example, think it’s kind of disgusting.

IP15: Yes, my father thinks so too. My mom thinks it’s great but my dad can question me and ask “Did you really buy it second-hand?”. Therefore, I might find it a bit difficult to shop for second-hand clothes and if I do, I would have avoided telling him.

This shows that social barriers created by family and friends become apparent in the differing opinions and reactions toward the consumption of used apparel. The conversation sheds light on the complex social dynamics that come into play when discussing the topic of pre-owned

fashion. The differing opinions and reactions presented in their exchange not only reveal the influence of family and friends in shaping an individual's perspective. IP13's observation about the trendiness of pre-owned fashion indicates a growing awareness and openness towards sustainable consumption. As seen previously in this research, this trend has been driven by factors such as increased environmental consciousness or the desire for unique styles. However, as IP15 suggests, not everyone shares this positive view, highlighting the subjective nature of fashion and sustainability. IP14's account of her parents' negative attitude towards pre-owned clothing illustrates a possible generational gap in values and beliefs. While younger generations, in this case, view them as a means of promoting sustainability and individuality, the older generation sometimes view it more negatively. The research conducted thus far underscores the complex social barriers created by differing perspectives, which may limit the adoption of more sustainable practices.

Continuing on the role of peer influence in shaping opinions about used apparel, friends can either promote or hinder such practices. IP13 expressed that she is influenced by her significant others and stated that "If it weren't for my sister checking out those second-hand stores, I wouldn't have gone by myself. [...] She's always giving me tips and whenever she comes across something she thinks I'd be into, she sends me a pic". Hereby it is evident that she is influenced by her friends to conduct such behavior rather than experiencing external pressure and would not plan to do so if it was not because of her sister, which highlights the role of social connections and the exchange of information and recommendations in shaping consumer preferences. Furthermore, IP5 provides an illustrative example of social influences, stating, "Yes, but in Stockholm, I still feel that you can be confronted like 'you shop a little too much that is not second-hand and if you are going to shop so much, you should shop more second-hand'". This statement suggests that she may be influenced by others to consume sustainably. In contrast, all participants in the initial focus group concurred that they do not prefer pre-owned and vintage shopping, primarily due to social apprehensions. Building upon that, another respondent acknowledges the strong influence of their social circle in shaping their consumption patterns but posits that ingrained patterns serve as a barrier to adopting such practices. IP10 explains, "Then I also think it is about what you grew up in, for example, we have never bought pre-owned clothing in our family. I also think that you are so set in a pattern and it can be difficult to commit to breaking the pattern because it has always been a certain way". Another noteworthy finding is that the majority of the participants did not sense a social stigma surrounding pre-owned fashion. This entails that there is a growing social acceptance of pre-owned shopping where individuals are merely faced with influences rather than pressure, and as IP7 pointed out, "I think that there was more of a social stigma surrounding it a few years ago, that it was cheap or that you couldn't afford new apparel, but now I haven't experienced any of this. I think people are more happy for you if you find these rare and cool items". Despite the fact that these participants did express that social stigma has decreased or even vanished, their patterns and perceptions reveal the opposite, suggesting that the stigma is evolving over time.

#### 4.1.7 Time and Effort

The theme of time and effort as a barrier to pre-owned shopping is found to be interconnected with various other themes discovered in this study and perhaps one of the most significant findings. Inhere, the amount of time and effort it takes to shop pre-owned, is described as a major reason why the respondents do not purchase it solely or as often as with new apparel or fast fashion. All respondents mentioned the inconvenience of shopping for pre-owned fashion in at least one or more instances, especially in unstructured and cluttered stores. In comparison, they also often mentioned the convenience and ease of purchasing apparel in fast fashion stores. In one of the focus groups, this difference between pre-owned and fast fashion was particularly evident:

IP15: I'm pretty open-minded, but when I go shopping, I want it to feel clean and simple. Myrorna (a Swedish second-hand store) just doesn't give me that vibe. Sure, they might have some nice stuff, but with clothes all over the place in a bunch of colors and sizes, I just don't have the patience for it.

IP14: Yeah, it can be really time-consuming. Instead, you could just pop into H&M and find the exact shirt you want in several different colors and sizes.

As a result, the respondents frequently expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the time and effort required to sort through the abundance of clothing or to search for certain items when the stores are crowded or disorganized. This might affect the entire shopping experience, and as previously noted in Chapter 4.1.5, some consumers might even leave the store at the entry if they see it packed to capacity. In addition, IP2 mentioned that "considering that sorting clothes is a bit more of a process because it can be 20 different items hanging on a clothes rack, time and patience are very important resources", and IP3 mentioned how pre-owned shopping is rather a one-day-activity she would plan ahead with her friends than do spontaneously, and that you have to be in the right mood for it. Thus, convenience arguably plays a great role in the decision-making process when the participants plan to purchase fashion, regardless of whether it is pre-owned or newly produced. The issue of time and effort is found to be connected to a poor layout and presentation in stores, as it directly impacts the ease of navigation and the overall shopping experience. Regarding these cluttered physical stores where the customers feel overwhelmed by items, the participants brought up potential solutions that they argue would make a huge difference. One such action, as described by IP8, which frequently shops for pre-owned fashion, is to make the atmosphere in the stores more equal to stores selling new apparel. She states that:

Often, second-hand stores can be pretty chaotic, and you end up spending more time searching than you would in a regular store [...]. They could definitely improve things by making it more organized and not cramming clothes so close together [...]. Just having a better layout and keeping things neat and tidy would make a big difference.

On another note, many of the participants mentioned that to overcome this barrier, one has to be good at shopping pre-owned. Specifically, to be able to more effectively sift through the



mass of apparel and navigate the stores. As further explained by the majority of participants, the more you shop, the more you keep track of what is good and where to shop for the best items. However, without this knowledge, the time and effort barrier constrains the respondents from putting in the effort needed. IP2 mentioned that she has the intention to shop for more pre-owned, however, “shopping second-hand hasn’t been very successful for me, [...]. Well, perhaps my attitude has been affected by the fact that it’s difficult to find something, and then I’m automatically not as motivated. I’m trying to get better at it, but I’m rarely in the mood nor have the time”. Among many of the respondents, there seems to be a discrepancy between the intent to perform a behavior and actual behavior, where all have the intention to shop – however, because of the time and effort required, they tend to purchase fast fashion instead. Hence, this can be a major barrier for those customers that are interested in shopping for pre-owned fashion but are deterred by the inconvenience.

For online purchases, there are found to be opposing opinions. Whereas IP5 expresses that it still requires a significant amount of time and effort to sift through the online platforms, IP12 believes that it is easier to find pre-owned items online than in-store. This may be explained by what IP4 and IP6 mention, as they frequently search for particular brands or use the filter function to find items online. They point out that this is an advantage to make the process more efficient and convenient, but in these situations, it is especially crucial to know what you are looking for.

## 4.2 Internal Barriers

### 4.2.1 Ignorance

Several respondents expressed a lack of knowledge and information about pre-owned fashion, and a few held misconceptions about the items and stores. Herein, some of the participants stated that they did not know where to find pre-owned clothing stores due to lacking marketing made by retailers. IP16 stated, “I think stores could have marketed themselves a bit more. It’s not often you see that stores market second-hand. At least, I don’t know that many. I know Myrorna and Björkman (physical stores selling pre-owned clothing) here in Malmö, but I don’t know many more”. This suggests that a certain level of hesitance may arise among consumers regarding the acquisition of pre-owned fashion, a phenomenon primarily attributable to an absence of requisite knowledge. Given their unfamiliarity with this sector, these consumers might struggle with understanding how to initiate this process or what outcomes they should anticipate. The lack of marketing by retailers may also contribute to consumers’ ignorance about them. As IP16 describes, she indeed has some knowledge about available stores in her proximity. Despite this, the respondents sense that there is a lack of promotions and advertisements for pre-owned shops and their merchandise, as well as a lack of visibility in the mainstream fashion media. Moreover, IP4 stated that it is easier to look for particular items in the same stores that she usually shops at instead of searching for new ones, opting for the more familiar brands and stores instead. She continues stating, “I haven’t done much research on what is available, but I think there are some stores in Malmö and in Copenhagen, and it is quite

close. So I guess I could have gone there to shop”. Arguably, in order to find second-hand and vintage stores, customers must often actively research themselves, which leads them to stick to what they know and frequently see in the media. The statement from IP4 brings to light a type of ignorance as she is comfortable going to the same stores she knows and is familiar with rather than searching for new alternatives.

