LUMEN ET VIRTUS

Sustainability and fashion: Conscious consumption practices in the thrift store market in São Luís/MA

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to understand the existing consumption habits within the fashion industry, taking into account its circular and linear economy models, especially *fast fashion* and *slow fashion,* the existence of thrift stores as a form of conscious, creative and sustainable consumption, enabling consumers, entrepreneurs and interested researchers to have an overview of the relationship between the fashion industry and the fashion industry. rise of ESG (*Environmental, Social and Governance)* practices. The research is composed of two moments and had as its main methodology to be descriptive with a qualitative-quantitative approach. The first moment took place in a qualitative way with the realization of a bibliographic survey obtaining information about the fashion industry, the impacts of its production chain, its consumption models and the behavior of consumers in this market, in addition to interviews with local entrepreneurs in the thrift store market. The second moment occurred quantitatively through the application of questionnaires aimed at consumers in the local thrift store market in São Luís/MA. The research resulted in: an in-depth analysis of the consumption habits of people who buy second-hand clothes and a study on thrift store entrepreneurs. Finally, the work shows that both stakeholders have different perspectives on sustainability, reuse of raw materials, disposal of products and what role they play within the linear and circular economy.

Keywords: Circular Economy, Linear Economy, Thrift Store, *Slow fashion*, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The use of clothes has always been directly linked to the behavioral issues of human beings, being historically related to the needs of protection against the cold and the dangers of nature. However, over time, clothes ceased to have only aspects inherent to their functionalities and began to be characterized as a form of social communication. Simmel states that, nowadays, the use of clothes and fashion "also satisfies, however, the need for distinction, the tendency to differentiation, to variation, to prominence. (Simmel, 2008, p. 165)"

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> It achieves this, on the one hand, by changing the contents which imprint on the fashion of today its individual stamp in relation to the fashion of yesterday and tomorrow, but on the other hand, even more energetically, by the fact that fashions are class fashions, that the fashions of the higher strata are distinguished from those of the lower and are abandoned at the moment when the latter begin to appropriate the former. Therefore, fashion is nothing more than one form of life among others, through which the tendency to social uniformity, the tendency to individual distinction, to variation is combined in the same unitary action (Simmel, 2008, p. 165).

Due to the needs for differentiation, since the Industrial Revolution, fashion has become an industry and like every industry it has also started to generate its own impacts, having one of the most polluting production systems in the world and building solid large-scale consumption models, where these practices began to generate direct impacts on people's health and the environment. Due to this, influenced by the growing market interest in the concepts of ESG practices, social, environmental and corporate governance, the fashion industry has been forced to change its processes, since more and more consumers have been looking for companies that have a production chain that is more respectful of nature and people. According to Portilho, these actions are important to achieve a more sustainable society.

> Individual actions that are conscious, well-informed and concerned with environmental issues appear as a new strategy for solving environmental problems and for changes towards the long-awaited sustainability" (Portilho, 2005, p. 113).

These models then began to have their own characteristics, the most conscious being called slow fashion and the most accelerated fast *fashion.* For Fletcher and Grose (2011), *slow fashion* contradicts common fashion practices by stimulating regional culture, manufacturing skills, creativity and slowed consumption.

According to data from The *State of Fashion* report conducted by the McKinsey *Company,* "52% of *Millennials* say they research basic information before making a purchase, compared to 45% of Generation Z consumers and 41% of so-called *Baby Boomers*" (McKinsey, 2019, p. 60).[i] Accordingly*,* in Brazil, the Healthy and Sustainable Life survey conducted by the Akatu Institute in partnership with the global consultancy *GlobeScan,* which had a sample of 1000 respondents, reveals that 75% of young Brazilians belonging to Generation Z are interested in repairing products and 78% in selling or donating something that has already been used (Akatu; Globescan, 2020). According to the same survey, these consumers seek within their own realities new possibilities for carrying out more responsible practices that increase the useful life of products, ranging from reducing the number of pieces purchased per year, acquiring products from natural raw materials to buying second-hand clothes, with the last consumption habit being the focus of this research. Because of this, the central question arises: if the processes of choosing to buy clothes have changed over time, what are the motivations that lead these consumers to switch from a fast system *(fast fashion)* to a slower system *(slow fashion)*?

Therefore, in order to direct the study with assertiveness, the general objective was defined: to analyze the consumption of second-hand clothes in thrift stores in the city of São Luís/MA, and as specific objectives: I. To raise information about the importance of the fashion industry for society: its cultural and social aspects, production models and consumption habits throughout history; II. To characterize thrift store enterprises and their sustainable practices in São Luís, Maranhao; III. To identify the socio-behavioral factors and consumption habits of people who buy second-hand clothes *(slow fashion)* in São Luís/MA. The first stage of the research took place through a theoretical survey about the fashion industry, listing the variables around its functioning and how they have impacted the environment and people over time. Subsequently, the second stage took place through a field research with consumers and entrepreneurs in the thrift store segment in São Luís/MA, pointing out the motivations that led them to be part of the slow consumption market.

FASHION INDUSTRY

The fashion industry has several *stakeholders* that help in its functioning, so it became necessary to structure the research by strategically defining what type of discussion would be raised, the importance of analyzing it and the result obtained through this study. Thus, it is divided into parts, having first the presence of a theoretical framework composed of: I. An analysis of fashion as a tool of social differentiation and its role as a language; II. A sectoral overview of the fashion industry and the impacts generated by its rapid consumption models; III. A survey about *slow fashion* and its importance for the creation of a more sustainable fashion industry; IV. A historical summary of the emergence of thrift stores, their transformation over time and their current business models; V. A study on consumers and entrepreneurs in the thrift store market in São Luís/MA.

After that, the presence of the research methodology punctuating the collection instruments that were used, listing the motivations around their respective choices and how they were important to obtain the scientific information necessary for the validation of this work. Finally, it has the results and discussions section, presenting in an assertive way what was studied through the analysis of the data obtained during the research.

FASHION AND LANGUAGE

One of the essential characteristics for the maintenance of the existence of society in history is the human capacity to establish language. It is from language that the behavioral and cultural values of the human being are defined, whether as an isolated individual or as a group. With the evolutionary processes of man, several types of language have been conceived, one of them being verbal language and which has as its main code the use of the word, whether written or spoken. For

Sapir (1971, p. 22), "language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires through voluntarily produced symbols."

In addition, another type of language that exists is non-verbal language. In terms of emergence, this one in particular preceded the first one mentioned. Thus, non-verbal language uses means other than speech and writing to carry out exchanges, such as body movement, gestures, shapes, colors and even clothes, the last category being an essential part of this research. Boehm states that "even before developing a structured language, Homo sapiens used visual and gestural communications" (Boehm, 2015, p. 31). Therefore, when talking about non-verbal language, one can finally talk about things that do not use words for communication, as a consequence of this, one can talk about the symbology of clothes and how they are historically used to establish a communication that does not end in the verb, but in the image.

From this, when talking about clothing in history, we initially talk about functionality. For example, primitive man who suffered coercion from the cold and other dangers of nature sought in clothes the alternative for the solution of his problems, so he attributed to them a function: that of dressing himself. Embracher (1999) states that the hostility of the time was the main responsible for influencing the change in the way clothes were seen. However, with the passage of time and no longer inherent to its initial function, primitive man began to attribute to clothes a new type of aspect: that of adornment. Accordingly, for Wilson (1985) adornment plays an essential role in human communication, even if at times it has a purely aesthetic commitment. That is, at a certain point the men of that time no longer mattered only the function of protection, but the role that clothes could play in the communicative process, since the hunting capacity of the man of the time was materially manifested by the adornments he wore, taking into account everything from the quality of the leather he wore to the bones he had hanging from his body.

