

Vintage Done Right: Tracing the Secondhand Clothing Supply Chain

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Abstract

The following research outlines the inter-workings of the secondhand clothing industry. The research discusses the history and importance of this industry, in relation to the broader fashion industry. The main methodology for the research was nineteen structured in-person interviews with individuals involved closely with vintage and used clothing. To supplement the data found within these interviews the researcher also includes numerical data dealing with the quantity of clothing being donated, sold, recycled, and thrown away each year. The findings state that the secondhand clothing industry is curbing the fashion industries impact on the environment by saving materials from being thrown away, though this would not be possible without the cyclical trends within the fashion industry. Clothing recycling programs aid in the repurposing of materials, but regardless, the majority of discarded pieces go directly to a landfill.

There is animosity within the vintage industry, stemming from the fact that regular retailers are using used clothing to create their current fashion lines, which diminishes the supply of used clothing for small, independent businesses. The researcher finds that, environmentally, it is positive for as much of the discarded clothing to be reused as possible. Also, the researcher states that more first hand retailers should be incorporating secondhand clothing into their business model, be it by using the clothing in new designs, or setting up donation programs. Additionally, there should be a wider spread of textile recycling programs to assist in closing the gap between recycled clothing and landfill-bound clothing.

Introduction and Background

Although the secondhand clothing industry is a part of the broader fashion industry, it has its own supply chain and technique of distributing clothing and attracting customers. The fashion industry is globally connected, and as the secondhand clothing market has grown, it now has an international impact as well. In 2010, the average household spent \$1,700 on clothing

throughout the year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The largest share of this estimated budget was spent on clothing intended for women who were sixteen or older. This trend of significant spending by and for adult females has been notable since 1985 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The fashion industry as a whole made over two and half trillion dollars in 2010 (Fashion Industry Statistics, 2015). This large volume of production and sales has led to significant impacts on the environment via the use of electricity and materials required to make clothes. For instance, manufacturing one pair of denim jeans requires the use of 1,500 gallons of water and leads to the release of 71 pounds of carbon dioxide. In the United States alone, customers purchase 520 million pairs of jeans yearly. Clothing production pollutes the air and waterways at multiple steps in the process; ion Industry Statistics, 2015). This large 'lotesticides and herbicides' (Wallander, 2012). In addition the global nature of fashion industry has had significant impacts on the labor force, especially people working in sweatshops or other factories with poor business practices. Concerned citizens have waged a war against companies who use sweatshop labor by encouraging people not to buy clothes from these companies. A potential solution for mitigating the amount of clothing produced every year is to encourage people to buy secondhand clothing rather than first hand clothing in every instance.

The fashion industry creates trends in a cyclical nature, thus something that was in style ten years ago, might come back in to style, after people have already donated their old clothes because they were not in fashion. This trend rotation allows for secondhand stores to have clothing that is in fashion even though it was not made within the past year (Winterman, 2009).

The research I focuses on tracing the supply chain within secondhand clothing stores, and gives attention towards whether or not the secondhand clothing industry is operating in a sustainable way; one that does not cause negative environmental and labor impacts. Outlining

this supply chain allowed for the discovery of gaps that can be filled. I then made recommendations for best practices applicable throughout the system. The research touches on consumer thoughts because the consumers drive the industry.

The prevalence of the used clothing trade has steadily grown since the late 20th century. Middle of the road stores such as Cross Roads Trading and Buffalo Exchange, whose designer pieces originally sell for prices in the hundred dollar range as opposed to the thousand dollar price range have gained popularity within the past twenty years. Cross Roads was founded in 1991 and prides itself on being a pioneer in the affordable vintage industry. On their website, they advertise themselves as being “an alternative to traditional retail” explaining that “Fashion shouldn’t come at a cost. Whether it’s the environmental impact of fast fashion or the inaccessible-to-most luxury market, Crossroads offers an alternative. Extend the life of your wardrobe by buying and selling recycled clothing.” (Cross Roads, 2015)

The layout of lower-end stores, such as Goodwill, is less organized than higher-end vintage stores. Unlike middle of the road stores Goodwill categorizes items broadly, such as shirts and dresses, and then frequently hangs the clothes on the racks in accordance with their colors (Mendoza 2010). One reason to explain these differing practices is that Goodwill handles significantly more items than the aforementioned types of stores, makes its business model different. Though the secondhand clothing industry has multiple types of stores, they all serve different functions, yet they still affect each other. The same way there are different types of first hand retailers, which cater to varying consumers, vintage clothing stores develop consumer bases dependent on the products they sell.

Literature Review

Introduction

The intention of this research is to define the supply chain across the spectrum of secondhand stores. This spectrum refers to varying types of hand stores in regards to cost and quality of the items they sell. The purpose of defining the supply chain is to assess its' impact on the environment and society. If the second hand clothing industry in its current state is negatively affecting the world, then this research will offer suggestions for potential amendments to the system. The reason for examining the secondhand clothing industry is to understand more fully how policy changes which curb the consumerism exhibited in the fashion industry will result in a lessened environmental impact of the fashion industry. This literature review looks at the fashion industry as a whole, focusing on consumer thought and consumption. The literature employed throughout this section comes from varying sources, including scholarly articles written for newspapers and other news sources as well as pieces from fashion-based websites. The following section outlines the evolution of vintage fashion and its rise of popularity in America. It also works to define the concept of trendiness as well as examine style's relation to vintage clothing. Also discussed is the impact of secondhand clothing on less developed countries, and the influence of raghouses in the greater supply chain of the industry.

The Fashion Industry

The fashion industry is a social institution, which is broadly defined as “Persistent patterns of social interaction aimed at meeting the needs of a society that can’t easily be met by individuals alone (Wade, 2015).” The reasoning for defining fashion in this way is simply because people can no longer feasibly make [their] own clothes (Wade, 2015).” Most people no

longer acquire the skills necessary to produce their own clothing and even those who have the ability to construct clothing by hand most likely cannot produce their own materials for doing so. The fashion system in America parallel's the healthcare system and educational system insofar that Americans are dependent on these institutions. Individuals can no longer do what the institutions can; thus dependence persists regardless of whether or not individuals support the institution (Wade, 2015).

Consumerism

The fashion industry often implements new trends once the ones they have previously created have trickled down to the lower class (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013). America functions with an advanced capitalist culture. This means that individuals do not have to spend all of their income on necessary goods, and additionally, necessary goods, such as housing and food are purchased in such a way that they are partially unnecessary, insofar that people do not require mansions as shelter or food that goes bad before it is eaten. This advanced capitalists culture has lead society into "conspicuous consumption, or buying items with the express purpose of being able to show them off to others" (Amanda, 2013). This concept applies to Americans' concept of fashion. Regardless of economic status, people participate in the conspicuous consumption of the fashion industry. Americans know that other people take note of their appearance and judge them based upon it.

The fashion industry changing small aspects of clothing yearly to encourage people to buy new clothes to stay in style is representative of the consumptive nature in America (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013). People always want the newest item, whether it be a car, a phone, or a dress. Through the pervasive presence of media and advertisements, consumers are aware of what is the newest version of each good, and they know that others will notice when they are the

owner of the latest version. This leads people to continuously buy new things even when their old items function properly. Fashion does not exist out of necessity, but society has let it become a major part of people's lives. Theoretically humans could wear t shirts and shorts (or some other basic combination of clothing items) merely adding layers or subtracting layers based on the climate to fulfill their basic need to be clothed. However, this does not happen because people are individualistic and use clothing as a way to express themselves in addition to showing their wealth and status.

Clothing Production

The United States underwent a transformation in regards to clothing production throughout the 1900s. This began with the industrial revolution, which allowed for the construction of many different types of factories, including textile and garment factories. The working conditions in these factories many times were detrimental to the workers, and sometimes the poor conditions would culminate in disasters, such as the infamous Triangle Factory Fire in 1911 that killed 146 people (Cornell, 2011). Instances like this forced the United States Government to regulate labor practices and labor conditions more strongly than they previously had done. Throughout the twentieth century the economy rapidly globalized with the introduction of airplanes, computers, and other technology that allowed for people to interact and exchange and purchase goods from people thousands of miles apart from them. This globalization lead to outsourcing the job of manufacturing clothes to countries with more relaxed labor laws and less regulation (Rosen, 2002). Massive tragedies on the production side of clothing still take place currently even though they do not frequently happen in America. For instance, 1,200 people were killed in Bangladesh during two incidents in 2012 and 2013, one a fire and the other a building collapsing (Amanda, 2013).

Unseen Global Impacts of Secondhand Clothing

Secondhand clothing can also be used as an agent of change to impact different communities who do not dress in an Americanized, covered way. Missionaries saw the nudity of many of these cultures as un-modest and understood this problem of nudity as a problem of a lack of resources. They did not necessarily consider the native garments were part of the peoples' cultures (Andrews, 2015). In Papua New Guinea, missionaries brought secondhand clothing from countries such as Australia and the United States in an attempt to civilize the indigenous people and make them more modest. There is an underground secondhand clothing industry, which funnels clothing from further developed and modernized countries to areas that remain tied to traditional forms of clothing. Because secondhand clothing is coveted in these societies, this means that the introduction of this clothing has altered their native society. In Zimbabwe the importation of secondhand clothing subverted the countries own fashion economy and removed monetary gain from the countries' native retailers, which lead the country to ban the importation of secondhand clothing. The secondhand clothing industry is only a positive alternative to first hand retail if the practices in the industry are less harmful to society and the environment. Implanting American culture into other societies' mplanting Americaning affects.

History of Secondhand Clothing

“For as long as clothes have existed, they have been borrowed, exchanged and swapped” (Andrews, 2015). There is also evidence that suggests that clothes have been recycled in other ways. An example of this reuse of clothing is old scraps of fabric being used for things like stuffing dolls between the first and fifth centuries C.E. in Egypt. “Throughout pre-modern

history wearable used clothes would never have been discarded, but instead passed between different social groups” (Andrews, 2015) Used clothing was also used as gifts that feudal masters would pass down “to their serfs, domestic staff and the local poor” (Andrews, 2015). It is also important to note that the used clothing trade took place beyond the western world in the past; there are records of trading used kimonos in Japan (Andrews, 2015).