Nevertheless, ignorance is also on the part of customers. IP7 noted, “I don’t know if you can return it, but it doesn’t feel like it. Or, I assume that you can’t. I think that when you buy used clothes online, you don’t really have all the information, and you may not have the same rights as when you buy new clothes”. This highlights a common concern among participants, which is the assumptions and lack of information available about pre-owned fashion retailers and their policies. This suggests that some participants frequently act on assumptions rather than reality, leading them to a sense of distrust or unease. It also relates to misconceptions and stereotypes about pre-owned fashion. As such, some customers expressed their concerns about pre-owned clothing with poor quality or old-fashioned styles, leading them to overlook these stores as a shopping option. IP9 stated, “Hm, well, it’s probably more that it is already used, and then I have an idea that it’s not fresh and clean”. This suggests that some customers may have an ignorant perception of pre-owned fashion. It appears that some of the participants tend to believe that all pre-owned items are of poor quality and that the stores only feature outdated fashion, even in cases when they have no prior experience. The statement made by IP9 that used clothing is not “fresh and clean” could indicate a lack of knowledge regarding the washing and refurbishment steps used apparel goes through before being sold. Hence, it is probable that the consumer has never purchased used fashion previously or that they are not aware of the stages involved in preparing used items ready for sale. However, it is important to note that the customer’s perception may not necessarily be their fault. Meaning that the stigma surrounding pre-owned clothing is perpetuated by societal and cultural factors that place a higher value on new and unused items. In these instances, it is therefore the responsibility of retailers who sell pre-owned items to educate the customers about the quality and cleanliness to address these concerns and promote pre-owned as a shopping option.

#### 4.2.2 Trust

During the discussions in the focus groups and the interviews, the issue of trust emerged as another common concern. All of the participants brought up that the trustworthiness of sellers is an important aspect to consider when purchasing pre-owned fashion. This was especially true for online marketplaces due to an increased risk of being scammed and potentially fraudulent behavior. The respondents felt this unease when they were unfamiliar with the seller or the website and therefore may require additional assurances before making a purchase. IP15 specifically pointed out, “I would only consider buying pre-owned fashion if I trust the seller, and that’s not always easy to determine”.

This was especially true for online platforms as the lack of physical interaction arose as a topic of discussion, leading the respondents to become uncertain when there was insufficient

information. Hence, making transparency even more important. For example, IP7 stated, “If you have a bad experience with one purchase, you might lose confidence. If I buy something that is in worse condition than what the seller says, I feel like I lose trust in purchasing pre-owned”. In line with this quote, the majority of participants felt that they cannot truly rely on the seller to accurately describe the condition of the item or disclose any potential issues with the product. IP6 continued and noted, “I would like to see the product in real life before I buy it. [...] You never know what condition it is or how it fits until you receive it”. As previously mentioned, customers may find it more challenging to evaluate the product’s quality and decide whether it is worthwhile to purchase because of the lack of physical interaction. IP16 agreed and stated, “Sometimes when you buy second-hand, you can get really lucky and find something that looks brand new. Other times, you can receive something that is completely different from what was described in the ad”. This unpredictability can lead to customers feeling that pre-owned shopping is too risky or unreliable to be a consistent option and resonated among all participants that it often comes down to luck. In line with this, photo quality emerged as an obstacle, as illustrated by IP12, who stated, “When buying used items, I am extremely detail-oriented, often zooming in and even asking the seller to provide more photos from different perspectives or lighting conditions”. IP12 further explains, “A satisfactory image is one that clearly shows any flaws in the product. Thus, the ideal photo should reveal the imperfections and visible defects of second-hand clothing”. Hence, the higher the photo clarity and transparency of products, the more confident consumers feel when making decisions about purchasing items, as they suggest that the seller is open and committed to offering precise details about the product. IP3 continued and was concerned about the delivery when purchasing online and stated, “I worry that the item I receive won’t match the description or photos provided by the seller. And then again, if I purchase from individual sellers online, I don’t even know if I will receive it. So that is a risk in itself”.

Furthermore, IP3 stated, “Since it’s an individual who sells on Tradera, it depends on how much they have posted in their ad themselves. And if I notice that it’s a sketchy ad, then I probably won’t buy from it”. To build trust, the participants agreed that stores must be as transparent as possible, providing comprehensive information about the condition of the products and the scope of services they offer. Further, many participants underscored the critical role of credible and dependable online platforms in influencing their choice to engage in online transactions for pre-owned fashion. IP6 stated,

I’m the kind of person who feels more at ease when I’m shopping from a big, reputable online marketplace, instead of some random new website nobody’s ever mentioned before. I usually go ahead and look for reviews on the internet to see what’s up. In those situations, I’m extra cautious about ordering stuff, or how everything’s going to turn out. And if it costs more, I’ll be even more careful, especially when it’s all happening online.

This emphasizes the role of established online marketplaces in building trust and confidence among customers and the need for new or lesser-known platforms to establish their credibility. However, even when customers have purchased pre-owned items previously and had positive

experiences, trust and reliability barriers may persist due to the perceived inconsistency of the pre-owned market.

#### 4.2.3 The Contradicting Self

Drawing upon the additional dimension of the theory of planned behavior, the theme ‘the contradicting self’ was indeed discovered to be prevalent in this study. Interestingly, it emerged from the focus groups and interviews that some participants had conflicting views of themselves and the actions they took. When the participants were asked whether they identified themselves as sustainable individuals, there were various answers. For example, IP9 did not identify herself as sustainable, whereas IP4 did. Although sustainability and pre-owned consumption may not be completely interconnected due to the broadness of the term ‘sustainable’ and the fact that it may hold different meanings for different people, the participants often brought up the two terms in relation to one another. Moreover, given the question of whether the participants considered themselves sustainable or considerate about the environment in their own sense, IP8 initially began by stating “yes”. Subsequently, when asked what actions the participants take in order to address environmental issues, IP8 continued that “For instance, I recycle a lot, and then I also bike everywhere. And I purchase second-hand most of the time”. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the participants acknowledge that there is a correlation between the two and that a motive for pre-owned shopping may be due to environmental concerns.

However, on another note, some of the participants had conflicting views on whether they viewed themselves as sustainable and if they actually purchased much pre-owned fashion. One such instance concerned IP1, who identified herself as sustainable, and that she has significantly decreased her consumption due to the contemporary consumer society, which she describes as ‘extreme’. However, when she was asked if she practiced what she preach, she stated:

I believe that I have a little bit more to learn. I would say that I have knowledge about what’s sustainable or not, but I might not always follow these practices. I still purchase at fast fashion stores because I don’t have as much money now as a student.

This statement highlights the complexity of human behavior and shows that it is possible to have concerns regarding sustainability and consumption but may not always follow through with these actions due to perceived barriers or more critical priorities. From the focus groups and interviews, this can include other factors such as fashion trends, availability, and financial considerations, much like IP1, who was not the only participant expressing this struggle. For instance, this is also experienced by IP3, who expressed herself as ‘sustainable’ but also ‘somewhat egoistic’ stating, “I am sustainable, or I care but I would not say I am an activist about it, I rarely shop for fun [...] but at the same time, if I want something for a better price I would go to H&M or some similar brand, so I guess that’s somewhat egoistic”. Furthermore, IP6 pointed out that she views herself as a person concerned with sustainability, but although she has a great interest in pre-owned fashion, she finds it difficult to solely purchase pre-owned, “I believe that it would be difficult to only purchase second-hand, mainly because I am very

interested in clothing and they don't have everything I am searching for". She continued and stated that "I guess I could have shopped more second-hand though". This entails that conflicting values and actions are prevalent among the participants and that the view of themselves as sustainable consumers does not reflect their behavior as such. The statements made highlight the importance of acknowledging the challenges and limitations of pre-owned consumption, placing emphasis on the potential conflict between personal interest and sustainable behavior. Herein, it became evident that many respondents have a desired interest in becoming more sustainable consumers. For instance, IP3 expressed her willingness to purchase more pre-owned and often thought about her consumption patterns.

