

Can the business models for charity clothing shops and second-hand clothing platforms be combined and developed to revolutionise the fashion industry for the good of the planet and humanitarian causes?

A new business value proposition that seeks to revolutionise second-hand clothing for the good of the planet and in support of charities worldwide.

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Laidlaw Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme

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Abstract

The project will examine the potential to design and implement a business, which would provide a branded one stop marketplace for second-hand, upcycled clothes and accessories where the sale proceeds would be distributed to a charity of the buyer's choice at the point of sale. The vision behind this research project is to examine the merits and potential of a business model that establishes and embeds a culture of recycling fashionable clothes in combination with charitable giving. The idea is that the process of distributing proceeds from upcycled and re-sold clothing to a variety of charities would become a stand-alone, ethical fashion brand. The business would aim to be a modern take on the meaning of exchange for the better.

1. The philosophy

The goal to propose a new model for the fashion industry takes root from three identified problems that the four proposed sections of this essay will chronologically address. These three problems are as follows: the imbalance in quality of life across the world, the proliferation of fast fashion industry, and the collapse of the high street.

Firstly, the imbalance in quality of life across the world, with wealthier nations enjoying the convenience of fast production where other financially poorer regions experience the burden of sweatshop labour, often in absence of adequate company adherence to human rights. The charities that this business proposal will make effort to incorporate hope to acknowledge and rectify this imbalance, through better connecting consumer and producer while also amending exchange to correspond more to a given purpose.

The second problem that informs the goal of this project is the lifespan of our current economic model as espoused by the proliferation of fast fashion industry. Constant production does not fit to the earth's finite resources. Therefore, the sale and creation of clothing from donations as well as other brands end of lines is central to this business model.

The third problem that crystallises the three core components to this model is the collapse of the high street in the wake of a proliferating online forum that fashion brands have come to occupy. This business will seek to exist online in the hope of one day transitioning to in person stores. The philosophy of this business will be grounded in the notion that in person contact is as important in cultivating community as is online presence.

These three problems can be denoted by three core themes or components that I will explore. The first theme being the exploration of humanitarian issues such as disparities in wealth and working conditions across nations as perpetuated by the fashion industry. The second theme being the absence of environmental consideration in the production of clothing within the

fashion industry and the consequent pivot towards re-sale, donation and upcycle. And the third main theme being the “Big Tech” boom which has transformed the face of retail and shifted the focus to online presence and brand interaction on social media.

To explore these three problems and affiliated components I will structure my essay by first delving into a set of case studies denoted “status quo”, dedicated to the investigation of current green efforts within the fashion industry. Second, I will pivot my focus to a more recent “innovative” set of case studies that probe some of what is not addressed with the status quo with regards to the criterion set up for this business. Third, I will analyse a self-conducted sample survey to tease out the target audience and appetite for this type of business or idea before finally coming to conclude with a new business value proposition, informed by case study and questionnaire consideration.

2. The “status quo” case studies

Having outlined the “philosophy” behind this project I will now look at three established case studies that each address a separate component to the established criterion of this business.

2.1 Oxfam

The inspiration behind any charitable or humanitarian component that this business hypothesis would hold central comes from participation in and knowledge of Oxfam’s retail activity. The first temporary Oxfam shop was set up to raise funds for the Greek famine emergency in 1943. From this, the first permanent Oxfam shop was founded in 1947 in Oxford. According to Oxfam’s 2021/22 report, the retail net contribution generated was £21.5 million, the highest amount in ten years¹. Oxfam displays how exchange can be remodelled to be less transactional given the purchase of a donated item from an Oxfam shop makes it straightforward for the individual to contribute help towards the humanitarian crisis of our time. The making of meaning in exchange is the point from which this project wishes to take inspiration from Oxfam in the composition of its own unique, circular business hypothesis.

However, Oxfam is a charity and retail is one aspect of their action on humanitarian crisis therefore Oxfam’s model cannot be expected to transpose directly onto a fashion business. What it can do is provide inspiration for fashion brands to incorporate second hand, donation,

¹ Oxfam, Oxfam Annual Report, (Oxfam)

https://www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/639/Oxfam_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2021_22.pdf

and charity into their business models. Further, despite Oxfam's evident effort made to make second hand attractive to consumers displayed through their campaign "Second-hand September" launched at Glastonbury in 2019 and fronted by actress Sienna Miller², there is an argument to suggest that charity shops are now a convenient way to discard what one no longer values. This arguably decreases the value of any exchange that takes place. Oxfam along with other high street charity shops do not make the case for desirability through their stores which are often badly organised. Having a unique brand dedicated to the sale of clothes made from donations may go some way to bringing business more in touch with charitable models for retail exchange and in making charity shopping more attractive to customers.

2.2 TK Maxx

The utilisation of donation via charitable organisations such as Oxfam is one way to do second hand but that is not to suggest donation is the only avenue from which to create or sell from what already exists. My proposed business hypothesis hopes to use end of lines and donations in creating a unique "upcycled" capsule line of clothing. When a designer overproduces, or other stores overbuy or a department store makes cancellations, TK Maxx negotiate with fashion labels to get better prices for customers in reselling what would otherwise have been discarded in landfill³. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation every second one truckload of clothing is landfilled or burned⁴. TK Maxx's philosophy as a business is concerned with better connecting value and quality, so reducing brand inflated prices for customers. TK Maxx claims the customer is at the heart of their business, as justification for their minimal stores where the focus is on merchandise.