> But there is also no doubt that in the space of a few days after the invention of the first fur garment, a distinction was created between the good hunters, armed with their skins, conquered at the price of a hard struggle, and others, the inept, the skinless. And it does not take much imagination to imagine the social circumstance in which the hunters would have worn their skins, no longer to protect themselves from the cold, but to affirm that they belonged to the dominant class (Eco, 1989, p.15)

At a certain point, due to cultural, social and economic development, adornments began to have even more of a differentiating character, no longer differentiating the good hunters from the bad ones and now starting to distinguish the social castes. This infinite need to differentiate oneself through the garments and symbologies they carry has become what we call fashion, with clothes being the main tool of differentiation used by it and also substantially the tactile, visual and material manifestation of this word. According to Calanca, fashion is configured as:

> A complete phenomenon because, in addition to providing a historical, economic, ethnological and technological discourse, it also has the valence of language, in the sense of a communication system, that is, a system of signs through which human beings delineate their position in the world and their relationship with it (Calanca, 2008, p. 16).

Therefore, from this it is possible to speak of fashion as a consumer industry, especially its accelerated economy models, the compulsion to buy, irregular manufacturing processes and the improper disposal of products, which end up directly impacting the functioning of people's lives and the environment.

A SECTORAL OVERVIEW OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

With the changes in consumption habits and the democratization of clothes provided by the Industrial Revolution, fashion began to be seen as a promising market for the maintenance of capitalist models of consumption and its economy of accelerated production. According to Calanca (2008), it was from this that it established itself as the great industry of the modern world that induces competitiveness and innovation.

> Fashion has conquered all spheres of social life, influencing behaviors, tastes, ideas, arts, furniture, clothes, objects, and language. [...] It is a social device defined by a very brief temporality and rapid changes, which involve different sectors of collective life (Calanca, 2008, p. 13).

That is, the industry itself dictates its forms of consumption, creating impulses and motivations that perpetuate the habits that must be followed, attributing to the act of carrying them out the feeling of personal satisfaction. For Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2017, p. 25), "when making purchasing decisions, consumers in general have been driven by individual preference and a desire for social conformity." In this way, it can be observed that Fashion as an industry constantly uses the assumption stated by the authors, having as an inherent issue to its functioning the creation of new trends that stimulate accelerated consumption and pressure consumers to follow them, just so that they feel social conformity with some group they want to belong to. According to Santos (2017, p. 2), this practice is called *fast fashion* and was "forged by the large corporations of the fashion world to refer to the fast, compact and continuous production of new clothing collections in a short period of time, involving high circulation of goods on the shelves."

In addition, the trends that the fashion industry encourages consumers to participate in are nothing more than the cyclical ability to create, value and devalue the same product in a short period of time through planned obsolescence. In fashion, these products are clothes. So it is easily noticeable that the fashionable clothes in the last semester have already become uninteresting, where they often have the feeling of being outdated, a factor that embarrasses those who wear them. This happens because, while the consumer feels ashamed to wear a so-called "out of fashion" garment, the

same industry that previously attributed such adjectives to them now sells to the consumer what is "in fashion", which is no longer outdated, but a trend, thus creating desires for unattainable satisfactions. According to Sull & Turconi (2008, p. 4), " *fast fashion* has the strategy of adapting its merchandise according to emerging market trends and as quickly and effectively as possible, responding to these changes in just a few weeks".[ii] Therefore, most retailers in the fashion industry have in their manufacturing process a rigorous management of their customers' preferences, where this strategy of observing the target audience and controlling the production chain enables a more assertive response capacity to the demands that are being demanded by consumers. Seeking to meet the desire of customers, retailers constantly create new trends, which ends up generating an exacerbated stimulus to the consumption of new pieces of clothing, where, due to this great demand for the production of new clothes, there is also the low quality of the final product because to achieve the goals defined by consumers it is necessary to have an accelerated and cheap production chain.

The means that the fashion industry uses to obtain its results have made it known worldwide for having scandals within its manufacturing processes. In the search for low cost, large retailers transfer their production sites to underdeveloped countries where labor is cheaper, concentrating a large number of workers in numerous illegal factories. According to the documentary *The True Cost* (2015), the exploitation disguised as work activities is most often carried out by women and children, based on repetitive processes of sewing, tying zippers, buttons, etc., where this chain brings direct risks to the lives of the workers involved in these processes. As an example of this, we have the accident that occurred in Rana Plaza, where on April 24, 2013 in Bangladesh City, the building of the same name collapsed killing 1,135 people who worked in situations analogous to slavery and left another 2500 injured with serious sequelae. This event started the *Fashion Revolution movement* , which promotes debates around the world about the production chain of clothing pieces from major luxury brands (Fashion revolution brasil, 2018).

However, this is just one of the countless examples of irregularities that exist in the fashion industry. A report carried out by *Stop Waste Colonialism (*2023), reinforces that many developed countries improperly dispose of large amounts of textile waste in underdeveloped countries, especially those in Africa. The disposal of these amounts directly affects the region's economy, affecting the workers who make a living from the production and sale of clothing in local commerce, in addition to causing pollution of the soil, rivers and seas due to the large concentration of clothes being transported by ships daily in the country and the inadequate dumping of dyes used for dyeing fabrics. This practice is called Waste Colonialism, with Ghana being one of the most impacted countries (Stop waste colonialism, 2023).

According to the *Fashion on Climate survey* (2020) carried out by *Global Fashion Agenda* and *MCKinsey Company,* in 2018 the "fashion industry was responsible for emitting 4% of the

greenhouse gases present in the atmosphere, equivalent to the sum of the total emissions made by France, Germany and the United Kingdom, where more than 70% of the emissions of these gases come from the clothing production processes, of this total, 38% is the result of the production chain of raw materials and 15% of the drying processes of the fabric" (Global fashion agenda, 2020, p.5).[iii] In addition, many raw materials are used in these manufacturing processes, with plastic being one of the most polluting. It is estimated that in 2018 alone, "107 million tons of fibers were produced, which could reach the metric of 145 million tons in 2030, where 52% of global production was synthetic and made of polyester, making this type of fiber the most used worldwide" *(*Textile exchange, 2019, p. 1).[iv] These data are alarming, since another report carried out by *GreenPeace* called *Forever Toxic: The Science on Health Threats from Plastic Recycling*, which used data collected by the *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2023*) reveals that "plastics have approximately 13,000 chemical substances, of which more than 3.2 thousand are considered toxic to human health" and that "the more they are recycled, the more toxic plastics can become" (GreenPeace, 2023, p.7).[v] Despite this, irresponsible disposal in rivers and seas happens very frequently. The report*, Pulse of The Fashion Industry,* reveals that "35% of the pollution caused by microplastics present in the ocean comes from synthetic fibers." and "80% of discarded clothes end up in landfills or are incinerated" (Fashion global agenda*, 2017*, p. 76 and p. 12*).*[vi]

In addition, the survey called *A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning fashion's future (*Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017) shows that the production chain of a garment uses approximately 93 billion cubic meters of water per year. Despite the expense of producing clothes, improper disposal of them in landfills is a major impact generated by the fashion industry, one of the greatest examples of this problem being the landfill located in the Atacama Desert, Chile. Known as the Cemetery of Used Clothes, the space stacks hundreds of pieces that have not received the correct destination after their use. Casara (2021, online) states that approximately 59 thousand tons of clothes arrive daily through containers and are discarded in the desert in a region that is called Alto Hospício.

Another key point in discussions about abusive habits in the fashion industry is the use of animal suffering for the production of clothing. Several institutions around the world have fought to guarantee animal rights, with *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* (PETA) being one of the most relevant. According to PETA's own website, its political position consists of the thought that "animals are not our property, we do not have the right to use them for experiments, to eat, dress, entertain or abuse them in any other way (Peta, 2019? online).[vii]

> All beings deserve freedom and respect not because they share the characteristics we admire in ourselves, but because they are living beings. We share the same evolutionary origins, inhabit the same Earth, and are governed by the same laws of nature. We are all the same. (Peta, 2019? online)[viii]element.

It is worth mentioning that many clothing brands lie about their production chain, claiming to be respectful of people and the environment. Because of this, PETA and countless other organizations have led debates about how these companies have taken advantage of *GreenWashing*, obtaining economic growth and competitive advantage through the opportunistic creation of non-existent sustainable practices that end up deceiving consumers who seek responsible companies. According to Sebrae (2022, online), this practice is called *GreenWashing* and is characterized when a company uses non-existent sustainable discourses to make a profit.

