

The Role of Consumers in Bangladesh's Informal Circular Economy of Rejected Garments

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Abstract

The paper examines consumer involvement in Bangladesh's circular market of export-rejected garments, exploring how informal secondhand distribution networks work and what social-economic and environmental effects they may have. Based on surveys of 128 consumers and interviews with more than 25 street vendors, the study notes that young people, students and women in particular, are the driving force behind demand because of preferences in trendy, affordable and eco-friendly clothing. The discussion indicates that the informal sellers use personal ties and opportunistic purchasing, developing an unstructured but flexible circular supply chain. The major difficulties are social stigma associated with turned-away clothes and lack of official mechanisms of quality management, traceability and labor protection. According to the research, rebranding, more transparency, storytelling and formalization of supply chains have the potential to promote participation, livelihoods and environmental performances. The results indicate the possibility to scale up informal circular practice towards a formal regulated process that contributes to sustainable consumption, waste minimisation and local growth. By focusing on consumers as key stakeholders in the circular economy, the paper can be relevant in the study that the grassroots market dynamics can be an informative area in industry development and environmental conservation programs.

Keywords: circular economy, rejected garments, informal markets, consumer behavior, Bangladesh, sustainability, supply chain formalization, RMG sector, youth fashion

1. Introduction

Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector has historically been recognised as the pillar of the country's commercial system functioning as one of the most substantial global suppliers of garments. In 2024 alone, the ready-made garment sector made up for more than 80% of the nation's overseas sale revenue, emphasising the sector's significance for domestic development as well as labour opportunities (The Business Standard, 2025; World Trade Organization [WTO] Trade Statistics, 2024). However, such massive production capacity comes with a growing secondary impact: this production of massive quantities of excess and discarded garments every year. Estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands of metric tons of textile waste are produced each year, a secondary product which

at the same time creates ecological risks as well as financial opportunities (LightCastle Partners, 2023; Centre for Policy Dialogue [CPD], 2024).

If handled properly the aforementioned discarded garments and textile leftovers may be recycled into useful resources towards domestic production, encouraging locally driven businesses providing jobs among female workforce and underprivileged communities complying to worldwide environmental aims like cutting emissions and the circular economy. Therefore, organised reclamation approaches may enhance incomes, stimulate social integration and strengthen Bangladesh's position in the role of a manufacturing centre which implements ecological accountability (Abdullah et al., 2023).

Thus, coordinated recovery strategies could improve livelihoods, encourage social inclusion, and improve Bangladesh's standing as an industrial hub that practices environmental responsibility.

Conversely, poor discarded material processing and uncontrolled dumping fuel the flames regarding image related risk, economic losses, deterioration and hazardous working conditions. Global buyers may face reputational backlash if discarded material ends up in harmful landfill sites or unregulated sites and inexpensive pre owned sales channels which generates warnings about false environmental claims as well as long term viability compliance (The Business Standard, 2024; LightCastle Partners, 2023). Furthermore, Bangladesh's long-term competitiveness in international sales prospects may be threatened by increasing international laws, such as the European Union's impending closed loop textile rules, if these challenges are not resolved (Circle Economy, 2024). As stated by, The Business Standard (2024) and LightCastle Partners (2023), the phenomenon worsens breathing related illness and toxic discharges injurious to the well being concerning the metropolitan inhabitants, moreover serving as an economic burden upon the local administrative officials responsible for garbage management.

In order to reduce the aforementioned challenges, this research examines the environmental and socio economic aspects regarding the supply chain of discarded garments in Bangladesh. In particular, the research examines seller behaviour, discarding trends and buyer perceptions with an aim of obtaining a better understanding regarding the possibilities and threats associated within the present alternative structure. Through mapping the following procedures, the paper contributes to research based writings and also relating to evidence based strategic discussion concerning the improved environmentally viable incorporation of discarded garments within Bangladesh's supply chain management system.

This study delves into the socioeconomic and environmental aspects of Bangladesh's second-hand clothing supply chain. In particular, it examines consumer perceptions, seller practices, and disposal mechanisms to highlight both the opportunities and risks within this parallel system, emphasising the manner in which successful recovery as well as recycling may foster a renewing community based production, creating job opportunities especially for disadvantaged communities and support ecological conservation objectives (Circle Economy, 2024). On the other hand, it also discusses the harmful effects such as, image related dangers affecting Bangladesh's own traders, hazardous employment circumstances in unregulated waste recovery areas, lost commercial possibilities as well as wellness related burdens caused by toxic emissions (The Business Standard, 2024, LightCastle Partners, 2023)

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How do consumers perceive and behave toward rejected RMG products in terms of willingness to purchase and stigma?

RQ2: What is the socio economic effects concerning the discarded Ready Made Garment supply chain affecting vendors, labourers and financially constrained buyers within Bangladesh?

RQ3: What environmental impacts arise from the disposal or recycling of unsold rejected garments?

Through applying this joint study the research aims to facilitate equally both academics and policy makers with respect to outlining directions towards an increasingly sustainable fair and resilient prospect concerning Bangladesh's apparel sector.

2. Literature Review

This section outlines the industry data that is currently available on consumer behaviour, product stigma, and market dynamics for rejected garments, as well as how these factors contribute to the development of a circular economy in Bangladesh's RMG sector.

2.1 The Role of Consumer Behaviour in Promoting Circular Economy

2.1.1 The Imperative of the End Market

Circular economies in the fashion sector rely on a responsive end market capable of absorbing recycled, recovered, or surplus products. Without consumer demand, even significant investments in recycling and recovery infrastructure face stagnation (Repon et al., 2024). As noted by Rony et al., (2020) the customers remain at the central point of all supply chain elements and fulfilling their needs and satisfaction is the most important. As observed by Dharshanaa et al. (2021), recycled textiles receive low consumer preference despite awareness of environmental benefits, creating a substantial challenge for circularity goals. According to Muhtadi et al. (2023), transparency in procurement, manufacturing, and quality assurance has shifted more control of supply chains to consumers. If consumers do not view rejected clothing as desirable, the objective of circularity is far-reaching.

2.1.2 The Stigma of Waste and Product Rejection

A key psychological obstacle to acceptance is the stigma attached to products produced from rejected garments. Argo et al. (2006) explain the process of product contamination, wherein an item's perceived value is reduced through its association with failure, damage, or waste. The very term "rejected" can carry connotations of inferiority or poor quality, even when the product is functionally identical to exported goods. Buyers often struggle to distinguish between defective and labeled clothing that affects their buying choices and perception of quality (Islam et al., 2022)

While second-hand clothing can be reframed as “vintage” or environmentally sustainable, export rejects are often perceived through a lens of imperfection or deficiency.

2.1.3 Perceived Risk and Value Assessment

Bauer's (1960) proposed a theory that consumers naturally evaluate risk before they make purchases. The idea has since evolved to include several types of perceived risk:

- **Functional Risk:** Will the apparel meet its intended purpose (fit, durability)?
- **Performance Risk:** Will it meet aesthetic expectations?
- **Social Risk:** Will wearing this garment reflect negatively in social circles?
- **Psychological Risk:** Will ownership induce feelings of inferiority of owning a "rejected" product?

These risks interact with the price-quality heuristic, in which lower prices are often proportioned with lower quality (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993). Despite their often identical quality to upscale products, this heuristic undermines consumer willingness to buy rejected garments.

2.1.4 Identity, Aesthetics and Fashion Signaling

Clothing is both functional and symbolic, serving as a means of self-expression and identity signaling (Belk, 1988). Consumers may resist rejected garments if they fear that such items will fail to present their desired image. Recycled or rejected products are often perceived as less trendy or lacking prestige. Dharshanaa et al. (2021) found that exposure to recycled apparel reduced purchase intention unless environmental gains were informed and socially validated. This shows that reframing and social proof are important in order to shift perception.

2.1.5 The Attitude-Behaviour Gap in Sustainable Consumption

Though surveys frequently find that consumers are concerned about sustainability, purchasing patterns fail to follow stated values due to a phenomenon termed the “attitude-behavior gap” (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Obstacles consist of inconvenience, skepticism about green claims, and higher perceived costs. Even for sustainability-conscious purchasers, rejected garments might not meet emotional or aesthetic requirements (Young et al., 2010).