## 5. Discussion

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*In this chapter, the results will be showcased along with the theoretical framework. The extended model of Ajzen (1991) lays the foundation for this analysis to discuss why some people choose not to partake in second-hand and vintage consumption. Supporting research will be used to shed additional light on the theoretical underpinnings of these hurdles. The discussion is structured on the four primary concepts identified in the theoretical framework.*

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The identified themes in the analysis shed light on how these individuals navigate the pre-owned fashion market and the challenges they encounter in their pursuit of pre-owned shopping. Furthermore, it is found that the process of planned behavior is more dynamic than proposed by Ajzen (1991) and can unfold in a more complex and multidimensional manner. The relationship between the four presented forces, intention, and behavior may not always be straightforward or linear, warranting further attention on the dynamic interaction. They can interact and shape an individual's decision-making process and, thus, subsequent behavior. The empirical findings reveal that there are patterns among the participants in how they perceive pre-owned consumption. As noted by previous research, there are many reasons why consumers choose to purchase pre-owned (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Williams & Paddock, 2003). However, from a more thorough investigation, it became evident that there are multiple reasons as to why people decide not to make a purchase. By expanding upon the empirical material and analysis presented in the previous chapter, this chapter sheds further light on the barriers to pre-owned consumption and how they influence consumer motivations by applying it to the extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Understanding these barriers and the interplay of various factors may prove helpful for developing effective interventions aimed at increasing pre-owned fashion consumption.

### 5.1 Attitudes

The attitudes of consumers play a critical role in shaping individuals' behavior, including their decisions to engage in pre-owned shopping behavior. In the context of pre-owned shopping behavior, attitudes can include beliefs about the quality and cleanliness, perceptions of the layout and presentation, misconceptions regarding pre-owned clothing, and whether second-hand and vintage sellers are trustworthy or not. Aligned with TPB, the perceptions and attitudes consumers hold are much affected by certain attributes (Ajzen, 2005). The findings revealed that some consumers hold negative attitudes towards pre-owned fashion already initial to any intention being created. On the contrary, those consumers that intend to purchase pre-owned fashion and hold positive attitudes may be interrupted by certain barriers that affect their attitude and, thus, the outcome of the intention.

#### *Perceptions About Quality*

Consistent with previous research (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016; Ekström, 2012; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019; Guiot & Roux, 2010), this study supports that negative attitudes

towards pre-owned fashion lower the likelihood of conducting a purchase. Product attributes and the variety of items are found to influence the attitude of consumers, meaning that perceived quality can act as a barrier. This barrier was initially intended as an external hindrance; however, findings revealed that it is additionally influenced by the psychological hurdle of participants. Thus, the findings suggest that there are two types of hygienic concerns about the cleanliness of pre-owned apparel. These are the actual cleanliness of the products and also the psychological difficulty of owning something previously used. Drawing from Rulikova's (2020) theory, the notion of wearing pre-owned clothing raised concerns, primarily due to their history of being worn by strangers. Despite the fact that certain items may be perceived as more unpleasant than others, apprehensions persist over the idea of these items lingering in others' living spaces. An interesting notion is the finding that the closer the item is perceived to have been to another individual's body, the likelihood that these barriers will arise increases. This observation aligns with Roux and Korchia's (2006) assertion that the perceived or actual presence of bodily traces, such as sweat stains or odors, on used clothing can be construed as an unwelcome intrusion of the previous owner's personal space, thereby discouraging people from reusing such items. Consequently, this might prompt individuals to opt for purchasing new products, even in situations where it is neither required nor environmentally responsible.

#### *Perceptions About Layout and Product Presentation*

Whereas the product attributes significantly affect the purchase intention of consumers, the store attributes and presentation of items both in-store and digitally are equally as important. Although this may be true for any retailer, it was expressed as a particular obstacle for retailers selling pre-owned in relation to firsthand retailers. The findings further suggest that there are differences in the layout between a digital store and an in-store experience.

Although Connell (2010) argues for the importance of an appealing and organized layout in-store, the existing research on the layout and presentation of products online is somewhat sparse. Therefore, the findings provided by this study offer new insights into digital product displays. In examining the empirical data, it becomes evident that the presentation of pre-owned clothing on online platforms, such as Sellpy, Blocket, and Tradera, significantly influences consumer perceptions, warranting further attention. Gao et al. (2012) have previously acknowledged the presentation online to be insufficient due to a lack of information. However, the findings of the poor presentation online extends beyond informational insufficiencies. For instance, when the apparel appear wrinkled or unappealing, it may lead to a negative impression, causing potential customers to doubt the items' quality or worth. This may deter them from purchasing used fashion, as they may associate the less-than-ideal presentation with a lack of care or maintenance. Ensuring a visually appealing display of pre-owned items could help counteract this perception and encourage more consumers to engage in sustainable and cost-effective shopping practices. Herein, the presentation also holds true for the quality of advertisements, such as revealing any imperfections and providing more aesthetically pleasing pictures. As previously mentioned, in the field of online product presentation literature the focus has predominantly been on addressing the demand for product information. However, to enhance customer experiences in both virtual and physical domains, retailers ought to offer extensive details on aspects such as quality, brand variety, and a user-friendly categorization

system for better comprehension of the available items (Connell, 2010). This is especially crucial for the digital transactions of pre-owned merchandise, where quality is a significant concern when purchasing pre-owned clothing. The empirical evidence from this study suggests that online retailers specializing in pre-owned fashion must strengthen their informativeness and presentation of items to remain competitive against their brick-and-mortar counterparts.

When it comes to physical stores selling pre-owned clothing, findings revealed that many consumers tend to feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the messy, cluttered, and disorganized layouts they often encounter. This is found to be especially true for customers who prefer or are used to the clean, neat, and organized presentation of traditional retail stores where design and layout are more considerably thought through. Drawing on the experiences of participants, it becomes evident that the absence of structure in second-hand and vintage stores frequently leads to customer confusion and irritation, thus making it difficult for them to locate their desired items. Customers in this research even said that an outdated or poorly-maintained interior could give the impression of an unclean shopping environment – which is then explained as an obstacle for purchasing pre-owned and affecting their attitudes. This, in turn, proved to affect the customers' impression of the quality of the items being sold. As previously mentioned, individuals noted that pre-owned fashion comes with an unpleasant smell and imperfections (Connell, 2010; Sorensen & Johnson Joergensen, 2019), which is then expressed as being transmitted to the store and affecting their attitudes leading potential customers to disrupt their intention to purchase. Despite this, it is important to keep in mind that certain customers found this atmosphere to be charming and positively different (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). Although customers seeking something that is unique and distinctively different might find a cluttered, vintage, and retro environment appealing, it is crucial to bear in mind that such customers are a minority in this research. Instead, the layout and presentation tend to be overwhelming and time-consuming for a majority of customers. This notion of pre-owned shopping being time-consuming is also found by Sorensen and Johnson Jorgensen (2019). Noteworthy, the findings suggest that it is one of the most prevalent barriers to influencing behavior. Similar to previous research, the time and effort it takes to distinguish appealing items and sort through the stores are often attributed to the huge amount of items, disorganized stores, and to some extent, lack of creativity (Sweet & Wu, 2019; Herjanto, Scheller-Sampson & Erickson, 2016). Pre-owned retailers must focus on their presentation and layout if they want to attract and retain customers. Customers' opinions of the store can be greatly enhanced by a neat and ordered presentation with attributes much like traditional stores, which also makes it simpler for them to browse and find the products they are looking for. Thus, making it more likely that these consumers will engage in pre-owned consumption behaviors.

#### *Misconceptions in Regards to Pre-owned Clothing*

Furthermore, the findings revealed that ignorance or stereotypical beliefs could serve as a driver of attitude and barrier to purchasing pre-owned fashion. In some instances, customers tend to have misconceptions regarding pre-owned items being of less quality or less hygienic based on assumptions rather than past experiences. This lack of knowledge has previously been noted by several authors (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016; Connell, 2010; Ellen, 1994), and according to the



empirical findings, this appears to be somewhat of a standard practice among consumers. On another note, Brandão and Gonçalves da Costa (2021) found that individuals with greater environmental knowledge are more likely to engage in pre-owned consumption. However, the findings indicate that despite having knowledge about the environmental benefits of buying second-hand clothing, many individuals still do not engage in such purchases. Hereby, some of the respondents in this study that had only purchased pre-owned on a few occasions or had never purchased – despite their environmental knowledge – rarely searched for information regarding the processes the items go through, nor where to locate and find the stores. Consequently, these customers rely on familiar brands and mainstream fashion stores to fulfill their needs whilst shopping. Herein, similar to Valor, Ronda and Abril's (2022) and Sorensen and Johnson Jorgensen's (2019) findings, there is more of a perceived lack of availability, accessibility, quality, and cleanliness that may not correlate to the actual reality, influencing their attitude towards the particular behavior. For the customers that have not purchased pre-owned items before, there was an obvious common negative perception towards both online and physical stores. This is previously noted by Sorensen and Johnson Jorgensen (2019), who demonstrate that many misconceptions also correlate to unfamiliarity. Hence, there is a clear connection between the stereotypes and misconceptions customers hold aligned with whether they have previously purchased or not. Likewise, the customers who had previously purchased pre-owned were more open towards pre-owned and held more positive attitudes, incentivizing them to do so again.