These are just a few data from a tangle of other information that reinforces the abuses that exist globally in the fashion industry. Regarding the textile industry in Brazil, in order to verify the production chains of companies operating in the country, *Fashion Revolution* carried out a survey on the transparency of the large fashion retailers that are currently present in the Brazilian market, such as Zara, Adidas, Renner, Amaro, Osklen, C&A, Riachuelo, Melissa among others. The Fashion Transparency Index (2022) found issues ranging from: "I. Decent work; II. Gender and racial equality; III. Sustainable supply and materials; IV. Hyperconsumption; V. waste and circularity; VI. Water and chemicals; VII. Climate and biodiversity" (Fashion revolution brasil, 2022, p. 3). According to the survey, "the progress of the Brazilian fashion industry towards transparency remains very slow, as the overall average score of the 60 major brands operating in the national market was 17%, a drop of 1 percentage point compared to 2021" (Fashion revolution brasil, 2022, p. 6). Other data present in the index state that:

> I. 90% of companies do not disclose results of effluent tests from their suppliers,
> II. 97% of brands do not disclose the percentage above the minimum wage that workers receive in their supply chain,
> III. Only 7% of brands disclose the amount spent on corporate responsibility and sustainability where no brand discloses zero deforestation commitments,
> IV. 82% do not disclose the amount of pre-production waste (leftovers, trimmings, yarns, ends of fabric rolls) accumulated in a period of one year
> V. 88% do not publish the amount of post-production waste (excess stock, samples, defective parts) generated in that time interval
> VI. of the 60 brands analyzed, 82% do not publicly disclose their due diligence processes on human rights or the environment" (Fashion revolution brasil, 2022 p. 6-15)

In addition, the Sectoral Overview of the Brazilian Textile Industry carried out by the Market Intelligence Institute (IEMI) in partnership with the Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association (ABIT), states that Brazil has the fifth largest textile industry in the world, producing approximately 8.1 billion garments per year and being among the largest consumers of jeans and knitwear on the planet (Iemi; Abit, 2022). The data in this report also point out that, in comparative terms, in 2021 the Brazilian industry produced about 2.16 million against 1.91 million total tons produced in the previous year, with about 1.34 million formal employees and 8 million indirectly influenced, where 60% of these workers come from female strength (Iemi; Abit, 2022, online). This majority female presence in the production chains has generated debates about the role of

seamstresses in the manufacturing process of garments. According to Casara (2021), informal seamstresses work more than 14 hours a day, earn lower wages than men, and suffer constant moral and sexual harassment from their contractors.

The program Escravo, Nem Pensar! through the survey of data acquired in partnership, the Secretariat of Labor Inspection (SIT), finds that between the years 1995 and 2018, in the state of São Paulo alone, 561 workers were rescued in work analogous to slavery, where 257 people of this total worked illegally in textile manufacturing and were immigrants from Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru (NGO repórter brasil, Sit, 2019). Accordingly, the documentary I'm Saving Myself For When Carnival Arrives (2019), shows the reality around the manufacture of jeans in Toritama, Pernambuco. Known as the Capital of Jeans, the city is responsible for the production of amounts of jeans in illegal factories that are called "faction", where most workers spend more than 14 hours a day performing, cutting, sewing and dyeing jeans. "Gold mine in the region, production reaches 18% of the amount consumed in Brazil where the Capibaribe River, Toritama's main source of water, receives industrial effluents from denim laundries and is dyed with 'the color of fashion', contributing to poor water quality" (Carta Capital, Fashion revolution, 2020, online).

In summary, chart 1 lists the characteristics of the *Fast Fashion consumption system*, pointing out its main advantages and contrasting them with their respective disadvantages.

Chart 1 - Advantages and Disadvantages of *Fast Fashion.*

Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Large-scale production	Irregular production chains
Wider Variety of Products	Products with lower quality and durability
More democratic fashion	Potential for exploitation of slave, child and women's labor
Increased audience awareness	Cyclical and unreachable trends
Products with a greater diversity of materials and inputs	Unconscious extraction of virgin raw materials, environmental pollution, and improper waste disposal

Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

These surveys reaffirm the need for changes in the current models of accelerated consumption in the world. It is important to mention that most of the problems generated come from fashion retailers that produce on a large scale and irresponsibly, where a representative portion of these companies ends up attributing their responsibilities to their consumers, taking their own blame from themselves. This is an opportunistic view, since, although consumers are essential pieces within the *fast fashion model,* it is important that both they and, especially, clothing brands change their consumption habits and thus seek alternatives for a more conscious production and purchase, respectful of the environment and the people who produce the garments.

ABOUT SLOW FASHION AND SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

The Industrial Revolution directly impacted the creation of existing economic models that reverberate to this day. It was from this point on that the relentless extraction of raw materials and the exploitation of labor became necessary parameters for the maintenance of a capitalist-consumerist, polluting and essentially materialistic economy industry. According to the *Ellen MacArthur Foundation*, the world's leading circular economy network responsible for developing research and promoting the ideals of the circular economy, this model based on exploitation for large-scale production is called Linear Economy or *take-make-waste*, extract-produce-waste and is characterized "as a system in which resources are extracted to manufacture products that eventually become waste and are wasted" (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2020? online).

This constant exploitation of finite natural resources has become one of the central problems around this model of economy. Therefore, as a direct response to it, what we know as *slow fashion emerged.* According to Berlin (2020), *slow fashion* is a system of slowed down production that values creativity, valuing work and the environment, where all stakeholders are aware of their consumption habits. Within slow *fashion,* we can talk about the importance of the Circular Economy and how it is essentially contrary to the Linear Economy. According to Luz, the Circular Economy has:

> optimized use of raw materials in existing production chains, leading to reduced demand for primary materials; when new raw materials are required, preference will be given to those produced sustainably, renewable and widely available; development of production methods and design of innovative products and promotion of new forms of consumption (Luz, 2017, p. 6).

The Circular Economy has increasingly become a goal to be achieved by countries around the world that aim to turn most of the products consumed into sustainable and longer-lasting products, through more appropriate processes that use the recycling and reuse of raw materials for the production of goods. A press release published on the European Commission's own website (2020, online) states that "the new action plan aims to make our economy well prepared for a green future, strengthen our competitiveness while maintaining environmental protection, and grant new rights to consumers". This way of consuming is important because:

> Reduces the amount of land needed to provide resources for the economy (acting on changes in land and sea use); II. Manages renewable resources, such as the supply of fish, in the long term (acting on the direct exploitation of organisms and natural resources); III. Reduces greenhouse gas emissions throughout the economy (acting on climate change); IV. Eliminates pollution at each stage of a product's life cycle (acting on pollution); V. Eliminates waste in which invasive alien species could be transported to new ecosystems (acting on invasive alien species) (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2020, online).

Parallel to this and as a means of strengthening the Circular Economy, the importance of the Creative Economy as a practice of maintaining slow and sustainable consumption models can be mentioned. According to the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service, the creative

economy is a set of activities that value respect for regional labor, innovation, creativity, the use of raw materials, etc., and ends up generating employment and income (Sebrae, 2023, online). The Creative Economy provides local entrepreneurs with the possibility of valuing and promoting their own sustainability practices, creating business models that are more respectful of communities and the environment in the region. These local entrepreneurs identify their target audience and the region in which they live, thus finding possible alternatives to meet the required demands, seeking to develop creative and differentiated products that stand out within the local consumer industry. According to the survey Portraits of Society: Sustainable Habits and Conscious Consumption carried out by the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), "74% of Brazilians say they are environmentally conscious consumers, 30% say they always adopt these habits and half of the Brazilian consumers interviewed always check (24% of the total) or most of the time (26% of the total) if the product they are going to purchase was produced in an environmentally sustainable way" (CNI, 2022, p.7). In other words, there is a growing number of Brazilian consumers who are looking for products that have a sustainable, innovative and creative production chain.