The current system of producing, distributing, and using clothing operates in an almost completely linear way⁵. Linear implying a structure of economy that mandates a cycle proven to be destructive to our planet: produce, use, discard. This "linear" system is the root cause of an ever-expanding pressure on natural resources. The industry's immense footprint extends beyond the use of raw materials to the transportation and afterlife of a garment. TK Maxx has spearheaded the rescue of end of lines from landfill, upholding a business structure that works entirely off selling what has already been produced. However, it still exists within this linear model. Its retail is possible provided overproduction. This project's business idea,

² "Second Hand September 2023", Oxfam.org. uk, <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/get-involved/second-hand-september/>

³ "How we do it", tkmaxx.com, <https://www.tkmaxx.com/uk/en/how-we-do-it>

⁴ "Redesigning the future of fashion", ellenmacarthurfoundation.org, <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/fashion/overview#:~:text=Every%20second%2C%20the%20equivalent%20of,plastic%20microfibres%20entering%20our%20oceans.>

⁵ "Fashion and the circular economy: Deep dive", ellenmacarthurfoundation.org, <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/fashion-and-the-circular-economy-deep-dive#:~:text=The%20current%20system%20for%20producing,lost%20to%20landfill%20or%20incineration.>

while utilising the reality of over production, cannot base the entirety of its operation on end of lines. This is because as a circular start up, the proposition would aim to disrupt the system of overproduction, rather than use it in facilitation of business growth. Further, this project would dispute the claim that minimal branding investment and effort serves customers. TK Maxx therefore provide inspiration for this business hypothesis as an innovator in the space of utilisation of end of lines, while highlighting the equal importance that we disrupt the linear way of doing retail.

2.3 Depop

Having addressed both the charitable essence to this business and some of its practical components, chiefly; donations and end of lines, it is now necessary to have a case study that explores the changing landscape of fashion as correspondent to the third outlined problem and accompanying component: the digitalisation of the fashion industry. The proliferation of Depop as an online platform that facilitates second-hand exchange by individual sellers comes in the wake of the digitalisation of the fashion industry and all industry. Depop was founded in 2011 as a social network where readers of the PIG (People in Groove) magazine were able to buy items from the young creatives featured in the magazine⁶. In a podcast episode from Vogue Business on the “Future of Fashion”⁷, Depop Chief Marketing Officer Peter Semple and TikTok fashion influencer Tim Dessaint discuss Depop’s rise. They comment on how Depop provides a workable, climate friendly alternative to fast fashion. Fast fashion works with social media to demand a never-ending cycle of trends. However, with Depop as both a form social media and a second-hand selling platform, trends can still be ever evolving but in a way that is circular. Depop has made second-hand aspirational with creative sellers active on other social platforms styling their products in numerous different ways, hence encouraging differentiation in styling as opposed to differentiation in item of clothing. The ways that Depop both utilises online facilitation of community and connects with Generation Z (with date of birth between 1996 and 2012), should be accounted for in this business proposal.

However, even with the accessibility of the internet and the way Depop has managed to speak an alternative to fast fashion, there is a case to be made for a dying high street. The domineering of online retail has caused individual boutiques and high street shops to close

⁶ “Depop is not a platform it is a place”, news.depop.com, <https://news.depop.com/who-we-are/about/#:~:text=Depop%20was%20founded%20by%20Simon,creatives%20featured%20in%20the%20magazine>.

⁷ The Future of Fashion by Vouge Business, “Depop CMOL “The secondhand market is the answer to constant newness”, April 2021, Spotify, 31:56, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/17OuuJp1hywrGrP9HpV7mj?si=ab086539452349ca>

with an estimated 17,145 retail stores across the United Kingdom closing throughout 2022⁸. This became a particularly strong theme during the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020. In person contact is invaluable to human well-being and mental health and there is something to be said for the correlation existent between declining mental health rates globally and the spread of social media and internet access. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) college-wide access to Facebook “led to an increase in severe depression by 7% and anxiety disorder by 20%”⁹. The aim for this brand, therefore, would be to cultivate the community that Depop has so successfully made but to operate, eventually, by both online and in person stores. In addition, the community project opportunities that this business presents are endless. The “upcycling” trend could bring together the younger and the older generations in the running of workshops that teach the re-making of clothing by designers. After speaking with CEO Nicki Clark of “Umi”, a consultancy business that provides advice to start ups, she made clear that a business with both a service and a product built into its delivery promised more longevity, citing Dyson as an example. This makes sense given a service may outlast a product. Running workshops, giving advice on sustainable shopping, and looking after one’s clothes may prove a good way to ensure the connection between service and product in this business.

Therefore, as a case study, Depop is useful in highlighting the undeniable shift fashion has made to online and the evident appetite for the re-sale market, with 1/3 of people aged 16 to 25 using Depop in the UK¹⁰. This case study perhaps provides avenue to explore further the importance of the Highstreet and community in person as well as online.

3. The “innovative” case studies

While Oxfam, TK Maxx and Depop serve as useful springboards to the three main components to this business hypothesis, chiefly: charitable giving, upcycle from second-hand and the utilisation of online platforming, what is more important to take from these three case studies is what they each highlight is missing from the green fashion effort. This project will now look at three “innovating” case studies that each address the three main components listed above in new ways to that discussed with the “status quo”.