#### *Retailers' Trustworthiness Shaping Consumer Attitudes*

The attitudes towards pre-owned shopping are also found to be attributed to the perception based on the trustworthiness and reliability of products and the company itself. Likewise, trust between the customer and the seller is crucial, as these consumers are often wary of buying from individuals or marketplaces they are not familiar with (Brand, Jacobs & Taljaard-Swart, 2023). As information is available online, this entails that, especially in online marketplaces, trust is essentially important due to the inability of the customer to touch, feel, or interact with the product or seller physically. Corresponding to Chen, Zheng, Xu, Liu, and Wang (2018), the empirical findings suggest that larger companies and transparency of information play an important role in these instances, and word of mouth and reputation becomes integral. The revealed hesitance of consumers may be attributed to a lack of confidence in online processes, as previously noted by Brand, Jacobs and Taljaard-Swart (2023). Thus, additionally influences the perceived behavioral control, where Ajzen (2005) suggests that a lack of confidence may negatively influence the intentions of behavior and the successfulness of carrying out a behavior. Herein, individual perceptions may vary and be attributed to preferences; however, to enhance the trust in pre-owned fashion and the retailers, interventions may include detailed product descriptions and high-quality images, further emphasizing the role of product displays and availability of information in online alternatives.

These findings shed light on the significant influence of barriers on motivation, particularly in relation to Ajzen's (1991) notion that perceived negative outcomes or attributes shape attitudes toward behavior and influence the formation of intentions. Herein, the quality or condition of pre-owned items, the limited availability, poor presentation of desired items, and uncertainties

about the trustworthiness may influence the consumers' motivations. In relation to attitudes, the study reveals that some consumers initially hold negative attitudes toward pre-owned fashion, which can hinder their intention to purchase. An interesting notion revealed is that these barriers often stem from previous experiences or no experiences of previous purchases, which may result in unfamiliarity and misconceptions. On the other hand, consumers with positive attitudes may face barriers – such as the difficulty of finding appealing items due to poor product presentation, that affect their attitudes and intention. When faced with these barriers, consumers experience interruptions or weakened intentions, leading them to reconsider or abandon their decision to engage in second-hand and vintage shopping.

## 5.2 Subjective Norms

The phenomenon that social influences have an impact on the way individuals behave and make decisions has been extensively researched previously. Both in terms of shaping individuals' intentions and behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and in relation to the buying process (Kotler, 1965; Kahneman, 2011). In the context of buying pre-owned items, people's perception of subjective norms can greatly influence their intentions to participate in specific activities. The findings indicate that the likelihood of individuals participating in pre-owned shopping might increase if they perceive this behavior as socially approved within their community. The influence of significant others can be a driving force for individuals, aligning with Bourdieu (1986), who states that friends can provide valuable resources in the form of suggestions that can help the participants to adopt certain behaviors they might not have considered otherwise. This illustrates the matter of injunctive norms in this research. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that in some cases presented, the individual is merely faced with social influences rather than the external pressure, which implies that compliance with the behavior is voluntary. The findings of this research consequently reinforce the idea that subjective norms partially impede the adoption of pre-owned fashion consumption (Connell, 2010; Ekström, 2012; Valor, Ronda & Abril, 2022). In instances where someone in close surroundings expressed negative opinions regarding pre-owned fashion, a complexity arose due to injunctive norms, as described by Ajzen (1991). The results presented in this study further align with the research conducted by Koay, Cheah, and Lom (2022), as it showed that consumers are less likely to purchase pre-owned clothing if they receive unfavorable reactions from their significant others regarding such behavior, often leading to customers not disclosing where they shop, or that they might be hesitant to repeat that behavior.

Furthermore, injunctive norms can emerge as an outcome of descriptive norms and the extent to which an individual identifies with a particular group or person, as posited by Wong (2019). For instance, it becomes evident that apprehensions from family members, as well as the reluctance to be categorized as something one did not wish to be associated with, played a significant role in forming barriers to acceptance of pre-owned clothing. This supports the findings of Wang, Fu, and Li (2022) that social stigma surrounding pre-owned fashion persists, with factors such as unhygienic conditions and the preferences linked to shopping for pre-owned clothing. However, it is evident that while social stigma remains, it has evolved over

time. Unlike the argument put forward by Henninger and Singh (2017), which suggests that the fear of being perceived as someone of lower status leads to hesitance in buying second-hand clothing, this research shows that the stigma is more about the perceived quality of pre-owned fashion rather than financial struggles or social standing.

Moreover, descriptive norms became evident in this research as individuals tend to behave in manners they might not initially consider, driven by a powerful need to conform and satisfy societal expectations. This proved to be true in regard to motives for sustainable behavior, however, in terms of barriers, it appears that the developmental context of individuals fosters patterns that ultimately guide their future conduct in the sphere of sustainability. The lack of exposure to sustainable practices within their familial upbringing may lead to the exclusion of options such as purchasing pre-owned clothing. On the other hand, individuals who were in the company of individuals who actively embraced sustainable practices displayed a greater affection towards developing positive attitudes regarding shopping for pre-owned items. However, this observation conforms with Rulikova's (2019) theory, which posits that early life experiences, such as cultural environment, can substantially sway consumer choices. Moreover, Birtwistle and Moore (2007) posit that people are becoming more conscious of how their consumption habits influence the world, thus becoming more mindful of their societal obligations. This research challenges this view, suggesting that this is not always the truth. Despite the potential awareness of the fashion industry's environmental implications, individuals' deep-rooted perceptions concerning shopping for pre-owned clothing often shape their intentions regarding future purchasing decisions.

The influence of subjective norms on consumer motivation and TBP is evident in the context of buying pre-owned items. Individuals' perception of subjective norms, such as social acceptability and the opinions of significant others, can greatly impact their intentions to engage in pre-owned shopping. This entails that individuals may be more likely to participate in pre-owned fashion consumption if they believe that others in their community or surroundings find it socially acceptable. Conversely, negative opinions from significant others can, to some extent, create barriers and complexity, leading to hesitation or reluctance to disclose their shopping behavior or repeat it. Herein, the social stigma of preowned fashion remains — although evolving over time. The power of social influences and conformity to societal expectations can shape consumer behavior, but it is important to note that compliance with pre-owned shopping behavior is voluntary. These findings suggest that subjective norms may partially hinder the adoption of pre-owned fashion consumption, but particularly highlight the importance of social influences in shaping consumer motivations and intentions.

### 5.3 Perceived Behavioral Control

The rise of pre-owned fashion has transformed the fashion industry, offering customers a chance to shop sustainably (Castro-López, Iglesias & Puente, 2021). To fully embrace this trend, both previous literature and the outcome of this research have proved that customers need to feel in control of their shopping experience and have access to resources and information

(Koay, Cheah & Lom, 2022). This section examines various aspects of customer engagement in vintage and second-hand shopping, including availability, financial considerations, time and effort investment, return opportunities, and knowledge about retailers and the apparel. By understanding and addressing these factors, retailers, and industry stakeholders can improve customer experiences, promote sustainable fashion, and capitalize on the potential of the pre-owned clothing market.

#### *The Matter of Limited Availability*

The lack of resources is one aspect of perceived behavioral control, which is identified as an obstacle that deters customers from adopting this consumption pattern. Specifically, if used items are not easily obtainable or within the consumer's reach, it has an effect on their motivation to engage in such behavior (Connell, 2010; Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). Conversely, this research indicates that if individuals feel that items are within their grasp and readily available, it enhances their motivation to seek and acquire pre-owned items. At the same time, perceived limitations concerning in-store availability and access to pre-owned shopping serve as an initial barrier to such intentions. This perception of limited availability extends to an absence of style, sizes, trendy attributes, and issues related to the store's layout and the presentation of merchandise (Connell, 2010; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019).

The study's results indicated that consistent with Ajzen's (1991) assertion about the importance of perceived behavioral control, individuals may not form strong intentions to engage in buying pre-owned clothing even if they possess the necessary attitudes and subjective norms. This is primarily due to the scarce presence of such stores and the restricted range of sizes and styles they offer if they are available at all. This aligns with the assertions made by Koay, Cheah and Lom (2022), who propose that the acquisition of key resources, such as opportunities to visit stores, is indispensable for consumers aiming to buy sustainably conscious products. When individuals perceive that there is an overwhelming difficulty in finding these items, the satisfaction of the shopping experience decreases, and the customers often feel as if they cannot fulfill their needs and intention to purchase. This is especially true for physical stores, where there is a lack of sorting and filtering, which in contrast, is seen as helpful and an advantage in online settings.