Within the creative and circular economy, sustainable handicrafts for the production of jewelry and clothing with territorial reference, made with natural raw materials or recycled materials, are also shown to be an important practice for sustainability, and can be defined as a set of manufacturing activities that value the creativity and financial autonomy of the artisan (Pereira, 1979). It is common to find sellers of handicrafts made manually and who use inputs existing in the regional market to produce them. The materials used range from the reuse of synthetic products such as discarded plastics and glass, to the use of natural fibers extracted from nature. These sellers end up transforming objects that would be discarded into totally new things, attributing different functionalities to them and increasing the useful life of the raw material that would be wasted. As an example of this, we have jars made from pet bottles or pieces of clothing made from buriti fibers.

Another sustainable practice is the production of cosmetics through the use of natural raw materials that are also part of the circular and creative economy. In Brazil, Natura is a great *success story* , having a sustainable value chain where about 84% of product formulas are vegan, 93% of natural origin, and are purchased from 34 local communities in the Amazon (Natura, 2023, online).

> Natura produces a wide range of products, including soaps, creams and shampoos, all of which rely on the rich biodiversity of the Amazon for ingredients and materials, as well as the "biointelligence" of local communities. The company's supply chain includes almost 40 types of "biodiversity assets" (plant-derived ingredients) and the involvement of about 7 thousand families (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2020?, online).

In the context of fashion, one can talk about the reuse of second-hand clothes, either by keeping them as clothes, or by transforming the raw materials present in them into new things. Therefore, the second-hand clothing consumption market is a great ally when it comes to sustainable

consumption practices within the circular and creative economy, where thrift stores are characterized as part of this model because they extend the useful life of garments, thus reducing the inadequate disposal of textile waste and the exploitation of natural inputs for the production of new virgin raw materials. As an example of this, we have the online thrift store *ThredUp*, a reference in the world as a business model that practices the circular economy. Founded in 2009 in the United States, the thrift store is responsible for reselling second-hand clothing through its own *marketplace* platform. According to ThredUp's own annual impact report, "every time a consumer chooses to buy a second-hand piece instead of a new one, 82% of carbon emissions are reduced" (Threadup, 2021, p.20).[ix] Other data also state that buying second-hand clothes has become "a global phenomenon with an expected growth of 126% by 2026, and may move 218 billion dollars in the same year" (Threadup, 2022, p. 4).[x]

When talking about sustainability practices in fashion, one can mention *Upcycling, a* practice responsible for understanding the perception of value in all potentially disposable products, in order to minimize possible negative impacts on the environment." (Moreira, 2017, p. 78). This form of clothing recreation is known for transforming what would otherwise be discarded into completely different pieces: a pair of jeans that through *Upcycling* will become a bag or a bag that through *Upcycling* will become a vest. This perception of value is manifested through the reuse of raw materials that have already been used, thus reducing the damage caused by improper waste disposal.

The practice of *Upcycling* is correlated to the consumption of second-hand clothes due to the fact that it is usually applied to used clothes that no longer have added value due to the use or changes in trends caused by *fast fashion*. According to an article published on the Vogue Portugal website, "it's like a new *do it yourself* , a process that can be done to any piece that is no longer suitable for your style or that no longer fits you" (Misciagna, Vogue Portugal, 2020, online), thus providing creative autonomy to the owner of the clothes. It is worth noting that another very popular technique in the fashion world and which is based on the reuse of textile waste is Patchwork . This transformation model is based on reusing leftover fabrics and scraps, resignifying them and transforming them into new pieces of clothing. Vogue Brasil states that "Patchwork invades fashion in collections that take advantage of leftover fabric or exalt the preciousness of artisanal work" (Sotocorno, Vogue Brasil, 2021, online). In Brazil, it can be easily found in the Northeast of the country, where there is a cultural habit of using leftover fabrics for the production of pillows, bedding pieces made of scraps or the so-called "fuxicos".

It is then noted that transforming or reusing something has increasingly become a lifestyle of the new generations, where, "48% say that buying second-hand clothes is more socially accepted today than 5 years ago, 74% believe that their consumption habits have a significant impact on the

planet and 72% feel proud to tell other people that they consume used clothes" (Thredup, 2022, p. 29).[xi]

It is worth mentioning that the recycling of garments is also a practice combined with *the slow* economy and ESG, where, through the reuse of fibers from garments, it becomes possible to reduce the impact of raw material extraction processes. This process is directly linked to the responsibility of companies to have a sustainable production chain, observing from the pre-production of their clothes to their disposal (Gatto, 2023). Currently, some retailers already have their own reverse logistics system, where they receive used clothing items and direct them to proper disposal for recycling through textile defibering, where, "this waste is worked to return to the state of fibers, which generate a new mesh" (Exame, 2022, online).

In summary, Table 2 lists the characteristics of the *Slow Fashion consumption system*, pointing out its main advantages and contrasting them with their respective disadvantages.

Chart 2 - Advantages and Disadvantages of *Slow Fashion.*

Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Slowed production	Lower acceptance by the general public
More sustainable, innovative and creative production chain	Increased production cost and time
Reuse of recycled and sustainable raw materials.	More delicate pieces that require greater care
Respect for local commerce	Difficulty in meeting possible large demands required by the market

Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

HISTORY OF THE THRIFT STORE AND ITS CONSUMPTION MODELS

The *Thread Annual Resale Report* conducted by the American online thrift store *ThredUp* concludes that "62% of consumers surveyed belonging to Generation Z and *Millenials* say they first look for a second-hand item before purchasing an entirely new item that has never been used" (ThreadUp, 2022, p. 15)[xii]. In other words, the purchase of used clothes is easily associated with the rise of changes in consumption habits of Generation Z, *Millenials* and young people who call themselves conscious consumers. Despite this, this form of acquisition emerged a few centuries ago, perpetuating itself over the years until it became a model of direct opposition to *fast fashion*.

When building a historical overview of the emergence of thrift stores, it can be observed that the purchase of second-hand clothes has always been directly linked to behavioral changes in society. The social transformations that took place in the Middle Ages were extremely important for the construction of the consumption practices we know today. It was during this period and due to the Crusades that several improvements in clothing and manufacturing techniques occurred, resulting in a greater production of garments and the beginning of the transition to capitalist models. According to Huberman, "they helped to awaken Europe from its feudal slumber, spreading priests, warriors,

laborers, and a growing merchant class throughout the continent; intensified the demand for foreign goods." (Huberman, 1986, p. 22)

This increase in the transport of manufactures between neighboring countries or cities ended up stimulating the practice of barter, since the merchants of the time met outdoors to exchange new or used goods that they obtained during their travels. This practice occurred due to the fact that many times the inputs used to produce the pieces of clothing were different depending on the region of origin, thus arousing the interest of the population in exchanging their pieces for others. Over time, these meetings on the transport routes became what we know as fairs, where "the great merchants, who differed from the small wandering dealers and local artisans, bought and sold foreign goods from the East and West, North and South" (Huberman, 1986, p. 24). However, it was approximately in 1920 in Europe that open-air fairs intensified through the creation of open-air bazaars whose main objective was to sell second-hand pieces. These bazaars were named Flea Market and exist to this day, with the main characteristic being the combination of fairs that have a vast segmentation of products to be sold.

> Originally called "Marché aux puces", the Flea Market emerged in the suburbs of Paris, France, as a large open-air bazaar, which held the sale of clothing that, at the time, often came infested with fleas (Portal laboratório da educação, 2017, online).

With the passage of time due to the custom already established by the Flea Markets and in a more modern context due to the high demand for second-hand pieces, there was the emergence of stores selling used clothes: the *vintage thrift shop* or *vintage clothing store's* (Fischer, 2012, 2013, 2015). Despite having different nomenclatures from the ones we know, these stores popularly known in Europe are directly similar to the ideas present in Brazilian thrift stores. In Brazil, it is estimated that the emergence took place approximately around the nineteenth century in Rio de Janeiro, where a street merchant named Belchior, who was popularly known for selling used pieces inside his own house, the "Casa de Belchior" (Tótaro, 2017, p. 43), ended up making all establishments that carried out this type of activity receive the same name, one of them being mentioned in the short story Ideias de um Canário by Machado de Assis.

> [...] I escaped by jumping into a belchior store [...]. The store was dark, cluttered with the old, crooked, torn, smeared, rusty things that are usually found in such houses, all in that half-disorder typical of business[...] (Assis, 2004, p. 427).