⁸ “Number of retail store closures in the United Kingdom from 2018 to 2022”, Statista, [statista.com](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1356731/retail-store-closures-uk/), 2018-2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1356731/retail-store-closures-uk/>

⁹ Walsh Dylan, “Study: Social media use linked to decline in mental health”, Sep 14, 2022, <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/press/academic-study-reveals-new-evidence-facebooks-negative-impact-mental-health-college-students#:~:text=The%20findings%20found%20a%20rise,at%20Tel%20Aviv%20University%2C%20Prof.>

¹⁰ Levy Marianne, “Depop: the fashion reselling platform used by a third of the UK’s 16–24-year-olds. And me. I’m 41”, Life & More, [inews.co.uk](https://inews.co.uk/news/long-reads/depop-fashion-reselling-platform-upcycling-feature-854799), Feb 2, 2021, <https://inews.co.uk/news/long-reads/depop-fashion-reselling-platform-upcycling-feature-854799>

3.1 Give Your Best

“Give Your Best” is an online platform that provides the space for refugee women and children to shop for free while also acting as a service enabling the online donation of clothes. This social enterprise was born when the founder Sol Escobar connected with an asylum seeker on Instagram. This refugee was surviving on an allowance of £5.60 a day during the Covid 19 pandemic. Escobar sent the refugee a parcel of essentials including clothing and toiletries before using Instagram to call for more donations. With the subsequent influx of donations and appetite to help, there became a need for a model or system to funnel these gifted donations and affiliated messages of condolence and support to the women that needed them. Hence “Give Your Best” was born.

Central to the philosophy of Give Your Best as a brand is the effort to make refugees feel valued and dignified in their clothing through giving them an avenue of choice and an opportunity to cultivate a personal style or adhere to a current trend. Give Your Best have identified a similar gap in the fashion market to the gap that this business hypothesis looks to close. It is their mission, as a social enterprise, to not only reduce the discarding of garments to landfill but to also attach a purpose to the donation as done in effort to reduce poverty¹¹. This social enterprise connects problems one and two identified in my philosophy: the humanitarian and environmental perils of the fashion industry. Any donation from their perspective as a brand becomes a gift. This re-writes the modern meaning of exchange to be less about the transaction of commodity, but rather an exchange with a reciprocity built into the model of “giving” and “giving thanks” in receipt of an item. Producer and consumer are therefore better connected. This is a branded one stop marketplace for the giving of donated clothing: a unique hybrid charity shop, set up specifically for asylum seekers.

3.2 Loanhood

As related to the second problem identified within the fashion industry: its environmental ramifications, Loanhood is a fashion start-up that promotes the value of rental to the fashion industry in its effort to be more environmentally conscious. In an interview given in a podcast by “Thoughtbot” in September 2022, co-founder and CEO Lucy Hall described how she saw Generation Z moving more towards online resale using platforms such as Depop¹². Loanhood

¹¹ “About us”, Give Your Best”, [giveyourbest.uk](https://www.giveyourbest.uk), <https://www.giveyourbest.uk>

¹² Giant Robots Smashing Into Other Giant Robots “LOANHOOD with Lucy Hall”, Thoughtbot, Sep 2022, Spotify, 31:14, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5JzB3dAbgxQg7sisSetWbh?si=4768afdf49db44b8>

claim a desire to “fix” the fashion industry while still getting their “fix” of fashion¹³. Loanhood has borrowed this idea of re-styling what is already in your wardrobe that influencers on Depop first cultivated. Users of Loanhood simply download the app, create an account, and then follow others with a similar style to themselves to rent outfits. This service helps with the often prohibitively expensive purchase of special occasion outfits as well as offering a simple way to change up your wardrobe without participating in the ills of fast fashion.

To find out more about the brand DNA of Loanhood I spoke with CEO Lucy Hall. What I gathered from our conversation is the idea that there are already enough clothes on the planet to clothe everyone in the world. Therefore, according to the morals of Loanhood there had to be alternative ways to facilitate the innate human want for change. Rental they believe to be the best way to do this. Loanhood is inspirational as a start-up looking to alternative ways to cultivate fashion environmentally and engage Generation Z. However, they do stick to the narrative that people always want a new fix of fashion. I cannot help but question this narrative. Perhaps it is not about finding alternative ways to facilitate this mindset, as Depop also does, but to encourage a change in mindset. This change would encourage the investment in staple pieces that reflect a personal style perhaps over and above the fashion of the day. But having said this, there is no denying that rental is another useful addition to the second-hand repertoire in effort to make fashion greener.

3.3 Alterist

Related to the escalation of the online resale market “Alterist” will serve another “innovative” case study. Alterist is an online site that platforms circular designers. Its curation sees the inclusion of multiple upcycled lines under the “Alterist” name. Their business is a clever way to encourage designers to upcycle and to reduce textile waste. The founders of Alterist had worked in the fashion industry and decided to launch the business off of observable change in customer behaviour and a disconnect in actioned response of the industry, much like the founders of Loanhood. The company structure their operation under five Cs: Circularity, Collaboration, Community, Care, and Creativity¹⁴. The company claim to have saved 924 items from Landfill and 566.67 litres of wastewater¹⁵. The company had their first ever pop-up store at Spitalfields market, London where they were able to showcase the designers in their community. Their pop-up store was part of the Fashion District Festival, a six-day festival that celebrates “*fashion sustainability, innovation and community*”

¹³ “Circular Fashion For The Fashion Forward”, Loanhood, Loanhood.com, <https://www.loanhood.com>

¹⁴ “Our Story”, Alterist, alterist.com, <https://alterist.com/about-us>

¹⁵ “Our Story”, Alterist, alterist.com, <https://alterist.com/about-us>

engagement”¹⁶. As part of the festival, Alterist also held three upcycling workshops. First was a workshop showcasing brand “Sakito Bags” where founder John Maribel Skelly displayed how to make hessian table mats from reclaimed coffee sacks. The second workshop was with the brand “Not Far Behind” where participants learnt how to draft a collar from upcycled materials. A third workshop featured designer “Nina” where a popular top was recreated using preloved tea towels and repurposed cotton tapes. Each workshop served to promote the development of new, upcycling skills.

