

From Affordability to Sustainability: Reframing Thrift-Shop Communication through Consumer Brand Identification

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Abstract

Thrift shopping has become very popular in Indonesia; however, its market positioning generally focuses on low prices instead of long-term benefits. This research investigates the potential of Consumer Brand Identification (CBI) to rebrand secondhand shops as catalysts for sustainable fashion revolution. A narrative literature review was performed, with data systematically gathered from Emerald Insight and Google Scholar. The search yielded 92 pertinent papers, subsequently refined to peer-reviewed research and thematically organized into six thematic categories of CBI: CBI theory, sustainable fashion, consumer behavior, sustainability communication, circular economy, and regional perspectives. The summary indicates that the majority of current research concentrates on consumer behavior, elucidating reasons, obstacles, and generational disparities in the adoption of second-hand fashion. Nonetheless, there exists a paucity of studies focusing on sustainability communication, despite its pivotal function in converting sustainability values into identity-centric narratives. The results show that CBI is a powerful theoretical framework for turning thrift shopping into a way to show who you are, especially among Gen Z and online networks. The study indicates that integrating sustainability into brand marketing can bolster consumer trust, loyalty, and advocacy, establishing secondhand shops as facilitators of circular consumption and sustainable fashion in Indonesia.

Keywords

Sustainability, Sustainability Communication, Thrift Shop, Sustainable Fashion, Consumer Brand Identification.

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Introduction

The thrift store business in Indonesia is set to grow a lot, especially among young people who want to stand out, save money, and look "cool" in their clothes (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Nurapriyanti & Hartono, 2023; Cervellon et al., 2022). Still, even though they are naturally part of circular fashion, most Indonesian thrift shop owners and marketers keep talking about the economic benefits and ignoring sustainability as a key value (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Faludi, 2025). This is a missed chance, since Gen Z and Millennials are becoming more interested in being environmentally responsible when they shop. Thoughtfully crafted sustainability storytelling could be a strong way to set your brand apart and build user identity (Dapit et al., 2024; White et al., 2019; Fischer et al., 2021).

But thrift has a lot of potential as a sustainability movement, and there are some practical problems that make it hard to reach that potential. Regulatory confusion, a long-lasting stigma against secondhand goods, and ongoing problems with illegal imports make it hard for thrift entrepreneurs to build their reputations and run their businesses (Jholanda & Anwar, 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2022; Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). To get past these problems, we need to stop focusing only on economic messages and start telling stories that focus on community, environmental stewardship, and ethical consumption. This is what successful global and regional sustainable fashion campaigns have done (Fischer et al., 2021; White et al., 2019; Cervellon et al., 2022). Thrift stores in Indonesia can build trust, change how people see them, and actively support the larger movement toward responsible fashion by telling stories that focus on identity and sustainability.

The growing gap between what consumers want and what shop owners say makes it even more important to connect theory and practice in Indonesia's thrift industry. Theoretical frameworks like consumer-brand identification, signaling theory, and social marketing have shown that messages based on identity and sustainability can help build trust, loyalty, and uniqueness in crowded markets (Cervellon et al., 2022; Faludi, 2025; White et al., 2019). But in practice, many thrift stores rely on transactional promotion, missing the chance to use communication as a strategic tool for long-term business growth. Not only is it important to fix this gap to make the thrift ecosystem in Indonesia more competitive and engaging for consumers, but it is also important to make it more sustainable and trustworthy (Faludi, 2025; Fischer et al., 2021). Indonesia could miss out on the transformative potential of thrift retail as a way to promote sustainable development and empower young people if it does not quickly put theoretical insights into practice.