Motivations of consumers for purchasing sustainable goods generally fall into three categories:

- **Altruistic Motives:** Purchasing to minimize environmental damage.
- **Egoistic Motives:** Need for self-image enhancement and moral gratification.
- **Social Norms:** Purchasing because of peer influence or social pressure.

Repon et al. (2024) found that education and income levels significantly influenced eco-garment purchases in Bangladesh, especially among those ages of 25–45 year olds. However, unless the rejected label is reframed positively, these motivators may not apply.

2.2 Bridging the Gap: Applying Consumer Psychology to Rejected Clothing

2.2.1 The Unique "Rejection" Trigger

In contrast to recycled clothing produced from post-consumer trash, rejected export clothing bears a different psychological tag: it was designed to meet premium export standards yet did not “make the cut”. Even minor issues as trivial as shade deviation or overproduction can provoke perceptions of failure. The “rejection” stigma can repel buyers if disclosed without context.

2.2.2 Transparency and Storytelling as a Stigma-Reduction Tools

Disclosing the reasons for rejection (e.g., a misplaced stitch) combined with positive narratives such as “rescued premium wear” or “upcycled limited edition” can neutralize stigma. Research demonstrates that redemption narratives enhance product attitudes (Paharia et al., 2011). Consumers appreciate authenticity and traceability, particularly if products are accompanied by certifications or quality assurances.

2.2.3 Product Type and Consumer Acceptance

Consumer acceptance of rejected apparel can differ across product categories. Basics such as t-shirts, loungewear or workwear, where fashion signaling is low are likely to be more acceptable than high-fashion products or intimate apparel. These observations align with consumer risk reduction strategies, where consumers start sustainable purchasing with low-risk items.

2.2.4 Psychological Interventions to Improve Perception

Effective interventions include:

- **Reframing:** Using terms like “rescue fashion,” “limited surplus,” or “reclaimed luxury.”
- **Quality Assurance:** Providing third-party certifications (e.g., GRS) or stress-testing.
- **Social proof:** Leveraging influencers or respected figures to endorse products can eliminate stigma.
- **Retail Positioning:** Selling in boutique or curated spaces, instead of discount stores can shift perceptions away from discount imagery

2.3 From Theory to the Bangladesh Context

The core of Bangladesh's export economy is the RMG industry. The massive manufacturing volumes at work are demonstrated by the USD 4.49 billion worth of clothing it exported in February 2024 alone (Star Business Report, 2024). On this scale, a certain quantity of clothing is inevitably rejected for export because of little flaws or surplus production. These clothes are sold domestically in manufacturing countries, but Sobuj et al. (2024) note that there are no formal buyer guidelines or structured business models for monitoring this trade. Previous research by Dharshanaa et al. (2024) presented a model for the entire supply chain of textile including recycled textiles, showing that ultimately there are two destinations for such garments, i.e local market and destruction. However, this model (see Appendix A) has no clear instructions for manufacturers to sell second-quality garments in the local market and does not account for the unique stigma and informal resale dynamics of export rejects in Bangladesh, highlighting a gap this study addresses.

There is a market inefficiency as well as an opportunity due to the lack of regulation and a coordinated resale strategy. To create effective circular economy interventions for rejected RMG products, it becomes crucial to comprehend consumer attitudes, desire to pay, and psychological hurdles.

2.4 Research Gap and Contribution

While earlier studies have explored consumer attitudes towards recycled apparel (Dharshanaa et al., 2021) and examined waste flows in the fashion supply chain (Haque et al., 2022), none have focused specifically on export rejected garments. This product category has a unique niche merchandise that has been created for premium consumption but diverted to secondary markets due to minor flaws or logistical surplus.

This research addresses that gap by directly examining:

1. Mapping the supply chain of rejected RMG products from factory to end consumer in Bangladesh.
2. Analyzing consumer perceptions, stigma triggers, and willingness to pay.
3. Testing the possibilities of reframing, storytelling, and quality assurance to improve acceptance.

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The findings seek to inform brands, market actors, and policymakers on how to develop psychologically sustainable markets for rejected exports, promoting sustainable fashion systems and textile waste reduction, thereby advancing both environmental and socio-economic goals.

3. Hypothesis

Main Hypothesis

This study assumes that the supply chain of rejected RMG products in Bangladesh mainly runs through informal but organized networks, rather than formal retail systems. These networks connect factories with local markets, allowing defective or surplus garments to reach buyers even without official regulation. Although this trade is not formally recognized as part of the mainstream apparel industry, it has built its own system that works effectively. The idea here is that the supply chain has grown out of necessity and opportunity, creating a parallel market that quietly supports local economies.

Sub-Hypothesis 1: Informal Market Channels

It is expected that rejected garments are mostly sold through small vendors in local markets instead of being absorbed into organized retail shops. Stalls, backstreet stores, and street markets act as the main distribution points, giving people access to branded clothing at low prices. Since most of these sellers operate without licenses, they rely heavily on informal supply networks. This pattern shows how the rejected garment trade survives outside formal business channels, while still managing to meet strong consumer demand.

Sub-Hypothesis 2: Youth as the Primary Consumer Base

Another assumption is that teenagers and young adults make up the majority of buyers in this market. They are often drawn to rejected garments because they are affordable and still carry the appeal of international brand names. For many young people, it is not just about saving money but also about wearing something trendy and fashionable. Their choices show how affordability and style combine to make youth one of the strongest drivers of this trade.

Sub-Hypothesis 3: Demand for Regulation and Growth

It is also believed that many sellers see regulation as a way to secure and expand their businesses. From their point of view, a regulated system could make the supply chain smoother, reduce risks, and help them reach wider markets. Sellers feel that formal recognition and institutional support would open new opportunities that are not available to them now. For them, regulation is less about restriction and more about building a stable foundation for growth.

Sub-Hypothesis 4: Contribution to Sustainability

Finally, the study suggests that the rejected garments supply chain plays an important role in reducing waste. By reselling clothes that would otherwise be thrown away, this sector helps cut down on textile waste and offers an alternative to the throwaway culture of fast fashion. Even though it operates informally, the system shows how discarded garments can be turned into resources with both financial and environmental value. If given proper support, this part of the market could make an even bigger contribution to sustainable fashion and responsible consumption.

4. Methodology

This research was conducted by using the mixed method in research where both the primary and secondary data were used in acquisition of research results on the consumer behavior aspects related to rejected exported garments. The study combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection in order to give a holistic picture of the subject matter.

4.1 Primary Data collection

There were two approaches to gathering primary data:

4.1.1 Online Consumer Survey

An online survey was sent out with the purpose of gathering quantitative data concerning consumer perception, attitudes, and actions when it comes to the purchasing process of rejected garments. Altogether, 128 responses were collected containing demographics, awareness rates, and a desire to participate in sustainable clothing. The survey consisted of inquiries concerning gender, age, education, income, purchasing behavior and views on reuse, recycling and reselling of rejected clothing.

4.1.2 In person Seller interviews

These interviews included face-to-face interviews with 20 sellers of rejected garments by going to local markets. Semi-structured interviews addressed the questions on how sellers viewed market demand, the price, supply chains

and selling of rejected apparel. The qualitative information based on these interviews placed the survey answers in perspective and promoted the actual analysis.

4.2 Sampling

The research used stratified sampling method to have representation of various demographics of consumers and categories of sellers in the country. In the case of an online survey, the respondents were picked at random in terms of age, occupation and geography. In the case of a salesperson (seller) interview, market vendors in different market types and sizes were selected. All respondents gave their free will to respond and answered the research questions willingly.

4.3 Secondary Data Collection

Secondhand sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, industry reports, government reports and reputable web content. The background of the study was developed using these sources and the findings of literature reviews were supported. These sources were used to include the comparative data concerning other contexts as well.