Alterist has cleverly utilised Depop’s cultivation of online community, but in its own way transposed the creation of content to the platforming of individual circular designers and brands. Alterist’s successful use of an online platform to sell pieces made from otherwise discarded materials is inspiring, but what is more insightful for the purposes of the composition of a hypothesis for this business is the recent transition they have made as a company to pop up, in person stores. In addition, the use of workshops works in tandem with “in person” stores to transfer the proliferating online circular movement to communities across Britain. This reinforces the idea that having a service built into the delivery of a product through workshops and stores adds to the longevity, connectivity and meaning to a business.

4. Market analysis

According to figures from the ThredUp Resale report from 2019, resale has grown twenty-one times faster than retail over the past five years¹⁷. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation support this claim with data collected indicating 56 million women buying second-hand products in 2018, up from 44 million in 2017¹⁸. The statistics indicate a market for a one-stop marketplace for clothes made from second-hand origin. In addition to these statistics as evidence I designed and issued a questionnaire designed to indicate the aptitude for this business. The information is to be understood by age and gender identity differentiation. By using these two differentiations, without collecting personal data, the questionnaire indicates the scope of interest in the different aspects of this brand, therefore assisting in the compilation of my new business value proposition to come and in identifying an audience to target for marketing purposes.

¹⁶ “Fashion District Festival Is Back”, Fashion District, [fashion-district.co.uk](https://www.fashion-district.co.uk/festival/), <https://www.fashion-district.co.uk/festival/>

¹⁷ “Thred-Up 2019 Re-Sale Report”, https://cf-assets-tup.thredup.com/resale_report/2019/thredUP-resaleReport2019.pdf

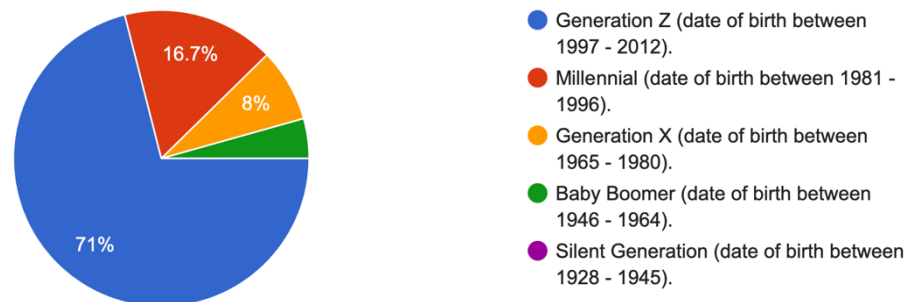
¹⁸ “Fashion and the circular economy: Deep dive”, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, [ellenmacarthurfoundation.org](https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/fashion-and-the-circular-economy-deep-dive), <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/fashion-and-the-circular-economy-deep-dive>

4.1 Results analysis

Out of 139 respondents 71% are from Generation Z with the date of birth between 1997 and 2012 where 73.2% of our respondents identified as female. Therefore, it may be concluded that any further data collected to inform this business value proposition is skewed to a younger, female demographic. Further detail on age and gender identity breakdown of responses can be seen in the pie charts below.

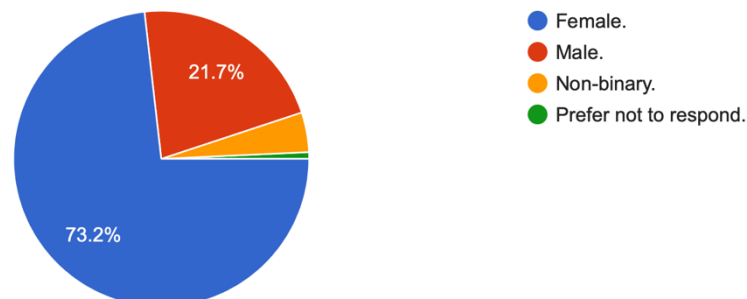
1) Which generation are you?

138 responses



2) Which gender do you identify as?

138 responses

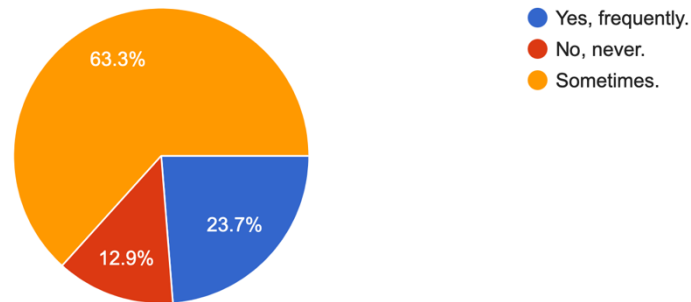


The further questions in my questionnaire were designed to target three overarching questions correspondent to a given component of the business as discussed in some detail above with the “status quo” and “innovative” case studies. Those components are as follows chronologically in the questionnaire: charitable and humanitarian concern; second-hand and environmental interest and lastly the comparison between online and in person retail. To start, provided this brand would be a greener alternative to fast fashion high street brands, the questionnaire asked if participants shopped from high street brands. Most respondents, or

63.3% of them, identified with “sometimes”. This would suggest that the high street is still prominent in retail habits.