Theoretical Lens: Consumer Brand Identification

Consumer Brand Identification (CBI) stems from social identity theory and defines how consumers identify themselves through identifying with brands congruent with their own beliefs, principles, and goals (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). At the center of CBI lies a consumer's feeling of affiliation and oneness with a brand, building an emotional bond, enduring loyalty, and supportiveness. Emphasizing more than functional advantages, CBI highlights the mental bond created when a brand gets

integrated into the consumer's concept of oneself. The identity results from shared storytelling, cultural imagery, and community engagement regarding the brand (Aaker, 1997; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

In reality, CBI lies at the core of communication, marketing, and advertising campaigns. Brands deliberately create identifications through designing storylines, images, and experiences that appeal to consumers' aspirational identities (Aaker, 1997; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Marketers utilize methods such as influencer collaborations, immersive marketing, and online communities to frame brands as sources of self-expression and belonging. Brands utilize shared ideas, aspirations, heritage, and emotional symbolism-factors contributing to recognition, respect, and inclusiveness among customers (Sartori et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). With this method, buyers are turned into brand ambassadors, who are loyal due to an affiliation extending beyond product satisfaction to an enduring tie to their identity.

This principle has particular success in the sustainability arena. CBI-driven sustainability campaigns move beyond conventional messaging, creating identity-driven narratives to induce consumers to see environmental responsibility as an integral part of their identity (White et al., 2019; Faludi, 2025). When sustainability is positioned as an ethical principle or norm of society, ecologically responsible behavior is practiced by the consumer as a confirmation of the self and of society and not as duty (Fischer et al., 2021). Brands link pro-environmental consumption to a better understanding of the self, to pride and to social approval via narrative, images, and shared experiences. As a result, brands achieve greater engagement, improved loyalty, and more potential behavior change (White et al., 2019; Sartori et al., 2012).

In the second-hand business industry, and more particularly in dynamic marketplaces like Indonesia, the CBI practice provides an influential connection of theoretical lenses and practical definitions. Thrift retailing, previously connected with cost-efficiency and access to branded clothes, nowadays has a pivotal standing at the confluence of sustainability and young identity (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Cervellon et al., 2022; Jholanda & Anwar, 2023). Using CBI, charity shops may redefine second-hand style as an honorable option of self-expression, motivation, and ethical interests. Positioning sustainability in storytelling, visual identity, and community occasions assist in building an identity-driven connection of clients to the second-hand revolution, thus exalting circular clothes as an icon of creative authority, social awareness, and community membership (Faludi, 2025; Cervellon et al., 2022). Positioning sustainability within the brands' identity highlights second-hand business, reduces stigma, and stimulates consumption pattern changes in culture (Fischer et al., 2021; White et al., 2019). CBI, thus, provides a strategic framework for charity shops to transcend the economy and become influential players in the broader debate about sustainable clothes transformation.

Guided by the theoretical framework of CBI, this study examines how identity-based brand relationships can be strategically mobilized to strengthen sustainability communication in the context of thrift shopping. CBI suggests that consumers incorporate

brand associations into their self-concept, aligning their values, lifestyles, and social identities with those embodied by the brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This theoretical lens provides a compelling foundation for analyzing how thrift shops - often positioned as niche, value-conscious retail spaces - can be reframed as influential agents of sustainable fashion transformation. Accordingly, this research asks: *How can Consumer Brand Identification be applied to reposition thrift shops as agents of sustainable fashion transformation, thereby influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward circular consumption?* The aim is to investigate how thrift retailers can craft brand identities that resonate with consumers' self-perceptions and social affiliations, thereby cultivating loyalty, advocacy, and long-term alignment with circular consumption values. This inquiry is particularly pertinent in the Indonesian context, where thrift shopping intersects with youth subculture, environmental responsibility, and the rising influence of digital marketing strategies (Nguyen et al., 2020; Sudarsono & Nugroho, 2021).

To answer this question, the study employs a narrative literature review, enabling an integrative and interpretive synthesis of research on CBI, sustainable fashion, and thrift retail. This methodological choice prioritizes conceptual depth over exhaustive coverage, allowing the review to map theoretical linkages between brand-consumer identity alignment and behavioral engagement in circular fashion (Snyder, 2019). By critically synthesizing findings from diverse academic domains - such as consumer identity in branding, pro-environmental consumption, and the socio-cultural dynamics of thrift retail - the review will develop a conceptual framework explaining how CBI mechanisms can be operationalized to reposition thrift shops as culturally and environmentally relevant brands. Through this synthesis, the research aims to produce both theoretical insights and actionable branding strategies capable of influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable fashion adoption (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012).