However, as mentioned by Assis, nowadays the pieces of clothing found in thrift stores are still stereotyped and carry with them the popular imagination of having bad energy, where most people "do not wear second-hand clothes not only because they consider it 'a poor man's thing', but also because they fear that 'negative fluids' from the previous owner would be impregnated in the 'spirit of the clothes'" (Tótaro, 2017, n.n). Despite this, over time, thrift stores have established

themselves as spaces for the conscious consumption of clothing, becoming popular business models that vary according to the public and type of curatorship they carry out (Ricardo, 2008). Therefore, the most easily found types of thrift stores are:

1. Street Thrift Stores: They are held outdoors in squares, sidewalks, neighborhood fairs or places with a lot of people, where the pieces are sold at affordable prices and informally between seller and customer.
2. Traditional Thrift Stores: They are popularly known as "neighborhood thrift stores", as they are more easily found in garages or sellers' own homes. They usually have a small physical space full of piles with various types of second-hand products that are sold at extremely affordable prices. Therefore, they end up demanding more patience from consumers to "mine" and find what they need in the amount of stacked clothes.
3. Online Thrift Stores: They have a slightly more rigorous curation. It is the thrift stores that make their sales exclusively through *online* channels. Its main characteristic is the administration of its own website or page on social networks where they sell directly to consumers
4. Marketplace *Thrift Stores: Have a more rigorous curation, Marketplace thrift stores* usually pay a certain amount to share the same physical space or *online* site to sell their pieces.
5. Shared/rental Wardrobe Thrift Stores: They have physical spaces and carry out rigorous curation based on the target audience they seek to serve, thus setting up a diversified wardrobe that meets the demands of people's daily lives. Each piece has different rental rates that are defined according to the clothing, material, style and the amount of time the consumer will spend with the piece.
6. Vintage Thrift *Stores*: They are rigorously curated. They sell clothes that are at least 2 decades old, where they preferentially look for new or used products from old famous brands.
7. Luxury Thrift Stores: They are extremely rigorously curated and most of the time sell rare and valuable pieces from major brands of national or international brands.

METHODOLOGY

Research is a primordial part of the development of a work and to carry it out it is necessary to define the methodology to be chosen. According to Strauss & Corbin (1998), the methodology consists of a process of actions and their respective tools used to collect data on a given subject. Thus, as for the objectives, it is characterized as descriptive research, since "its main purpose is the description of the characteristics of a certain population or phenomenon, or the establishment of relationships between variables" (Gil, 1999, p.28), in this case, the characterization of the fashion industry and its economic models, the study of existing thrift store enterprises and the preferences of

second-hand clothing consumers in Luís/MA. As for the approach, it was done in a Qualitative-Quantitative way. According to *Duffy (1987),* it:

> it allows the possibility of controlling biases (through the quantitative approach) and understanding the agents involved in the phenomenon (through the qualitative approach); identification of specific variables (by the quantitative approach) and global view of the phenomenon (by the qualitative approach); complementation of a set of facts and causes arising from the quantitative approach with a view of the dynamic nature of reality; enrichment of findings obtained under controlled conditions with data obtained in the natural context. (Duffy, 1987, p 130-133)

The research took place at different times, with the first part being more qualitatively grounded with the use of secondary sources. According to Gil (1999, p.28), "research of this type has as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon or the establishment of relationships between variables". Thus, information was obtained through the bibliographic survey in articles, books, magazines and news that deal with the theme of fashion, sustainability and conscious consumption of second-hand clothes in the world and in Brazil. Later, it continued quantitatively. For Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), this type of research provides the transformation of the information collected into scientific data. In addition, "for the collection of qualitative data, the following methods stand out: individual interviews, *focus groups* and observation" (Hancock, 2002, p. 22), with Field Research being the means used in this work.

> Field research is the type of research that intends to seek information directly from the researched population. It requires the researcher to have a more direct encounter. In this case, the researcher needs to go to the space where the phenomenon occurs, or has occurred, and gather a set of information to be documented [...] (Gonsalves, 2001, p. 67).

Thus, as for the procedures, it was done in Primary Sources through Field Research, with the application of semi-structured interviews and a structured questionnaire in thrift store fairs and physical thrift stores. However, in order to obtain the necessary information, it is important to define the sample to be studied. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2000, p. 26), a sampling plan should answer the following questions: "who to survey (sampling unit), how many to survey (the sample size), and how to select (the sampling procedure)." The public to be surveyed was diverse, focusing on both consumers and entrepreneurs of thrift stores present at the fairs, regardless of gender and age group and who live in São Luís, Maranhão. The thrift store meetings took place every two weeks, so the period of application of the interviews and questionnaires lasted 1 month.

The data collection was also carried out in a Qualitative and Quantitative way. For a qualitative analysis, the semi-structured interview was used in an appropriate way to be applied only to thrift store entrepreneurs. The interviews were carried out in person, where initially data was collected through demographic questions about gender, age, family income and education and later questions were asked directed to the business with questions about the motivations for the creation of

the thrift store, time of existence, brand positioning, perspective on customers, business planning, sustainability, etc. In all, 9 (nine) different enterprises were interviewed, where each interview was recorded and later transcribed. For a quantitative analysis, the Survey Survey was applied, through the use of a structured questionnaire with the presence of a scale and delimited questions, where it was directed only to consumers in order to obtain information about the consumption habits of second-hand clothes in São Luís. To define the target population used as the focus of the research, the selection criterion was established that only people who consume second-hand clothes could answer. However, due to the informality of the thrift store market, it was not possible to project the exact number of these consumers in terms of population.

Therefore, taking into account the existing variables, the respondents were selected through an intentional non-probabilistic sampling, where "cases are chosen for the sample that represent the "good judgment" of the population/universe" (Silva and Menezes, 2005 p. 32). The Survey questionnaire was applied online and published on thrift store pages and mining groups on WhatsApp. In addition, it was also taken through a QR CODE to thrift store meetings, where consumers could scan the code and answer the survey through it. The sample obtained 50 respondents, where all respondents met the criterion of non-elimination, since they were consumers of thrift stores and therefore served for data collection. The results obtained with the application of the structured questionnaire were transformed into graphs, a Likert Scale and tables for a better understanding of the motivations that lead these consumers to buy clothes in thrift stores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This stage of the research had the bibliographic survey as a guiding core, because it was through the theoretical study that the topics to be discussed were defined. Because of this, the analysis of the results was structured in two stages that consist of the grouping of the data obtained through the application of field research, namely: I. the characterization of the existing thrift store enterprises in the market of São Luís/MA and II. the study of the consumption habits of people who buy second-hand clothes in São Luís/MA.

The first part of the investigation took place through the transcription of the interviews, enabling from the statements made by the entrepreneurs a better understanding of the *stakeholders* that involve the operation of a thrift store, from the motivations of its creation, the market positioning, sustainability and the way it observes the preferences of its consumers. In addition, in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis, the data from the first stage was intersected with those from the second, which was responsible for analyzing socio-behavioral factors, sustainable consumption practices, and the priorities that customers have when consuming second-hand clothes. It is worth mentioning that when constructing the two stages, the previously defined research

problems were taken into account, crossing the data obtained with the information studied in the theoretical framework and thus achieving the expected results.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THRIFT STORE ENTERPRISES AND THEIR SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

For a greater understanding of the details that involve entrepreneurship in the thrift store market in São Luís/MA, it was necessary to apply interviews with the owners who carry out the maintenance of these businesses. The criterion for selecting the interviewees was based on the ease of access to them, taking into account mainly those who were found making sales in thrift store meetings or who had well-located physical stores. All the businesses interviewed were managed by women, six of them by women over 46 years old, one by a woman between 36 and 45 years old, and two of them by two young women between 18 and 25 years old. In addition, of the 9 interviewees, 100% of them had some degree of access to higher education.

Chart 3 shows the interviewee's code and their demographic data, respectively.

Chart 3 – Demographic data of the interviewees.