3) Do you shop from high street brands?

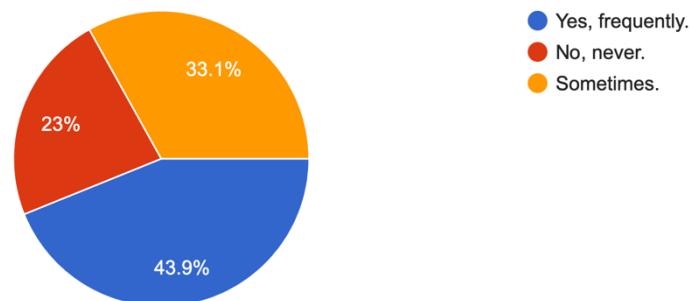
139 responses



With respect then for the first component: charity, the question “Do you shop at charity shops?” attained a 45.2% “yes, frequently” response, with 32.6% claiming “sometimes” and 22.2% “never”. Although charity shopping wins dominance in percentage from this question, the “no, never” category cannot be described as slight.

5) Do you shop at charity shops?

139 responses

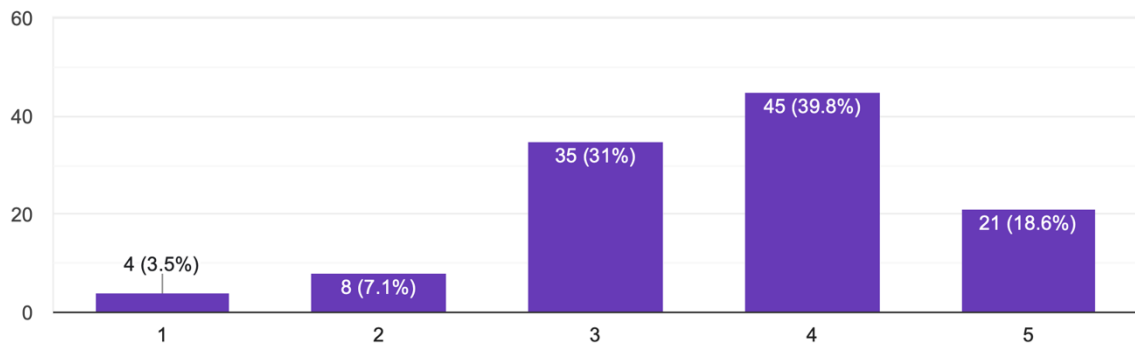


Following this, as interested in gathering data correspondent to why shoppers do shop in charity shops, the questionnaire asked if participants considered the cause they were contributing to by shopping this way. This question was presented as a scale, with “one” being “*Giving to charity is my main motivation for shopping in charity shops*” and “five” reading “*Getting a unique piece at a fair price is my main motivation for shopping in charity shops*”. That is not to suggest of course that wanting to get a “*unique piece at a fair price*” is mutually exclusive from considering the cause of the charity, this question was aimed only at ascertaining what factors more in a shopper’s mind when choosing to shop in a charity shop, or perhaps re-phrased “*What are participants main motivations for shopping in charity shops?*”. The question perhaps should not have been so direct as to ask if people considered the cause but rather, what factors more in their decision to shop at a charity shop: the cause,

the price, or the uniqueness of the piece purchased. If conducted again, I would have changed this question to reflect this.

9) If you shop in charity shops, do you consider the cause you are contributing to by shopping there?

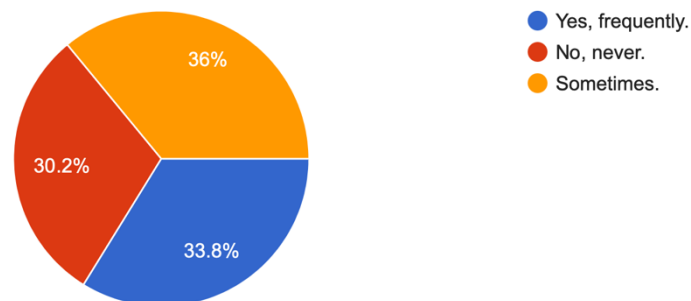
113 responses



Regarding the second core component to this business: alternative second-hand avenues with less environmental impact, questions had a less definite response to the charitable aspect. It was a reasonably even split in response to the question “Do you shop from second hand online retail platforms such as Depop, Vinted or Ebay?” between “yes” “no” and “sometimes”.

4) Do you shop from second hand online retail platforms such as Depop, Vinted or Ebay?

