

POST-CONSUMER FASHION DISPOSAL BEHAVIOUR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CIRCULAR FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKAN GEN Z CONSUMERS

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Abstract. Addressing the negative effects of fast fashion waste on the environment, this paper is intended to investigate post-consumer behaviour in fashion disposal practices. The research was conducted as a qualitative study, where participants were interviewed with semi-structured questions. The study examined Jacoby's Disposition Decision Model as a framework to investigate how the Sri Lankan Gen Z consumers dispose of their clothing, while exploring the factors that affect those decisions. The findings show that disposing of clothing is not a purely rational or environmentally conscious decision. Instead, it is influenced by everyday factors like cultural norms, sentimental attachment to clothing, inadequate infrastructure for disposal, and straightforward practicality. The study also presents a context-specific modification of Jacoby's model, identifying six key context-specific disposal methods within the targeted population. The findings of this study will facilitate the stakeholders within the post-consumer waste ecosystem in Sri Lanka to form effective strategic decisions towards a circular economy.

Keywords. *Circular economy; Gen Z; Jacoby's disposition model; Post-consumer Disposal Behaviour; Textile waste*

1. Introduction

The fashion industry has been contributing significantly to the economy by providing employment to more than 300 million people and contributing over 2% to the GDP ([Arrigo, 2021](#); [Bailey et al., 2022](#)). Along with this expansion of fashion comes a massive increase in the generation of textiles. The demand for textiles approaches 100 million tons a year globally, with call-to-action concerning recycling rates currently at a critically low point. The disposal of post-consumer textiles often ends up in landfills or is burned because of the reduced lifespan of garments ([Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020](#)). Waste is classified as pre- and post-consumer waste, and Post-Consumer Textile Waste (PCTW) has been rising as an emerging issue for the environment ([Han & Won, 2018](#)). In most countries around the world, including Sri Lanka, waste textile products are mostly disposed of through landfill and unofficial disposal, putting pressure on waste management services ([Nayak & Patnaik, 2021](#)). The circular economy is a solution for the "take, make, dispose" approach in the current take-make-dispose economy in the fashion industry. The effectiveness of a circular fashion system depends on consumer participation in the disposal phase. Without an understanding of consumer motivations and behaviours, circular fashion initiatives would fail.

Current literature highlights that have primarily concentrated on pre- and purchase-stage fashion consumer behaviours, with limited attention devoted to PCTW disposal. When considering fashion disposal, there is more of an emphasis placed on the quantity of waste generated, without concern for emotional, cultural, or motivational spheres of influence in fashion disposal practices ([Gunawardana & Perera, 2015](#)). Regarding empirical literature in Sri Lanka specifically, there has been limited inquiry into Gen Z fashion disposal. Gen Z has the perception of being an environmentally conscious generation, while the existence of a discrepancy exists regarding personal fashion disposal attitudes ([Niinimäki et al., 2020](#)). PCTW models have been piecemealed with limited application to the digitally driven world. Jacoby's Disposition Model will serve to fill these theoretical gaps. This paper provides practical implications for a consumer-oriented approach for a circular economy, which is aligned with the culture and infrastructure in developing nations. Moreover, while identifying how Sri Lankan Generation Z consumers dispose of their clothing according to the categories outlined in Jacoby's Disposition Model, including donation, resale, reuse, storage, and discarding, this paper also develops a disposition model that is tailored to the Sri Lankan PCTW system. Hence, the study provides practical implications for policy makers, fashion brands, and other stakeholders who are concerned with managing PCTW in Sri Lanka.

2. Literature review

The fast fashion industry operates using the linear approach: "take, make, dispose." This is oriented toward speed and affordability, and the need for continuous new products. This approach has made fashion more accessible through the work of brands such as Inditex (Zara) and H&M. These have damaged the planet significantly ([Bick et al., 2018](#)). It uses 93 billion m³ of water resources annually and 1.2 billion tons CO₂-equivalent annually, which is set to increase by more than 50% in 2030 ([Bailey et al., 2022](#)). Textile waste demonstrates the inefficiency of this system. The per-capita waste rate in Europe is approximately 11 kg per year, with that of the U.S. estimated at approximately 37 kg per year ([Dillon et al., 2018](#)). Currently, less than 1% of fabrics are turned into new clothes, thereby wasting precious materials ([MacArthur, 2017](#)). Artificial fibres such as polyester comprise more than 60% of fabrics, thereby increasing wastage. Every rinse contributes to microplastics, estimated to dump 500,000 tons of microfibers into oceans on a yearly basis, equivalent to more than 50 billion plastic bottles ([Boucher & Friot, 2017](#)).

