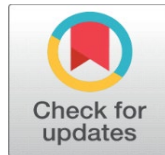
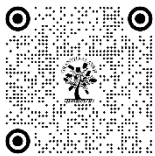


# VASTRAVIKAS: UNRAVELING INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE GARMENT LEGACY

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## ABSTRACT

The clothing and textile industry, a cornerstone of India's rich heritage, is shifting towards sustainable practices by emphasizing reducing, reusing, and recycling materials. This approach ensures that waste decomposes naturally, promoting sustainability. The retail sector in India has grown significantly, evolving from a seller-driven to a buyer-driven market. Historically, India's retailing started with barter systems, exchanging goods of similar value without money, which played a vital role in the economy and offered solutions to modern cash flow issues.

This study examines the recycling practices involving clothes collected by hawkers. Survey results show that urban respondents understand recycling as creating new items from old ones. Hawkers gather used garments, sort, inspect, clean, and then produce useful recycled products. These recycled garments are often bought by middle-class families at affordable prices for their housemaids.

To promote sustainable practices in the textile industry, several strategies are recommended. Organizing workshops and training sessions on upcycling can help individuals repurpose old clothing creatively. Establishing community repair centers or providing resources for basic clothing repair techniques can emphasize the importance of repairing and modifying garments. Educational campaigns and community events can promote clothing donations, preserve cultural heritage, and reduce waste. Supporting sustainable textiles involves encouraging local artisans, weavers, and the textile industry, and urging designers to incorporate traditional techniques and fabrics. Awareness campaigns through social media and community events can educate people about the traditional Indian model of garment reuse, further promoting sustainability in the textile industry.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Fashion, Garment Reuse, Eco-Friendly, Unorganized Market, Barter System, Recycling



## 1. INTRODUCTION

India is a country that has witnessed and developed the concept of sustainability and made it a practice of daily routine since generations through its rich civilization. Indians have always practiced sustainability, the habit of recycling and reuse for its daily utilization products whether it be a gadget, clothes, foods or lifestyle.

From ancient times to today, textiles and clothing have played an important role in our daily lives [Jain \(n.d.\)](#). India was majorly using cotton and silk fabrics and these are the fabrics obtained from nature and have the property to biodegrade with time. During the early times and now as well the old clothes and other dress materials like

sarees and old bedsheets, old dupattas, curtains were reused to make “kathai” “Mats” and blankets with a daring stitch.

This way they utilized the old fabrics putting layers over layers and convert then to new product which has added strength and increased durability. These new products had long life and were used from generation to generation.

The apparel industry is a collection of trades and industries along the apparel production and value chain, starting with the textile industry (producers of cotton, wool, fur, and textiles) and accessories. From the fashion industry with embroidery to clothing retailers, second-hand clothing trade, and fabric recycling. [Narang \(2018\)](#) Indian textile and apparel industry is strong in the entire value chain from textiles, yarns, and fabrics to apparel.

Indian textile and apparel industry serves variety of products. These products have a wide range of segments that's includes traditional handloom products, traditional textiles products, products of special weaves, pure silk, pure woolen products and a good range of variety of handicrafts. Indian households and small sector commercials had always been practicing the use of old rags for the purpose of cleaning, dusting, stuffing inside cushions, toys, pillows, mattress and converting old silk sarees to pillow covers, cushion covers, curtain, bed spreads, puppets, dolls while using patch work techniques.

Passing on these traditional items made out of old silk, cotton fabrics was the common practice in Indian household. It is also the method of passing on traditional items preciously made from one generation to next. Generations take pride in inheriting these traditional items which were usually made of waste and unused first product [Jain & Gupta \(n.d.\)](#).