One issue that surfaces when tracing the history of the industry, is the a lack of information on the secondhand clothing industry within poor, lower class communities. This is due to the fact that there is a gap in historical knowledge in regards to those who were not in the upper class. Secondhand clothing was most likely very important to these communities, if we look to who depends on secondhand clothing in modern times, but historian’s cannot make firm statements on this but can only speculate. There are accounts of higher end secondhand clothing exchange systems, such as guilds in thirteenth century Italy dedicated to trading secondhand clothing. Some of these pieces were acquired by lower-class people who were paid to buy and sell used clothes in the street. The types of clothing purchased was not limited to only clothes from the upper class, but rather they worked with clothes from households of varying socio-economic statuses (Andrews, 2015).

Until the twentieth century, people had to take special care of their clothing because new, inexpensive clothing was not readily available (Fennetaux, 2014). Women would sew up what needed to be fixed, and people would re-tailor pieces to fit changing bodies. In Paris in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, shops functioned as both first hand and secondhand retailers (Fennetaux, 2014). The stores would sell expensive items to their wealthier clientele but also offer secondhand and repurposed clothing to those who could not afforded to buy the expensive first hand clothing. The shops would repair the items and sometimes alter them to make them

more appropriate for current trends. Sometimes people would trade and sell old clothing to shops as their occupation but other times individuals would sell their old items to make small sums of money for themselves.

This secondhand market grew as theft increased. Thieves stole jewelry and clothing from wealthy people and sold the items to secondhand clothing retailers. Payment was sometimes monetary but at other times people used their items to trade for other items. Parisian documents list noble people using their old pieces of clothing that did not reflect the current style of the time to barter for newer, trendier items. A tension developed between stores that sold both first hand and secondhand goods and stores that just sold secondhand goods. In 1776, secondhand retailers joined together with tailors and they were no longer able to sell new items. This change eased the friction. During the eighteenth century in Paris, the clothing market was able to break through boundaries. New clothing was no longer tied solely to the upper class and secondhand clothing markets opened up to people of all socio-economic statuses (Fennetaux, 2014).

Impact of the Secondhand Clothing Industry In Today's Society

The vintage fashion industry is a way to curb societies negative environmental and social impacts caused by the dependence on consumerism. When consumers buy secondhand clothes rather than being a patron of first hand retailers, they theoretically reduce the production of clothing. The constant change in trends creates a need for “fast fashion” which requires continuous production of clothing at as low of a cost as possible. The turnover of trends used to happen roughly every three months, but within the past fifteen years, this cycle has sped up to

having new trends every two weeks (Pacific Standard, 2014). The low cost of production is necessary because people do not want to pay a large amount of money for an article of clothing they know will be out of style in a short period of time. The rapid turnover of clothing and low cost requires inexpensive labor, which is achieved through the outsourcing of production to places where there are limited labor regulations. To keep costs low this outsourcing often results in workers making less than a living wage and dangerous working conditions.

The hand fashion industry utilizes clothing already produced and sold at traditional retail stores. Secondhand stores sell clothing manufactured and sold recently, as well as items from the last ten to fifty years, and sometimes even longer. They often sell different types of styles and qualities of clothing items. Consumers utilize these stores for different reasons, including: to supplement their wardrobes with unique pieces, to fill their wardrobe in an inexpensive way, and to purchase designer clothing at a discounted price.

Vintage clothing succeeds as a sector of the fashion industry because trends are cyclical (Winterman 2009). First hand retailers continue to sell clothes on a daily basis because items that are in style change each season. These changes range from subtle to extreme, but they are often significant enough to mark the clothes people bought the previous season as no longer wearable by societally trendy standards (Amanda, 2013). The media encourages us to care about what is currently chic and forsake anything that does not fit with the seasons' style. Some clothing items stay popular for longer than others; for instance, leggings came back in to style in the early 2000s for women and they never went back out of style, though the materials and patterns have been adjusted. Gaucho pants also came into style in the early 2000s but only stayed fashionable for a year or two. When shopping, consumers cannot always predict which trends have longevity. Once certain styles are no longer popular, many people get rid of those clothes to make room for

currently trendy clothing. These discarded items in some instances are resold at secondhand stores. People donate clothing for multiple reason, which include, but are not limited too, the items are no longer in style, the items are not in what the donator considers to be wearable condition, the donator is tired of the item.

Secondhand Clothing Store Types

There are different classifications of secondhand stores, though these have not yet been defined by the fashion industry in an official capacity. Vintage store are typically separated into types by their average prices. This price differential also reflects on the quality of clothing for sale in the stores. The price additionally dictates who is able to shop at the stores. A luxury secondhand clothing store with designer apparel most likely has higher prices then fashion centric stores such as Zara of Forever 21, both of which focus on providing consumers with trendy fashion for inexpensive prices. This means, it can be more cost effective for customers to buy first hand goods. Some secondhand stores buy clothing from people, sometimes for store credit and other times for monetary value. These stores are typically more particular about which clothes they choose to sell. Stores which allow all donations with no return value sometimes offer tax credit. Most of the large-scale thrift stores that accept all donations have charitable ties. Though they take in all the items people bring them, they do not sell every item given to them because they still want to provide a certain standard of quality for their customers. .

Fashionability and Trends

The discussion of fashion and trendiness throughout this research focuses on people who dress in accordance with current style trends. Full outfits communicate style, not merely individual pieces. Peoples' combination of clothing defines their personal style. A person's wardrobe is limited by an individual's ability to purchase items (monetary means), their body

size, and their age. Age dictates what is appropriate for each individual based on fashion norms (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013).

Judgment based on appearance is prevalent in primary education where everyone is of a similar age and styles are less varied. Adolescents assess each other based heavily on appearance and others' ability to fit in with the current trends. The same thought continues into adult life, where peoples' fashion choices can impact their life more significantly than their peers' opinions about them in high school. To be hired for a certain position, you have to be put together and polished, and for many positions, your fashion choices have to be up to date. The clothing people wear impacts others' first impressions of them, especially because clothing choices are seen as an extension of one's self.

Trendiness does not encompass all fashion choices. Some fashion pieces are classic, for instance, the frequently discussed little black dress or a cable knit sweater during wintertime. Classic fashion pieces provide secondhand stores with the ability to always be selling fashionable items, however, even when pieces surpass trendiness and become timeless and classic, they still are typically worn with items that fit in to the current fashion trends to ensure onlookers know that the wearer is aware of what is in style (Winterman, 2009).

The cyclical nature of fashion trends allows vintage stores to be stocked with and sell fashionable items (Winterman, 2009). For over 50 years denim jeans have been a staple in most Americans closets, but the shape and the color of the pants people are encouraged to wear changes from season to season. This change encourages people to buy new jeans even if the ones they currently own are in wearable condition. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, bell-bottom jeans became a popular silhouette, but soon after their introduction they went out of style. This particular cut of jeans became popular again in the 90s, but then quickly faded out of style. In

2014 the style once again made a resurgence to add an alternative to skinny jeans, which had been trendy for many years. Each time these trends change, first hand retailers produce items to sell to consumers based off the version of the item sold in its last stint in retail stores. Although trendy retail stores are able to cash in on re-productions of an old style, secondhand stores are also able to gain from the cyclical nature of fashion insofar that they are able to sell secondhand items that were previously out of style.

Vintage as a Style

There is an important distinction between the vintage look and a full vintage outfit because it is separate from the strict definition of vintage as used clothing (Wade, 2015). Vintage as we know it now in America emerged in the 1990s, within the upper-middle class (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013). Vintage style currently in society can be attained with both new and used clothing; it is no longer defined as secondhand items only. Within this “there are rules among those who “know” vintage fashion—rules about fit, what to combine and how, how to tailor old pieces, how to recognize “vintage” from just “old” and so on. These rules establish new hierarchies, probably recreating some of the class lines, establishing new insiders and outsiders (Amanda, 2013). The look related to vintage clothing was solidified further within the fashion industry when designers and retailers began to re-release slightly updated versions of their items from the past. The fashion industry capitalizes on vintage style, rather than the secondhand clothing industry being able to generate the total revenue. This is potentially problematic because there are not the same environmental and labor benefits when companies reproduce old clothes as there are when people forgo new clothes for used styles. The intention of the vintage shoppers is to express one’s inner identity through purchases, whether they are actual vintage or made to look like secondhand items. (Amanda, 2013)

People concerned with fashion pay attention closely to trends and use them to build their outfits, but the ultra-fashionable also want to stand out as individuals while utilizing trends. They push the boundaries of fashion and incorporate pieces that might not typically go together to create their pairings. Many times they bring together vintage pieces with items bought for the present season. A study conducted at the University of Minnesota focused on how ninety-seven females between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five achieved a sense of uniqueness in their style choices. The study found that the women who shopped more frequently at vintage retailers had a greater desire to create a unique look for themselves (Reiley 2008). Those who judge a person's fashionable tendencies, be it a news or media outlet or individuals in discussion admire people who are trendy but also are able to wear clothes and trends differently than others around them. Influential fashion bloggers all look stylish without looking like clones of each other. Vintage fashion allows people to purchase pieces that not every other shopper can access.

Vintage fashion is only a profitable venture in societies where there are established trends and changing forms of fashion. In tribal cultures with clothing styles that are not altered over time, there would be no reason to introduce a vintage market. For this reason along with increasing the cultural instability in groups of people who do not participate in current, Americanized, Western-centric culture, bringing secondhand clothing to their society is not an overall positive practice. The vintage style utilizes "reappropriation and reinvention" of fashion trends from the past (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013). Vintage allows for nostalgia, but that is not entirely why it became trend worthy. In advanced, capitalist societies people feel distant and alienated from their surroundings, therefore "individuals compensate 'dislocation'-caused by a fast-changing society- by invoking the past (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013)." This invocation is easily done through style choices, especially when the vintage look is marketed and readily

available. In the advent of vintage, shopping has become less of a treasure hunt because vintage stores now hand-pick items and arrange them in a manageable way for average shoppers (Wade, 2015). Vintage walks the line between authenticity and commerciality. Theoretically, vintage breaks down the hierarchy of the typical first hand fashion industry because it allows for more individual choices and affordable options but this is not always the case because retailers have capitalized on peoples' desire for vintage and created a vintage hierarchy, though it is not as severe as that exhibited by the first hand clothing industry (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013). The new hierarchy has much to do with "dressing for knowing audiences (Veenstra and Kuipers 2013)." This audience is a group of people who understand and appreciate fashion because not everyone understands the repurposing of style (Amanda, 2013).