5. Findings

From brand tags to backstreets, the market for rejected garments in Bangladesh has quietly evolved into a thriving system. Yet, despite its scale, the supply chain mainly serves individual consumers, particularly teenagers and young adults, instead of formal retail businesses.

5.1 Supply Chain Mapping of Rejected RMG

The clothing, textile and fashion sectors are among the fastest moving globally and generate a significant amount of clothing waste as a result of this business strategy (Chan, Wei, Guo, & Leung, 2020). Rejected garments in Bangladesh's RMG industry form a parallel supply network that operates alongside the official export chain. In the apparel manufacturing industry, waste is what is leftover in the form of rejected garments, trims, accessories or materials (Rathinamoorthy, 2018). This section of the paper maps the journey of rejected RMG products from factory rejection to final disposition. Although the ultimate life cycle of a garment depends on its owner and individual fate, we used our sources to trace these diverse pathways as systematically as possible.

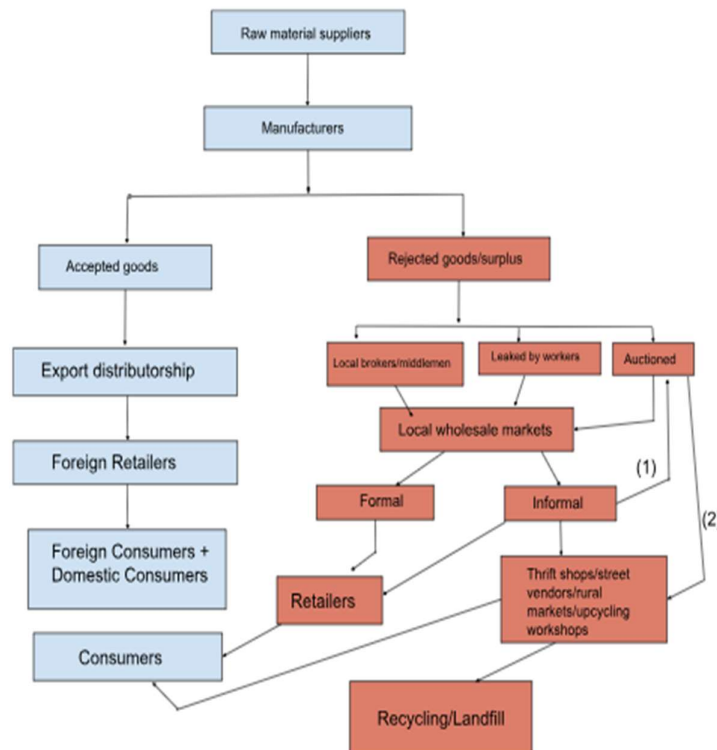


Fig: Supply chain mapping of Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector, showing the primary export chain (blue) and the secondary rejected/surplus garment chain (orange)

5.1.1 The Primary Export Chain

The official ready-made garment (RMG) supply chain in Bangladesh begins with raw material suppliers, who provide fabrics, trims, and other necessary accessories to manufacturing units. The country being positioned in a strategic location is near primary raw material sources and sea routes, which gives it a logistics edge. This proximity to the supply routes helps reduce time and overall costs, giving the country an upper hand globally. The central part of raw materials that Bangladesh imports, such as cotton that goes into making garments, comes from China, India, and the United States (dragonsourcing).

Manufacturers serve as the central hub of production. According to the Centre for Policy Dialogue (2018) about 98% of Bangladesh's RMG manufacturing enterprises are located in four districts: Dhaka (38%), Gazipur (28.9%), Chittagong (16.1%), and Narayanganj (14.7%). Defects in stitching, color variation, labeling errors, or late delivery deadlines can result in garments being classified as "rejected" or "surplus." According to Rathinamoorthy (2018), such waste often includes finished garments, trims, accessories, or other materials that cannot serve their intended purpose in the export chain.

For accepted goods, they follow the primary export pathway. From manufacturers, they move to export distributorships and are shipped to foreign retailers in key markets such as the European Union and the United States. From there, products reach both foreign and a limited number of domestic consumers through official retail channels. This route is characterized by formal contracts, customs clearance, and strict adherence to brand and regulatory standards.

5.1.2 The Secondary Supply Chain

The secondary supply chain diverges at the point where garments are rejected or produced in surplus. Normally factories produce 2 to 5% extra garments to reduce final inspection risks, and this surplus can re-enter markets. (TextileToday Bangladesh, 2017). Surplus or rejected garments also frequently arise from overproduction, order cancellations, or fluctuations in consumer demand (Textile Today Bangladesh, 2017).

Surplus garments differ from second-hand clothing. Unlike used clothes, they are brand new and unworn items that were not sold due to cancellations or overproduction (Fashion ID company). Such surplus inventory may include items like t-shirts, jeans, dresses, sweaters, and branded apparel from major global brands produced in Bangladesh. Surplus garments can offer consumers the opportunity to buy high-quality clothing at a price lower than they normally purchase. Such goods may be redirected through various entry paths into the domestic market, often sold at retail shops, clearance stores, or online platforms.

Middlemen and brokers buy bulk huge amounts straight from factories or storage facilities, frequently at steep discounts, to resell in unofficial marketplaces. Rejected goods are collected in bulk from factories by middlemen before they are sent to proper recycling or auction routes. Additionally, some factories conduct auctions that are either public or restricted to wholesale buyers where rejected items are sold in large lots. Auction prices in this case may be 60–70% less than the going rate (EPB figures, Bangladesh, 2024). After being purchased through middlemen, these clothes frequently go through regional wholesale marketplaces like Chattogram or Jatrabari and Mirpur in Dhaka.

The products then reach retailers:

Formal retailers in the secondary chain include small clothing stores and thrift stores that publicly sell rejected RMG goods, sometimes promoting them as "export surplus". Informal retailers include street vendors, rural market sellers, and upcycling stores that turn used clothing into new goods

At the end of the chain, unsold items may be redirected to recycling or landfill. Recycling processes in Bangladesh's textile sector include fiber recovery for use in lower-grade yarns and conversion into industrial cleaning cloths. However, a significant portion of textile waste still ends up in landfills, contributing to environmental challenges such as landfill saturation and the release of microfibers into surrounding ecosystems (Chan et al., 2020).

Thus, tracing both the primary and secondary chains reveal how rejected garments flow through a complex network of formal and informal actors before reaching consumers or disposal sites.

5.2 Consumer Behavior and Perceptions

5.2.1 Overview of Data Sources

This study relies on two main sources:

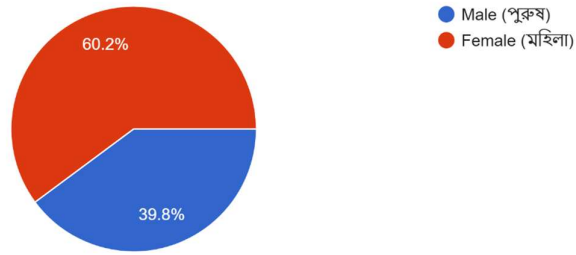
A survey of 128 people, mostly young consumers, and interviews with over 25 street sellers, along with four to five garment insiders who help move rejected garments into the local market.

Together, their accounts paint a clear picture. This market is driven by the style preferences, spending habits, and budgets of young people. It operates as an informal, buyer-focused supply chain designed for personal use rather than bulk resale. However, with the right structure, its potential could be much greater.