Respondent code	Demographics
BC01	Age: 49 years old, Education: complete higher education Average income: 03 to 05 minimum wages
BC02	Age: 57 years old Education: complete higher education Average income: 03 to 05 minimum wages
BC03	Age: 25 years old Education: Master's student in progress Average income: up to 01 minimum wage
BC04	Age: 48 years old Education: complete higher education Average income: 03 to 05 minimum wages
BC05	Age: 57 years old Education: complete higher education Average income: 03 to 05 minimum wages
BC06	Age: 38 years old Education: complete higher education Average income: 03 to 05 minimum wages
BC07	Age: 23 years old Education: complete higher education Average income: 01 to 03 minimum wages
BC08	Age: 56 years old Education: complete higher education Average income: 03 to 05 minimum wages
BC09	Age: 48 years old Education: incomplete higher education Average income: 01 to 03 minimum wages

Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

When analyzing the demographic data, it can be easily seen that the thrift stores observed are managed by women who achieved financial independence through them, further reinforcing the role

of the female force in entrepreneurship in Ludovica and also as a significant part of the production chains of the textile industry. As stated by Casara, if when we observe fashion as a global scale of *fast fashion* we unfairly find women in a position of devaluation of work and abuses related to gender issues (Casara, 2021), here we can see the opposition of expectations where we find female strength as a relevant part for the creation and maintenance of a *slow* consumer market and sustainable. When asked about her main motivation for having a thrift store, BC01, who has a business with 25 years of existence, said that financial independence was the decisive factor for starting her business.

When asked about her main motivation for having a thrift store, BC01, who has a business with 25 years of existence, said that financial independence was the decisive factor for starting her business.

> "The thrift store was a fortress that leveraged me, made my work have more stability and this stability thank God I find every day, regardless of whether I sell or not and that's how I work and it grows more and more. If I tell you, you may not believe it, but I've been doing it for 25 years, I've been working for a long time since I was young, today I'm 49 years old, I'm a teacher, but I've never stopped working with my business that I like." (BC01)

During many interviews, the entrepreneurs reiterated the dedication and love they put into their work, in serving their customers and in the pieces of clothing they sell. Here once again one can observe an important contrast of values: if in the fashion industry the priority is only to sell pieces of clothing, here fashion and clothes are seen as a way to convey affection, creativity and authenticity. According to *Thredup*, this directly impacts the customer experience, since "82% of consumers say they feel positive emotions when buying a second-hand piece" (Thredup, 2022, p. 28).[xiii]

> "The thrift store came to me at a time of change, I worked for years in the industry and because of that I ended up getting depressed... I started looking for new things and ended up discovering a new path in the thrift store. [...] I take off the buttons, metal parts, zippers, the lines... One of those pieces that I see that there is no way out. What I take off, I end up using in other clothes." (BC09)

In addition, the interviews enabled the perception of the business planning, where questions were raised about how thrift store owners get second-hand clothing suppliers and how their customers are captured. All the entrepreneurs stated that they go in search of clothing on their own, either by entering exchange groups and buying used pieces, or by looking for donations or buying bags of clothing on the internet, where most of the interviewees have traditional and online thrift stores. It is then observed that the ways of "panning" are many and that thrift store owners usually use all possible variables to obtain the maximum diversity of products, reaching the public they want through the organization, cleanliness and good presentation of clothes (Ricardo, 2008). When asked about the planning of her business, BC02, and that she has a business with 7 years of existence, she states that:

> "The planning of the thrift store is to have the working capital to buy the pieces and the pieces have to be sold at an affordable price to the community, according to the community is the price of the clothes and pay the rent that we have a rented point, an employee who works with us. So, there is a whole organization plan so that these goals are fulfilled and there is never a lack of clothes." (BC02)

When asked if they consider their own business sustainable, the entrepreneurs mentioned the practices they carry out within their thrift stores and how this is placed as a priority during product curations, where 100% of the interviewees claimed to consider their enterprises sustainable, often carrying out *Upcycling* or *Recycling* and thus reducing the negative impacts caused by the irregular disposal of these products (Moreira, 2017). When asked about the subject, BC03 states that sustainability is a lifestyle.

> "There are many things we can do, I believe that we use a piece that is already ready, right... that for, for example, for the production of a piece more than 1000 liters of water are used, there are microplastics that is one of the biggest obstacles nowadays in clothes... there are plastics in clothes... Why not use a piece that already exists, right? a piece that has already been made, so it is already in the world, it has already been manufactured. So sustainability is in this sense of being able to reuse a piece that is already here, right? it can be used." (BC03)

Another important point to be noticed is that some interviewees reported having different sales channels. For BC03, *Instagram* is an important tool for the operation of his business: "I use the thrift store's Instagram to publish the new pieces I got, through a monthly update with a general overview of new mines." For BC04, knowing how to reach customers is an essential factor to obtain good sales: "I want to take my thrift store forward more and more and always be inserted in the fairs. It's very good to take the thrift store to people and not wait for them to go to the thrift store." BC05, states that:

> "The branch still has some prejudice, this issue of the thrift store needs to be demystified... There are people who have a certain prejudice, but we realize that it is something that is much less so today... people already have less resistance, the clothes from the thrift store are more popular... even in the middle classes. Today it's not just people with lower incomes who buy at thrift stores! Today you see middle-class people who buy to form a different look, something more original and quietly, you know?" (BC05)

Chart 04 presents a summary of other important information that was discussed by the entrepreneurs during the interviews.

Chart 4 – Main aspects of the interviews.

Respondent code	Aspects discussed
BC01	Financial independence; care for clothes and customers; focus on selling various products; He sees the thrift store as a growing market.
BC02	Financial independence; entrepreneurship; reuse of parts; customer segmentation; curatorship with a focus on retro fashion; highlights the importance of working capital for the management of its physical thrift store.
BC03	Detachment from pieces; uses *Instagram* as a sales channel; participates in thrift store meetings frequently; focuses on vintage and sports women's fashion; highlighted the difficulties of dealing with the public; considers sustainability as an important factor; likes to work with thrift stores and responsibility.
BC04	Detachment from pieces; sees the thrift store market as something growing; likes circular fashion; upcycles defective clothes; wants to have a physical store that sells various products in the future; attends thrift store meetings and thinks it is important to take it to people.
BC05	Detachment from pieces; experience with *marketing*, economics and administration; affirms that the thrift store enables a more accessible fashion to low-income people; greater acceptance of the thrift store by the public; sees the growth of the consumption of used clothes, especially by the middle class.
BC06	Detachment from parts; considers its customers to be more aware people; considers your enterprise sustainable.
BC07	Detachment from pieces; highlights the negative impacts of *fast fashion;* She likes circular fashion; she sees the thrift store as an accessible and sustainable form of consumption.
BC08	Financial independence; believes that clothing is affection; *upcycling;* properly discards what it doesn't use; the thrift store has changed its view on fashion, style and identity.
BC09	Entrepreneurship; he always dreamed of having his own business; has a physical store; attends thrift store fairs; receives donations and exchanges parts; sees its customers as creative and conscious people.

Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CONSUMPTION OF THRIFT STORES IN SÃO LUÍS/MA

Continuing the study and in order to deepen the analysis of the internal and external factors that influence the consumption habits of second-hand clothes in São Luís/MA, it was necessary to apply a questionnaire specifically directed to consumers, which contained questions about gender, age group, education, income, consumption and socio-behavioral habits. When asked about gender, most of the responding consumers claimed to identify themselves as women (76.5%), while the rest were divided between men (15.7%), non-binary people (5.9) and gender-fluid (2%). It is worth mentioning that a survey carried out by the Brazilian Association of the Textile and Apparel Industry states that 60% of workers in the fashion industry are female (Iemi; Abit, 2022) and as a complement to this, the respondents' data once again reaffirm the importance of the thrift store market as a participatory agent in the generation of women's income and also as a sector of interest to this audience in terms of fashion consumption.