The negative effects of fast fashion result from its mass production, the rate of fashion trends, and carbon-emitting globalized supply chains with large transportation distances. In other developing nations, the overuse of water and disposal of untreated chemical wastes continue to impair the environment ([Farrant et al., 2010](#); [Islam, 2025](#)). Burning textiles and dumping in landfills continue to raise concerns over air, greenhouse gas emissions, and the loss of recycling and reuse opportunities ([Islam, 2025](#); [Lee et al., 2021](#)). The Circular Economy (CE) is a crucial paradigm shift to grow without consuming resources and has three principles such as eliminating waste and pollution, keeping products and materials at their highest value, and regenerating natural systems ([MacArthur, 2017](#)). In the fashion industry, the application of CE is the concept of reducing, reusing, and recycling. Reducing entails cutting resource consumption and

wastage through effective design and controlled consumption, while reusing stands for extending the life span of the garment through donation, resale, and second-hand markets. Studies reveal that reusing 100 garments can compensate for 60–85 newly produced garments, reduce the effect on global warming by 14%, and human toxicity by 45% ([Farrant et al., 2010](#)). Mechanical and chemical recycling can recover materials, but they are challenged by fiber mixtures, dye migration, and the cost of recycling. Waste-to-X technologies convert non-reclaimable textiles to bio-oil, charcoal, nanofibers, and asphalt additives, although this is often seen as downcycling and not fully circular ([Shahid et al., 2024](#); [Stanescu, 2021](#)). There is a great need to transition from the linear approach practised by fast fashion to the concept of the CE.

2.1. POST CONSUMER FASHION DISPOSAL BEHAVIOR

Behaviour related to disposal accounts for post-use actions with products, whether stored away, put aside, or discarded ([Jacoby et al., 1977](#)). Such product disposal affects routes to disposal (waste sent to landfill, incinerated, recycled, repaired, donated) rather than the ultimately harmful effects. Waste generation may be a generation of materials discarded during production (scrap) or post-use materials (consumer waste) (Waddill. Consumer waste is post-consumer materials ([Hofmann et al., 2023](#)).

2.1.2 Post-consumer apparel waste: global context

A consequence of fast fashion has been the acceleration of fashion product generation and disposal. The fashion industry annually produces more than 100 billion pieces of clothing and 92 million tons of textile waste each year, estimated to reach 134 million tons of textile waste in 2030, provided that the trends continue ([Shamsuzzaman & Islam, 2025](#)). More than half of that amount is PCTW. Meanwhile, recycling rates remain relatively low at 15 to 20%, with the remainder generally being sent to landfills or incinerated ([Grayson et al., 2022](#)). Both practices have severe effects on the environment. When the waste is dumped into landfills, methane is released ([DeVoy et al., 2021](#); [Li et al., 2010](#); [Salem et al., 2008](#)). Incineration wastes the materials' value while also releasing pollutants such as carbon dioxide. Synthetic fibres also pose a risk of microfibers. Polyester and nylon release microfibers during wash and disposal, and a staggering 500,000 tons of these end up in oceans each year ([Shahid et al., 2024](#)). Inequality exists in waste management. Over consumers belong to richer sections of society, and lower-income communities are exposed to even more waste because of a lack of access to recycling units and a tendency to live near waste dumping areas ([Liu et al., 2023](#); [Naghiebalsadati et al., 2025](#); [Shahid et al., 2024](#)). The rate of textile waste per capita is higher in richer sections of society, but waste and waste dumping go into lower-income communities. Environmental injustice in textile waste dispersals and dumping is indicated by the presence of waste dumping points and sites in lower-income communities worldwide ([Shahid et al., 2024](#)). High-speed consumption and production of textile waste are a feature of high-income societies. Only 15-20% of textile waste can be processed by recycling units ([Mim et al., 2025](#)).