The organized sector consists of businesses that follow government guidelines. The organized sector includes companies registered with the government and following government guidelines and regulations. These companies usually have more resources such as capital and employees. Organized retail trade is a sector comprising businesses engaged in producing or selling goods. Organized retailing is about customers entering showrooms and purchasing products. [Akhter \(n.d.\)](#)

The unorganized sector consists of small businesses that do not follow government guidelines. These businesses have fewer resources like money and employees than the organized sector. [Shrestha \(2008\)](#) The main reason is that they have a smaller market and sell their products at a lower price. A good example of unorganized retail is markets and pop-up shops [Vij \(n.d.\)](#)

In India the retail industry is renovating in a large way. It is undergoing a significant development in its organization and operations. Earlier, retailing in India was unorganized and can be seen into unorganized local markets having various small shops which were called as a small traditional Kiran stores or general stores having all sorts of product assortments. This structure has slowly reemerged as an organized retail with Malls and classified markets with assorted products with the participation of foreign retail giants [Sangvikar et al. \(2019\)](#). This organized retail gave consumers a better shopping experience. It also provided urbans more job opportunities. This is also helping less skilled nonurban people living in small towns in cities in search of work and employment [Dharejo et al. \(2022\)](#).

Low earning rates in villages and less opportunities are shifting many people who engage themselves on street vending in cities when they do not have any other option for livelihood. For them to become a street hawker is an easiest way to daily earnings and their survival. A large population of street vendors who usually are un skilled labors are serving the cities dense areas operating the barter system.

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Barter, the oldest form of commercial transaction, can be understood as the trading of good sor facilities without the use of currency. Most of us have known barter since early childhood. India has quite a very interesting history when we talk about the ancient practices of barter that were carried out. During the Vedic age, cows, shells, and even various metals were used as a medium of exchange. More and more businesses are embracing the idea of bartering [Khan \(n.d.\)](#). This is because bartering allows you to exchange goods and services through "trade credits" instead of using your cash reserve.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The textile and clothing industry is enriched with vibrant and thriving textile crafts and design treasures. Ecological practices in the field of textiles and clothing adhere to the principles of reduction, reuse, and recycling. New words appear almost daily as designers seek recognition and market interest for their products – upcycled, altered clothing, remade, recycled fashion, recycled style, etc. [Aram & Tryphena \(2017\)](#) In the daily life of many Indians, many recycling activities are seen which have been going on for a long time.

Earlier textile recycling was a small-scale industry in India, but today there are textile groups and MSME'S that work on importing of second-hand clothing to generate a variety of products such as recycled yarn, doormats, prayer mats, coverlets, and blanket. Textiles in India are now widely used for recycling and are supplied in both domestic and global markets. The recycled textile products that are supplied and circulated in domestic market, are mostly floor; door mats, towels, and rugs. Fibers obtained from recycling clothing are transformed first into cast-off

yarns and then weaved to be used in various textile products. These are also used as fillers in various cushioning purpose. Pre-used cotton fabric waste is also a big source of raw materials for the paper industry [Bairagi \(2014\)](#).

In India retail had been started since ancient times. In ancient India, weekly HAAT were organized where both seller and buyer gathered to conduct the process of retailing. It was an exchange of products in barter system or exchange of mudra to product. Previous was more popular. Modern retail system took a long transition phase to develop. The modern grocery stores or the “Baniye ki dukaan” now also known as Mom ‘n’ Pop stores is an example of phase of development from ancient to present time. It is still existing in India and hence, so Indian retailing system can be best understood as - organized and unorganized. The present concept of retailing also involves the interactions between a retailer and end consumer. This though has developed in many systems and magnitudes. It has grown into traditional retail stores, street shops in the local market, luxury multi-brand outlets, especially.

As department stores, specialty store, super market and hyper markets. Retail marketing has two aspects one is -in-store retailing and non-store retailing. In-store retail is also called brick and mortar stores like a department store, or a specialty store. This is an example of evolution of the massive organized retail industry. The major population of India are still dependent of an unorganized retail market. Today's Indian retail industry has evolved from the traditional unorganized retail to an organized retail providing both option of retailing to their customers [Vij \(n.d.\)](#).