5.2.2 Consumer Behaviour and Perceptions

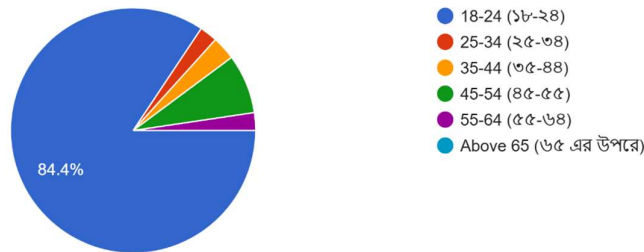
Gender (লিঙ্গ)

128 responses



Age Group (বয়স)

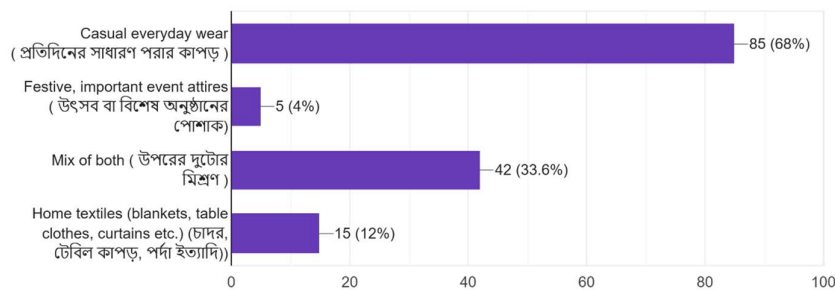
128 responses



Among the survey participants, 60.2% identified as female and 39.8% as male. Most were teenagers or in their early twenties, while the rest were 25 or older. This confirms that young, fashion-conscious individuals, especially women are the most active participants.

What kind of clothes you usually buy from places like this? (আপনি সাধারণত এই ধরনের দোকান/জায়গা থেকে কী ধরনের পোশাক কেনেন?)

125 responses



When asked about their purchases, 68% said they mainly bought casual clothing suitable for campus life, outings, or everyday wear. Only 4% looked for festive or special occasion outfits, while 33.6% bought both. Interestingly, about 12% also purchased household items like curtains and tablecloths, showing that while clothing dominates, the market meets other needs as well.

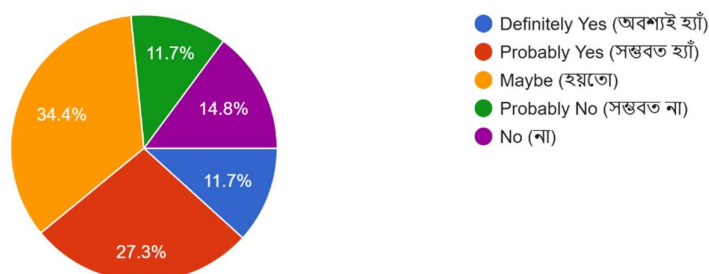
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If a rejected garment had a visible, but minor flaw, would you still consider purchasing it if the price was significantly lower? (যদি কোনো রিজেক্টেড ... অনেক কম হলে আপনি সেটা কেনার কথা ভাববেন কি?)

128 responses



How important it is to you that the garments you buy are "brand new" and not considered "rejected" or "stock lot"? (আপনি যেসব পোশাক কিনছেন, সেগুলো... না—এই বিষয়টা আপনার জন্য কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?)

127 responses



Some buyers mentioned seeing big-name brands like ZARA, H&M, and Primark among the items, but their purchases weren't driven by branding. Instead, they valued price, accessibility, and keeping up with trends. As Akash (17, from Mirpur) put it, "You get trendy stuff at a lower price. That is what makes it worth it."

5.2.3 Seller Insights

Sellers described a supply chain that starts at garment factories, moves through middlemen, and sometimes includes stock from closing or relocating showrooms. There's no fixed system; supply often depends on who offers the best deal at the time. Many sellers have built long-standing relationships with trusted suppliers over years of trading.

The market is firmly focused on consumers. Businesses rarely buy in bulk, and when resellers do appear, they often take only a few pieces instead of placing large orders. Over 15 of the 25 sellers interviewed said their regular buyers are mainly teens and university students, with young women making up a significant share of daily sales. While stalls are open to everyone, sellers admitted that their product choices and pricing strategies reflect what young buyers prefer.

Most stalls operate in open-air markets or on busy footpaths in areas like New Market, Mirpur 10, Meradiya Haat, Motijheel Holiday Market, Gulistan, and Savar New Market. Only a couple of sellers offer delivery through WhatsApp; the rest rely entirely on face-to-face sales.

Clothing is graded from A to F. A-grade items are new or nearly flawless, while lower grades have minor defects. F-grade pieces are discarded. Prices vary based on quality; the cheapest items, often thin or slightly damaged, can sell for as little as 100–150 BDT. Sellers are flexible; they may accept small losses or take back an item if a customer complains. In this informal setup, such gestures are seen as good customer service. However, as per the interviews conducted, most of these sellers believe that "there are no losses in this business" as anything they're able to sell regardless of price is worthwhile, since the clothes are purchased in bulk. Unsold products are eventually passed down to the next phases of the supply chain ultimately generating profit no matter what.

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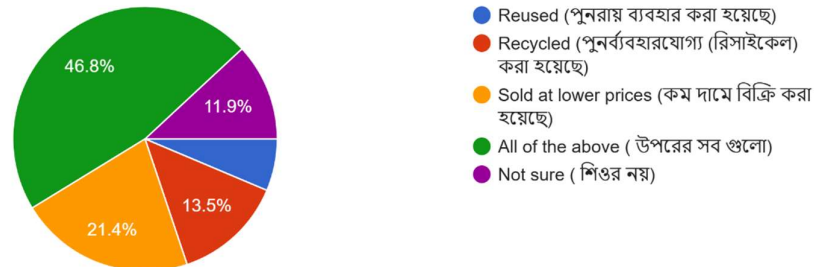
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Many sellers believe that with official recognition or structured regulation, this market could expand significantly. Some also view it as a way to address waste while boosting the economy.

5.3 Environmental Awareness Among Buyers and Sellers

Do you think rejected garments should be reused, recycled, or sold domestically instead of being discarded or wasted? (আপনি কি মনে করেন রিজেক্ট...হার, রিসাইকেল বা দেশের বাজারে বিক্রি করা উচিত?)

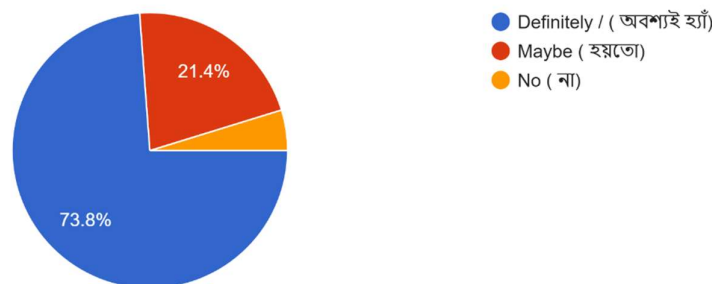
126 responses



Survey results indicate that environmental awareness exists among both consumers and sellers. Almost half of respondents (46.8%) preferred a mix of reuse, recycling, and resale at a lower price, while 21.4% chose resale only, 13.5% recycling only, and 6.3% reuse only. Another 11.9% were unsure, suggesting that awareness campaigns could have an impact.

Would you switch from a brand you like if you found out they exploit workers or harm the environment? (আপনি কি এমন কোনো ব্র্যান্ড থেকে ...রা শ্রমিকদের শোষণ করে বা পরিবেশের ক্ষতি করে?)

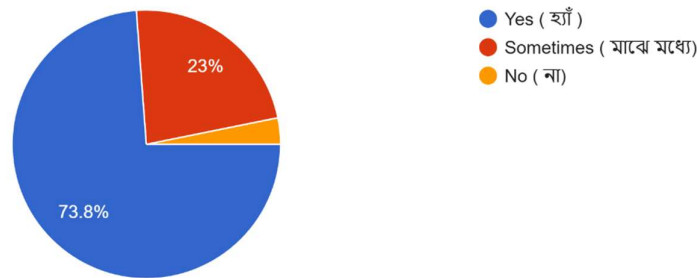
126 responses



Most respondents also expressed strong ethical beliefs. About 73.8% said they would definitely stop supporting brands that exploit workers or harm the environment, while 21.4% said they probably would.

Do you personally try to reduce clothing waste (e.g., by reusing, donating or upcycling clothes)? (আপনি কি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে পোশাক অপচয় কমাতে চেষ্টা... কাপড় পুনঃব্যবহার, দান করা বা আপসাইকেল করা?)

126 responses



A majority (69%) agreed that buying rejected garments helps reduce fashion waste and 78.3% said they regularly try to minimize clothing waste in their lives.