Consumer disposal pathways show distinct motivators and systemic consequences. Donations have remained the most preferred disposition practice among Western consumers ([Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2012](#)). Altruism, ease of disposal, and guilt

avoidance experienced by consumers because of disposing of garments that could still be useful, drive this practice among consumers ([Lai & Chang, 2020](#)). However, second-hand garments are usually baled and shipped to developing countries, which may have a devastating impact on textile industries there and lead to a practice of waste dumping, including poor-quality garments in the bales sold to these countries ([DeVoy et al., 2021](#)). Resale is also rapidly evolving through online platforms (Depop, Poshmark, Vinted) and is predominantly led by Gen Z, fueled primarily by profit and social validation ([Cervellon et al., 2022](#); [Park & Lin, 2020](#)). Although helping in circularity, it is functioning in the remit of large consumption. Discarding is prevalent, especially in the fast fashion industry for cheap clothing, because of a disposable mentality, a lack of convenient alternatives, a lack of environmental concern, and the perceived low value of the garment ([Norum, 2017](#)). In the United States, 66% of disposed of clothing is sent to a landfill, with 19% being incinerated, according to the EPA ([Dillon et al., 2018](#)), Recycling and Repair remain niche markets, as recycling is hindered by a low level of awareness, inadequate collection infrastructure, and some technical difficulties in dealing with mixed fibers ([Laitala, 2014](#)); also, a lack of skills/time, as well as perceptions that replacement is cheaper/easier, hinder repair ([Diddi & Yan, 2019](#)). On one hand, disposal in sorted PCTW includes donation and reuse, while for unsorted PCTW, it includes general waste. Socio-demographic variables such as education level, family size, and urbanization influence textile waste and responsible practices. The influence of smaller family size and education levels implies the requirement for focused education and infrastructure in consumer waste practices ([Islam, 2025](#); [Lee et al., 2021](#)). Despite the issue of concern for the environment, convenience, trends, and affordability can ultimately play a stronger role in behaviour, as identified in the attitude-behavior disconnect ([Mim et al., 2025](#)). Younger generations have the issue of social pressure and the internet influencing impulsive consumption and disposal ([Liu et al., 2023](#)).

2.1.2 Gen Z and PCTW Disposal Behaviour

For Gen Z, disposal is both practical and an identity regulation and an online digital self-presentation issue ([Harahap et al., 2023](#)). Clothing is a significant self-expression vehicle, and disposal impacts both physical and online self-presentation. Emotional attachments (memory, aesthetic, self-definition) may delay disposal and redirect disposal toward prosocial and deliberate avenues such as donation ([Cervellon et al., 2022](#); [Oliveira et al., 2024](#)). The emotional non-permanence mediated by fast fashion technological trends accelerates disposal. Digital platforms impact the disposal practices of Gen Z in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, these platforms offer the possibility of reuse through peer-to-peer second-hand online selling platforms, which facilitates a 'digital disposal experience' in tune with online engagements ([Radtke et al., 2022](#)). Social validation, aesthetic presentation, and monetary gain can render the act of disposal highly visible and entrepreneurial. On the other hand, platforms such as TikTok and Instagram accelerate micro-trends and over-consumption. Haul culture encourages large quantities and short-term possession, resulting in the escalation of textile waste ([Birtwistle & Moore, 2007](#); [Degli Esposti et al., 2024](#)). At the same time, the guilt associated with over-consumption on the part of many Gen Z consumers can result in donation or discard ([Gwozdz et al., 2017](#)).

2.1.3 Behavioural differences in developed vs. developing countries

In most developed regions, there are organized donation avenues, second-hand sales, textile recycling, or retailer collection programs ([Shahid et al., 2024](#)). Second-hand practices also differ from place to place. Second-hand is considered treasure hunting by the young, while in the Northern regions, circular models, brand take-back, and policy-led initiatives such as the European Union's 2022 Sustainable and Circular Textiles Strategy are more prevalent.