The age group of consumers also proved to be something important to be observed, with the vast majority of respondents belonging to Generation Z and *Millenials*, a factor that can be placed in parallel with the information obtained by *McKinseyCompany* (2019) and Akatu, *Globescan* (2020) that affirm the participation of these consumers as the public of greatest interest in consuming second-hand clothes. Of the 50 respondents, 58.8% of them said they were between 20 and 30 years

old, 31.4% were between 31 and 40 years old and 7.8% were up to 19 years old. In addition, income is also a preponderant factor when talking about this market, since most consumers are looking for cheaper and more accessible products. However, as stated by the entrepreneurs, the thrift store has become popular among all income groups, especially among the middle class. When asked about their income, it is possible to perceive the existing diversity of the consumer public, where 41.2% of consumers answered that they receive between 01 and 03 minimum wages, 23.5% claimed to receive between 03 and 05 minimum wages, 17.6% receive up to 01 minimum wage.

Chart 05 lists the demographic data of the respondents and their respective percentages.

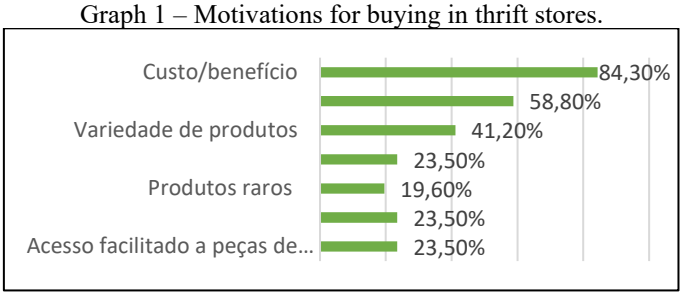
Table 5 – Consumer Demographics.

Variable	Variable level	% of respondents
Gender:	Man	15,7%
	Woman	76,5%
	Non-binary	5,9%
	Gender fluid	2%
Age group	Up to 19 years old	7,8%
	From 20 to 30 years old	58,8%
	From 31 to 40 years old	31,4%
	From 51 to 60 years old	-
	Over 60 years old	-
Schooling	Incomplete elementary school	-
	Complete elementary school	-
	Incomplete high school	-
	Complete high school	17,6%
	Incomplete higher education	31,4%
	Complete higher education	51%
Family income	Up to 01 minimum wage	17,6%
	From 01 to 03 minimum wages	41,2%
	From 03 to 05 minimum wages	23,5%
	From 05 to 15 minimum wages	15,7%
	Above 15 minimum wages	-

Source: prepared by the author (2023).

When asked about the 3 main motivations that lead them to consume thrift store products, the responding consumers claimed that the most important factors are: I. Cost/benefit (84.3%); II. More sustainable consumption (58.8%); III. Variety of products (41.2%). Accordingly, *Threadup* states that the top 3 general motivations of second-hand clothing consumers are: "saving money and conducting good price negotiations, easy access to pieces from high-end brands, and the possibility of finding a unique piece" (Thredup, 2022, p. 25).[xiv]

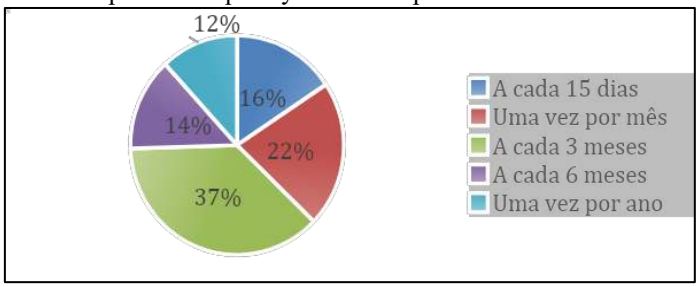
Graph 1 – Motivations for buying in thrift stores.



Source: prepared by the author (2023).

When asked about how often they usually buy second-hand clothes, you can observe something related to customers that should be taken into account by entrepreneurs. While a portion of the respondents claim to buy frequently - such constancy can be justified by the fact that conscious consumption is probably part of the *lifestyle* of these people - another portion is not totally captivated by the thrift store market, where they usually make purchases of used items with a longer time interval. The interesting thing then would be to think of ways to captivate this portion of consumers who are already inserted in the market, but who still have a lower frequency of consumption.

Graph 2 – Frequency of consumption in thrift stores.



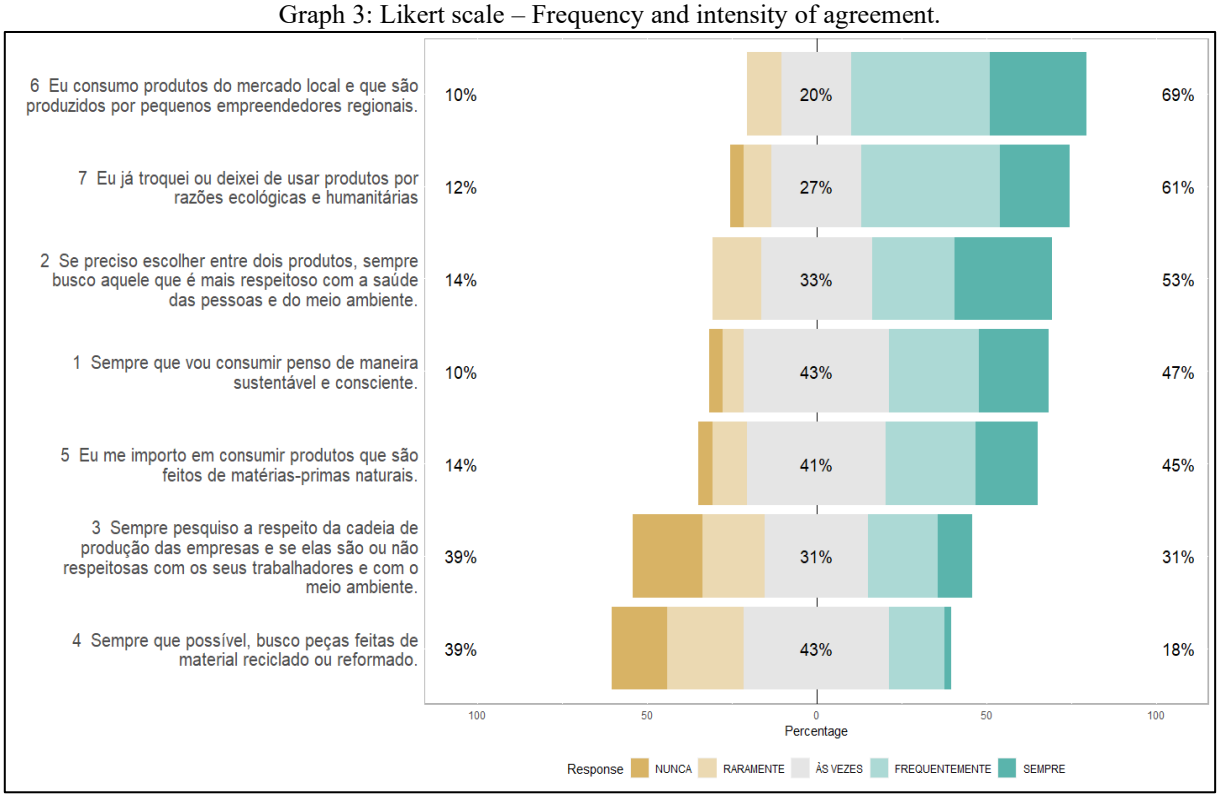
Source: prepared by the author (2023).

In addition, 43 respondents (84.3%) claimed to know thrift stores that talk about sustainability and conscious fashion, while 7 people (15.7%) claimed not to know. However, when asked if the fact that these thrift stores have this type of positioning motivates them to make the purchase, 52.9% stated indifference and that any thrift store - regardless of its positioning - motivates them to make a purchase, that is, at the time of purchase they preferentially value the cost/benefit of the product. Despite this, 41.2% stated that sustainable positioning is indeed important, in agreement with data from the Akatu Institute, which reaffirms young people's interest in buying, selling, or donating something that has already been used (Akatu, Globescan, 2020).

Concomitantly, a Likert scale was applied in order to understand in more detail the relationship that consumers have with conscious consumption practices and the frequency with which they performed the activities described. The scale was structured with seven statements about consumption habits and had possibilities of answers that varied between never, rarely, sometimes,

often and always. In graph 4 it is possible to see that most of the respondents had a tendency towards neutrality (sometimes) or positive influence.

Graph 3: Likert scale – Frequency and intensity of agreement.



Source: prepared by the author (2023).