Sellers share this viewpoint. Eight out of ten said they see their work as contributing to waste reduction and environmental protection. Many believe a regulated supply chain could enhance this impact. This connects to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), which focus on minimizing waste, promoting reuse, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions from textile waste.

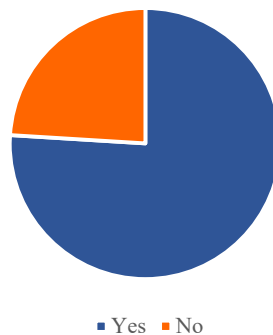
5.4 Socio-Economic Impact

Beyond environmental benefits, the rejected garments market provides a source of livelihood for many. Twenty of the 25 sellers said this business has kept them from financial hardship.

Yasin (23, M) shared, "I may not earn much each day, but this business pays my brother's tuition and keeps me off the streets." Hakim (42, M), a seller for ten years, believes that "a regulated market will open doors for more business and make our path easier." Firoza (33, F), who has run her stall for three years with her husband's help, said the trade has given her a modest yet noticeable boost in income.

Out of the 25 sellers we interviewed in person, 19 (about **76%**) expressed that they would prefer a more regulated market.

Wish for a more regulated Market



They believe regulation could not only benefit their own businesses but also help this sector grow on a larger scale. According to them, a regulated system would make it easier for sellers to enter the market and ensure a smoother supply chain.

For many, selling rejected garments provides not just a livelihood but also independence, stability, and dignity. At a national level, developing this sector could create a regenerative economy by turning surplus and discarded clothing into usable resources, reducing reliance on imports, and generating more opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs.

In Summary

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The rejected garments market is fueled by young, price-conscious consumers and supported by sellers who navigate a flexible but unregulated supply chain. It already provides environmental benefits and sustains livelihoods, but its potential is far from fully realized. With the right regulation and investment, this sector could transform discarded clothing into a stable income source, significantly reduce textile waste, and strengthen Bangladesh's economy while advancing global targets under SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

6. Results

Main Hypothesis: Informal yet Organized Supply Chain

The findings support the main hypothesis that the rejected RMG supply chain in Bangladesh primarily operates through informal but structured networks rather than formal retail systems. Interviews with over 25 street sellers and insights from garment insiders revealed that products move from factories to local markets through trusted middlemen and long-standing relationships. The supply chain is functional and resilient, meeting consumer demand effectively even without official regulation. Observations from markets such as New Market, Mirpur 10, and Savar New Market confirmed the informal yet organized nature of these networks, validating the hypothesis.

Sub-Hypothesis 1: Informal Market Channels

Data indicates that rejected garments are predominantly sold through small vendors in street markets and backstreet stores, rather than through formal retail channels. Over 15 out of 25 sellers confirmed that their primary buyers are individuals rather than businesses, and bulk purchases are rare. Pricing, grading (A to F), and flexible customer service practices further demonstrate how this sector functions outside formal systems. These results support the hypothesis that informal market channels dominate the distribution of rejected garments.

Sub-Hypothesis 2: Youth as the Primary Consumer Base

Survey results strongly support the hypothesis that teenagers and young adults form the largest consumer group for rejected garments. Among 128 respondents, the majority were under 25, with 60.2% female and 39.8% male. Most buyers purchased casual clothing suitable for daily use, campus life, or outings, while only a small percentage sought special occasion items. Buyers reported that affordability, trendiness, and accessibility mattered more than brand names. These findings confirm that young, fashion-conscious individuals drive demand in this market.

Sub-Hypothesis 3: Demand for Regulation and Growth

The results also support the hypothesis that sellers see value in market regulation. Out of 25 interviewed sellers, 19 (76%) expressed a preference for a more structured system, citing benefits such as easier market entry, smoother supply chains, and the potential to expand their business. Many sellers emphasized that regulation would not restrict them but provide stability and opportunities for growth. These findings validate the expectation that stakeholders recognize the economic potential of formalizing the sector.

Sub-Hypothesis 4: Contribution to Sustainability

Findings from both buyers and sellers indicate that the rejected garments market contributes meaningfully to waste reduction and sustainability. About 69% of survey participants agreed that purchasing rejected garments helps reduce fashion waste, and 78.3% actively try to minimize clothing waste in their daily lives. Similarly, eight out of ten sellers acknowledged their role in reducing environmental impact. These observations align with SDGs 12 and 13, confirming that even informal, unregulated systems can offer substantial environmental benefits.

Hypothesis	Key Findings	Supported or Not
Main Hypothesis: The rejected RMG supply chain operates through informal but organized networks rather than formal retail systems	Interviews with 25 sellers and garment insiders show products move through middlemen and trusted networks; markets operate effectively without formal regulation.	✓ Yes
Sub-Hypothesis 1: Informal Market Channels	Rejected garments are mostly sold through street vendors, stalls, and backstreet shops. Bulk purchases by businesses are rare. Flexible pricing and customer service reflect informal practices.	✓ Yes
Sub-Hypothesis 2: Youth as the Primary Consumer Base	A survey of 128 participants shows the majority that is 84.4% under 25 years; 60.2% female, 39.8% male. Buyers prefer affordable, trendy casual wear over branded clothing.	✓ Yes

Sub-Hypothesis 3: Demand for Regulation and Growth	19 out of 25 sellers (76%) expressed a preference for regulation, citing benefits like smoother supply chains, stability, and growth opportunities.	✓ Yes
Sub-Hypothesis 4: Contribution to Sustainability	69% of buyers believe purchasing rejected garments reduces fashion waste; 78.3% actively try to minimize clothing waste. 80% of sellers see their work as environmentally beneficial.	✓ Yes

Fig: Summary of Hypotheses and Findings

Summary of Results

Overall, the study's findings support all main and sub-hypotheses. The rejected garments market in Bangladesh is an informal but well-functioning supply chain, driven largely by youth consumers and supported by sellers who recognize both economic and environmental benefits. The data highlights a strong demand for regulation and the potential for growth, showing that with proper structure, the sector could expand its economic contribution, improve livelihoods, and enhance sustainable consumption.

7. Discussion

7.1 Interpreting Supply Chain Mapping of Rejected RMG

The mapping of both chains highlights the dual nature of Bangladesh's RMG supply system. Despite the export chain's high levels of structure, contract-drivenness, and global connectivity, the secondary chain uses unofficial networks to provide substantial commercial and social value. Mapping this secondary chain is essential to understand the economic role of informal garments markets, their contribution to livelihoods, and their environmental implications.

During the phases of supplying raw materials for production, waste generation is minimal but can occur when fabric rolls are damaged or fail to meet buyer specifications. While rejected goods are collected by middlemen from factories before being sent to auction routes, in some instances workers engage in informal clothing leaks, a behaviour that is generally accepted but falls inside a regulatory grey area. Research indicates that approximately 2-3% of rejected goods leak in this manner (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2023). The reliance on middlemen and auctions demonstrates how waste materials are consumed by local markets rather than being thrown away, generating employment opportunities. Their functioning in a regulatory grey area, however, also brings up governance and transparency concerns. Clothing that was initially meant for high-end markets is undervalued, as evidenced by the 60–70% discounts that auctions offer on items.

The role of wholesale hubs such as Jatrabari and Mirpur shows how unregistered nodes can execute sorting, grading, and redistribution without official oversight, simulating supply chain functions. These hubs act as places of intersection where products are arranged according to price and quality, with higher-grade items directed to formal retailers and lower-grade products entering informal distribution networks.

Consumer demand, primarily shaped by affordability and accessibility, confirms Sobuj et al.'s (2024) findings that consumer willingness to purchase such items is often driven by affordability and perceived value, even when buyers are aware of the garments' rejected status i.e. value perception outweighs stigma for many buyers. Sometimes, a lot of established markets get closed down or shifted, in that case the brand auctions all their garments in lots at a lower price to informal wholesale markets, ultimately ending up to street vendors and thrift shops.

Overall, the findings indicate that although the secondary chain already lowers waste and makes reasonably priced apparel accessible, its current configuration is not sustainable or scalable. A more structured strategy might make it a recognised component of Bangladesh's supply chain management system, generating new business models that are advantageous to the environment and the economy.