Infrastructural deficiencies and a general lack of understanding result in textiles being commingled with ordinary trash, being dumped or burned in landfills or open dumping or burning sites ([Islam, 2025](#); [Madushani & Rathnasiri, 2022](#)). Variations occur based on economic, cultural, or sustainable available alternatives ([De Fonseka, 2023](#)). Capacity can facilitate change, where policies promote recycling 25% of textiles with 2 million reclaimed fibres, take-back programs, renting, or resale (China's initiatives). However, most countries in the Developing World practice dumping or incineration due to human capacity or infrastructure deficiencies ([Sinha, 2022](#)). There are tremendous challenges in disposal for sustainable post-consumer textiles in developing world countries at an infrastructural level ([Khan et al., 2022](#)). In the Developing World, there is public behaviour against sustainable practices involving ever-expanding consumption patterns related to expanding middle-class spending patterns, in combination with entrenched poverty ([Wu et al., 2022](#)). In general, developed countries can facilitate sustainable practices at an infrastructural or policy level with less individual public interest, whereas countries such as Sri Lanka engage in very poor or ineffective collection practices, especially regarding second-hand or reuse outlets in terms of infrastructure or facilities available.

2.1.4 Barriers and Motivations in Textile Disposal in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka reveals an imbalance between the leadership in sustainable apparel manufacturing and the poor disposal of post-consumer textile waste. ([De Fonseka, 2023](#)). However, the disposal of PCTW in Sri Lanka remains largely unorganized, with collection, reuse, sell, and small-scale collectors prolonging the lifecycle, but no systematic recycling, very little source segregation, and discarded garments going to the normal municipal waste stream, with non-repairable garments going into domestic waste for disposal by burning ([Herath et al., 2022](#)). In Colombo, there are disposal patterns driven by infrastructural shortcomings, practicality, and local culture, where blue-collar workers can sell their used garments, but little reuse or donation by students or professionals, resulting in consumers dumping fabric waste along with domestic waste or burning them ([De Fonseka, 2023](#)).

Sustainability in the Sri Lankan context has broad aspects for consumers—economic, social, ethical, and environmental responsibility, and governance. It covers aspects of products and organizations, such as transparency, treatment of workers, accountability, and environmental practices, influencing trust and post-consumer behaviours in the brand ([Nicolăescu et al., 2015](#); [Weerasinghe et al., 2023](#)). However, despite increased consumer and brand attention to sustainability, there exist challenges in sustainable disposal practices, namely, a lack of large-scale textile collection, sorting,

and recycling facilities and capabilities in the country's municipalities, causing landfills and open burning of clothes, releasing dangerous chemicals and toxins to the air ([Geegamage et al., 2024](#)). There exist cultural issues in the secondary market in Sri Lanka, which associate second-hand clothes in Sri Lanka's cultural heritage and perception, by linking them to poverty, dirt, and low social class and prestige in the community ([Vidanage et al., 2024](#)). Gaps in policy exist in the Sri Lankan EPR, which lacks sufficient and favourable incentives to recycle, and lacks favorable facilities and cooperation between the public and the private sectors, particularly in the small and medium enterprises of Sri Lanka to recycle clothes in the country ([De Fonseka, 2023](#); [Madushani & Rathnasiri, 2022](#)). Technical barriers also persist, including difficulty recycling blended fabrics and problems from chemical/dye contamination. Hygiene and contamination concerns can discourage.