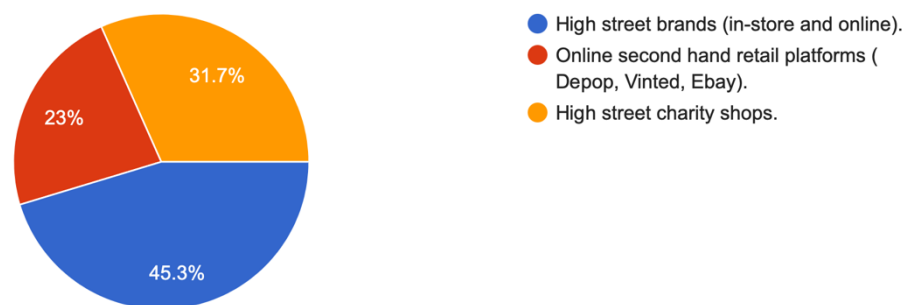
139 responses



It is evident from the questionnaire that second hand online platforms are not the most popular avenue for shoppers given the responses to the question “Out of the three options listed below (High Street brands, online second-hand retail platforms, and high street charity shops), which platform do you use most frequently for shopping?”. The answer that received the most selection was “High Street brands” where the least selected was “second hand online retail platforms”. This surprised me as it is a different result to the one that I experience among my friends who often comment on another purchase from Vinted, frequently with an air of pride about their tone of voice in announcing the origin of the item.

6) Out of the three options listed below, which platform do you use most frequently for shopping?

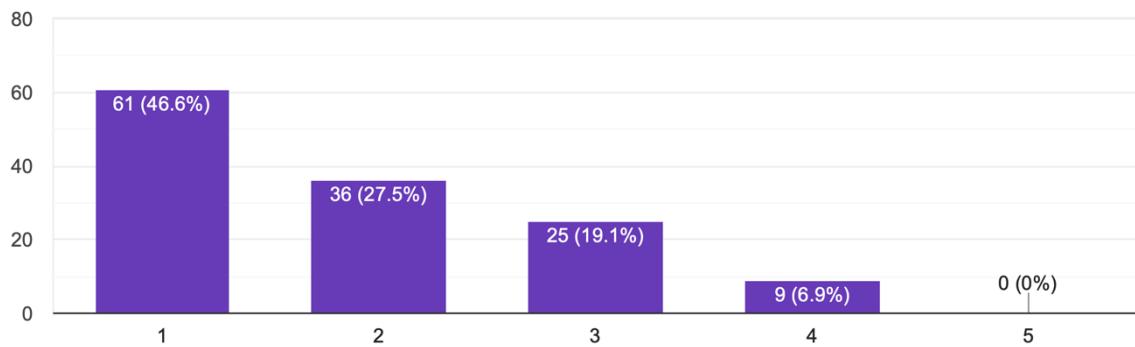
139 responses



That is not to say that both charity and second-hand platforms are not used avenues for shopping, it just highlights the consistency of High Street brands in dominating shopping habits. However, despite most participants indicating their preference for high street brand shopping, when asked on a scale their guilt, if any, in shopping in these shops the result suggested the majority are aware and do feel a level of guilt in shopping fast fashion. On the proposed scale “one” read: “Yes, I consider and am aware of the impact of the cycle on this planet and on human rights abuses in sweatshop labour”, while “five” read: “No, the connivence of the experience as well as the easy access to trend cycles outweighs my consideration for fast fashion’s impact on the planet and use of sweatshop labour”. In response, 47.2% of respondents picked “one” and 0% picked “five”.

10) If you shop from fast fashion retailers, do you feel guilty about it?

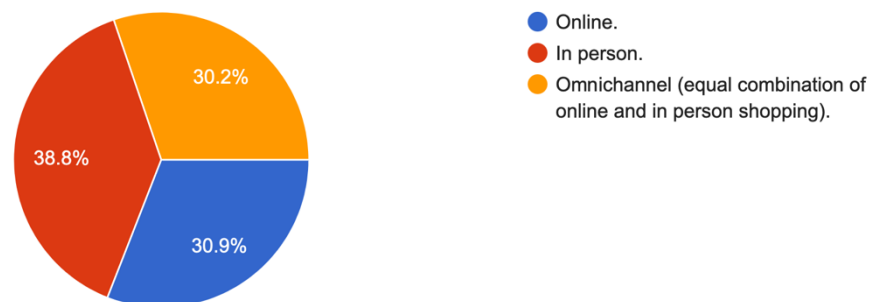
131 responses



Again, this may be a leading question, and a question which should not assume the mutual exclusivity of the two pre-written responses, but what it did indicate nevertheless is the guilt involved in this way of shopping. Customer awareness of the ills of fast fashion production should therefore not be underestimated but rather cultivated by a new brand which eliminates this way of producing and consuming. The third component addressed as a key criterion to this business idea: the digitalisation of the fashion industry, produced similarly equal response rates.

7) Would you say you shop more online or in person?

139 responses

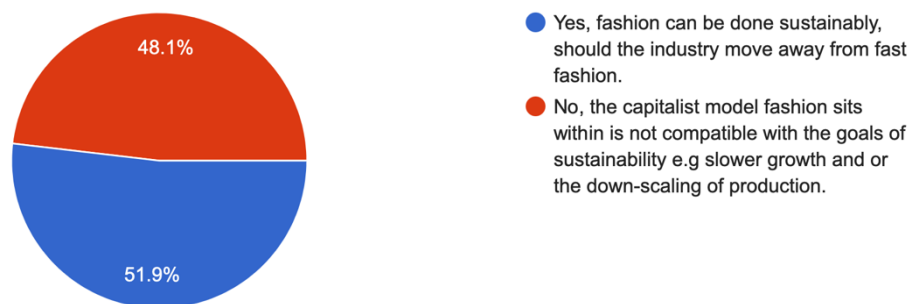


It surprised me to find respondents interested in preserving in person shopping and the high street experience proved further by the next question: “Do you care about shops closing down on our high streets?”, although perhaps a leading question, 84.7% of responses indicated the preference for “Yes, the high street is important for community orientation and in person contact”. This chimed with the response to the perhaps ambitious question “Do you feel fashion as a concept based on production in response to constant trends can be compatible with sustainability or slow growth?”. This was an academic question to ask, but only three

participants did not attempt to answer with 49.2% of respondents favouring the proposed answer of “*No, the capitalist model fashion sits within are not compatible with the goals of sustainability e.g slower growth and the down-scaling of production*”. This suggests that customers do not necessarily favour the ever-producing nature of the industry. This is useful in informing the high street, community focus of this business. However, in response to this question 50.8% favoured the “yes” response which read “*fashion can be done sustainably should the industry move away from fast fashion*”, proving also that there is faith in the pledge of sustainability within the fashion industry among its customers.