Presumably, not every person in our society wants to stand out as an individual through his or her clothing choices. Some people follow fashion trends without pushing the boundaries. These types of people buy what is advertised and wear what stores tell them is a fashionable pairing. These people are seemingly fashionable, but not to the level that those who exercise deliberately unique tendencies are. Other people do not put much thought into their outfit choices. They can wear the same clothes for many years, through style changes, and not care that they do not match what the fashion industry is outputting as stylish. These types of breaks in structures of individualism within clothing choices do not take into account people who cannot afford to wear the type of fashionable clothing they might wish to because they do not have the extra funds to purchase new or trendy secondhand pieces.

The future of the secondhand industry will most likely be dictated by the fashion industry as a whole. While vintage clothing remains trendy and coveted and fashionable people utilize vintage stores of all price ranges to fill their closets with pieces, secondhand stores will

continue to profit, but if the fashion industry and prominent fashion figures decide that vintage stores are no longer a place where people should purchase clothes, they will most likely become only stores that sell inexpensive clothing for people who cannot afford first hand retail items.

Stores such as Urban Outfitters and Reformation, both first hand retailers, now dip into the secondhand world of textiles to create their new pieces. Ten percent of Reformation's business comes from selling used clothing (Mallet, 2015). These stores repurpose vintage clothing, sometimes keeping the shape of an article the same and sometimes using the fabric from the used clothing to create entirely new designs. The use of vintage pieces and styles by first hand retailers has had varying affects on secondhand retailers. Firstly, mainstream, nationwide brands popularizing vintage styles is beneficial to the secondhand clothing industry by galvanizing a larger shopping network, but it negatively impacts the industry by creating more options for buying vintage clothing. The plethora of options sometimes decreases the number of shoppers at other stores. Larger retailers also purchase more used clothing than small businesses with one storefront. The flooding of the market with larger retailers diminishes the supply of used clothing. This leads to smaller businesses having to raise their costs for vintage. Though there are millions of pounds of used clothing circulating the globe constantly, many of these items are not currently in style, and curated vintage stores have no interest in selling them, so they do not impact the diminishing supply.

Raghouses

Raghouses, or textile recycling facilities, are a significant point in the life cycle of clothing. Close to 80 percent of clothing that is donated each year is sent to raghouses (Northam, 2013). As the secondhand clothing industry has evolved and gained popularity, charitable, low price, thrift stores have bettered the quality of the clothing they offer to

customers, meaning that more items are discarded to make room for nicer pieces. Raghouses have curbed the flow of unsellable items going to a landfill. Raghouses turn un-fashionable or tattered items into other materials, such as stuffing for pillows. Raghouses make a profit off of clothing that would used to have been thrown away. There are also pieces coming out of raghouses and going back into circulation within the used clothing industry. Vintage pickers, curators, and storeowners go to raghouses to find pieces for their stores. Raghouses thoroughly sort through their clothing to be able to provide their vintage customers with wearable items. The first hand retailers that are utilizing secondhand pieces in their collections purchase used pieces in bulk from raghouses (Mallet, 2015).

Methodology

Research Questions and Additional Questions

- What is the supply chain for secondhand clothing stores across the spectrum?
- Can we rescue the production of new goods with a better transparency or thought put in to secondhand stores?
 - o How can all secondhand clothing stores be mobilized/organized/considered in order to be a more efficient way to reduce production?
 - o For secondhand stores to exist, do they have to constantly have fashion forward marketing? Additionally, do they have to have large and fashionable first hand stores like Nordstrom and Forever 21 to exist?
 - o What is the evolution of vintage fashion? How long has it been popular in America?
 - o What is the affect on the developing world? When was the practice of sending used clothing to the developing world started?

- o How is clothing recycled if not in vintage stores?

Research Strategy

Supply Chain Analysis

I established the supply chain for a typical clothing item and outlined the different paths it could travel down. I did this by synthesizing the data I received from mainly firsthand interviews, with Internet research filling in the gaps. This chain is modeled visually and also discussed and analyzed. After gaining a better understanding of the way items flow and explicating this chain, I subsequently break down specific problematic instances along the chain, and identify how to ensure the flow of garments is done in a way that positively impacts society and the environment.

Data Collection and Analysis

A large source of my research comes from data collection found on the Internet. The types of data examined focus on the amount of donations yearly and the way secondhand clothing stores and raghouses fit into the life cycle of disposed clothing. The statistics do not come from one particular data-set due to the lack of a comprehensive set of numbers relating to the secondhand clothing industry that is free to the public. The data elucidates what the impacts of the secondhand clothing trade are, in addition to numerically describing gaps in the industry.

Interviews

Interviews comprise a large amount of my research. In doing these interviews I talked with 19 managers and executives from a variety of secondhand stores. The research is focused in Los Angeles because there are enough stores within the city to facilitate meaningful conversations about the supply chain of second hand clothing. Even though all of the stores are within Los Angeles, the research is not only be relatable to Los Angeles, but can be used to

understand the trends of the secondhand clothing industry nation wide. There is not significant major differences nationally in the way secondhand clothing stores operate; therefore the placement of the research in Los Angeles does not limit the research's nationwide impacts.

I spoke with multiple individuals working for different categories of secondhand clothing retailers; the reasoning for this is that each of the different types of stores might function significantly differently than other stores within its category. I had at least two stores from each level to help establish a more complex understanding of the supply change. Ideally, I would speak with ten or more stores from each delineation, but because of time constraints, I did not feel that I would be able to have meaningful interviews with substantive analysis with this many individual retailers. The stores are separated into groups based on differences in price, clientele, amount of clothing, and types of clothing. The high-end stores are the kind of stores who sell resale designer clothes, such as Chanel and Versace, as well as clothes without famous labels.

The main purpose of the interviews was to uncover the layout of the stores buying, collecting and/or selling process. This information was used to gain insight into the industry that would not be possible without talking to someone directly involved. I asked the people that I interviewed to walk me through the way their business operates, and additionally discuss the operations of the industry as a whole. I also talked with them about various trends they have noticed within their time in the industry. The interviews further establish the sustainable aspects of the industry.

Findings

Interviews

Leading up to this work, I reached out to vintage and secondhand retailers, by email, by phone, through Yelp, and through Facebook. For every retailer that agreed to do a meeting, I set

up a time to interview them in person. Almost all of the interviews took place at the stores being discussed, which allowed for me to have firsthand observations of the way they function, though I do not explicitly include these observations in this research. Initially I wanted to do ten interviews, but after receiving such a positive response from the secondhand clothing community in Los Angeles, I realized I could collect a larger amount. At first I hoped to conduct forty interviews, but through the process, I reached a stopping point around the fifteenth interview, meaning that all of the data I was receiving was pointing in the same direction, and I was no longer receiving any new information about the industry. When reaching out to stores, I chose stores of different sizes and price ranges in different areas of the city, so as to represent multiple areas.

Some interviews were recorded, if approved by the interviewee. I found that I did not utilize the recording much in the summarization process of the conversations I had with each retailer, but rather relied on my notes. I did not get answers to every question I posed from every retailer, though I made sure to discuss with all of them where they acquire their clothes, and where they give their clothes if they cannot sell them. A summary of each interview is located in Appendix 2. The varying paragraph lengths reflect the fact that some people were more open about their store, their practices, and the secondhand clothing industry in general, while others were more closed off and limited in their responses. I use gender pronouns within the paragraph to show that there are not solely women managing secondhand clothing stores, and also for my own memory of each location. I think my bias is limited within this work, though I will look into it further as I continue my research. I did purchase items from some of the stores, though this was always done after I had completed my interview and not discussed during the interview, so I do not think my patronage would have impacted the interviews I conducted. I spent time looking

at each store after I finished each interview to ensure I had a full understanding of what the store offered its customers.

Numerical Data Set

USagain Statistics 2012:

All statistics reflect yearly numbers

An Info-graphic with a visual model of these statistics is located in Appendix 3, A second Info-Graphic from Simple Recycling is located in Appendix 4 to reaffirm the data

13.1 million tons of textiles discarded

11.1 million tons sent to the landfill

15%, 2 million tons are recovered for reuse or recycling

48% of people throw away reusable clothing pieces

65 pounds of clothing on average discarded by each American

77% of people think textile recycling should be incorporated into cities' recycling programs

Environmental Protection Agency Statistics 2012:

Recyclable Textiles: "Fiber from apparel, furniture, linens (sheets and towels), carpets and rugs, and footwear"

Not Recyclable: "textile waste generated during manufacturing process (mill scrap) and C&D projects"

Defined as Recycling: "Recycling of textiles into wiper rags, and recycling of apparel and carpet fiber into new products such as linen paper or carpet padding"

Not Defined as Recycling: "Reuse of clothing"

254 million tons of trash generated in America

34.3% Recycling Rate, 87 Million tons

9% of all recycling comes from Rubber, leather, and textiles

Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles (SMART) Statistics 2016:

80% of donations to thrift stores are sent to raghouses

3.8 billion pounds of clothing donations recycled.

30% of recycled goods become wiping clothes

20% of recycled goods become fibers that become carpet padding, insulation, pillow stuffing, etc

45% of recycled clothes are exported

150 Raghouse member agencies of SMART, estimated 200-300 more in the United States

Major Themes

Made clear in the statistics, there is a disparity between discarded clothing and recycled clothing. All of the research I have done only addresses the fifteen percent of clothing not sent to a landfill. There need to be adjustments in the way people think about used clothing, so they do not immediately place it with their other trash. It is possible that people do not know that used clothing can be recycled. Thrift stores already sort through un-wearable clothing that then gets sent to raghouses, and as the statistics show, most of donations go to raghouses. This fact means that even if people live in places where they cannot directly recycle their old clothes, or if they do not know how to do this, they can still give it to thrift stores. Placing the clothing recycling burden on thrift stores might not be a long term solution, but thrift stores should be part of new recycling strategies. The easiest and least environmentally harmful way to recycle clothing is for someone else to use in its original form, though the Environmental Protection Agency does not consider reuse of clothing to be recycling. This definition potentially might skew their findings.