The Sri Lankan Gen Z generation exhibits the existence of environmental concern and the lack of sustainable disposal practices because of the infrastructure, cultural issues, and trend-based consumption patterns enabled through social media platforms; this "attitude-behavior gap" has similarities globally ([Gwozdz et al., 2017](#); [Madushani & Rathnasiri, 2022](#)). Lack of engagement is due to limited awareness regarding the products to use, lack of awareness regarding second-hand materials, and lack of awareness regarding upcycled fashion; however, concerns regarding the environment, along with the need to develop fashion technology, act as motivators to change current practices ([Madushani & Rathnasiri, 2022](#)). In the broader context, the existence of the crisis hampers long-term investment. Specifically, during the current COVID-19 era, Sri Lankan clothing companies emphasized financial sustainability and workers' rights over environmental improvements; this is because they consider current green waste technology unviable from a financial perspective; coupled with the lack of enforcement and poor infrastructure, the CE implementation gap gets widened ([Dissanayake & Weerasinghe, 2021](#); [Weerasinghe et al., 2023](#)). As such, the current literature highlights the need to develop strategies that take into account the context; namely, small-scale recycling systems, waste collection strategies, and awareness strategies to remove stigma from recycling systems—to shift current practices toward the development of a more sustainable textile infrastructure ([Islam, 2025](#); [Khan et al., 2022](#); [Mim et al., 2025](#); [Shamsuzzaman & Islam, 2025](#)).

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is prominently used in the study of sustainable consumer behaviour. Yet, the Theory of Planned Behaviour has been found ineffective in the case of complex and context-dependent decisions, such as the disposal of the used garment ([Bamberg & Möser, 2007](#)). This issue will be rectified using a model designed specifically for disposal in the study. Researchers will utilize the Disposition Decision Model by Jacoby et al. as the primary framework in analyzing the forces that drive and constrain Sri Lankan Gen Z consumers in the disposal process after they have consumed their clothing, as well as the fate of the disposed clothing. The framework recognizes consumptions as a process that eventually leads to three different possible disposition routes: keep, dispose, and dispose-temporarily ([Jacoby et al., 1977](#)), with additional routes that include: reselling, donating, discarding, reusing, and storing, which aptly illustrates the flow process wherein the garments will go after they are no longer desired.

Over time, the model has been expanded in later applications to reflect broader real-world disposal practices and influencing conditions, including behaviours such as burying and burning, as well as variables related to social consciousness, everyday practices, and problem-solving considerations. As such, it is seen that Jacoby's framework is still highly applicable for studying garment disposal behaviour as it systematically describes the disposition decision space and can be used as a tool for developing strategies for reducing waste and improving disposition practices ([Jacoby et al., 1977](#)).

3. Methodology

This qualitative study applied an interpretive pragmatic approach to explore the PCTW disposal practices of urban Gen Z youth in Sri Lanka ([Saunders et al., 2011](#)). It is ideal to apply the interpretivist approach in the research since it aims to examine how the subjective meaning and attitudes of people influence their waste-disposal practices. On the other hand, pragmatism enables the researcher to employ flexible methods and problem-focused approaches to produce practical findings. Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants met specific criteria relevant to the study, allowing in-depth and context-specific insights, whereby certain predetermined criteria were used to pick the respondents, namely: (a) belonging to the Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), (b) coming from an urban setting in Sri Lanka, (c) actively engaged in fashion consumption, especially fast fashion, and (d) having been involved in the disposal of clothes before. ([Hong et al., 2024](#); [QI, 2024](#); [Schiaroli et al., 2024](#)). By employing in-depth, semi-structured one-on-one interviews that lasted about 45 minutes each, the data was collected ([Creswell & Poth, 2016](#)). Semi-structured interviews based on Jacoby's Disposition Model were conducted to collect information about consumer attitudes, emotional attachment, apparel value, and apparel disposal. Non-verbal cues were considered while collecting data. Thematic analysis was done using the MAXQDA software, following the guidelines proposed by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), including the phases of getting familiar with the information, Coding, developing themes, and refining themes.

4. Results

The study helped to generate findings on fashion consumption habits, which explained how Gen Z consumers in Sri Lanka dispose of their clothing after use. This indicates that the disposal of clothing is not only dependent on practical aspects but also on the attitudes and intentions of the consumer towards sustainability and the future. The theme of disposal is composed of two sub-themes and seven key codes, which indicate that both habitual actions and intentions of consumers are responsible for the disposal of clothing after use.

Gen Z consumers commonly dispose of clothing that is no longer usable through practices such as burning or discarding, often influenced by limitations in formal waste collection systems. One participant explained, *"...If an item is completely unusable, it is burned. I generally do not dispose of clothing through regular waste collection because garbage collectors do not accept clothing items..."* This response suggests that disposal choices are shaped not only by personal preference but also by the convenience of the waste collection system.