Method

In this research, a narrative literature review combines and critically examines the prevailing academic literature regarding CBI and potential applications of CBI in thrift shops' sustainability communication strategies. The narrative literature review method is selected because the study focus is complex and inter-disciplinary, thus an integrative perspective rather than a focused empirical or meta-analytic one is required (Paul & Criado, 2020; Massaro et al., 2016).

In short, the foundation of this study is an integrated explanation of why and how intertwining CBI theory with the reality of thrift store branding would make sustainability communication in fashion retail more successful, but especially in Indonesia due to the extraordinary evolution of thrift shopping as an economic and cultural phenomenon (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Faludi, 2025). For this purpose, ideas from social psychology, consumer behavior, marketing, and sustainability studies, and case studies in diverse locations and in-world studies by scholars worldwide and Indonesian scholars are suggested. A narrative literature study helps put things into a broader picture, exploring gaps among concepts, and building an interpretive framework given the subtleties of

identity, culture, and communication in the thrift retail sector (Tranfield et al., 2003; Massaro et al., 2016).

To use this method, you need to do three things:

1. **Mapping and Gathering:** The review begins with carefully mapping out the different types of research on CBI, sustainable branding, and thrift store operations. It draws on peer-reviewed periodicals, theoretical monographs, and regional studies as its sources. The list contains both classic publications and more recent studies to highlight how both theoretical and practical understandings have changed throughout time.
2. **Thematic and Synthesis Analysis:** This brings together important themes and ideas, focusing on how CBI functions in brand communication and the structural limits and possibilities for adding CBI to long-term strategies for thrift shops. At this point, evidence from both Indonesian and international contexts are compared to acquire a better understanding.
3. **Integrative Interpretation:** The review ends with a critical, integrative story that connects theory and practice. It gives real, useful tips for thrift store owners and those who talk about sustainability and explains why CBI may change thrift stores into a way to promote sustainable behavior and identity changes in the fashion industry.

This paper's methodological approach aims to establish a clear yet rigorous framework for future research and for individuals seeking to implement identity-based sustainability communication in thrift and secondhand markets (Paul & Criado, 2020; Faludi, 2025). To make sure that the ideas are obvious and the research is thorough, the literature study is split into different theme clusters. There are several instances in the literature that show these categories, such as the theory of CBI, thrift store consumer behavior, sustainability communication, and digital marketing (Massaro et al., 2016; Faludi, 2025; Tranfield et al., 2003). Clustering this theory enables the possibility to put together ideas from different fields, reveals where theories overlap and where further research is needed, and helps to gain discoveries that can assist the secondhand retail industry in Indonesia become more sustainable.

Analysis

This study employs a narrative literature review to synthesize and critically examine existing knowledge on CBI within the context of sustainability and thrift shopping. To ensure a structured and rigorous process, data collection was carried out through two academic databases: Emerald and Google Scholar.

The choice of these two databases was deliberate. Emerald Insight is recognized as a leading publisher in business, management, and social sciences, offering access to highly curated and peer-reviewed journals with strong reputations in academic research (Zhao & Strotmann, 2015). Its inclusion ensures that the review draws from prestigious, rigorously evaluated scholarship. In contrast, Google Scholar is an expansive search

engine that indexes a much broader range of academic outputs across publishers, disciplines, and geographies (Halevi, Moed, & Bar-Ilan, 2017). By combining the two, this review balances depth and breadth - Emerald guarantees insights from established, high-quality journals, while Google Scholar allows for the detection of emerging discussions and contributions from diverse institutions and contexts. This strategy not only enriches comprehensiveness but also helps identify whether the research topic resonates across various research settings and publishing platforms, ensuring a more holistic understanding.

The initial search process combined three Boolean keywords - "Consumer Brand Identification" AND "Sustainability" AND "Thrift Shop" - with a time filter of 2010-2025. The choice of 2010 as the starting point is grounded in both technological and cultural developments: the rise of Instagram and influencer-driven fashion trends around 2010 significantly accelerated the global visibility and desirability of second-hand clothing (Cervellon, Carey, & Harms, 2022; Nguyen, Phan, & Nguyen, 2020). Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, not only reshaped how fashion is consumed but also contributed to the rebranding of thrift fashion from necessity to lifestyle, making this time frame especially relevant to the study of CBI and sustainability. Using this search strategy, the results yielded 129 articles from Emerald and 212 from Google Scholar.