7.2 Understanding Consumer Behaviours and Perception

The consumer survey reveals how affordability and accessibility outweigh brand prestige or defect-free quality in driving purchases of rejected garments. This market is driven by the style preferences, spending habits, and budgets

of young people. It operates as an informal, buyer-focused supply chain designed for personal use rather than bulk resale. However, with the right structure, its potential could be much greater. The prevalence of casual clothing purchases indicates that rejected garments serve everyday needs rather than high-status consumption. Sellers' reports of grading systems (A–F) show that buyers still perform risk assessments, consistent with Bauer's (1960) notion of perceived functional, social, and psychological risk. With sellers being flexible to losses, believing "there is no loss in this business" and selling the products at a low price; in this informal setup, such gestures are seen as good customer service. Many sellers believe that with official recognition or structured regulation, this market could expand significantly. Some also view it as a way to address waste while boosting the economy.

7.3 Environmental Dimensions Based on the data of the consumer survey, the support of the consumers was evident towards the sustainable practices associated with garments. The overwhelming majority of the respondents speculate that manufacturers should play active roles in waste reduction and pollution prevention and a profound number of them would reward environmentally-friendly brands with their buying loyalty. The high level of interest in strategies of combined reuse, recycling, and resale indicates a possibility of a policy

framework and corporate efforts which will combine all three strategies. Maximum of the sellers agree that a regulated supply chain could enhance the impact of rejected garments in reducing environmental waste. Many believe a regulated supply chain could enhance this impact.

These findings indicate that actors on the supply and demand sides already perceive rejected garments as a pathway towards sustainability. However, according to the broader literature, the environmental impacts of rejected garments appear to be far more complicated. Research shows that exported garments are often rejected due to minor defects, overproduction, or cancelled orders, but how customers react will ultimately determine their fate (Haque et al., 2022). Because they are stigmatised or are thought to have poor quality, customers avoid them, which leads to more waste, resource depletion, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. The world generates 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually which is approximately one garbage truck full of clothing getting disposed of every second. Americans alone dispose of about 70 pounds of clothing and other fabrics each year, contributing to 17 million tons of textile waste. Of that, only 2.5 million tons of it are recycled (Harris, 2023)

7.3.1 Direct Environmental Impacts

7.3.1.1 Landfill Accumulation and Microplastic Pollution

The ready-made garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh generates enormous volumes of textile waste every year. Worst still, 85% of all discarded clothing go into either landfills or are burnt. This is equivalent to 400,000 tons of waste in Bangladesh alone which occupies 15 percent of the municipal landfill per year (zoombangla, 2025). The garments that are most commonly rejected are synthetic blends, e.g., polyester-cotton, which may require over 200 years to decompose completely (Sandin & Peters, 2018). Polyester fibers release microplastics during decomposition which pollute the surrounding soil and go into groundwater. Besides posing a threat to terrestrial and aquatic life systems, this microplastic pollution makes its way into the food chain, which presents a long-term health danger to humans. A load of polyester clothing during laundry may release 700,000 microplastic fibres that can end up into the food chain. (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011).

7.3.1.2 Resource Waste

About 44 trillion of water is also being used annually (2.6 percent of all water used worldwide) by the cotton production industry in irrigation during textile manufacturing only. A single cotton shirt requires 2,700 liters of water, which is enough for one person to drink water for 2.5 years (European Parliament, 2020). The textile industry alone is responsible for 10 percent of all carbon emissions worldwide with annual emission of 1.2 billion tons of CO₂. (Economics Observatory, 2023). And when such rejected garments are wasted, the resources involved are also wasted to no end. According to the European Parliament (2020), the fashion industry is placed fourth in terms of pressure on water and land use in the world but only 22 percent of textile waste is recycled. According to Arminda, Filho, and Avila (2021), to the extent that consumers refuse to wear rejected garments, this issue is worsened by the lack of recycling opportunities. Some of these built-in resources may get back into the closed-loop recycling system however, when the stigma about reuse is placed on them by consumers, the waste is indeed entirely linear.

7.3.1.3 Carbon Footprint of Production and Disposal Carbon emissions generated on rejected garments are linked with the production and in the disposal process of the garments. The process of manufacturing 1 kg of textile material releases 15-25 kg CO₂ which varies according to fiber and the energy sources used to produce it (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011). Textile Landfilling also adds to emissions because of the anaerobic degradation that causes the release of methane, a strong greenhouse gas which is about 28 times stronger than CO₂ on a 100-year scale. According to Islam et al. (2024), it is estimated to emit 4 to 5 kg CO₂ e extra emissions through the landfilling of 1 kg of textile waste. The amount of emissions after consumers reject export-ready garments and after brands replace such clothes with new production can reach up to 30 percent more than in the event of the sale of rejected garments or recycling (Haque et al., 2022).

7.3.2 Indirect Environmental Impacts

7.3.2.1 Downcycling and the Loss of Material Value

These rejected garments may be recycled but the majority of them are downcycled into lower-value use like cleaning rags, insulation and making mattress fillings (Tabassum, Bari, Rahman, & Moniruzzaman, 2017). Downcycling means that the garments do not retain their original price value and functionality and turns into an economic and environmental loss. A small percentage of discarded clothes enter the textile-to-textile recycling process. Such minimal circularity is directly connected with consumer behavior: as long as demand in high-quality recycled fabrics is low due to stigma, recycling investments cannot be as viable to manufacturers (Joung, 2014).

7.3.2.2 Chemical Pollution from Landfilling and Incineration Many rejected garments have chemicals that are harmful and include azo dyes, formaldehyde-based resins and polyfluoroalkyl substances known as PFAS, especially in stain-resistant or water-proof cloth (Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011). Toxic chemicals that leach off these garments can contaminate the surrounding soil and water systems when this landfilled material is discarded. An alternative ending approach is incineration, which emits volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and heavy elements to the ambiance causing air pollution and risking human breathing (Islam et al., 2024). The trend is indirectly perpetuated by consumer rejections of rejected garments because the rejected item in unsold inventory leads the factories to environmentally-detrimental disposal methods.

Environmental Impact	Magnitude	Consumer Link
Landfill Accumulation	~400,000 tons/year (BD)	Stigma reduces reuse rates by up to 68%
Water Waste	20,000 L/ton (cotton garments)	Avoidance wastes embedded water resources
CO ₂ Emissions (production)	15–25 kg CO ₂ e/kg	Replacement with virgin production increases emissions by 30%
Microplastic Pollution	200+ years to degrade polyester	Consumer rejection prevents recycling adoption
Chemical Leaching	Hazardous dyes & PFAS release	Disposal linked to unsold inventory

Fig: This table summarizes the scale of environmental consequences linked to rejected exported garments, alongside consumer behavior drivers.

7.3.3 Positive Environmental Contributions of Reuse

7.3.3.1 Landfill Waste Reduction through Reuse

Repurposing discarded clothes will considerably reduce the amount of textile waste that gets into landfills. By reusing or reselling garments instead of discarding them into landfills, it saves the product lifecycle and less garbage is deposited in landfills. Sandin and Peters (2018) explain that repurposing of textile has the potential to save up to 60 percent of landfill waste, releasing pressure on the municipal solid waste systems and reducing anaerobic methane emissions through decomposition. It is also very important in countries with few and strained landfill infrastructures such as Bangladesh to reduce waste disposal environmental risks (Islam, Khan, & Ahmed, 2024). To maximize profits for the rejected garments companies could reuse the garments instead of paying the landfill dump fees that

can also create good will through activities that support the environment. They can also employ workers on the edge of the workforce, donate to charities and disaster rescue efforts and make clothes available to areas in need.