Apart from direct disposal, some Gen Z individuals utilise unused clothing in alternative household applications. As one participant stated, *"... I typically use them for wiping or cleaning purposes or store them for such use. By doing this, I feel that I am making use of items that I no longer wear. This approach also makes me feel comfortable and satisfied as I am not discarding them unnecessarily..."* This indicates that repurposing clothing provides both practical value and emotional satisfaction, allowing individuals to avoid waste while feeling responsible in their consumption behaviour. Emotional attachment also plays a significant role in clothing retention among Gen Z. Some participants highlighted sentimental reasons for keeping garments, particularly those associated with meaningful relationships or life stages. For instance, one respondent noted, *"...For instance, I have like 3 or 4 outfits like that because my favourite people gave me as gifts. So, I want to keep them as souvenirs,"* while another shared, *"... haven't given my school uniform to anyone. I have washed it and folded it, and it is kept in my closet."* These responses demonstrate that sentimental value often exceeds functional usefulness, leading to longer retention of clothing items.

Another common practice is inventive reusing, which involves repurposing clothing for household purposes instead of throwing it away. Participants mentioned various forms of reuse, including *"... I reuse clothing items that are no longer worn by repurposing them into bags of other usable items,"* and *"... since I no longer wear the item, it can instead be used for cleaning purposes."* However, participants also acknowledged limits to reuse, as one respondent explained, *"...if an item can no longer be worn due to its condition or being outdated, disposal becomes unavoidable. In such cases, even donating the item is not practical if it cannot be used by others. And it ultimately has to be discarded..."* Another participant highlighted intergenerational influence, stating, *"...My mother also reuses old clothing items for cleaning purposes, especially for carpets and for cleaning brushes, chairs, and similar household items..."* Ultimately, these responses suggest that Gen Z values extending garment life, often learning such practices within the household context.

While awareness of clothing resale exists among Gen Z, it is not widely practised due to moral discomfort. One participant explained, *"...Because I wore it already. But I feel bad if someone's wearing and like he, if he or she purchases and gets that thing to wear, it's bad. That's why I donate these things, OK,"* another participant added, *"... Yeah, I heard of it, but I don't like to resell my clothes."* These views indicate that although resale practices are known, participants prefer donation over resale, believing it is inappropriate to exchange used clothing for monetary value. Recycling-oriented disposal practices were also seen among participants, reflecting environmental awareness. As one participant stated, *"...I believe that if an item is no longer in use, it should be given to someone else rather than being discarded. Alternatively, it can be used for cleaning purposes or donated to institutions that recycle such items..."* This highlights Gen Z's awareness of environmentally responsible disposal methods that prioritize reuse and recycling over waste.

Donation emerged as a particularly valued practice, especially when garments remained wearable. Participants described donating clothes to workers, friends, or individuals in need. One participant explained, *"I live in an apartment, and we have*

workers who come in and out like me, so when we donate clothes, we sort them into women’s and men’s items and let them choose what they want. Sometimes they take the clothes for themselves, and other times they pass them on to people they know who really need them.” ...Similar emotions were expressed through statements such as “...actually, I donate some of my clothes if they can be worn...,” and “I have long sleeve shirts I gave to a friend of mine who comes from a poor family. Clothes that I can’t wear anymore but are still in good condition. I give it to him, even some clothes that I haven’t worn at all...” These responses illustrated that donation is both a socially responsible and emotionally rewarding disposal method for Gen Z consumers.

At last, despite the limited availability of structured and incentive-based sustainable disposal systems in Sri Lanka, participants expressed a willingness to listen to them. One participant expressed, “...some countries pay around 50 cents per cloth. So, there are ways that people can engage in those, but I don’t think in Sri Lanka they do not have a thing like that...” while another stated, “...Yeah, I guess I’ll feel happy, cause then I’m not engaging in environmental pollution...” These responses showed a willingness among Gen Z to participate in sustainable clothing disposal initiatives, suggesting potential acceptance of future systems aimed at reducing environmental pollution. Discarding and burning clothing are common practices among Gen Z, while sustainable clothing disposal practices such as donating, recycling, repurposing, reselling, and thrifting are also common among fast fashion consumers.