Barter system is method doing the business, a financial instrument which was recognized in the economy eras before. It is a new concept today being less in use. A modest explanation of a barter system is the interchange of goods or facilities. It does not involve the use of printed or casted form of revenue. Barter is a method advanced based on motivation and a simple understanding of the exchange system. This was easy adaptable and best understood during that time and was successfully run in the absence of money. Barter is an international trade system through means of exchange of goods between two countries without the use of money. If barter is defined commercially or in term of corporate then it is system where exchange of goods against goods happened directly with company instead exchange of money against goods [Uyan \(2017\)](#).

In these cases, exchange happens between the manufacturers to manufacturers or retailers to retailers who are customers too. The value of the goods is estimated based on their demand. the monetary value is not calculated as such. The barter system involved exchange of goods, products and services between two or more people or company and money is not involved in such transactions. People and firms exchange goods and services based on corresponding evaluations of prices and goods.

The barter system is coming back in its new forms, which is more sophisticated and had applied with latest techniques to assist trading; for example, the Internet. In ancient times, the barter system was applied involving people of the same area, but now it is becoming global.

One of the most noteworthy benefits of bartering is the fact that money is its hard form is not involved, which is flawless for a world of growing income disparity and an altering labor force. Barter also offers much more suppleness, while users could trade alike goods [Schrader \(n.d.\)](#).

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Study of the traditional Indian model of sustainability
- To study the unorganized local barter system
- To survey and develop traditional sustainable models existing in India.

### 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is Exploratory cum Descriptive research. The study is completed by surveying street hawkers. Hawkers managed to use waste for recycling and reuse the waste in new forms done by people via a bartering system. it is common for discarded clothes to be collected and sold by informal waste pickers. The sample size was randomly selected from Kanpur, Delhi, Noida, and Greater Noida. They collect the clothes and exchange them for some goods and services.

A structured questionnaire was developed to understand and compare the behavior and methods of recycling being in practice in exchange of clothing or other related products and the methods to reuse the waste in new forms done by hawkers.

### 5. FINDINGS

The first inquiry was about the types of clothes used for recycling and collected by hawkers. The outcome of the survey revealed that most urban respondents that recycling is the process of creating new items from the old. By exchanging clothes with hawkers, they collect used or discarded garments from various sources. then they sorted and inspected the damaged fabric after washing, drying, and ironing the garment then finally hawkers gave recycled useful products. Middle-class families buy recycled garments at very affordable prices for their housemaids.

In [Table 1](#) types of clothes that are used for recycling are collected by hawkers and some products are made by recycling old clothes. by cleaning process of these data are from Kanpur, Delhi, Noida, and Greater Noida.

**Table 1**

Table 1 Types of Clothing Used for Recycling				
S.N.	NAME	LOCATION	TAKEN ITEMS	EXCHANGED ITEMS
1	Manoj	Beta 1 Greater Noida	Saree, trousers, men's shirt, dupatta	curtain from saree
2	Kamlesh	Greater Noida	Saree, salwar, t- shirts, trousers	Repair bags and zips of bags
3	Raju	Alpha 1 Greater Noida	Saree, pants, shirts, kurta, jeans, salwar	Repair household appliances
4	Surendra	Beta 1 Greater Noida	Men's t-shirts	They gave Imli powder and candies
5	Sunita	Beta 1 Greater Noida	Saree, bedsheets	mats from rugs of saree and bedsheet
6	Usha	Jagat farm Greater Noida	Saree, jeans, kurta, t- shirts	They gave utensils
7	Suraj	Sector 70 Noida	Pants, kurta	repair sewing machine
8	Amir	Greater Noida	Saree, bedsheets	Blankets
9	Kamal	Greater Noida	Old jeans, saree, pants	Footsteps made by waste fabric straps
10	Dinesh	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, shirts	Blankets