7.3.3.2 Conservation of Natural Resources

Reusing textiles preserves huge quantities of embedded natural resources that go into the manufacturing of garments. Water, energy, and raw materials are dramatically reduced, by reusing instead of manufacturing a brand new garment. Studies estimate that recycling one ton of cotton clothing can save around 20,000 liters of water without having to restore more cotton farming that consumes a lot of water (Arminda, Filho, Avila, Dennis, 2021). Moreover, reuse minimizes the amount of energy required and greenhouse gas emissions associated with the fiber processing, dyeing, and finishing processes (Sandin & Peters, 2018). This aligns with new circular economy strategies such as garment leasing, which encourages reuse and cuts waste by prolonging product lifecycles (Fahim et al., 2024)

Therefore, reuse would be an efficient method in fighting depletion of resources related to fast fashion.

7.3.3.3 Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) The idea of using rejected garments is directly relevant in contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12--Responsible Consumption and Production (United Nations, 2015). The SDG 12 objectives are to prevent and reduce waste as well as promote recycling and reusing of the generated waste by 2030 to a significant amount. Reuse of textiles is one of the initiatives that help achieve these objectives by minimizing the environmental impact of the fashion industry, diminishing water and energy use, as well as landfill waste. Further, reuse activities meet with SDG 13 (Climate Action) because it decreases greenhouse gas emissions per unit of production and waste processing.

7.4 Socio-Economic Significance

According to the findings of the study, Bangladesh's rejected garments market plays a crucial socio-economic role for both sellers and consumers. For sellers, especially street vendors and small-scale businesses, this market represents a primary source of livelihood. 20 of the 25 vendors who were interviewed said that trading in rejected garments had prevented them from financial hardship. For instance, Yasin (23,M) disclosed that his earnings support his brother's tuition, while Hakim (42,M) explained that a controlled market may increase opportunities and simplify business operations. In a similar vein, Firoza (33, F), who operates her stand alongside her spouse, stated that the commerce has provided her family with modest but meaningful financial stability. Among the sellers, 76% expressed that they would prefer a more regulated market, believing it would make it easier to enter the market, stabilise supply chains, and allow for sector-wide expansion. Meanwhile, consumers, especially young people are vital to maintaining this economy. The majority of the 128 respondents to our survey were teenagers or in their early twenties, with 60.2% being female and 39.8% being male. Rather than brand reputation, these consumers are largely motivated by affordability and access to fashion trends. While a lower percentage (12%) also purchased domestic items like tablecloths and curtains, over 68% of participants reported buying casual apparel. This proves that discarded clothing helps meet daily family necessities as well as the cost of affordable fashion consumption. Therefore, the market sustains livelihoods on the supply side and gives lower- and middle-income populations cost-effective access to apparel on the demand side.

7.4.1 Positive Socio-Economic Impact

7.4.1.1 Regenerative Economy of Local Manufacturing

The reclamation of rejected and surplus garments has the potential to foster a regenerative economy within Bangladesh's apparel sector. By transforming discarded textiles into usable resources, the country can reduce reliance on imports and stimulate sustainable domestic production (Financial Express, 2023; Iftekhar et al., 2020).

7.4.1.2 Job Creation in Waste Recovery and Informal Markets

The excess and discarded clothing items provide job openings, especially for disadvantaged populations by means of classifying and selling used goods. This unregulated industry creates opportunities for numerous employees, who would potentially encounter lack of work or economic struggle. Despite the environment being tough at times such employment adds to family earnings and enables disadvantaged communities financially (Danish Refugee Council,

2024). Additionally, the increasing focus on fabric reprocessing creates prospects to regulate and enhance these employments going forward, potentially improving salaries and workplace safety (LightCastle Partners, 2023).

7.4.1.3 Environmental and Community Benefits

Effective control of textile scrap minimises nature degradation by redirecting leftover clothes from waste dumps and controlling the damage of trash dumping methods, such as open burning. This contributes to enhanced air and aquatic conditions that supports community well being and lowers city trash handling expenses (LightCastle Partners, 2023). The embracing of regenerative approaches also fits Bangladesh's economy with international green objectives boosting the country's standing as an accountable manager and gaining eco aware customers (Circle Economy, 2024).

7.4.1.4 Women's Empowerment and SDG Alignment

The current garment related discarded material reclamation and repurposing industry creates significant opportunities in regard to enhancing womenfolk's financial contribution aligning closely with the SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), especially targeting 8.5 (complete and efficient work for every females as well as males) and target 8.8 (preserving employment rights and securing hazard free work environments). Within the country, a significant share of unregulated clothing categorising and re-trading functions take place which are carried out through females from economically disadvantaged or excluded communities allowing these individuals to provide monetarily toward their families and achieve a degree in terms of financial self reliance (Danish Refugee Council, 2024). Regulating and promoting such tasks by means of skill development availability to funding and workplace protection policies might boost salaries, ensure job circumstances and lessen susceptibility toward unfair treatment. This type of inclusion inside official production systems would not just encourage womenfolk's emancipation but also reinforce Bangladesh's own employment sector, adaptability adding toward participatory and long lasting financial expansion (UNDP, 2024).

7.4.2 Negative Impacts

7.4.2.1 Loss to Bangladesh's and Brands' International Reputation

As soon as sustainability becomes a mandatory consideration for international buyers, mishandling of rejected and excess garments can lead to tarnishing the image of Bangladeshi exporters and international brands sourcing from them. Brands whose supplier waste ends up at environmentally destructive dumping sites or low cost second hand outlets might face accusations of "green washing" (The Business Standard, 2024). This negative publicity may deplete the consumers' trust and brand loyalty and further enhance the image of Bangladesh as an unsustainable low cost sourcing base (LightCastle Partners, 2023). Furthermore, with the European Union's upcoming circular textiles regulations introducing stricter recyclability and waste reduction norms, non conforming exporters will face market access limitations (Circle Economy, 2024).

7.4.2.2 Poor Working Conditions in the Informal Waste Economy

Most of the returned and excess clothes from Bangladesh is treated at small, unofficial factories where the working environment is largely uncontrolled. Workers in these plants, often women and children are engaged in sorting, cutting, and working tasks for very minimal wages, typically on a non-contract basis, without social protection, or occupational health cover (Danish Refugee Council, 2024). These working environments are usually poorly ventilated, lack safety measures, and hygiene, exposing employees to dust, chemicals, and sawing equipment (The Business Standard, 2024). These unfair and hazardous circumstances explicitly clash against Sustainable Development Goal 8 which is the one that requires fair employment intended for everyone and also safeguarding, relating to workforce entitlements which target 8.5 and 8.8. Unregulated employment inside the sector confines employees within financial struggle having limited chance to advance to more secure, higher earning occupations (LightCastle Partners, 2023).

7.4.2.3 Wasted Industrial Opportunity and Lost Economic Value

Each year, massive amounts of leftover and defective textile items are produced from Bangladesh's clothing manufacturing sector which ends up as rubbish and are discarded instead of being re-integrated into higher-value

production chains (Financial Express, 2023). Vast sums of money that anticipated profit are forfeited due to the fact that these resources are not reused nationally into more valuable thread or textile (LightCastle Partners, 2023).

7.4.2.4 Public Health Burdens from Environmental Pollution

Inefficient disposal of leftover garments by waste landfilling, open-air burning or inefficient waste channels which creates pollution of air, water and earth (LightCastle Partners, 2023). Dyes and textile substances flow into rivers, at the same time burning of synthetic fibers emits poisonous gases (The Business Standard, 2024). These pollution hazards unfairly affect poor city dwellers who suffer from increased levels of lung illnesses, breathing disorders, dermatological conditions and other health issues (The Business Standard, 2024). Moreover, municipal bodies are compelled to use tight budgets in dealing with this garbage by burdening public funds (LightCastle Partners, 2023).

7.5 Bridging to Implications

Together, our results demonstrate that the rejected RMG chain is more than a by-product of manufacturing inefficiencies; it is a socio-economic ecosystem with substantial market demand, livelihood contributions, and environmental trade-offs. Consumer stigma, informal market structures, and lack of institutional recognition prevent its full integration into sustainable supply chain models. It may be possible to legitimise the trade and advance sustainable apparel systems in Bangladesh by redefining rejected clothing as "rescued" or "surplus fashion" through openness, storytelling, and official acknowledgement.