Most clothing going straight to a landfill goes along with the fact that the majority of all waste goes straight to a landfill rather than getting recycled. There is a 34.3 percent recycling

rate of all goods, and within the amount of recycled items, 9 percent are rubber, leather, or textiles. Unfortunately for looking for textile recycling data on a mass scale, it is grouped with rubber and leather so it cannot be defined on its own, though parts of the rubber and leather might come from shoes, and parts of the textiles do not come from clothing.

Most of the smaller stores only have one location, while the larger, charitable thrift-stores have multiple locations, ranging from statewide to worldwide. The smaller stores have to be particular about what they put on their shelves because they need to sell clothing to keep their store in business, whereas the large thrift-stores typically do not only sell clothing and also have such a vast variety and customer base that they do not have to be as particular about what they sell. Many of the owners of the smaller stores, whether they were middle of the road or high-end described themselves as fashionable and having an eye for what customers want. They could not exactly define why they were this way or how they developed their senses of style, but they all were passionate about fashion.

Wholesale pickers are important middlemen to the process of secondhand clothing. They go to thrift stores, garage sales, and raghouses and pick out pieces of clothing they believe they can sell to curated secondhand clothing stores. The people I interviewed did not want to give me the names of their pickers because these people are coveted. They typically establish relationships with the stores they sell to and develop an idea about the stores' particular style, and then they select items that they think the store will want to sell to their customers. Most stores use these pickers or do the job of the pickers themselves, or alternatively they allow for people to bring in clothing to sell to the store that they will then sell to other customers for a marked up price. New applications are affecting this process according to the owners of stores who function in this way. Now that people are able to sell pieces directly to another customer

through different social media platforms, they do not need the stores to do this. Though according to the stores, many people still find it easier to sell it to the stores, especially if they were going to donate the item anyways.

Even though there are many vintage stores flooding the market, almost every store I talked with had been open for at least five years. Many of them have repeat customers. Being in Los Angeles, there is a tie to the film industry. Several of the stores mentioned selling to costume designers. The stores develop relationships with certain production companies, and sell them clothes for their different movies and shows more than just once. Some of the stores also discussed having relationships with celebrity stylists who need pieces for their clients to wear to award shows and other events.

Most of the small storeowners chose the location of their storefront based on where they lived. Typically, they lived a ten minute drive or less from their store. This is possibly to help with business because many vintage stores' consumer base is tied to personal relationships. People build attachment to the small stores and continue to come back and buy their pieces. Possibly most people who own small independent businesses open them near their residence so they do not have to travel far in case of emergency or even just for their regular commute, but I do not have data on this.

Most stores have amended their marketing strategies with the advent of social media. Instagram is mentioned over and over again by many stores. As the vintage clothing industry is changing and widening, many stores are adapting their marketing through social media rather than altering the way they run their stores. Two storeowners acknowledged that they might get more business if they advertised more on social media, but they do not want to take on the task of learning how to do so. Even the large thrift stores utilize social media in their marketing. This

could possibly impact their customer base. Every thrift store I spoke with mentioned that they have noticed a change in their consumers over the last five years, meaning that the people who can only afford secondhand clothing still shop in their stores, but now they are joined by others of higher socio-economic statuses. This phenomenon might also be caused by the increasing price of curated vintage. Many of the small storeowners talked about the increasing price of items when discussing the trends they have noticed. This price increase has taken place partially because the market has changed with the introduction of first hand retailers into the purchasers pool and the increase of typical secondhand stores. Raghouses play a large roll in the industry, and shape people's pricing structure. When I asked about trends, almost every person who answered pointed out an increase in interest in vintage clothing stores and re-sale stores, be it by young people or by people who did not previously see vintage as a viable option. Vintage styles also are appearing more in fashion occurring to the people I spoke with, but within my research this does not seem to be a new phenomenon, so I will do further investigation into this change

There is a split within the industry about the concept of discounting their clothing. All of the low-end thrift stores I spoke with discount their clothing because they want to sell as much as possible to create room on their shelves for new items because they constantly have new clothing coming into their store. Some of the other middle of the road stores and high-end stores have sale sections or times during the year where they host sales for the same reason as the thrift stores, to make room for more merchandise so that they are continuously offering their customers something new. Roughly half of the middle and higher end stores though do not believe in sales. They all had the same sentiment, that they picked out each piece individually and all of their pieces have value, and just because something is not in style right now does not mean that it will not be in style again down the road. They typically keep their items for as long as possible, and

will take them off the shelves if they are not selling, keep them in storage, and then bring them out during a different season, before discounting the price.

. The supply chain for used clothing flows in both directions. Higher end stores donate their unwanted items to other thrift stores, but they also shop at thrift stores and raghouses or have pickers who do so for them. All of the owners of middle of the road and high-end vintage stores said they were constantly looking for new items, meaning that many of them frequented thrift stores multiple times a week to find new pieces. One vintage store said that they try to donate clothing they cannot sell to different thrift stores that they shop at, so as the original thrift store does not have to sell the same item again.

It was the interview process that helped me to discover the importance of raghouses or rag-mills within the secondhand clothing industry. Due to the significance of this point within the supply chain of secondhand clothing, I amended my original literature review to include information about raghouses. Raghouses sort hundreds of thousands of pounds of clothing yearly; and they are a point in the supply chain for many items of secondhand clothing. Before raghouses, clothing that would not sell at thrift stores was thrown away, so with the introduction of raghouses in the mid-twentieth century, millions of tons of clothing have been kept from going to the landfill. This is not to say that raghouses have ideal systems in place for the end point of their clothing. The photos below are taken on the inside of raghouses. Making raghouses larger and wider spread will be necessary if there is an increase in clothing recycling in the future.



(Mallet, 2015)



(Mallet, 2015)

Supply Chain Charts

From the interviews, I established the supply chain charts shown on the following pages. These charts show the life cycle of clothing that I have discovered through doing my research. First Hand Retailers sell the majority of their clothing to individuals. The clothing they cannot sell is called deadstock. Deadstock joins the supply chain when it is either donated to a thrift

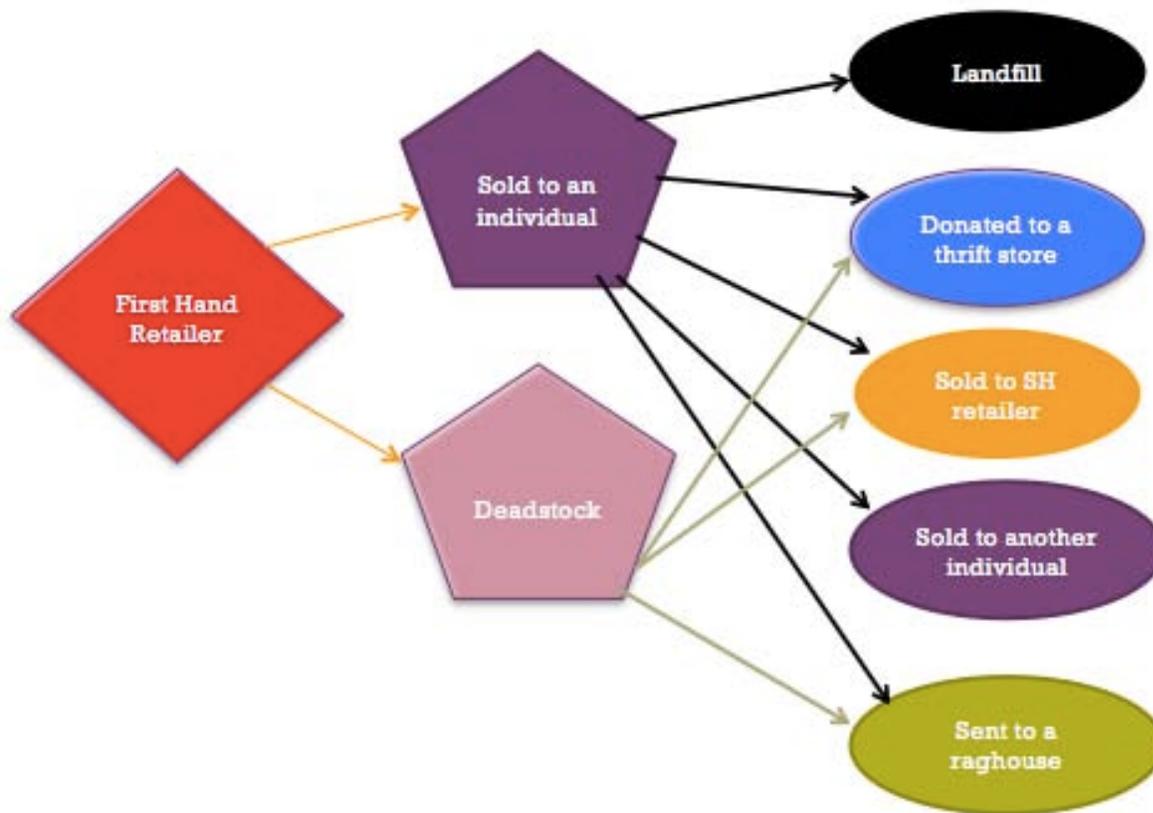
store, sold to secondhand clothing retailer, or sold or given to a raghouse. Clothing resides mostly in people's closets. Once people no longer want a clothing item, for reasons discussed in the literature review, they either throw it away and it is sent to a landfill, they donate it to a thrift store, typical with charitable ties, they sell it to a secondhand retail store, they sell it or give it directly to another individual, either through social ties or the growing industry of secondhand clothing applications for cellphones or websites, or they give them directly to a raghouse.