#### *When Rarity Meets Price*

Furthermore, some customers may feel as if pre-owned items are affordable. Previous research indicates that economic motives act as a driver to purchase pre-owned due to lower prices and the thrill of finding a bargain (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016; Guiot & Roux, 2010; Borusiak et al. 2021; Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012). On this note, participants of this study often expressed the affordability as beneficial. This apparent benefit can serve as a capability that is aligned with both perceived behavioral control and intention, thus leading directly to a purchase. Controversy, a commonly described phenomenon, is one of rarity and price, and as items are often of previous seasons or limited to their access, price tends to increase. This is particularly true for vintage items that customers perceive to be more highly priced. As per Brandão and Gonçalves da Costa (2021), the appealing modernity of certain products may attract positive attitudes. However, their substantial pricing could dissuade potential future

buyers. An alternative viewpoint on financial concepts suggests that individuals have also conveyed apprehensions regarding their perception of the value of money. This is often due to pre-owned items having imperfections or thoughts of certain items being used before could deter customers from paying a high price, especially when they are aware of the current market price for the item. However, to promote this behavior, the perceived value must outweigh the cost compared to other alternatives (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021). This finding is aligned with previous research (Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019; Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016), which points out that financial incentives may be overshadowed by other motives or tangible benefits. However, unlike Wang, Fu and Li (2022) and Henninger and Singh (2017), who point out that the social stigma of pre-owned shopping is a sign of financial struggle, it is revealed to not be the case in this study. On the contrary, the price and exclusiveness have turned the tables on this type of social stigma, resulting in the perception of trendy and hard-to-find items. Aligned with Blas Riesgo, Lavagna and Codina (2023), the participants are indeed experiencing the shrinking gap between pre-owned and new fashion. This ultimately leads many individuals to perceive sustainable fashion as more luxurious and sometimes out of financial reach (Connell, 2010; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019).

#### *How Effort Shapes the Sense of Control*

The phenomenon of time and effort as a barrier to the consumption of pre-owned fashion has been discussed to be caused by the lack of omni- and multichannel approaches along with the lack of sorting and the large volume of items (Sweet & Wu, 2019; Ellen, 1994; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen, 2019). Indeed, the findings suggest that a significant obstacle to customers' engagement with pre-owned item shopping lies in the perceived complexity of the consumer journey. Having that said, it is evident that the customers in this study may be missing out on the opportunities presented by new digitally-driven, user-friendly avenues for purchasing pre-owned clothing, as noted by Padmavathy, Swapana and Paul (2019). Although pre-owned shopping is the fastest growing segment of the online shopping market (Fernando, Sivakumaran & Suganthi, 2018), there is a particular need to streamline. In contrast, individuals expressed their experienced challenge of searching for high-quality, unique, and fitting fashion in an overwhelming amount of items. Not only does this affect the attitude of potentially purchasing in the future, but it can also limit the perception of the ability to perform a behavior. As such, the larger group of customers turn to more convenient retailers to meet their needs. Especially in physical stores selling pre-owned clothing, where there is a lack of sorting and filtering, customers perceive that they must set aside time if they truly want to find suitable items in comparison to retail stores selling new clothing. Herein, the notion of being a good pre-owned shopper has been given much attention, where a consistent pattern of shopping plays a role in making the shopping process more efficient. This provides an illustration of Ajzen's (1991) dashed line in his framework (*see Figure 2*), where high levels of perceived behavioral control may lead to behavior while an indication of low perceived behavioral control does not. Although consumers may have an equally high intention to shop for pre-owned items, confidence to master that activity can serve as the final denominator. In instances where consumers doubt their ability or perceive the action to be too difficult, they may be less likely to engage in shopping for pre-owned fashion despite having a strong intention to do so.

### *The Importance of Returns*

Another interesting finding that has not been accounted for in previous literature is the issue of returns, which herein is connected to perceived behavioral control. Although customers often have the option of returning or exchanging items, the procedure is considered a hassle, especially given the heightened risk of unforeseen issues that may arise when acquiring pre-owned goods. The perceived complexity associated with pre-owned transactions can often discourage individuals from participating in such exchanges in the future. One reason for this perceived hassle is found due to the lack of standardized processes perceived by the customers. Participants in this study highlighted a key difference between traditional fashion stores and thrift stores regarding return and exchange policies. They expressed that while traditional stores typically offer clear and consistent policies, stores selling pre-owned clothing may not have such standardized policies in place. The existence of terms of return and exchange policies can vary depending on the individual sellers or the platforms through which the transactions occur. Therefore, participants acknowledged the potential lack of consistency and the possibility of differing policies when engaging with pre-owned fashion. This lack of consistency can make it challenging for individuals, contributing to the perceived hassle they are experiencing. Thus, limiting the intention to shop for pre-owned fashion. Additionally, the perceived hassle of returns and exchanges is found to be due to the nature of pre-owned items themselves. Many customers are worried about the imperfections they often come with, the wear and tear, or issues not presented whilst purchasing – especially online. This finding can be connected to Harris, Roby and Dibb's (2016) findings, which entail that it is arguably more difficult for consumers to determine the quality and durability of online purchases. Moreover, if individuals sense uncertainty about or perceive that the process is too complicated, they may be less prone to engage in such behavior. On the other hand, when these are made easier and more accessible, this can increase an individual's perceived behavioral control toward engaging in pre-owned shopping. It is worth noting, however, that this complexity may be due to the already low prices of pre-owned items, and as returns often come with a fee, customers may see it as a hassle due to this reason instead of an actual lack of information.

### *Without Knowledge, There is No Control*

The impact of ignorance and lack of information on individuals' attitudes toward pre-owned shopping extends beyond influencing attitudes alone (Connell, 2010; Ellen, 1994; Brand, Jacobs & Taljaard-Swart, 2023). When customers perceive a lack of information and knowledge about pre-owned fashion, including factors such as availability, processes, and attributes or imperfections, they tend to experience uncertainty regarding their ability to engage in this behavior effectively. This study highlights the importance of information in shaping consumer behavior. An important note made by Gao et al. (2012), is that this information should be of high quality rather than sheer volume. Although the information is of high quality, it would still be useless for consumers that have not previously made a purchase due to the difficulty of predicting individual preferences. Furthermore, many individuals expressed inadequate awareness regarding pre-owned products and their associated processes. However, this indicates an issue that is two-folded. On the one hand, a systematic issue where information about pre-owned shopping may not be effectively communicated to potential consumers. On

the other hand, it may be a result of a lack of awareness for the consumers on their own behalf (Connell, 2010; Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016). While the systematic issues mentioned above contribute to the lack of awareness, consumers also bear some responsibility in proactively seeking knowledge about pre-owned fashion. For instance, in alignment with Brand, Jacobs and Taljaard-Swart (2023), the results indicated that if a customer has the intention to purchase pre-owned fashion but does not know where to locate the stores or high-quality products, they might perceive it as too difficult or time-consuming. On another note, the results align with those of Ellen (1994), highlighting the intricate nature of identifying flaws or evaluating the quality of certain items. This complexity often causes consumers to question their capacity to successfully navigate the process of purchasing pre-owned goods, stressing the importance of addressing the informational gaps and enhancing awareness.

To summarize the lack of capability consumers felt in the process of purchasing pre-owned apparel it can be concluded that a convenient and streamlined customer experience is desired and proved to be lacking in this research. Whether it concerns the availability of products, the effort involved in the shopping process, the ease of post-purchase procedures, or the understanding of the product's origin, these perceptions proved to have a far-reaching impact. These concerns affect various aspects such as the perceived difficulty of the behavior, the attitude towards the behavior, and the individual's perception of their own capability to perform the behavior successfully. Hence, when consumers view the process as too demanding, they are likely to opt for more convenient, often less sustainable alternatives.

## 5.4 Self-identity

The diverse opinions and actions identified among the participants of this study serve as a compelling illustration of the relevance of self-identity in understanding intentions and behaviors related to sustainable consumption. In this study, self-identity serves two functions – it indicates how consumers' past experiences influence their future behavior, and it represents how consumers perceive themselves as individuals. This extends beyond habitual patterns by suggesting that single experiences can serve as important drivers of behavior, which is not accounted for in the original TPB, as previously mentioned by Sparks and Shepherd (1992) in Chapter 2.5.