When asked if they have ever changed or stopped using products for ecological or humanitarian reasons, 61% of respondents stated that they do this during their daily lives and 53% said they prioritize products that are more respectful of people's health and the environment. Despite this, when asked if whenever they are going to consume they think consciously and sustainably, only 47% of respondents said they do this in a positive way, while 43% were neutral. The data show that these consumers are more politicized about ecological and humanitarian issues and that whenever possible they seek to align their lifestyle with what they will consume. ThreadUp's annual impact report states that this is due to the fact that the *lifestyle* of the new generations has undergone changes over the years, where socio-environmental debates have become a topic of interest to consumers and conscious consumption a global phenomenon gradually on the rise (Threadup, 2022, p. 4 and 15).[xv]

When asked whether or not they prioritize products made of recycled or refurbished material, 39% said they do not think about it when they buy something, while 43% were neutral. In addition, 39% of respondents do not prioritize because they know information about a company's production chain, 31% were neutral and only the remaining 31% answered that they usually reflect on this at the time of purchase. In parallel, the Fashion Transparency Index, which investigated the regularity of the production chain of 60 *fast fashion brands* operating in Brazil, states that "82% of brands do not

publicly disclose their due diligence processes on human rights or the environment, 88% of brands do not publish the amount of post-production waste, 82% do not disclose the amount of pre-production waste and that 97% of brands do not disclose the salary of their customers." workers" (Fashion Revolution Brasil, 2022, p. 6-15). These data prove that despite being aware of the impact of their purchase on people's lives and the environment, consumers still need to be increasingly sensitized.

In addition, the negligence of companies - whether they are in the fashion industry or not - must be taken into account due to the fact that they rarely talk about their production chain, their suppliers, the disposal of their product or the quality of the environment in which their workers are inserted. This information reinforces that the transparency of the fashion industry in Brazil is still seen with indifference by companies and this ends up directly influencing people's perception of the subject (Fashion revolution brasil, 2022). In search of competitive advantages, many of these companies do not make this information accessible or end up purposely hiding it from their consumers, thus generating their disinterest. Therefore, it is important that the products and services industry disclose its official reports and transparency indexes, showing customers the importance of having knowledge about production chains and whether they are legally safe or not.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND NOTES FOR FUTURE STUDIES

When talking about management as a science, we usually think of the most common contexts in which it can be applied - in its use as a tool for the management of private companies or public sector bodies - and, therefore, we end up neglecting its importance as a multidisciplinary science that can and should be applied in different contexts, including those that have as their main characteristic the presence of informality. Therefore, this study has its relevance based on providing its reader with an overview of the variables that directly affect the existing purchasing behavior in the fashion industry and what is its relationship with the sustainability and ESG practices that continue to grow around the world in recent years

The research achieved the general objectives outlined above, since it was able to analyze the functioning of second-hand clothing consumption habits in São Luís/MA, through the survey of data that showed the different perspectives existing within this market, ranging from the vision of entrepreneurs to that of consumers. In addition, it also managed to achieve its specific objectives with its respective results, namely: I. the realization of the survey about the fashion industry and its impacts on society, which resulted in a theoretical study about the functioning of the linear economy models and *fast fashion,* and from this, also allowed the understanding of the opposite way to this model: the circular economy and *slow fashion*; II. the characterization of thrift store enterprises in São Luís/MA, which resulted in a more in-depth study on the motivations for the creation of a thrift

store, female entrepreneurship, customer segmentation, market positioning and strategic planning within this type of informal business; III. and a study around the consumption habits of thrift store consumers in São Luís/MA, which resulted in an analysis of the motivations for purchase, the frequency in which they usually consume second-hand clothes and what degree of relationship they have with conscious consumption practices.

In addition, it is clear that studying the socio-behavioral habits of consumers is a preponderant factor for the success of a business and this also applies to informal thrift stores. It is through strategic planning and its efficiency as an analysis tool that enterprises are able to achieve their goals and draw a better understanding of what consumers prioritize and, consequently, a better market positioning. In addition, it also made it possible to perceive that customers and consumers have different perspectives regarding their positions as individuals within a global consumer industry. Most entrepreneurs see the second-hand market as something of the future and that sustainability is a priority for their customers. On the other hand, consumers end up preferentially prioritizing the cost/benefit that the thrift store can provide. It is also worth mentioning that just consuming second-hand clothes is not enough: it is necessary to buy only what is necessary, thus avoiding the misconception that because they are cheap and used clothes, we can buy them in an uncontrolled way and dispose of them in an irregular way.

Finally, as notes for a future study, the intention to further deepen this study is highlighted, applying management tools such as Value Curve, Porter's Forces, Canva, etc. thus being able to understand other details that involve the operation of the thrift store market. In addition, to investigate in other ways the functioning and impact caused by waste colonialism and *greenwashing* in the fashion industry, taking into account the context of the functioning of production chains and their correlation with these themes. Another interesting point would be to carry out a case study with an enterprise in the second-hand clothing market that has a more elaborate administrative structure, aiming to better understand how it works and its relationship with the practice of ESG, in a new, more elaborate perspective and different from the models of informal thrift stores that were studied here.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

[i] Millennials are at the vanguard, with 52 percent agreeing that they always research for background information before buying, compared with 45 percent of Gen Z consumers and 41 percent of baby boomers (McKinsey, 2019, p. 60).

[ii] Fast fashion describes the retail strategy of adapting merchandise assortments to current and emerging trends as quickly and effectively as possible. [...] in which retailers respond to shifts in the market within just a few weeks (Sull & Turconi, 2008, p. 4).

[iii] The fashion industry accounts for around 4% of emissions globally, equivalent to the combined annual GHG emissions of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. [...] More than 70% of the emissions come from upstream activities, particularly energy-intensive raw material production, preparation and processing: 38% Material Production, 15 % Wet Processes (Global fashion agenda, 2020, p.5).

[iv] The Preferred Fiber and Materials Market Report 2019 reveals that global fiber production has doubled in the last 20 years, reaching an all-time high of 107 million metric tons in 2018 and is expected to grow to 145 million metric tons by 2030. [...] polyester was reported to have a market share of around 52 percent of the global fiber production, making it the most widely used fiber worldwide (Textile exchange, 2019, p. 1.)

[v] Plastics are made with as many as 13,000 chemicals, and researchers say 3,200 of these are chemicals of concern (while many more have never been assessed and may also be toxic). [...] While virgin plastics contain unknown and untested harmful chemicals, studies show that recycled plastics often contain higher levels of chemicals (GreenPeace, 2023, p.7).

[vi] 35% of plastic pollution in the oceans come from micro fibres shed by synthetic fibres. 80% of all clothing is landfilled or incinerated (Fashion global agenda*, 2017*, p. 76 e p. 12).

[vii] Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way (Peta,2019? Online).

[viii] all beings deserve liberty and respect not because they share the characteristics we admire in ourselves but because they are living beings. We share the same evolutionary origins, we inhabit the same Earth, and we are ruled by the same laws of nature. We are all the same (Peta,2019? Online).

[ix] Every time you shop secondhand instead of new, you reduce carbon emissions by 82% (Threadup, 2021, p.20)

[x] Second Hand Is becoming a Global Phenomenon, Expected To Grow 127% by 2026, reaching $218bi (Threadup, 2022, p. 4).

[xi] 74% of shoppers believe their individual consumption habits have a significant impact on the planet, 48% of consumers say secondhand apparel is more socially acceptable now than it was 5 years ago, 72% consider themselves thrifters say they feel proud to share with others that their outfits is secondhand (Thredup, 2022, p. 29).

[xii] 62% of Gen Z and Millennials say they look for an item secondhand before purchasing it new (ThreadUp, 2022, p. 15).

[xiii] 82% of consumers shared that they feel a positive emotion when they buy a secondhand item (Thredup, 2022, p. 28).

[xiv] Top 3 reasons consumers buy secondhand over new: save Money, afford higher-end-brands, find one-of-a-kind itens (Thredup, 2022, p. 25).

[xv] Consumers are thinking Secondhand first. Secondhand is becoming a Global Phenomenon (Threadup, 2022, p. 4 e 15).