In the second stage, the dataset was narrowed to peer-reviewed journal articles only, resulting in 64 articles from Emerald and 28 from Google Scholar. This refinement ensures academic rigor and credibility, as journal articles are subject to formal peer review processes, which strengthens the reliability and validity of the insights (Paul & Criado, 2020; Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie, 2016; Snyder, 2019). This methodological choice also aligns with recommendations for narrative reviews, which emphasize prioritizing authoritative and peer-evaluated sources over non-reviewed or grey literature to build a trustworthy conceptual foundation.

Following data collection, a thematic clustering process was conducted to organize insights into coherent categories. Guided by the theoretical framework of CBI, the analysis was clustered across seven thematic domains:

1. CBI Theory
2. CBI in Sustainable Fashion
3. Thrift Shop Consumer Behavior
4. Sustainability Communication
5. Circular Economy & Policy
6. Digital & Social Media Marketing
7. Regional Perspectives

This thematic structure enables a multidimensional interpretation of how identity-based brand relationships intersect with sustainability and thrift consumption. By clustering the literature, the review not only highlights converging insights but also identifies critical gaps

and tensions across domains - thereby laying the groundwork for conceptual synthesis and practical implications for sustainability communication in thrift retail.

It is vital to note that the final papers in this table come only from Emerald and Google Scholar and were chosen because they are directly related to the main research question: How can Consumer Brand Identification be utilized to rebrand thrift shops as catalysts for sustainable fashion transformation, ultimately shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards circular consumption? In addition to being directly related, these papers were also chosen because they make important theoretical and empirical contributions: they offer robust theoretical frameworks, insights into how consumers behave in different situations, and practical implications that may be used in a charity store. The selection also guarantees diversity in terms of location, consumer demographics, and analytical approaches, which makes the synthesis not only relevant but also strong and complete. All of these reasons make sure that the table puts together the best, most relevant evidence for answering the research question.

Following thorough examination of the 92 contributed papers, it became evident that they had to undergo filtration and better categorization in order to respond directly to the research question of this survey. Each paper was reviewed for relevance and for contribution to one or more of the seven thematic areas for CBI. The final list of papers that match the research question and yield rich insights into the interplay among CBI, sustainability, and thrift consumption is presented in Table 1. The shortlisted studies illustrate how each of the seven thematic areas for CBI enhances the examination and reveals the contribution of each individual study to the larger body of discussion on sustainability communication in the context of CBI. The literature matrix serves as the structural framework to (a) synthesize empirical and theoretical evidence pertinent to the repositioning of thrift shops through CBI and (b) demonstrate how each of the seven thematic domains of CBI influences alterations in consumer attitudes and behaviors regarding circular consumption.

Literature mapping provides unequivocal empirical evidence for the adaptation of CBI within the thrift setting, identifies significant barriers to adoption, and delineates the communicative and structural measures that facilitate the transformation of identification into sustained behavioral change. The CBI theory, as the primary domain, provides the mechanism elucidating the efficacy of repositioning: when a thrift brand's identity (values, personality, social significance) aligns with consumers' self-concept, consumers integrate the brand into their identity and engage in behaviors that reinforce that identity (repeat purchases, advocacy). The table illustrates the theoretical framework - CBI elucidates the mechanism by which self-congruence and social benefits transform sustainability messaging into commitment; however, explicit, independent CBI studies within the thrift context are limited. Thus, employing CBI conceptually reconciles theory and practice by prioritizing identity as the focal point of communication and program design.