### *Past Shapes Future*

Past experiences, regardless of positive or negative, are acknowledged to be reliable indicators of future behavior (Rise, Sheeran & Hukkelberg, 2010), and this research is no exception. This notion was found to be confirmed in this study, where consumers with initially negative attitudes or that were uncertain about, for instance, quality and finding desirable attributes based on previous experiences were less motivated to shop pre-owned fashion than those with positive experiences. While some participants did appreciate the aesthetic charm and the element of surprise inherent in not knowing what to find next, an inadequate in-store and digital experience proved to be problematic. This study revealed that in cases where consumers rarely find suitable items or continuously encounter an unappealing store environment, their motivation to repeat

that behavior decreases. This revelation strengthens the theory put forth by Ouellette and Wood (1998), which posits that previous actions significantly inform the self, and by extension, predict future behavior. It implies that prior patterns of behavior serve as a reliable guide and shape subsequent actions. However, as proposed by Sharma (2021), single experiences – either positive or negative – and the satisfaction of these influence future purchasing intentions and attitudes toward pre-owned fashion. For instance, in the field of online shopping, participants expressed that their trust in purchasing pre-owned items diminishes when their purchase is in a more degraded condition than advertised by the seller. When products are inaccurately presented, it can result in negative outcomes for customers by not fulfilling their expectations. This makes them more careful and doubtful about buying pre-owned items in the future. Additionally, they might express their dissatisfaction through unfavorable word-of-mouth or influence other individuals by sharing their negative experiences.

### *Understanding Self-perception*

Another noteworthy finding from this study is the high number of participants who identified themselves as “sustainable” yet rarely thought about buying pre-owned fashion. Given the context of this research, these consumers also expressed the relationship between pre-owned fashion and sustainability. In spite of that, the intentions and behaviors that underlie the participants’ intentions and activities can be better comprehended by understanding the prevalence of this self-perception as “sustainable” among them. According to Sparks and Shepherd (1992), there is a contradiction between people’s self-beliefs and their actual behaviors or actions. The research supports this idea by indicating that the consumers’ activities or behavior do not necessarily align with a specific identity or characteristic, as proposed by the authors. It is, however, important to consider that sustainability encompasses various aspects beyond pre-owned apparel, such as reducing waste, supporting ethical manufacturing practices, and choosing eco-friendly materials. Therefore, participants who identify as “sustainable” but do not prioritize pre-owned clothing may still be committed to sustainability in other areas of their lives. Moreover, as Sparks and Shepherd (1992) have pointed out, although this term is rooted in the self-identity of participants of this research, their attitudes towards other forms of consumption could be driven by attitudes. This could be attributed to various factors, including both rational and emotional aspects. From a logical perspective, the affordability of sustainable clothing options could be a potential concern influencing their attitudes.

On the other hand, from an emotional standpoint, an individual might seek to associate themselves with current fashion trends as part of their self-identity and, as highlighted by Wattanasuwan (2005), use fashion as a means to express themselves. Although some consumers agreed with the shift towards purchasing pre-owned fashion, emphasizing the uniqueness and nostalgic significance of specific eras, as noted by Cervellon, Carey and Harms (2012), this study also identified notable obstacles to this transition. In this context, the obstacle seems to be rooted in internal factors such as the aspiration to be fashionable. This became particularly evident when certain participants contended that the lack of modern trends diminished their interest in second-hand and vintage apparel, although some were concerned with sustainability. That being said, the results support McNeill and Moore’s (2015) argument



that the quest for “fashionability” tends to outweigh the aspiration to behave sustainably. This scarcity may lead individuals to construct guiding principles, as noted by Rise, Sheeran, and Hukkelberg (2010), that align with their fashion identity rather than sustainable alternatives and subsequently deter from pre-owned apparel, despite their self-professed environmental consciousness. This paradox is previously noted by McNeill and Moore (2015), which demonstrates a clash between identity construction, consumption, and internal drivers. However, while pre-owned fashion is considered trendy and a mode of expression by some consumers (Belk, 2001; Cervellon, Carey & Harms, 2012), it may not fully satisfy certain practical requirements, as previously noted. Consequently, for those who place significant emphasis on self-expression through their purchasing choices, these limitations and potential issues associated with pre-owned fashion might dissuade them from considering it as a viable option. Given the participants’ planned behavior there is both a validation and a contradiction of Aycock, Cho, and Kim’s (2023) research. The validation arises in the sense that the desire to remain fashionable was deemed to be of higher significance than financial concerns within the generation under examination. Yet, a contradiction emerges as the participants of this study underscore the preference for new apparel as the primary means of maintaining fashionability, a deviation from Aycock, Cho, and Kim’s (2023) proposition that advocated for pre-owned clothing.

Moreover, Roux and Korchia’s (2006) findings shed light on the reasons why some consumers hesitate to purchase previously used clothing. One factor identified was the existence of symbolic and physical violations associated with these items. Symbolic violations refer to negative beliefs consumers hold regarding the ownership history of pre-owned apparel, perceiving them as undesirable due to their previous owners. On the other hand, physical violations pertain to the notion that the apparel may be physically contaminated by the previous owners, leading to reluctance to purchase them. As a result, the presence of symbolic or physical violations poses a barrier to accepting pre-owned clothing. Some consumers may be concerned that wearing pre-owned fashion could compromise their self-expression or undermine their self-image. Despite being less philosophical, this study found – much like Roux and Korchia’s (2006) findings – that some consumers believe pre-owned clothing has less or no value compared to new or fast fashion. However, contrary to what Roux and Korchia (2006) suggest, this study’s findings suggest that it is frequently more of a hygienic or preferential issue where individual standards play a role in shaping attitudes. Some of the participants expressed unease with the idea of wearing apparel previously owned by others and the potential contamination associated with them. Nonetheless, this does not align precisely with Roux and Korchia’s (2006) explanation of symbolic and physical violations. Despite the different underlying reasons, this study’s findings support the notion that consumers’ desire to express themselves and maintain consistency with their self-image is still relevant when considering their hesitance to embrace pre-owned clothing. These consumers may not appreciate the concept of previous ownership and the potential contamination, albeit through different channels than those proposed by Roux and Korchia (2006). Therefore, the barriers to purchasing pre-owned clothing encompass both the desire for hygiene and the need for self-expression, highlighting the complexity of consumer attitudes toward pre-owned fashion.

Concludingly, the findings emphasize the role of self-identity in pre-owned shopping behaviors and its connection to the TPB. Consumers' past experiences, particularly uncertainties about quality and attributes, tend to discourage further engagement in shopping for pre-owned apparel. For instance, time constraints proved to further intensify this, making the process of browsing through items a daunting task, thus deterring future visits. Moreover, as consumers often use fashion as a means of self-expression, a discrepancy was observed. Participants of this study revealed a contradiction – while sustainability is of concern, the lack of current trends in second-hand and vintage stores proved to result in a preference for new fashion. The fear of symbolic violations further represents a major barrier to the acceptance of pre-owned fashion, as some participants expressed concerns about potential contamination and the impact of wearing pre-owned fashion on their self-image. The contradiction of identification aligned with consumption highlights the importance of understanding the complexities of consumer attitudes and motivations beyond self-identity.

## 6. Conclusion

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*Following the exploratory approach of this research, the concluding chapter highlights novel aspects within the area and revisits the research questions. Furthermore, theoretical and practical implications are presented, followed by limitations of this particular study and suggestions for future research.*

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### 6.1 Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to address the purpose of identifying barriers that deter consumers from engaging in pre-owned fashion purchases within a multichannel retail context. By exploring the motivations underlying consumers' decisions to refrain from shopping second-hand and vintage apparel, this study aimed to progress the existing knowledge in the field. With a qualitative approach, this research advances the theory of planned behavior by integrating the notion of self-identity, aiming for enhanced comprehension of consumers' barriers and planned behavior within sustainable consumption. This study contributes to the existing body of literature by both validating and developing previous findings. The key findings of this study are four-fold and are listed as follows:

First, the barriers to the consumption of pre-owned fashion among the investigated Swedish young females were heavily influenced by a range of external and internal factors. These influences interact with each other, and findings suggest that the relationship between intention and behavior is not always straightforward as disruptions can arise and influence decision-making. Herein, the considerable investment of time and effort required during the shopping process emerged as the most prevalent barrier and thus confirms previous research. This investment is often influenced by other factors, such as the messy and disorganized store layouts, along with the complexity of the search process. This may include evaluating each item's condition, the absence of nearby stores, and the limited availability of options. As a result, the customers may sense confusion, frustration, and diminished satisfaction – which can lower the appeal of pre-owned items. This, combined with the convenience offered by new clothing retailers, can further diminish the motivation for pre-owned shopping, as consumers may perceive it as not worthwhile.