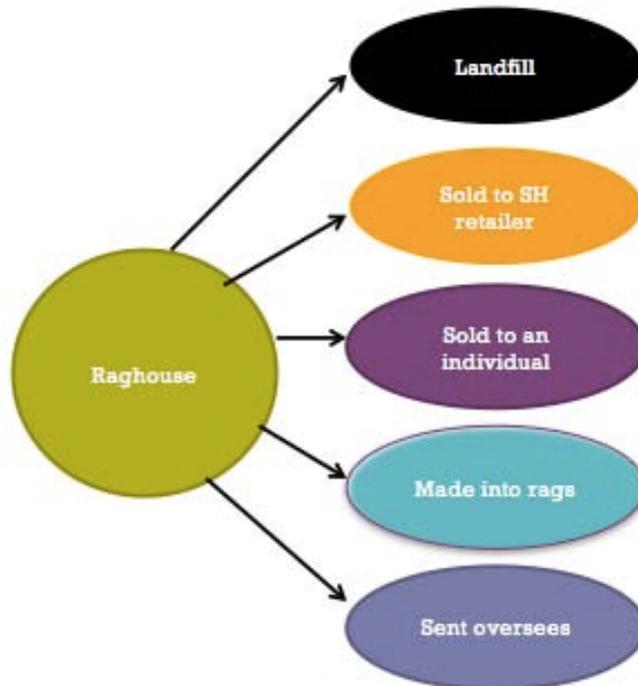
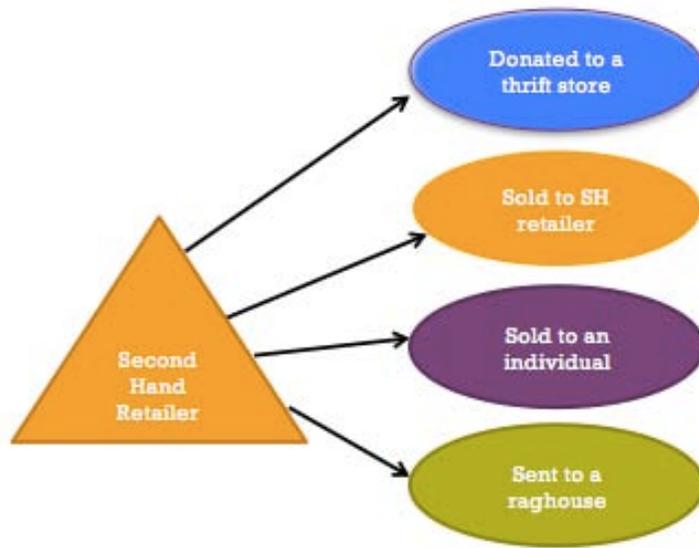
Once at a thrift store, employees sort the clothing and assess whether items are sellable. Typically if they are deemed unsellable, they are sent directly to a raghouse. If the items can be sold they are put on the floor and purchased mostly by individuals for their own use, but sometimes people buy items to sell at other secondhand clothing stores that sell curated pieces. When items do not sell after a certain amount of time, thrift stores add them in with the originally sorted, unsellable items, and send them also to a raghouse.

Once at a secondhand retailer, differentiated from a thrift store by the fact that the items they sell they pay for and purposefully select, clothing is sold to individuals and also sold to other secondhand clothing stores. Sometimes clothing does not sell, and then stores donate items to a thrift store or send them to a raghouse. Secondhand retailers also donate to thrift stores to receive tax benefits. Businesses can make up for some of their losses by selling unwanted items to raghouses, though they do not pay a significant amount.

When clothing items go to raghouses, they are sorted to determine the wearability of an item. If a piece is too worn out to be sold, it is turned into a rag or another industrial material, such as pillow stuffing. Sometimes tattered pieces are sent to a landfill. Most clothing items at raghouses are not sold directly to individuals because frequently buyers have to be affiliated with a company and have to purchase a minimum amount of clothing. Secondhand

retailers go to rag houses and purchase large amounts of clothing. Some raghouses sort their items more thoroughly than others, making it easier for the buyers. Clothing is also bundled together and sold to other countries. Sometimes this facilitates the secondhand clothing industry in other countries and sometimes the clothing is given to people in need. There is not significant data that would allow me to map the life cycle of clothing in countries with a culture significantly different than that of the United States.





Recommendations

1. Vintage clothing stores should market themselves more like first hand retailers to entice new buyers. This is not to say that they have to follow current trends, but they should continue to use the social media platforms and other marketing strategies used by larger retailers. Some ways of marketing can de-stigmatize used clothing, though this is happening regardless. In many instances, they could take the place of first hand retailers who are selling “vintage inspired” items if people were aware of the types of clothing they could find in vintage stores. It also might be beneficial for more secondhand clothing stores to rework used clothing items to make them more modern or potentially offer free alterations, and build alterations cost into the price of the item, so people can buy pieces that do not perfectly fit them in their original state.

2. Large thrift stores should have curated sections with designer items and pieces that are currently in style that they have received from donations. Some stores already do have these sections, and they attract customers searching for higher-end pieces. Also if people like the pieces in the curated section, they might be more likely to look further at the store and buy more items. Overall it is best for the environment if people buy as many clothes as possible from secondhand clothing stores, whether they are thrift stores or vintage boutiques.

3. First hand retailers should be more involved with secondhand clothing. Stores with a certain amount of revenue each year, should be required to either use vintage fabrics within their current lines, or collect used clothing and properly recycle it. H&M hosted a program with DoSomething.Org where they encouraged their customers to bring in clothing to donate by giving them a discount on their purchase of twenty percent. Nearly 80,000 people participated and they collected over 580,00 pounds (Comeback Clothes, 2016).

4. Raghouses should be closely monitored, and shipping American used clothing to other countries should be regulated. Some stores ship specific items to customers overseas, but I am not referring to this practice, rather the hundreds of thousands of pound disrupting local economies and placing the burden of our unwanted clothing on other countries. Additionally the labor practices at raghouses should be watched closely. Raghouses should also market more to firsthand retailers. They should combine like fabric patterns and work together with the first hand retailers to reuse more of the clothing they have. If there is a going to be an increase in clothing recycling, there has to be amendments in the size and function of clothing recycling facilities. They might have to expand to accommodate more clothing. Being able to sell the used clothing to first hand retailers would help find a place for the increased number of clothes to go.

5. The government should be more involved in textile recycling, providing accessible avenues for people to dispose of their clothing. Many people want textile recycling as part of their regular recycling program. Even if cities had certain clothing recycling days, rather than having it year round, they might be able to stop some clothing from going to a landfill. Having the government be a part of the used clothing industry would most likely not negatively impact the already existing industry because the clothes that people would recycle through their cities might have the potential to be less nice or more worn than the clothes they might give to charity or sell to a secondhand store. If cities are going to implement wider spread textile recycling, they will need to have educational programs to help people understand the benefits of recycling. They might be able to do this through public schools and also collect clothing through schools. The government can additionally publish info-graphics like the ones seen in Appendix 3 and 4.

6. People should be educated about the impact their clothing has on the environment. They should learn how many resources go into producing one article of clothing. People should

not be discouraged from buying clothing because buying clothing is important to not only making the secondhand clothing industry function, but also a major component of textile recycling. People should be encouraged to buy secondhand clothing when possible, and magazines and other fashion blogs and outlets should continue to educate consumers and those interested in being fashionable on how to blend used items with newer items to make outfits look trendy.

7. Applications and websites should continue to offer people the option of directly selling clothing to each other. Additionally, groups should host clothing swaps for their membership. For instance, sororities nationwide have started Facebook pages where members post photos of the clothing they no longer want, and they either give it away or sell it to another member of their organization. This practices continues to make the reuse of clothing more popular. Though companies are not profiting, the clothing creates less of an environmental impact because business do not have to take the energy to re-sort and evaluate it.

Shortcomings and Future Research

Within doing my interviews, I was not able to interview individuals from raghouses. I reached out to multiple locations, both in Los Angeles and elsewhere, though they were not willing to talk to me. Additionally, during my interviews, many people did not want to give me the names of the raghouses they used because they seemingly see them as their personal treasure trove, not to be shared with outsiders. The interviewees also did not want to share whom their vintage suppliers were with me, so I was unable to interview more than one of these suppliers who are an important middleman within the process. I focused most of my interviews on clothing stores that sold items intended for adults. There is a large market for children's used clothing, so if I were to continue my research I would focus more heavily on that, and possibly

compare it to the stores aimed at adults. Time constraints were additionally an issue within my research; I would have liked to do further observation of the sorting process and talk to workers involved in this aspect of large-scale thrift stores, rather than just to people within management. I think there is more to be discovered about the treatment of workers and their life quality. If I continue the research, I would want to spend a period of time working and observing at each of the three levels of secondhand clothing stores I discussed. Another issue I faced was the lack of empirical data about recycled clothing and recycled clothing programs. Textiles are also lumped together in some statistics, so it is impossible to fully assess the size and impact of used and discarded clothing within the country. In further research I would also focus more on the impacts of secondhand clothing in other countries and who exactly is buying and selling the clothes from American raghouses. Finally, if I continue this research, I would focus heavily on first hand retailers who are selling both vintage inspired pieces as well as pieces created from actual vintage fabrics. I want to know when they started doing this, and how successful it has been in comparison to their traditional retail items. I would like to host a focus group, or multiple focus groups, comprised of people working at different points of the supply chain to eliminate any misconceptions, and have a robust talk about changes and patterns within the industry.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions

Is your company part of a chain of companies?

If so how many other stores are there nationwide?

If not, are there any plans of expansion?

Where do you acquire your clothes?

Do the majority of your clothes come from individuals or from organizations, stores, or other groups?

How old are the clothes you typically sell?

Do you pay attention to whether or not the clothes you are selling are currently in style?
Do you try to sell stylish, trendy clothing or class pieces?

What is the intended occasion to wear the clothing you sell? (Dressed up event, work, everyday, lounging, etc.)

Do you pay for the secondhand clothing you sell?
If so, how do you advertise this payment and how do people receive it? (Is it a store credit or another form of payment?)

What are the standards you use to assess whether an item is sellable?

What is the sorting process after acquisition of clothing?

How quickly do you put new clothes on the shelf?

If an item does not fit these criteria, what do you do with it?

What is the typical shelf life for a clothing item?

How many clothing items at full price do you typically sell in a week?

How many clothing items at a discounted price do you typically sell in a week?

What are the steps you take with clothing that is not selling at the original price you set?

What do you do with clothing you cannot sell?

Do you have relationships with particular stores that you acquire clothes from or give clothes to?

What is your business model?
Is it based off another secondhand store or another type of apparel store?

What are your marketing strategies?

How long has your store been in business?
If part of a larger group of stores, how long has the company in general been in business?

Have you amended your marketing strategies recently or do you plan to change them in the future?

Have you amended the way you obtain clothing recently or do you plan to change this in the future?

Are all of the clothes you sell secondhand?

What is the range of original prices for the items you sell?

Can you describe the current supply chain of the second hand clothing industry?

Have you ever worked for another secondhand clothing store?

How did you choose the location of your store?

What factors about the location of your store make it successful?

Do you sell any of your clothing online?

If so, what is your shipping radius?

Have you noticed any trends in donations or purchasing within the last five years?