Table 1: Literatures Grouping

CBI Theory

No	Paper / Authors	Strength (how the theme explored)	Contribution to SC Study	RQ Alignment
1	Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003) - Consumer - Company Identification	High	Foundational CBI framework; directly adaptable to thrift shops as brands	Direct
2	Stokburger-Sauer, N., Ratneshwar, S., & Sen, S. (2012) - Drivers of CBI	High	Core drivers of identification (self-congruence, social benefits); key to modelling thrift CBI	Direct
3	Preez, R. du & Bendixen, M. (2020) - Explaining Generation Y South Africans' Love and Satisfaction with Samsung Phone Brand using Consumption Value Theory	Medium	Connects value dimensions (monetary, functional, symbolic) to brand love; theory adaptable for thrift market CBI	Direct
4	Weng Marc Lim, Kian Yeik Koay, Simon Hudson, Muzaffer Uysal, & Luiz Moutinho (2023) - Airline and hotel loyalty programme diversity and choice: personality, cultural, socio-demographics	Medium	Demonstrates how design and value framing in loyalty programs taps into self-expression and community identity; concept transferable to thrift loyalty campaigns	Direct

CBI in Sustainable Fashion

5	Ethical identity, social image & sustainable fashion (Zollo, 2023)	High	Directly links identity expression and sustainable fashion; bridges theory and thrift context	Direct
6	Mohr, I., Fuxman, L., & Mahmoud, A. B. (2021) - A triple-trickle theory for sustainable fashion adoption	High	Explains adoption pathways for sustainable fashion; can be blended with CBI positioning	Direct
7	Siregar, Y., Kent, A., Peirson-Smith, A., & Guan, C. (2025) - Disrupting the fashion retail journey: Gen Z & social media	Medium	Gen Z's sustainability perceptions + digital engagement; important in thrift CBI target	Direct
8	Nguyen, B., Wu, M.-S. S., & Chen, C.-H. S. (2016) - How Does Self-concept and Brand Personality Affect Luxury Consumers' Purchasing Decisions?	High	Provides psychological basis for how thrift shops can be branded for CBI	Direct
9	Carolyn A Lin; Xihui Wang; Linda Dam (2023) - Sustainable fashion influencer marketing lessons on TikTok and Instagram	Medium	Content framing strategies applicable to thrift CBI campaigns	Direct

Thrift Shop Consumer Behaviour

10	Koay, K. Y., Lim, W. M., Khoo, K. L., Xavier, J. A., & Poon, W. C. (2024) - Consumers' motivation to purchase second-hand clothing	High	Belief-driven motivations for SHC; aligns perfectly with thrift + CBI application	Direct
11	Medalla, M. E., Yamagishi, K., Tiu, A. M., Tanaid, R. A., Abellana, D. P. M., Caballes, S. A., Jabilles, E. M., Himang, C., Bongo, M., & Ocampo, L. (2020) - Modeling antecedents of SHC buying (Millennials)	High	Hierarchical factors affecting thrift purchase; informs CBI message focus	Direct
12	Norum, P., & Norton, M. (2017) - Factors affecting 2nd-hand clothing acquisition (USA)	Medium	Cross-market thrift motives; enriches comparative understanding	Direct
13	Herjanto, H., Amin, M., Purinton, E., & Lindle II, E. L. (2023) - Gen Z purchase intentions for SHC	High	Gen Z thrift dynamics; integrates easily with CBI framework for targeting	Direct
14	Kim, N. L., & Jin, B. E. (2020) - Addressing contamination issue in collaborative fashion	Medium	Overcoming hygiene concerns to build trust/identity fit	Direct
15	Fida Ayu Nurrizkia Putri, Tangguh Dwi Pramono (2025) - Analysis of Factors Influencing Consumer Attitudes Towards Preloved Fashion in Indonesia	High	Local empirical insight into second-hand clothing consumer motives, barriers, and cultural framing; directly useful for thrift repositioning strategy in Indonesia	Direct

Sustainability Communication

16	Ghazali, I., Abdul-Rashid, S. H., Md Dawal, S. Z., Aoyama, H., Sakundarini, N., Ho, F. H., & Herawan, S. G. (2021) - Green product preferences - Malaysia vs Indonesia	High	Shows cultural nuance in sustainability appeals; adaptable to thrift in Indonesia	Direct
17	Nitha Palakshappa, Sarah Dodds, Sandy Bulmer (2022) - Cause for pause in retail service: a respond, reimagine, recover framework	Medium	Context for changing consumer priorities re: sustainable purchasing	Direct