8. Limitations

It is common knowledge in the academic world that studies cannot be successful without flaws. True to this piece of knowledge, the current research also has its share of limitations that should be taken into consideration in order to interpret its findings.

8.1 Sample size and Representation

The survey was done on 128 consumers and more than 25 interviews amongst the sellers which on a large scale is a very small sample representing the huge number of consumers of Bangladesh. Further, the object of this particular poll was inclined towards the young, urban, highly educated audience (most of them were in their teens or early 20s), which might not reflect the views of other age groups or the rural population. This is a small and youth-oriented sample, so the results cannot be easily applied to every Bangladesh consumer. As with the 25+ sellers interviewed, they may not represent the full business diversities across the country in sellers whose businesses are in rural or semi-urban hubs.

8.2 Geographic Scope

The data was gathered primarily in Dhaka and some of the local marketplace. Large garment centers like Chittagong, Narayanganj, and Gazipur were not covered comprehensively. Therefore, regional differences in terms of buyer-seller relationships, perceptions shaping a culture, and regulatory environments are yet to be examined.

8.3 Informal Data Limitations in a Supply Chain

The garments supply chain which was rejected was informal thus posing a serious data constraint. No records of the export-cancelled clothes are kept, and there is no centralized information on how the clothes end up on the street. As a result, it was challenging to obtain quantitative data like highly specific volumes of garments that were diverted to waste, how many times a product was turned over and very specific revenue amounts. Self-reported data and anecdotes were heavily used in the study. Critical variables such as the proportion of factory rejects accessing this market and the proportion discarded remain unknown given the inaccessibility of related data.

8.4 Single Timeframe

The study gives only a momentary picture of consumer attitudes and seller practices. There was no longitudinal follow-up and therefore, the way that consumer behavior or market dynamics could change over a period of time could not be determined. Significant questions are yet to be answered, including whether the current youth-driven demand can be maintained as buyers become older, how seasonal effects and fashion tendencies can impact the market. A time-series perspective would also be helpful in indicating whether tendencies observed are long-term or short-term.

8.5 Restricted Environmental Lifecycle Assessment

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Although the investigation qualitatively covers the environmental advantages (e.g., reduced waste, avoidance of pollution, and fewer virgin resources consumed), it has not been able to do a lifecycle assessment (LCA). The study could not quantify precisely the environmental impact of diverting rejected garments that were going to landfills or offsetting new production because of a lack of relevant data. The environmental assertions are thus suggestive more than decisive based on secondary sources and approximated figures rather than actual ones. Further, the research was unable to identify what happens to the discarded clothing once it is used locally, which makes it unclear how great of an environmental impact the practice makes.

8.6 Limit the Focus to Consumer and Seller Reactions only

Though this paper has discussed the insights about consumer psychology and retailer interaction, it does not look into the viewpoints of the other important stakeholders like garment makers, government and big box stores. As an example, the factory managers or government authorities could have offered answers as to why the formal resale avenues have not been developed.

8.7 Temporal Limitation

Lastly, the research records the consumer perceptions of the period 2024-2025. Fashion choices, the level of stigma, and environmental sustainability consciousness are all too active to push as they can change with the slightest bit of social media influence, the financial state of the globe, or the updated policy environment. The results must be interpreted as being of a certain time rather than a stable condition.

9. Possibilities for Further Research

It is crucial to identify these limitations not just to place the work in its context but also also serve as a guide to the future study. The areas below identify where future research can be helpful in enhancing and extending knowledge.

9.1 Increasing Geographic and Demographic Reach

It would be possible in future research to increase the sample with a nationally representative setting that encompasses other areas that could cover rural market shares, age trends beyond the young population and the various socio-economic groups to understand how well this populates this retail market.

9.2 Longitudinal Studies

An extended timeline of conducting research might also apply in measuring or updating consumer perceptions as a result of continued campaigns, tighter regulations, or variations in international fashions.

9.3 Comparative research with other countries

The areas surrounding the rejected garment market in Bangladesh could be compared with the other major RMG-exporting nations (e.g., Vietnam, India, Cambodia) to find any similarity and differences that could occur within the rejected garment market.

9.4 Supply Chain Analysis and Life Cycle

Future studies might include a full life-cycle assessment (LCA) of discarded garments and compare carbon, water, and financial savings in the event of reuse versus disposal. Quantification of a map of where the rejected garments go will complement the environmental results.

9.5 Policy and Business Model Innovation

Future research may examine the effects of organised resale venues, governmental recycling centres or labelling/branding (e.g. rescued fashion) acceptance and propensity to pay.

9.6 E-commerce with digital integration

Future research can test how the digital environment, online marketplaces, or influencer-driven marketing influence attitudes and expand outreach since sellers are still largely offline.

10. Conclusion

The main driver of the circular market in Bangladesh, export-rejected garments are consumers. This paper identifies the role played by youth, their preferences, purchasing patterns and participation in informal waste exchanges in developing a bottom level circular economy where industrial waste is converted into socio-economic and environmental value. An active involvement in this system will allow consumers to not only support local entrepreneurs but also reduce the amount of textile waste and work towards sustainable practices.

The market is informal and there is societal stigma that affects the potential of the market. The above issues can be resolved by rebranding, more transparency and formalizing the supply chain. These would make the sector stronger, improve livelihoods and make it easier to improve qualities and participation.

However it is likely that a transformation is possible where Bangladesh starts utilizing its informal reject market as the core principle of a circular economy by empowering consumers, combining informal connections to the market within structured systems as well as collaboration by multi-stakeholders. This demonstrates the imperative of consumers, not only as main drivers but the primary force behind the development of sustainable, inclusive and resilient supply chains.

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Appendix

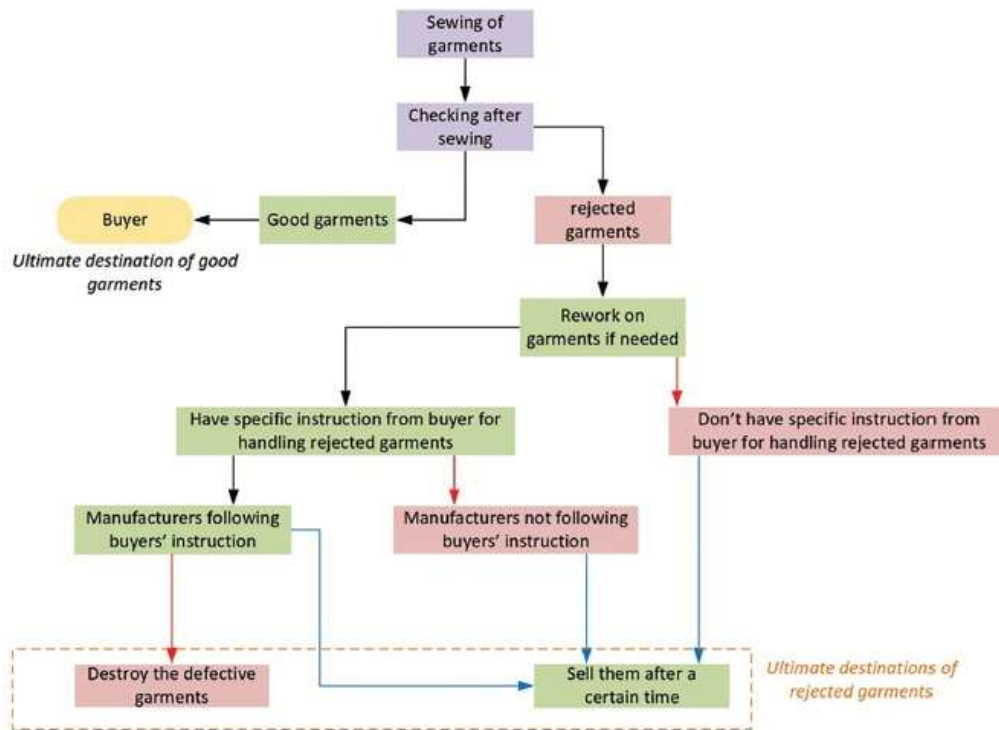


Fig: Model for Present Scenario of Rejected Garments Management in Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2024)