11) Do you feel that fashion as a concept based on production in response to constant trends can be compatible with sustainability or slow growth? How?

135 responses



A last question featured in the questionnaire asked respondents to articulate the difference between style and fashion in their own words. Although responses varied, a consistent identifiable trend among all responses was that style is individual and long lasting where fashion is collective and short lived.

“*Fashion is about trend cycles where style is about timeless flare - things that will always be "In vogue" because they are attached to one’s persona almost... ”*

“*Fashion is stuff that people collectively think looks good and style is what you personally like”*

“*Style is a personal, cultivated form of using clothing and accessories etc to be expressive, creative and is unique to an individual. A sense of style tends to evolve more slowly. Fashion is perhaps more an ability to follow trends in the market and dress accordingly, it has less consistency and can jump around a lot depending on whatever the new desirable aesthetic is.”*

“*Fashion is shared public trends and style is personal”*

“Fashion to me is characterised by cyclical trends of consumption, buying/selling what is popularised by the media and trends. fashion is very fast paced and changes rapidly, very often fashion is associated to me with conformity and often with current beauty standards. style on the other hand feels much more personal, where individuals choose and buy clothes that fit their personal look. style feels like a project- accumulating pieces that you like and slowly building up a sense of identity”

From the responses, fashion and style were pitched largely as opposites while some respondents questioned the presence of any difference.

“Is there a difference?”

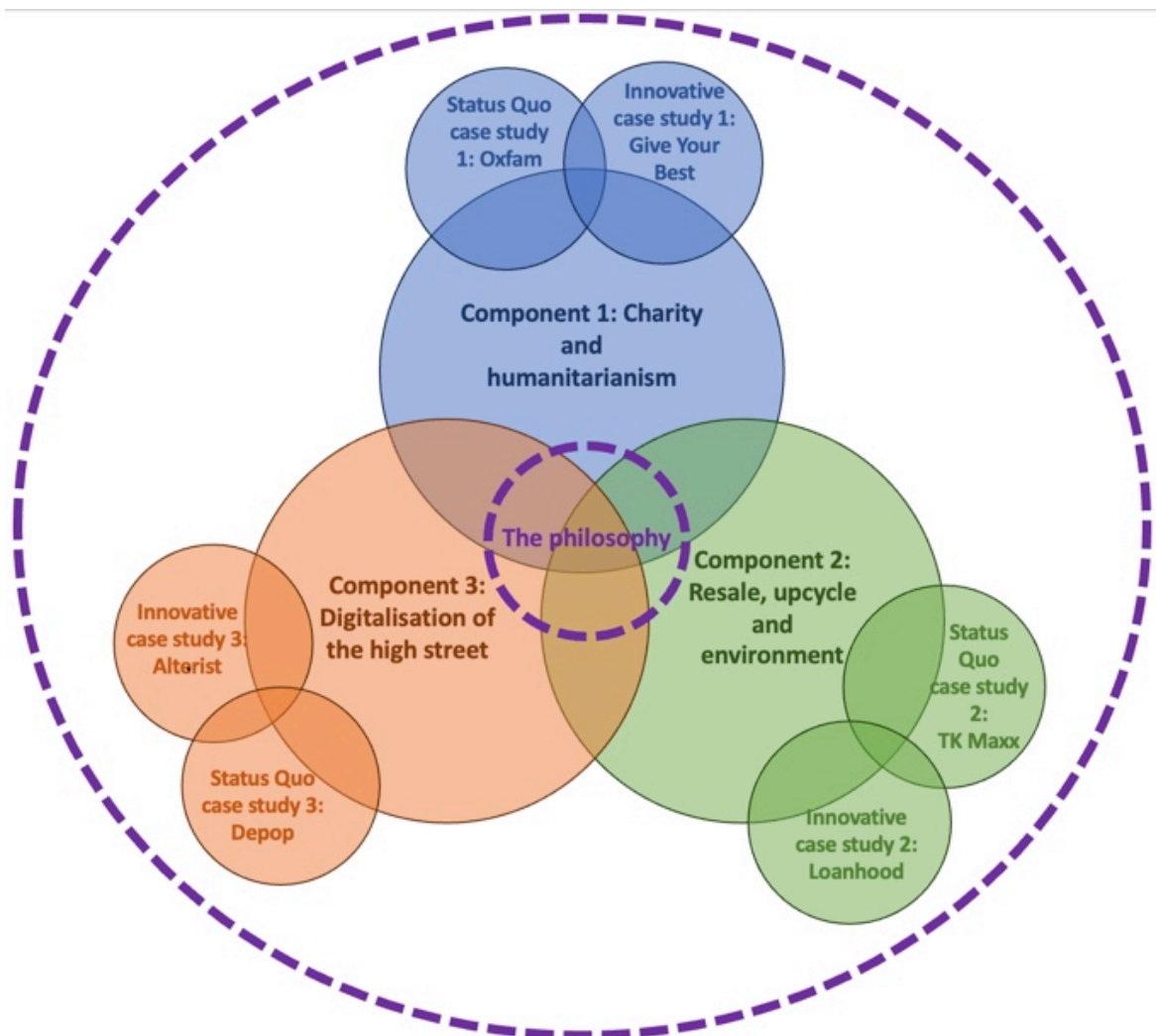
This is significant as it has led me to question the extent to which my business may cultivate a sense of style over and above fashion. It would seem from responses that customers do value style over fashion viewing style more inherent to individualism and fashion more a matter of following. That is not to say that feeling a sense of belonging is not important to consider in designing and selling clothes, but this could be done in the cultivation of community through wearing our brand. “Style not fashion” could be a good slogan denoting the philosophy of the business, with a longevity consistent with the goals of sustainability and the necessity to slow down production for the good of the planet built into its operation.