Circular Economy and policy

18	Rudrajeet Pal, Bin Shen, Erik Sandberg (2019) - Circular fashion supply chain management: exploring impediments and prescribing future research agenda	High	Multiplicity is a key requirement in order to enable cascaded loops of repair, reuse, refurbish and recycle for circulating materials, and create and capture value across different supply chains.	Direct
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19	Ertz, M., Durif, F., & Arcand, M (2017) - Life after death? Multiple lives of goods	Medium	Consumer reuse and product lifecycle; thrift as practical example	Direct
20	Woldeyohanis, Y. G., Berndt, A., & Elifneh, Y. W. (2024) - Disposal/reuse streams in developing market context	Medium	Background on consumer end-of-life behavior for clothes	Direct

Digital and Social Media Marketing

21	Siregar, Y., Kent, A., Peirson-Smith, A., & Guan, C. (2023) - Disrupting the fashion retail journey: Gen Z digital	High	Gen Z digital thrift engagement; facilitates online CBI strategies	Direct
22	Jonathan David Schöps, Christian Reinhardt, Andrea Hemetsberger (2022) - Sticky market webs of connection - human and nonhuman market co-codification dynamics across social media	High	Shows impact of social consciousness via short-form video on sustainable buying - adaptable for thrift advocacy content	Direct
23	Cara Connell, Ruth Marciniak, and Lindsey Drylie Carey (2023) - The effect of cross-cultural dimensions on the manifestation of customer engagement behaviors	Medium	These findings serve as a foundation for future academic inquiry and present the opportunity for managers to foster and nurture a brand culture that encourages customers engagement	Direct

Regional Perspective

24	Yilma Geletu Woldeyohanis, Adele Berndt, Yohannes Workeaferahu Elifneh (2024) - Clothing disposal in Ethiopia: methods and motives	High	Reveal various clothing disposal methods, such as bartering, donating, gifting, repurposing and reusing, and discarding. Different motives drive consumers to use these methods, including economic benefits, altruism, and convenience.	Direct
25	Rahmawati, Aulia, Nurrachmi Febriyanti, Syafrida and Puspita Tutiasri, Ririn (2022) - Thrift Shopping and Indonesian Urban Youth Fashion Consumption	High	Understanding how the younger generation interprets thrifting is nuanced, and not only a dichotomy of economic or environmental considerations.	Direct

Simultaneously, within the sustainability framework of secondhand products, there are several research on sustainable fashion identity and brand personality that connect to ethical considerations. It demonstrates that when a brand exhibits a credible ethical persona (authenticity, stewardship), consumers are more inclined to engage in identity-consistent behavior (brand affection, loyalty). The chart emphasizes Zollo's ethical identity and additional studies illustrating how symbolic and value signals foster enduring attachments that facilitate circular choices. Furthermore, the behavioral cluster delineates the specific motivations (price/value, uniqueness, environmental belief) and obstacles (hygiene, stigma) that CBI campaigns must confront; identification messaging must simultaneously affirm existing motivations and mitigate barriers through trust-enhancing measures (curation, cleaning protocols, transparency). The matrix underscores generational and regional disparities (e.g., Gen Z's social signaling and brand awareness), suggesting the segmentation of identity propositions (e.g., "creative curator" versus "responsible steward") to align with varying self-construals. This behavioral facet should serve as the framework for formulating a sustainability communication plan, as it will furnish the necessary insights for generating material for short-form social media and marketplaces, which are pivotal catalysts. Comprehending consumer behavior can facilitate a more successful strategy for presenting curated content (e.g., TikTok/UGC) that influences descriptive norms and attitudes, thereby driving intents for sustainable garment selections. The paper's analysis illustrates that content is impactful when it generates observable social proof and narrative identity signals that engage viewers in a communal identity, rather than simply conveying knowledge. These findings demonstrate that sustainability communication regarding thrift stores should leverage digital and social media platforms to promote the business and convey the significant worth of the things sold.