Second, concerns about quality assurance are undeniably essential in both online and in-store shopping. Although quality assurance has been demonstrated previously in physical stores, its importance herein is emphasized, particularly when it comes to purchasing pre-owned fashion online. The absence of physical examination makes consumers more reliant on the trustworthiness of the sellers, as assessing the quality of pre-owned clothing becomes a greater challenge through digital channels. It also emerged that the manner in which sellers display clothing online impacts customer attitudes, an aspect which, to the best of our knowledge, has been overlooked in previous research. Based on the findings of this study, it appears that consumer skepticism towards digital commerce platforms may be enhanced by potential inaccuracies in product representation, leading to unmet expectations and dissatisfaction. This degree of distrust can exert a negative influence on their purchasing decisions, with past

negative experiences serving as a roadmap for future conduct. On a similar note, this study recognizes the role of clear return policies as barriers to consuming pre-owned fashion, also due to quality concerns. Despite this, consumers are often unaware of the processes or are hesitant due to the inability to return or exchange their items. Thus, this study recognizes the importance of a seamless and transparent return process to build consumer trust, minimize risks, and encourage repeat purchases.

Third, findings revealed that participants often lack awareness and knowledge regarding the location of stores, the fabric of the clothing, and the general process of second-hand and vintage shopping. This deficit in understanding often influences them to opt for new clothing, despite their environmental concerns, exemplifying a conflict within the self. The majority of participants in this study viewed themselves as environmentally conscious who strive to do the small things in everyday life, yet find themselves falling into the trap of purchasing new apparel despite their intentions. This may be attributed to the need for trending items or to maintain a certain image. However, it may also be attributed to their limited exposure and prior experience with pre-owned clothing, which fostered misconceptions, notably the notion that pre-owned apparel is inherently of inferior quality. The lack of knowledge about pre-owned fashion resulted in uncertainty among consumers. Therefore, the effects on consumers are multifaceted, encompassing both psychological and practical aspects, including trust, self-expression, aspiration for fashionability, and information accessibility. The convenience and accessibility of traditional retail stores make them the default choice for many, even if they are aware of the environmental impact.

Fourth, although not being the main purpose, this study revealed the novel finding that participants' motivations for engaging in pre-owned fashion consumption are primarily driven by factors other than environmental concerns. Despite recognizing the sustainable benefits of pre-owned clothing, participants often prioritize convenience, affordability, and social factors over environmental considerations. Herein, this study challenges the notion that the consumption of pre-owned fashion is associated with financial struggle or low-status, which has been prevalent in previous research (Wang, Fu & Li, 2022; Henninger & Singh, 2017). This study reveals a different perspective, suggesting that the barriers consumers face are no longer rooted in perceptions of financial difficulties or seen as having lower status. Therefore, shedding light on the changing societal attitudes towards pre-owned fashion. However, the stigma regarding pre-owned fashion being unappealing and offering limited options remain, as well as the social stigma of subjective norms influencing consumer behavior. These findings suggest that environmental concerns alone are insufficient to drive consumer behavior toward pre-owned fashion. Thus, interventions should go beyond emphasizing environmental benefits and focus on highlighting the broader value proposition of pre-owned fashion.

## 6.2 Theoretical Implications

As discussed in the problem formulation (see Chapter 1.2), there is a scarcity of research conducted on the barriers consumers face when they are planning to or have the intention to purchase pre-owned fashion. Although sparse, the previous studies within the field have mainly adopted quantitative methods, failing to capture the interpretative nature of the topic at hand (Wang, Fu & Li, 2022; Seo & Kim, 2019; Brandão & Gonçalves da Costa, 2021; Henninger & Singh, 2017). By evolving from previous quantitative approaches to qualitative research methods, this research uncovers new perspectives, sheds light on overlooked aspects, and contributes to a more comprehensive knowledge base in the field of challenges when purchasing pre-owned fashion. More specifically, this approach provides perspectives on the complex interplay of various elements, such as social, contextual, psychological, and economic factors, that impact consumer attitudes and behaviors toward pre-owned fashion.

This study further contributes to the academic field of consumer behavior by extending the theory of planned behavior with the concept of self-identity. This extension gives new perspectives to a theory commonly used within the marketing domain where consumers behave in an emotional manner. While TPB is based on the premise that consumer behavior largely stems from “rational” and consciously financial decisions, adding the element of self-identity provides a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon. By incorporating this concept into the theoretical framework, this study recognizes that consumers’ self-perception and identification with a particular social group can significantly influence their intentions and behavior. This study additionally recognizes the role of consumers’ previous engagement with pre-owned fashion in shaping their future intentions and behavior.

Moreover, the empirical findings contribute to the currently evolving literature on disruptions that influence consumers’ motivation when purchasing pre-owned fashion. By investigating consumer behavior in both online and offline channels, this research provides valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics that shape consumers’ decision-making processes. One novel finding from this study revolves around the impact of the online presentation of apparel by sellers on customer attitudes. It was discovered that the manner of how pre-owned fashion is presented online has a profound influence on consumers’ perceptions and attitudes toward engaging in pre-owned fashion consumption. The visual representation, accuracy of product descriptions, and overall aesthetic appeal of the online presentation play a crucial role in shaping customer preferences and willingness to make pre-owned purchases. Additionally, this research highlights the role of clear return and exchange policies as potential barriers to pre-owned fashion consumption. We identify that consumers often express concerns about the ease and transparency of the return process when considering pre-owned purchases. These apprehensions can act as deterrents, preventing potential customers from fully embracing pre-owned fashion. This deep understanding would not only benefit researchers but also inform practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders in developing effective strategies to address these barriers and promote sustainable consumption practices in the fashion industry.

### 6.3 Practical Implications

The insights of the study could be interpreted as a recommendation for management to concentrate on multiple facets of the pre-owned clothing purchasing process, with the aim of preventing consumers from encountering the same barriers. The findings suggest that there are collective opinions regarding the external barriers, which may generally be easier for managers to address as these are often tangible and under the control of the organizations. In contrast, internal barriers tend to be more deeply rooted and more of a subjective nature, suggesting a more holistic, although perhaps difficult approach. In this context, the following practical implications arise: (1) prioritizing the enhancement of the customer experience, (2) dispelling negative perceptions and challenging stereotypes, (3) building trust and confidence in online platforms, and (4) leveraging marketing strategies to resonate with consumers' values and past behaviors. These implications aim to guide managers in developing strategies that will enable them to thrive in the dynamic retail landscape while contributing to a more sustainable future.

Considering the importance of time and effort, as well as various identified obstacles, it is vital for retailers to consider an omnichannel strategy, or at least a multichannel strategy. However, this task does not come without difficulties, as a large portion of these markets are fueled by charitable initiatives and limited products. This could potentially lead to insufficient resources, making the efficient administration of both platforms a daunting task. Despite this, if the aim is to compete favorably with primary market retailers, for whom an omnichannel presence is a necessity, and to promote a broader goal of making consumers choose pre-owned fashion before new fashion, those within the second-hand and vintage sphere must prioritize enhancing their customer experience. However, if this is not feasible, the findings of this research highlight the matter of structured stores and their importance for a convenient experience. For instance, coordinating by size, color, or product category. Retailers can leverage this strategy by focusing on streamlining the consumer journey and making it more convenient to ensure their competitiveness in the dynamic retail landscape.

Given that the primary buying interest often comes from individuals who have purchased pre-owned clothing before, it is crucial for managers to be transparent and challenge stereotypes associated with second-hand and vintage shopping. This could be achieved by enhancing their marketing strategies and, at the same time, educating consumers to mitigate negative perceptions and demonstrate that these assumptions do not apply to all retailers. Increasing the visibility and popularity of these stores and websites is equally important, thus dispelling misconceptions and encouraging a broader acceptance of such shopping experiences. However, while managers can create a supportive and inclusive shopping environment, they cannot directly control or change customers' internal beliefs or attitudes. Internal barriers often require more long-term and individual-focused strategies, such as personalized communication, which may be more challenging for managers to implement on a large scale.

Furthermore, given the significance of online shopping for pre-owned fashion, retailers should focus on building trust with customers through transparent and reliable online presentations. Sellers should accurately display clothing items and provide detailed information about the

quality and condition of pre-owned items. Establishing a trustworthy online presence can help reduce concerns about online purchases and returns, ultimately encouraging more customers to engage in pre-owned shopping behavior.