Do the people that give clothes or sell clothes to your store ever shop at your store?

If so, how frequently are these people also consumers?

Appendix 2

Raw Interview Data

Interview 1

This store is a middle of the road vintage boutique in Chinatown, prices range from moderate to expensive; the owner says the range is from about \$28-98, but this range does not include the store's original collection. The store has two locations, one in New York and one in Los Angeles; the Los Angeles location was the original location and remains the more successful of the two. The majority of the clothing in the store comes from wholesale dealers who sort through old clothes and sell them to vintage stores, though the owner and her employees occasionally go to individual's homes and buy pieces from them. She pays for all of the clothing she sells, meaning none of her items are donated to her store. She chooses clothing based on

whether or not it suits her personal taste because in her time in the industry, she says she has learned that most women like the clothing she picks out. This store is particular about what qualifies as vintage, and aims to sell only clothes at least 20 years old or older. The store does rework some of the pieces they sell, meaning they go beyond just repairing minor rips or tears, and actually alter the style of the piece. The owner states that “the past is useless to the future without a little editing.” After new items are obtained, they are typically put on the racks within a week. Some items stay in the store for years, while others are purchased the same day they arrive at the store. There is no official process for removing clothes that are not selling from the racks, but she does comb through the racks every so often and pick out clothes to donate. She does not like to discount her clothing, though they do sometimes have sales where they sell everything that has not been selling for \$3, and the items that do not sell at that time are taken to Goodwill. This store sells clothing for all aspects of a woman’s life. The space is very open, and they do not have fitting rooms, so men are not allowed in the store. She has noticed a decrease in her number of sales since she opened in 2004 because of the increase in other vintage stores and other avenues to buy vintage, such as Etsy. The store also sells its own collection of evening gowns and wedding dresses, designed with vintage inspiration, but made with new materials. She states without this original line, the store would have gone out of business. The line was created to fill the gaps in vintage and create pieces that her clients wanted but she could not find.

When I asked her to describe to me the secondhand clothing industry in her words, she gave me this narrative: Before 1970 old clothing was buried in landfills. In the 70s due to the hippy movement, people started to re-wear clothes, which sparked the idea of secondhand clothing as being more than just a necessity for those in poverty. Then she explained, people give donations, then the next wave of donations come in, and now the store is too full, so they ship the

excess to an urban environment, where it sits, and some of it does not sell, then outlets would take the unsellable items and bury them in the ground. After this was happening, someone came up with the idea to take the clothes, and start a rag house, where people sort these clothes into different categories. The most important textile is cotton, other textiles can become mattress stuffing, carpet padding, rags, and other items. The rag houses started buying the excess from Goodwill, for more money than they used to spend on these extra clothes. They buy the clothing in thousand pound bails, and then ship the bails to graders. After the clothes are graded they are sold in different arena. One of the main places they are sold to are third world countries. She says that Mexico wants grade A. They want recognizable American labels. Most of the clothes being graded are not technically vintage, rather just used. She says the grading industry has mostly gone out of business because people do not give away their clothes as readily. Also thrift stores like Goodwill have had more shoppers, and people are selling their own clothes. She says there is now a greater exchange between the populous through direct sales because everyone now wants to earn money from their clothes, rather than just giving them away.

Interview 2

This company has a singular, high-end vintage store in Pasadena that has been opened for two years and requires an appointment to be a shopper. The stores location is based on the owner's residence being in close proximity. They acquire the majority of their clothing from consigners who are locals that bring multiple pieces to the store for the employees to go through and decide what to use. The store then puts items on the racks, and they have six months to sell, or they are returned to the consigner or donated to a thrift store that supports pregnant, homeless women that is in the same area as the secondhand clothing store. If the item sells, the store keeps

half of the profit and the consigner gets the other half. Most of the consigners also shop at the store. Almost all of their clothing is used, though they do sell some new accessories, purchased from wholesalers. The store aims to sell current styles from within the last five years, so it is not as much of a vintage store, rather a resale boutique. Their target audience wants contemporary, high-end pieces. Because of this desire, they only pick clothing that they deem currently stylish, because this will determine if it sells. The intended occasion for the majority of their clothes is everyday, though they do have some fancier items, but no real gowns. Each piece is priced individually based on its original price and current relevance. They used to discount their clothes after a certain time period by 30%, but now they do not discount unless they are doing a promotion. They sell clothing online and ship it worldwide. They use social media to market their items with Instagram being the most prominent. Over time the employee has noticed a change in the industry because of the increase in online used clothing sales. People are no longer using stores as middlemen, but rather selling their clothes directly through apps like Tradesie, but their store believes that they are providing a service to their consigners.

Interview 3

This store is a middle of the road resale boutique with one location in South Pasadena that has been opened for 11 years. Within the past four or five years the owner has noticed that the area has become more popular, and this has helped with her sales. The owner chose the location because she grew up in the area. When the business started, the owner did a lot of hunting at thrift stores and estate sales, but now more people bring in items to sell or more frequently trade. None of the clothing items the store receives are donations. Once clothes are acquired, they are assessed for cleanliness and repair needs, and when they are cleaned and

fixed they are typically put into the store within two days. There is then about a forty-day turn around for the clothing pieces. The store sells clothing from around the 1920s to contemporary pieces. The owner recognizes that this does not make the store a true vintage boutique, but she cares more about the style of the clothes she sells than the absolute vintage label. She has noticed that recently more vintage stores are opening, causing prices to go up, which also causes the stores to sell more contemporary pieces because true vintage is becoming harder to find for reasonable prices. The intended occasion for the majority of the clothes at the store to be worn in everyday, though there are some party clothes. They discount their clothing frequently; they have different racks outside the store with lower priced items. If items are not selling or they have experienced wear and tear in the store they are donated to store number 5 and on some occasions given to people that the owner has personal relationships with, such as an artist who makes capes out of old fabric. The company also has an online component that ships worldwide, though they typically sell the more expensive pieces online. They also use different social media sites such as Instagram, Tumblr, and Facebook to market themselves. She says that other countries such as Australia and the UK like to buy American vintage. She also said that most people get into vintage because they love the hunt and are passionate about the history of fashion.

Interview 4

This store is a low-end thrift store in Echo Park, with prices ranging from \$5.75 to \$9.75, though they have some specially priced items that can cost up to \$100 if they are high quality designer pieces. The store is strongly tied to charity. The use there charitable partnership as their main marketing strategy; people want to shop and donate because they feel like they are helping a good cause. Many people that donate to the store also shop at the store. There are 21

stores nationwide, with the majority of locations in Southern California; the business was opened in 1990. They acquire all of their clothing through donations, though not all of it is used because sometimes they get items from department stores that were manufactured incorrectly. People bring in donations, but they also sometimes do pick ups of clothes. All of their clothing is priced individually, after the clothing is sorted. The manager told me that the store wishes to provide the best quality of clothing to its customers, so if items are deemed to be unsellable they are sent to a company that recycles clothing into rags. The store has a tag system to cycle the clothes out; meaning that depending on the tag color each week, different items are discounted. They continue to be discounted until they are a dollar. If they do not sell for a dollar than they are removed and sent to be made into rags. Because of this process, the store does not keep items of clothing for long periods of time. The store manager told me that he has developed personal relationships with people who come into the store to pick through the racks to find pieces to sell at their own stores or repurpose into different pieces and that these types of shoppers come in frequently. He says that he has noticed a shift in the secondhand clothing industry within the last five years, that seemingly wealthier people now shop at their store more, so now the store is serving people from a wider range of socio-economic statuses because of a change in the perception of secondhand clothing.

Interview 5

This store is located in Pasadena and is part of a nationwide chain of stores attached to a religious charity that has been in business for over 60 years. This store is low-end thrift store, with almost all clothing items under \$20. 95% of the clothing sold at the store comes from donations, people bring in their used clothes, the store picks up used clothes, and sometimes

department stores and other clothing manufacturers donate their deadstock. The percentage not accounted for in this vast majority comes from the jail system. Inmates get separated from their clothes and it is too complicated to return the clothes to them, so the clothing is donated. Most of the clothing sold at the store is female clothing, and most of the people shopping for clothing are women. The store manager guesses that this is because most of the clothing industry is targeted at women, in addition to the fact that men typically wear their clothes for longer til the point that they are too tattered to be donated. A lot of the donations come at the end of the year because people receive tax deductions for donating. All of the items are priced individually, and the store uses a color tag system. After 14 days an item is 50% off. The store also has 50% off days three times a week. In addition to discounts, the company also gives out store vouchers to families in need, and he says that he personally will give clothing to homeless people who come into the store and need clothing to keep them warm at night. The store manager says they are always trying to keep it fresh. They always have lots of stuff waiting to go on the racks because they have a warehouse with people who pricing new items and preparing them to be sold. The warehouse supplies the store with about twenty racks a day of clothes to be sold. The clothing that does not sell in the store or the clothing that the sorters in the warehouse do not think is sellable is packaged in large quantities and sold to other countries.

Interview 6

This company is a low-end to middle of the road secondhand clothing store located on the cusp of Echo Park that has been open full time for a year. The owner chose the location because the storefront had been passed down through her family and she liked the neighborhood. The acquire their clothing through wholesalers, through individuals coming in to the shop to sell

or trade their clothing, estate sales, and through raghouses. She tries to never pay more than \$15 for any item. Most of their inventory comes from active looking; the owner says she prefers to have clothes from between the 1960s and 1990s because in her opinion the clothing from before that time is made with fabric that is difficult to wear. She especially does not want items made of purely polyester. They sell almost all secondhand clothing, though they do sell some new accessories and gifts. The owner picks clothing that she thinks fits in with current styles; she sells mostly everyday wear because she says “the things that turn over the most are the things we can all afford.” She also stated that if people want to sell more specialized pieces they then have to create their own market. When she acquires new clothing pieces, she tries to have it on the rack within two days, after cleaning and doing minor repairs if necessary. She does not have a particular system to get rid of clothing that is not selling because she says items have very varying shelf lives, though she does donate clothing at times, and she also will donate clothing that people have brought to her when selling other items that they no longer want and she does not wish to sell. She does not have a particular place that she donates clothing; it ranges from local thrift stores, to social workers who have families lacking in clothes, to friends who bring things to Mexico. The company uses social media to market themselves, and the owner runs a frequently updated Instagram. In her words about the secondhand clothing industry, Everybody chooses a different way to do it; some places do strictly buy sell trade,; some places strictly go digging through raghouses, some people buy in lots for cents per pound, she says it depends on how curated they wish their store to be. She also points that she has seen donation bins in the parking lots of raghouses that she is almost positive are just going into the raghouse to be sorted and sold.