Moreover, the literature on circular economy and policy shown in the table delineates the substantive acts that render a thrift brand's identity believable, such as repair services, take-back loops, and transparent lifecycle accounting. Connecting brand identity to quantifiable circular practices enables consumers to engage with a tangible system - CBI is enhanced when identification aligns with verifiable contributions to material recirculation rather than mere rhetoric. This is also connected to the prior area, since sustainability communication and MSME brand equity literature underscore that operational substance (repair loops, lifespan metrics) supports perceived authenticity; skepticism towards greenwashing necessitates "show, don't say" evidence for identity assertions to be credible. Institutional, operational, and trust elements serve as the foundations of structural assurances - transparent provenance, cleaning protocols, quality checks, and circular services (repair, take-back) - which are essential for converting symbolic identification into habitual behavior by mitigating risk perceptions (e.g., contamination) and enhancing perceived brand efficacy and trust. Research indicates that institutional signals influence the relationship between values and adoption: credible systems render identity claims credible and actionable. The final domain of CBI is regional viewpoint. Regional studies within the matrix emphasize that identity frameworks must be

contextualized: values fostering identification in Indonesia (e.g., rationality, simplicity, communal trust) contrast with those prevalent in Western markets, where environmental activism and individuality prevail; thus, effective CBI strategies integrate a global sustainability role with local cultural markers (glocalization). The matrix indicates that localization enhances perceived compatibility and diminishes resistance, so rendering identification - and the consequent behavioral modification - more enduring.

The synthesis of CBI's domains within the table indicates a concise program logic for testing and implementing CBI-based repositioning:

1. Audience mapping: delineate target self-schemas and obstacles (motives/concerns) by segment (Gen Z, frugal, eco-active).
2. Identity design: formulate a cohesive brand personality and value story that implements circular practices (repair, provenance, impact measurements).
3. Social activation: employ user-generated content, concise social media content, and communal rituals to establish discernible normative signals and indicators of membership.
4. Institutionalization: disseminate lifespan metrics, implement quality and cleaning standards, and establish membership and tier systems that promote novelty and appreciation, hence alleviating hedonic adaptation.
5. Measurement: consider CBI as the mediator - assess identification, followed by subsequent outcomes (intentions, repeat purchases, advocacy), and evaluate mediation and moderation by culture/segment with real transaction data when feasible.

The evidence indicates that CBI is an effective technique for repositioning secondhand shops as catalysts for sustainable fashion transition, connecting individual motivations and social norms to lasting behavioral change through identity processes. The research suggests that effective repositioning will integrate (a) identity-aligned brand design, (b) verifiable circular operations, and (c) socially engaging communications that enlist customers into a recognizable in-group. Empirical testing should define CBI as the mediating variable between brand interventions and circular consumption outcomes, while also integrating institutional assurances as moderators of effect strength.

Conclusion

The evidence indicates that CBI represents a viable and effective mechanism for repositioning thrift shops as credible agents of sustainable-fashion transformation. However, CBI alone is insufficient; durable behavioral change emerges only when identification is reinforced by demonstrable institutional credibility and socially visible activation. When thrift brands successfully project identities that align with consumers' self-schemas, CBI drives repeat purchase, advocacy, and brand attachment - outcomes that go beyond temporary attitude shifts. Yet identification translates into sustained circular practices only when operational substance (e.g., repair and take-back systems,

cleaning and quality protocols, provenance and lifecycle metrics) and institutional assurances reduce barriers of hygiene, quality, and trust. Once these foundations are secured, digital social activation (e.g., user-generated content, short-form video) amplifies descriptive norms and cultivates identifiable communities, particularly among Gen Z consumers.

Future research should prioritize two targeted directions. First, empirically validate CBI as the central mediator linking brand interventions to circular-consumption outcomes, by developing a thrift-specific CBI scale and testing the mediated model across diverse consumer segments. Second, experimentally assess institutional assurances and social activation as moderators of identification by manipulating visible operational cues (e.g., cleaning/quality seals, provenance and lifecycle metrics, repair/take-back services), content formats (e.g., UGC and short-form video), and loyalty program structures (e.g., tiering, payment incentives). Measuring their effects on trust, stigma reduction, hedonic adaptation, CBI strength, and behavioral outcomes will generate robust, actionable insights. Advancing these two lines - rigorous mediation tests and causal experiments on institutional credibility and social activation - will yield the theory-grounded evidence necessary to design thrift repositioning strategies that convert identity alignment into enduring circular consumption.

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