4.2 Conclusions from questionnaire

The interest demographic for this kind of business is clearly with generation Z, skewed towards those identifying as female. This may of course have been to do with my outreach tactics, but largely I think this outcome makes sense provided this business is designed to mirror a hybrid or mirage of Oxfam, Depop, Alterist and Loanhood – all platforms with this demographic audience. Further it is evident that although respondents demonstrated they do shop in charity shops, the high street brands still claimed a prominent feature. This therefore makes clear the need for the business to become a brand in and off itself with the same appeal of a high street brand, so borrowing marketing tactics for example. But the evident accompanying guilt in shopping this way provides scope from which to build a brand that realigns exchange to correspond more to a given purpose with charity built into the process. The last question provided a core to the business which we may check ourselves against: “style not fashion”. This encapsulates all the aims of the business discussed with reference to the three core problems identified with the fashion industry: humanitarian abuse, environmental absence, and the collapse of in person shopping in the wake of online.

5. New business value proposition

The purpose of this research project was to design a philosophy for a new circular fashion start up as informed by past and present innovations in the sector. After having revised six core “status quo” and “innovative” case studies as well as compiling data from a self-directed questionnaire I will now present a summary of findings to make a hypothetical business proposal. The diagram shown below is designed to visually connect the three problems and affiliated components this business looks to solve as related to each of my core themes: Charity and humanitarian concern; second-hand avenues and environmental awareness within the fashion industry and lastly the proliferation of social media in tandem with the transition of fashion to online retail at the cost of a collapsing high street.



Therefore, from my research I would propose that a successful circular fashion brand is one that provides both a circular service and a sustainable product. The re-selling of lines from

donated clothing and un-used end of lines together with the sale of a created capsule upcycled collection are the sustainable products of the business. Further the partial funnelling of those profits to a charity of the customer's choice makes clear a purpose to the brand to be sustained by the offering of a service through workshops, in person consultation on how to wash and care for the product sustainably. This would be a branded one stop marketplace by which to buy new, to buy old and to learn and participate in charitable activity: a unique hybrid charity fashion brand dedicated to eliminating the abuses in sweatshop labour and assisting in the humanitarian issues of the day as well as preserving the earth's precious resources through an online platform and accompanying store.

Glossary

By order of appearance

Second hand: A previously owned item passed on to someone else for their use

Upcycle: The creation of a new product from something or a combination of items already in circulation

Recycle: To convert something (waste) into a reusable material

Fast Fashion: The production of cheap clothes by cheap labour and cheap, excessive material

Re-sale: Selling what has already been sold/ produced

The Big Tech Boom: Referring to the fifteen-year period post the 2008 financial crash which saw the rise of technology with the birth of companies such as Microsoft and social media sites like Facebook

End of Lines: When a company has clothing that they have made and not sold

Landfill: When waste is discarded by burial

The linear economy: The economic model most producing companies follow produce, use, discard.

Overproduction: When a company produces more of an item than is bought

The circular economy: Antithesis to linear economy where the afterlife of the product is built into its first design

Retail: The sale of a product to the public in small quantities as intended for consumption over resale

Digitalisation: The adaptation of a system to operate online/ by computer

Generation Z: Those with the date of birth between 1996 and 2012

The high street: A main street or town in a residential area including café's, banks, shops etc

High Street retailers: Retailers that operate in high street settings typically at affordable prices

Service: The delivery of assistance or advice to someone in a business setting

Product: An item refined and produced for sale

Sustainable: Able to be maintained in a way that may translate to being better for the environment

Green: A colour in this case used to describe a process, product or idea that is not environmentally harmful

Commodity: A material to be bought and sold typically with affiliated use and value

Reciprocity: Exchanging things with others for mutual benefit can be informal or organisational

Hybrid: Something made from the act of combining two or more different elements

Start-up: A new business

Pop-up store: A temporary in-person shop, typically from an online platform or service

Marketplace: An arena of commercial dealings

Second hand online retail platforms: A company with its operations online intended to promote second-hand sellers or designers well known examples include Depop and Vinted

Slow growth: Where our economy grows slowly in effort to avoid economic crash and overproduction as harmful to the environment

Pre-loved: Referring to a retail technique that involves re-selling what a customer has already loved

B-Corporation status: Companies certified in the B lab measured against the highest social and environmental business pledges including merits in transparency and accountability

Sweatshop labour: A workplace where workers are employed at low wages with unhealthy working conditions

Finite resources: Resources that are non-renewable and will run out