Interview 7

This store is middle of the road vintage store located in Silverlake that has been open for 18 years in the neighborhood. She chose the location because it was down the street from where she lived at the time. She says the changing nature of the neighborhood has changed her typical customer from local artist, to foreign tourist. The owner acquires the clothing in the store when she travels through Los Angeles and beyond to visit garage sales, estate sales, and thrift stores. People also come into the store to sell their clothing, but they typically want cash and are not interested in trading. She sells clothing from the 1880s-1980s, though she also sells some reproductions of vintage inspired clothing. She sells a lot to the movie industry for period pieces, and she also sells gowns to people looking for outfits to wear to award shows, but her store front is mainly everyday, street wear. Most items she cleans and repairs them herself if they are in need of patching or has a more talented seamstress repair if it is beyond her ability. Sometimes though she does not clean or fix items, and sells them as is to people, mostly artist, who then use them as inspiration for their art and fashion designs. The store tries to market itself somewhat online, but the owner admittedly does not put much effort into it, though she says she thinks she might be more successful if she was more vigilant with her Instagram. She does have discount racks, and she will bargain with her customers, but sometimes when items will not sell she donates them to thrift stores in her neighborhood. She said that because there are so many vintage stores opening in Los Angeles, it is now nearly impossible to find real vintage, and now newer things are now becoming vintage. Prices of vintage have gone up, while the quality has gone down. She is not sure whether or not she cannot find good vintage because other stores already have it or because it has fallen apart. She says when she started wearing vintage it was because she had no money, now vintage is trendy, which makes the prices go up. She also has a

negative view of the owner from interview 1 because she says that she caused a major raghouse to shut down because of inappropriate relations.

Interview 8

This store is located in Silverlake and specializes in professional sports team vintage along with more male clothing than any of the other stores. The store has been in the area for four years. They typically acquire their clothing from vintage suppliers, though sometimes people come in and sell their used clothing. He used to do more hunting for items, but he said now it is a waste of his time. They typically sell clothing from the 1970s and 1980s, though they also sell more recent pieces. After they acquire new pieces, the owner does cleaning and repairs if necessary, then takes measurements and pictures of the items he sells online. Though he does have an online component, the storefront is the main source of revenue. He does not typically discount his clothing because the pieces are hard to come by, nor does he donate clothing. He has noticed an increase in the interest in vintage. His advertising takes place mainly through Yelp and Google.

Interview 9

This is a mid-level to high-end vintage boutique in Pasadena that has been opened for 4 years. Her prices vary from about \$70 to \$400. The owner chose the location because she lived near it, and thought the particular street was attractive. It specializes in items from the 1960s and 1970s, though some items are from the 1980s; all of the clothing comes from wholesalers or private collectors. The reasoning for the time period choice is based on the owners' personal style. The intended occasion to wear the items are either everyday or for a party. The owner

wants the store to feel like a modern day boutique that just happens to be selling vintage clothing. She does not believe in amending the style of the garment and only will make minor repairs after cleaning newly acquired pieces. She is also not in favor of discounting clothing, though she does occasionally have special sales. If items do not sell, she will sometimes take them off the floor and keep them in her storage area until it is a more applicable time or season to sell them. She sometimes donates clothing, especially to get tax benefits She uses social media to market herself, and she sells some items online.

Interview 10

This is a high-end vintage store is located in Hancock Park that has been in business for 35 years. They acquire their clothing from estate sales, auctions, and wholesalers, and the feature clothing from the entire 20th century; she says 95% of her inventory is true vintage. They pick their pieces based on their condition and current relevance, then clean each item and make any necessary repairs. Most items are placed in the shop within a week or two. The owner does not believe in regularly discounting or bargaining, though twice a year they have a large sale. Sometimes she donates clothing she cannot sell to a charity that helps recently incarcerated women re-assimilate into society. The store has online component and she is about to launch a \$99 and under site because she has a warehouse filled with inventory that is not relevant enough to be sold in the store. She believes that it is our responsibility to respect what is already been made. She also says that for the top tier of vintage clothing stores there will always be items available.

Interview 11

This company has been open in Eagle Rock for a year and a half, and it sells middle of the road to high-end vintage; the owner chose the location because it is a block away from her house. The owner has been collecting clothes for over 30 years and she mostly likes to sell items from the 70s that can be worn everyday, though she is completely attached to the time period. She gets pieces for her store from raghouses and stores like Goodwill. Occasionally she lets people sell to her in store, but she is particular about this process and will only buy from people she has a positive connection with, who have clothes that match her aesthetic. She pays attention to seasonal items, for instance she will sell more jean shorts during festival season. Sometimes she sells new accessories and deadstock clothing, but most is used. She buys all of the clothing she sells, then washes it, then takes pictures of it for her Instagram then puts it in the store. She tries to make this process as fast as possible, and aims to have new clothing in the store the next day. She also will sometimes post items on Etsy. She does discount her clothing when it is not selling, and for items that she cannot sell even with the discount she will give them away to different thrift stores within the community, though she is not tied to one place. She says that because the vintage industry is blowing up, it is hard to find stuff at decent prices, which made her have to raise her prices. She mentioned Urban Outfitters, and their urban renewal program. She says that the company goes to the same raghouse that she does, and because they buy in such massive quantities they get a better discount and better choices. She also acknowledges that there is a fine line with this issue because in one sense she thinks that they are ruining vintage by mass producing it, but they are also making vintage popular in the way only a large corporation can.

Interview 12

This store is located in Burbank and offers clothes at middle of the road prices; it has been in business for 20 years. They obtain their clothing from estate sales, garage sales, flea markets, people consigning, low-end thrift stores. They sell clothing from the late 1880s to the 1990s, but focus mainly between the 1940s and 1980s. Though they sell vintage clothing, the owner still cares if the pieces she buys are still stylish. She acknowledges that some people come shop at her store because they dress vintage as a lifestyle, while others use it for special events such as themed parties. Once the store acquires new pieces, they are all washed and repaired if necessary, then put on the shelf within a week. She does not put many of the clothes on sale, though the store does sometimes have specials. Some clothing is donated to Goodwill or American Way if it is not selling. The store also provides clothing for film, so because of this there are fewer donations. Her description of the secondhand clothing industry is that clothes start in department stores where they are purchased, worn, then handed down or sold at a garage sale, consigned, or donated, then someone else purchases the item secondhand and this process continues until the item is worn out and thrown away or donated again and then sent to a rag house. She has also noticed an increase in interest in 1980s style from the younger generation did not live within the time period. She has also seen more fashion brands doing vintage inspired looks that focus on the 80s.

Interview 13

This seller has been in the vintage clothes business for ten years does not actually have a store front; her main business is done through Etsy, though she also participates in vintage fashion shows, she consigns clothing, goes to the Rosebowl flea market monthly, and sells to private customers. She purchases her pieces from estate sales, garage sales, thrift stores, and

from individual deals. The clothing she sells is vintage from the 1920s through the 1990s, and she focuses a lot on whether or not the items are stylish, but also edgy. She has a sewing machine that she does all the repairs she is capable of, and if an item needs reworking beyond her ability she brings it to a tailor. Clothing that she cannot sell she donates to Goodwill. Her prices vary vastly based on her audience; they might be closer to \$25 when at the Rosebowl, and nearing \$600 when she is dealing with a private client. She also acknowledged that she sells different types of clothing in these environments. She has noticed an increase in young American's interest in vintage recently.

Interview 14

This company is a low-end thrift store located in Pasadena, with 90% of its inventory coming from donation drop offs and the other 10% coming from donation pick ups. Most of the people who donate clothing also shop at the store. They tried purchasing clothing from wholesalers, but it did not positively impact their business, so they reverted back to being donation based. When they get donations, they sort them and price them individually; they do not spend time cleaning or repairing items. The store manager said that the dirty clothing is sold to secondary company where it is repurposed, most likely a raghouse, though he did not explicitly say that. They typically sell 10,000 items a week and generate \$15,000. The average price for a garment is \$3.40. They have a website and an email list, though they do not sell any of their items online. They were started by a community center in the area to generate money while also benefitting the community; the store has seen a steady increase in sales since it opened six years ago. The store manager said that he has noticed more that people from all walks of life are buying clothing from thrift stores.

Interview 15

I interviewed a buyer for a vintage clothing and vintage housewares boutique. She acquires most of the clothing for her store at flea markets throughout California. The shop has established relationships with flea market vendors who will now bring special items each month that they know the buyer will want. She states that there is a strong network between vintage dealers; the industry has been around since before the prevalence of social media, making it so face-to-face relationships are still important. She additionally gets clothing for the store at other thrift stores and also from yard sales because she describes the area the store is in as “wealthy.” Sometimes people come into the store trying to sell their used clothing, but the people at the store rarely buy it, and rather direct the intended seller to another used clothing store that does directly buy from individuals. She describes the owner of the store she buys for as a “hippy,” meaning that most of the clothes they sell are from the 60’s and 70’s. She also notes that selling from this time period has been successful because brands such as Free People have been making vintage inspired pieces that have a positive consumer reception, leading to people wanting to buy actual vintage. She states that they do not always follow current trends, but also acknowledges that trends are different within the vintage industry than there are at traditional retailers. She says that vintage clothing trends are sometimes inspired by popular Television Shows or Movies; people like to dress like their favorite characters, and also, people sometimes have themed parties based around the shows or movies. The store pays for all of the clothing they sell, and the owner does not like regularly putting items on sale, so instead, twice a year the store does a “flea market-esque” sale where they discount clothing from the previous season. For instance, they will discount summer dresses during a winter sale, so as to make more space in their inventory

for seasonally appropriate clothing. The owner does sometimes donate clothing to their local Goodwill, but she only does so after exhausting all other options to sell the garment in the store, such as styling it on a mannequin. The store has its own Instagram for promotion, and the buyer has her own Instagram where she directly sells clothing to clients. A trend within the industry that she notes is an influx of buyers around music festivals; she gives the example of Burning Man. She says the same people come in every year to get their outfits because the theme changes each time.