As shown in Figure 1, disposal practices related to fast fashion products have mainly been divided into two broad areas, namely, common disposal practices and behavioural intentions and future orientation. Common disposal practices involve burning used clothes, discarding unusable ones, storing unused clothes, reusing/repurposing, reselling, recycling, and donating. The behavioural intentions and future orientation dimension pinpoint the willingness to adhere to sustainable approaches, manifesting in an ecologically responsible pattern of disposal behaviour.

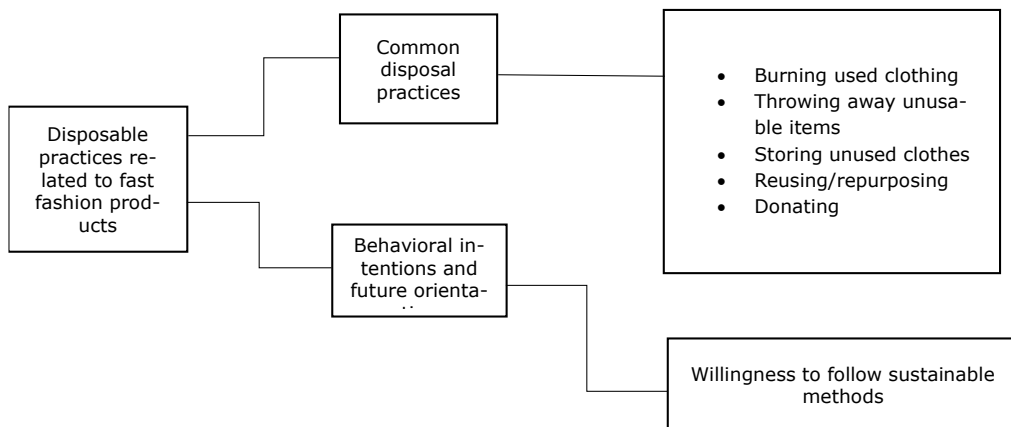


Figure 1, Theme Development from Codes – Disposal practices related to fast fashion products
(Source: Authors’ creation)

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that culture, emotional factors, infrastructural constraints, and practicality influence Sri Lankan Gen Z fashion consumption behaviour, which ranges from impulsive to responsible behaviour. There are six different modes of disposing of clothes: burning, discarding, storing unused items, reuse/repurposing, recycling, and donating. ([Jacoby et al., 1977](#)). These findings illustrate the importance of beliefs, personal values, facility provision, and accessibility in influencing these disposal options ([Birtwistle & Moore, 2007](#); [Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013](#)). Nevertheless, the findings suggest the existence of variations in the context, which indicates a crisis in the applicability of the model with the Sri Lankan context, as stated in [McNeill et al. \(2020\)](#). Burning and disposing of clothes continue to be practised widely due to sociocultural perceptions regarding sanitation and emotional recovery, combined with the belief in the quality and lack of disposal facilities ([Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2012](#); [Gregson & Crewe, 2003](#)). This phenomenon can be classified under Jacoby's "throw away" group; however, it is largely affected by structural factors and the convenience approach ([Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013](#); [Lang & Armstrong, 2018](#)).

Unworn clothes were saved because of emotional value, intended use, and economic value, consistent with the "keeping it" aspect of Jacoby's Disposition Model ([Jacoby et al., 1977](#); [Kleine & Baker, 2004](#); [McNeill et al., 2020](#)). Use and conversion, such as converting clothes into housewares, was of use, not an environmentally based practice. Recycling was the least-observed practice, hindered by inadequate infrastructure and support, emphasizing the attitude-behaviour discrepancy ([Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002](#)). Donation became the prominent practice and was of moral-emotional provincialism, not environmentally based, consistent with the "give away" subset of Jacoby's Disposition Model ([Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2012](#); [Gregson & Crewe, 2003](#)). While Jacoby's Disposition Model can be applied effectively, practices in the Global South must be adapted when considering cultural practices influencing the disposal of fashion goods ([McNeill et al., 2020](#)).