By understanding the role of self-identity and past behavior, marketing efforts can be tailored to resonate with consumers' values, aspirations, and previous experiences, ultimately fostering a more sustainable fashion industry. The study highlights the potential influence of past experiences on future conduct, as they may shape consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and motivations. Whereas positive experiences motivate consumers to make future purchases, negative experiences often leave consumers uncertain and with a lack of confidence. In worst-case scenarios, the experience may result in a deterrent to future purchases. This underscores the need to consider individuals' histories and past interactions with the market when designing interventions and communication strategies. Managers need to understand the dynamic nature of planned behavior and the various barriers that can influence individuals' motivation to engage in pre-owned shopping behavior. By identifying and addressing these internal and external barriers, such as concerns about time and effort investment, limited availability, and societal norms, retailers can create an environment that encourages and facilitates the adoption of pre-owned fashion. While external barriers may be easier to target, it's important for managers to recognize the interplay between external and internal factors.

#### 6.4 Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study is due to its contextual dependency, as it exclusively focuses on the Swedish market. This narrow scope may limit the generalizability of the results, as participants in the empirical data may reveal different patterns compared to potential consumers in other countries or contexts. However, this contextual and specific approach also serves as a strength, as it provides a nuanced understanding of the research phenomena. While this study provides valuable insights, future research could expand on these findings by considering a broader range of contexts or cross-cultural or regional variations. In addition, Ajzen (2005) suggested that the concept of perceived behavioral control may not always accurately reflect the reality of the situation. This warrants further attention to longitudinal research on the topic to understand if planned behavior correlates with actual behavior. Future research could revisit this aspect to explore further whether the results hold true for a larger population of consumers beyond Sweden.

Furthermore, it is worth considering the perspectives of social constructivists adopted in this study, as it emphasizes that there are several versions of reality beyond individual opinions. Thus, by exploring patterns and examining their implications, the findings may offer insights that extend beyond individual experiences. In addition, this research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of diverse perceptions surrounding the phenomena rather than seeking a single truth or definite answer – further emphasizing the contextual dependency. As society becomes increasingly aware of their consumption patterns and their implication on the environment, second-hand and vintage stores have received attention and experienced rapid

growth (Chua, Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020). Thus, it is possible to speculate that these topics are increasingly important to a wider range of people beyond young Swedish females. Therefore, exploring the experiences from a mixed-gender sample or comparative studies including men as consumers of pre-owned fashion would be of particular interest. It is reasonable to assume that other generations or customer segments would be relevant for future investigations in order to capture a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviors and attitudes toward barriers to purchasing pre-owned fashion.

Finally, future studies could draw upon the novel findings of this research, drawing attention to new emerging online marketplaces. By studying new marketplaces, researchers can uncover new insights into how these platforms can facilitate the adoption of pre-owned fashion and overcome barriers identified in this study. Understanding the strategies employed by successful online marketplaces, such as user-friendly interfaces, comprehensive product information, or effective customer support, can inform the development of guidelines and best practices for both new and existing platforms. It would be especially beneficial to investigate the impact of return policies and customer satisfaction on pre-owned shopping behavior to inform retailers and marketers on how to improve overall satisfaction and trust in the pre-owned fashion market. Following this, investigating and possibly addressing concerns about, i.e., quality or returns, could stimulate greater consumer involvement in the pre-owned fashion market, aligning with the collective aim for a more sustainable planet.



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# Appendix

## 1. Consent Form - Interview

Dear participant,

We would like to extend our gratitude for considering participating in our research study regarding pre-owned consumption. At any time during the interview, you have the right to withdraw without any consequences or explanation. We require you to thoroughly read this consent form to confirm that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you consent to the terms of your participation.

Your privacy is of utmost importance to us. All information shared during the interview will remain confidential and anonymous. Any data collected from the interview will only be used for research purposes and cannot be linked back to you. We will use anonymous citations from participants in the final report, but names will not be mentioned. You will be handed a copy of the transcribed document to confirm that our transcriptions and understandings are correct.

The interview will be conducted individually, with either audio or video recording, and is estimated to last around 45 minutes. After the research is finished, all recordings will be stored and inaccessible for unauthorized use. No prior preparation is necessary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions without consequences.

By accepting this request to participate in the study, your consent is assumed. If you decline, please simply notify us. If you have any questions or would like further information about the research, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via email.

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Thank you in advance for your time and contribution to this research.

Best regards,  
Alicia Larsson & Cajsa Schoultz

## 2. Consent Form - Focus Group

Dear participant,

We would like to extend our gratitude for considering participating in our research study. At any time during the interview, you have the right to withdraw without any consequences or explanation. We require you to thoroughly read this consent form to confirm that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you consent to the terms of your participation.

Your privacy is of utmost importance to us. All information shared during the interview will remain confidential and anonymous. Any data collected from the interview will only be used for research purposes and cannot be linked back to you. We will use anonymous citations from participants in the final report, but names will not be mentioned. You will be handed a copy of the transcribed document to confirm that our transcriptions and understandings are correct.

By agreeing to this document, you will not disclose any personal or identifiable information, such as the names of individuals who are participating in the focus groups. Furthermore, you agree to keep all conversations that take place within the focus group confidential and not discuss them with anyone outside of the group and its members.

The interview will be conducted in a focus group, with either audio or video recording, and is estimated to last around 60-90 minutes. After the research is finished, all recordings will be stored and inaccessible for unauthorized use. No prior preparation is necessary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions without consequences.

By accepting this request to participate in the study, your consent is assumed. If you decline, please simply notify us. If you have any questions or would like further information about the research, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via email.

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Thank you in advance for your time and contribution to this research.

Best regards,  
Alicia Larsson & Cajsa Schoultz

### 3. Topic Guide

#### **Initial information at the time of the interview/focus group**

- Clarify the purpose of the survey
- Inform about the interviewees' right to interrupt the interview
- Inform about what the material will be used for
- Inform that the interviewee is anonymous
- Ask for consent to record the interview

#### **Introduction** (Participants introduce themselves and their interest in pre-owned fashion)

Tell me about yourself: name, age, and occupation

#### **Shopping**

1. How often do you purchase new fashion?
2. What does your thought process look like when you make decisions regarding purchasing fashion or not?
3. What are the three most important factors when deciding to purchase fashion?
4. If you had an endless amount of money - what kind of fashion would you buy?

#### **Pre-owned shopping and self-identity**

5. What is your view on second-hand and pre-owned consumption?
6. Do you consider yourself a person concerned about sustainability? Do you ever think about it?
7. Have you ever purchased pre-owned fashion? Why or why not?
  - a. If yes, can you tell me about a time when you purchased pre-owned? How did you feel about it?
  - b. If not, what would it take for you to start purchasing pre-owned fashion more regularly?
8. Do you think that there is something specific companies could do to increase the consumption of pre-owned fashion?
9. Are there some kinds of items you would prefer to buy second-hand or vintage?

#### **Norms**

10. Why do you consume fashion? For whom?
11. Do you experience any external pressures to consume a certain type of fashion or style?
12. How do you think other people perceive individuals who purchase pre-owned fashion?
13. Is it something you think about, why you consume clothes?
14. Do you feel like there is a stigma associated with purchasing pre-owned fashion, and how does this influence your decision to buy or not to buy?
15. Are there any other factors, such as cultural or social norms, that would prevent you from purchasing pre-owned fashion?
16. Do you practice what you preach when it comes to the consumption of fashion?

17. Do you socialize a lot with other people who shop second-hand? How does this affect you?

### **Perceived behavioral control**

18. What resources do you feel are necessary for you to purchase pre-owned clothing?  
19. Do you feel you have enough information/knowledge to make informed decisions when buying pre-owned clothing?  
20. How have your past experiences with purchasing pre-owned clothing influenced your intention to purchase it again in the future?  
21. Have you ever had the intention or desire to buy second-hand but then regretted it or felt that something prevented you from buying it?

### **Motivations**

22. What factors influence you to buy pre-owned fashion? (*or would influence you to potentially buy*)

### **Barriers**

23. Have you had any negative experiences when buying used fashion?  
24. Can you think of any specific barriers that would prevent you from purchasing pre-owned fashion in the future?  
25. What are your biggest concerns about purchasing pre-owned fashion, and why do these concerns exist?  
26. Have you ever decided not to purchase second-hand fashion because of the price?  
27. Are there any types of second-hand apparel that you find to be particularly expensive?  
28. How do you feel about the quality and durability of pre-owned clothing, and do you believe that this differs from new fashion?  
29. Have you had any negative experiences when purchasing pre-owned clothing, such as finding damaged items or having difficulty returning or exchanging items? If so, can you describe these experiences?  
30. Do you think there is a difference in shopping for used fashion online versus in-store?

### **Ending question**

31. Is there anything you would like to add to the topic?