Interview 16

This company is a vintage wholesaler with one location, close to Montebello, Los Angeles. The company is similar to a raghouse, though it is much smaller, and the owner states that raghouses do both importing and exporting, but they only do importing. They also hand pick all their merchandise, which gives them better quality goods, though it does significantly increase the price she has to pay for goods. The owner has contracts with charitable organizations across the United States that require her to purchase a certain amount of clothing from them each month to receive a discounted price. She says the items that they do not sell to her will most likely be sent to raghouses. Sometimes she takes 3,000 pounds of clothing, and sometimes she takes 200 pounds of clothing because they do not have what she is looking for. She states that she was a clothing designer for 26 years, so she believes her pulling expertise might be better than an average raghouse because she knows the history of fashion. Most of the clothing she sells comes from between the 1930s and 1990s because she is trying to sell true vintage. Her clientele includes vintage retailers from the United States and internationally. About 30 percent of her business comes from overseas, though she does not sell clothing online, rather

clients come to her store sometimes just once and sometimes once a year to look at her inventory and explain the types of clothing they are looking for. She then does research on their stores, and sends them clothing that she believes they will like. She additionally sells to people who exclusively sell the clothing on online platforms, such as Etsy or Ebay. She also sells to people looking for inspiration for their own designs. Her business succeeds because of return customers; she also only sells to people intending to sell her clothing. Her customers have to have a resale license, and there is a minimum amount they are required to purchase, though her minimum is less than that of a typical raghouse. She does not have sales at her business because she says trends work differently for vintage clothing; it is not like traditional retail. She uses the example of men's polyester shirts, saying they were extremely popular four years ago, but now they are not in style, though that does not mean they are not going to come back into style. She also notes that trends are different overseas; currently they want a lot of Tommy Hilfiger for men, but in America people are not interested in that. She does donate clothing occasionally, not so much to thrift stores, but more to help people, especially schools. For instance she will donate prom dresses to people who give them to underprivileged girls for free, and she will donate solid t-shirts to a school's art department. Her final anecdote, when talking about trends within the secondhand clothing industry, represents the limited nature of the clothing for sale. She says currently, small size denim full-length jeans are popular, but five years ago, cutoff Levi jeans were in style. Many vintage retailers bought as many small size denim jeans as they could find and turned them into shorts. Now, the cutoffs are not as popular, but there are not enough full-length jeans to fit consumer desire. Now retailers who can find the full-length jeans can sell them at a high price because of their rarity.

Interview 17

This retailer is part of an international organization, located in 80 countries. They have been in Los Angeles since 1907, and at their Lincoln Heights location since 1970. Each individual location has their own 501c, so they can operate on their own. They are a charitable organization with a Christian affiliation. They collect donations by picking up people's donations in addition to having people drop items off at their store. They also accept donations from corporate donors who have overstock and dead-stock items. The corporate donors are new at the location where I interviewed; the person answering my questions said that their main corporate donor has donated three times within two years, though these donations include thousands of pounds of goods. To determine if a clothing item is sellable, they assess whether or not it is something they would give to someone in need. The donations brought to the store are processed within one day. The processing area is larger than the store-front. All of the clothing items are priced individually. They have a colored tag system that leads to discounts on items after they do not sell in a certain amount of time. The shelf life of a clothing item is no longer than five weeks. For clothing that is damaged or clothing that has not sold in four weeks, they put it in an as is section with extremely low prices. If the clothes do not sell from there, they are bailed, condensed and sold by the pound either to raghouses, people overseas, or a recycling company. In the past they have marketed themselves in publications, such as newspapers, but now they are turning more to social media, such as Instagram and Facebook. The store, during the week before I interviewed them sold 5,496 pieces of clothing. Also, within a year they diverted 400,000 pounds of textile from the landfill. These numbers are both from the woman I interviewed. The woman I interviewed said that the thrift store does have relationships with vintage retailers who come to the store to pick clothing to sell at their own shop, and she also said that there were most

likely more people like this that she did not know of because they did not make their intentions obvious.

Interview 18

This company is a private vintage retailer, they are not as large as a wholesaler or a raghouse, but they do not have storefront that is open to the public. The business's singular location is in Highland Park. The owner stated that 90 percent of the pieces she sells she found at thrift stores. She goes daily to look for more clothing. She also goes to estate sales and yard sales. She shops at some of the thrift stores mentioned in the low-level secondhand clothing retailers section. Her business carries clothing from the 1900s through present day, but she prefers selling items from 1970 or before. She does not try to sell clothing that is currently in style because she is dealing mostly with the entertainment industry. She sells clothing to wardrobe departments as well as stylists who dress celebrities. She only reconstructs items if they are damaged. Most of her pieces she sells for between \$30 and \$100. She says she is attached to the clothing she sells, which makes it difficult for her to donate pieces that are not selling. She keeps clothing for a long time, and does discount pieces, but sometimes she does donate to thrift stores, though she tries not to donate to the ones she buys from. She does not market her business; it is all through word of mouth, and she sells about 50 pieces of clothing each week. She also sells some pieces that she designed herself. Part of the reason she started working within the secondhand clothing industry was the environmental factor; she tries to do all of her shopping locally, so the clothing she sells does not travel far distances. Although, she does sell some of her clothing online through Etsy. She acknowledges that the vintage industry is growing, though she says, in her opinion, a lot of the newer stores are not selling true vintage.

This creates a pushback from the more established vintage retailers, who have a tight knit community.

Interview 19

This retailer is part of a larger organization, with eight locations located within Los Angeles. The organization has religious ties. Their thrift stores support the greater workings by the organization. Their clothing is not priced individually; rather it is priced by style, though they do have a designer section where everything is priced individually. All of the clothing they sell comes from donations. If the clothing they receive does not fit their criteria to be sold in their stores, they sell it to a raghouse. All eight of the stores send their unwanted clothing to the same raghouse. They do not keep the clothing they are selling forever; the store has a rotation system to decrease the prices, and they also do promotions. They want to sell as much as possible to make as much money for their organization as possible, but most clothes are given a two week maximum. 70 percent of the organizations revenue comes from clothing sales. They do not do much advertising on social media; they have a small advertising budget, which they use to take out ads in publications, but most of their business comes from word of mouth. They try to put their locations in upscale areas, to attract more upscale donations and to create a nicer storefront. The man I interviewed said there has been a five percent to twenty-five percent revenue increase at thrift stores within the last ten years.

Appendix 3

USAGAIN Info Graphic



JUST 1 POUND OF TEXTILES EMITS MORE THAN 7 POUNDS OF CO₂.



7 lbs CO₂

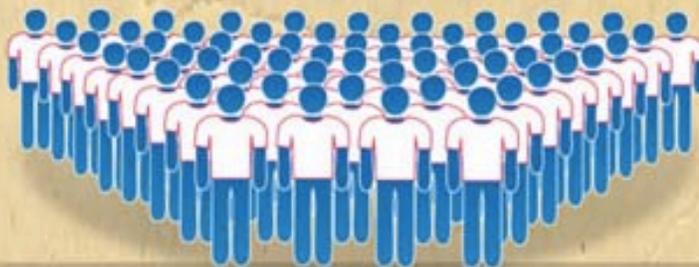
Textile waste creates pollution and wastes precious resources.



THE AVERAGE T-SHIRT WASTES 700 GALLONS OF WATER DURING MANUFACTURING.



That's 140 water cooler jugs!



IF ALL 300 MILLION AMERICANS RECYCLED JUST 1 MORE T-SHIRT, WE WOULD RECOVER 210 BILLION GALLONS OF WATER AND KEEP 1 MILLION LBS OF CO₂ OUT OF OUR ATMOSPHERE.

What's the solution?

.....➔ (Recycle more, duh.)



3 thrift stores in a 5-mile radius.

Hmmm...

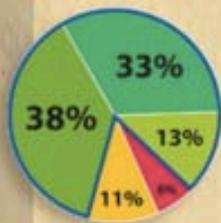


8 drop boxes in a 5-mile radius.

*Example ZIP code 60463

64% OF PEOPLE DO NOT WANT TO DRIVE MORE THAN 5 MILES TO DROP OFF THEIR REUSABLE CLOTHING & SHOES.

84% of people find convenience of location and access important in choosing where to discard reusable clothing and shoes.



■ Most Important ■ Very Important ■ Somewhat Important
■ Less Important ■ Not Important

Convenience is the name of the game.



4 OUT OF 7 PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO SHOP AT A BUSINESS IF THEY KNOW IT IS HOSTING A TEXTILE RECYCLING BIN.

DOES YOUR CITY RECYCLE TEXTILE WASTE?



77%

OF PEOPLE THINK CITIES SHOULD INCLUDE TEXTILE RECYCLING IN MUNICIPAL RECYCLING PROGRAMS.

SOURCES
 1. www.usagain.com/huffington-post-infographics-march-2012
 2. <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/materials/textiles.htm>

Appendix 4

Simple Recycling info Graphic

THE LIFE CYCLE OF SECONDHAND CLOTHING

What happens to your recycled used clothing?

Once a resident determines that their clothing, shoes, handbags, or household textiles have reached the end of their useful life, materials are collected by Simple Recycling and collected clothing is sorted and graded for condition.

10-20%

Top quality materials are sold to local thrift stores where they create access to low cost clothing and jobs for local residents.

80%

The vast majority of clothing collected is not resaleable in the U.S. so it is further sorted for international export or broken down for raw materials.



Thrift industry employs nearly 100,000 workers in the U.S. with over \$1 billion wages paid. In addition, private sector recyclers create an additional 15,000 to 20,000 jobs nationally.²

The textile recycling process follows the conventional recycling maxim of

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

simplerecycling

45%

Reused and Repurposed
Majority is exported as
secondhand clothing.



30%

Recycled and Converted
Reclaimed wiping rags are
used in various ways as
industrial and residential
absorbents.



20%

Recycled into Fiber
Post-consumer fiber is used
to make home insulation,
carpet padding, and raw
material for the automotive
industry.



Only 5% ends up as waste.

Sources:

- ¹ EPS 2009 Federal MSW waste study; 3.8 billion lbs. recovered divided by 2010 U.S. Census Population 310 million
- ² "Textile Recycling in the U.S." Report submitted to SMART by Dr. Jana Hawley PhD, Univ. of Missouri 2009
- ³ EPA 2009 Federal MSW waste study.

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