As shown in Figure 2, clothing items are divided into two main disposition paths: keeping the item or getting rid of it permanently. Under the keeping path, items may be used to serve the original purpose, converted to serve a new purpose, or stored. Under the permanent disposal path, items may be burned, donated, thrown away, or recycled. This model highlights context-specific disposal choices and reflects how Gen Z consumers in Sri Lanka adopt multiple practical and culturally influenced approaches when deciding how to manage unwanted clothing items.

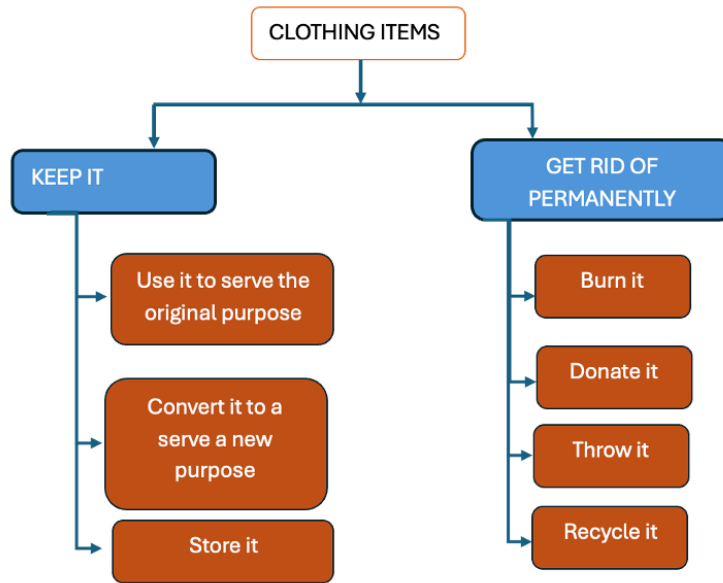


Figure 1, Context- specific disposition model for the Sri Lankan Gen Z consumers (Source: Authors’ creation)

One major point of divergence lies in the emergence of context-specific behaviours, particularly burning used clothing, which is not accounted for in Jacoby’s original framework. Burning reflects socio-cultural beliefs related to hygiene, closure, and personal order, illustrating how disposal behaviours can extend beyond rational or market-based decision-making. Furthermore, recycling, although conceptually aligned with sustainable disposal, is not explicitly incorporated into Jacoby’s traditional configuration. The limited adoption of this practice in Sri Lanka reveals the model’s tendency to prioritize individual choice, while overlooking the critical role of external structures. This indicates that disposition behaviours must be examined within the broader structural and environmental contexts that shape and constrain consumer practices. Hence, while the model remains useful as a foundational framework, it requires contextual adaptation to account for informal practices, personal values, and culturally embedded meanings of clothing in the Sri Lankan context.

6. Conclusion

This study utilized the Disposition Decision Model formulated by Jacoby to examine the clothing disposal behaviour among the Gen Z youth in Sri Lanka. The findings revealed that the decisions were not entirely rational or environmentally motivated but were influenced by culture, sentimentality, poor disposal infrastructure, and practical constraints. Though there is awareness about sustainability among the Sri Lankan youth, attitude-behaviour gaps were also identified among the participants as they continue to burn their clothing, dispose of it with other domestic waste, or hold onto unused clothing due to poor infrastructure rather than a lack of awareness. Behaviours such as donating, reusing, and repurposing were identified as positive actions among the participants. Donating fulfils the moral and emotional need, while reusing the clothing for home use fulfils the practical need to extend the life of the garment. Sentimentality towards clothing

with memories also influences the retention of behaviour. Though the study utilized the Disposition Decision Model formulated by Jacoby, it should be adapted to suit the Sri Lankan context as a developing country. The research has also depicted that there is a pressing need for improvement in facilities management related to the concept of circularity in Sri Lanka, particularly regarding collection points of textiles, sorting, recycling facilities, and reuse practices at the community level. Future research should place greater emphasis on studying underrepresented regions to better understand culturally specific drivers, barriers, and practical circular economic solutions related to fashion disposal. Expanding research in these contexts would contribute to a more inclusive and globally representative understanding of post-consumer fashion behaviour.

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