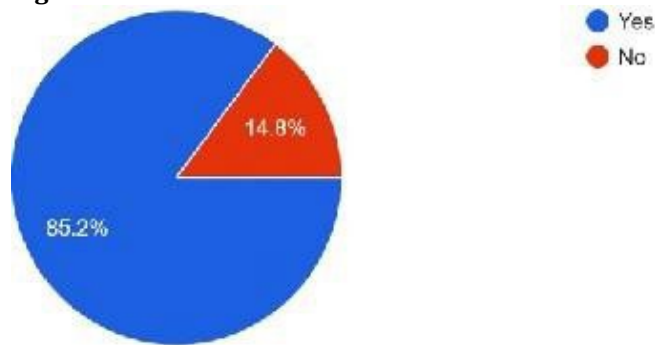
11	Laxmi	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, pants, shirts, kurta, jeans, salwar	Repair household appliances
12	Kavita	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, trousers, men's shirt, dupatta	curtain from saree
13	Ajay	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, bedsheets	repair sewing machine
14	Dilip	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, shirts	Blankets
15	Mohan	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, bedsheets	Blankets
16	Raman	Sector 70 Noida	Saree, bedsheets	curtain from saree
17	Jyoti	Sector 70 Noida	Men's t-shirts	mats from rugs of saree and bedsheet
18	Seema	Sector 70 Noida	Saree	Handbags, tote bag
19	Shyam	Kanpur	Saree, pants, shirts	Plastic container
20	Kailash	Kanpur	Saree, bedsheets	Handmade tablecloth by saree
21	Kallu	Kanpur	Saree, bedsheets, Men's t-shirts	Repair household appliances
22	Brijesh	Kanpur	Saree, pants, shirts, kurta, jeans, salwar	Blankets
23	Savita	Kanpur	Old jeans, saree, pants	Blankets
24	Meena	Kanpur	Saree	Handmade tablecloth by saree
25	Sushma	Kanpur	Saree, pants, shirts, kurta, jeans, salwar	Repair household appliances
26	Gautam	Kanpur	Saree, bedsheets	repair sewing machine
27	Sunder	Kanpur	Saree, bedsheets	repair sewing machine
28	Bharat	Kanpur	Saree, bedsheets	Blankets
29	Ravi	Kanpur	Old jeans, saree, pants	curtain from saree
30	Suman	Kanpur	Saree, shirts	mats from rugs of saree and bedsheet
31	Kiran	Kanpur	Saree, trousers, men's shirt, dupatta	Handbags, tote bag
32	Rakesh	Delhi	Saree, pants, shirts, kurta, jeans, salwar	Repair household appliances
33	Pankaj	Delhi	Saree, bedsheets	repair sewing machine
34	Vimal	Delhi	Saree, shirts	Blankets
35	Rajni	Delhi	Saree, bedsheets	curtain from saree
36	Pinku	Delhi	Men's t-shirts	Blankets
37	Bahadur	Delhi	Saree, jeans, kurta, t-shirts	mats from rugs of saree and bedsheet
38	Lallan	Delhi	Pants, kurta	Handbags, tote bag
39	Mangal	Delhi	Saree, bedsheets	Plastic container
40	Puspendra	West Delhi	Hair waste	Cumin seeds 5gm to 30gm approx.
41	Munna	West Delhi	Broken slipper	Peanuts, masala chana
42	Rajjo	West Delhi	Hair waste and garment	masala chana, spices
43	Amina	West Delhi	Saree, shirts	Repair household appliances
44	Naresh	West Delhi	Men's t-shirts	repair sewing machine
45	Jitu	West Delhi	Saree, bedsheets	Footsteps
46	Ashvin	West Delhi	Hair waste	Snacks, toffees, and candy
47	Geeta	West Delhi	Broken slipper	Rice
48	Munmun	West Delhi	Ripped bag	Handbags, tote bag
49	Sushma	West Delhi	Sarees	Plastic container
50	Mina	West Delhi	Shirts and kids wear	masala chana, spices



The study, based on an online survey of 610 respondents, found that a significant number of urban residents understand and engage in recycling textile waste, viewing it as a process of creating new items from old garments. Hawkers play a crucial role by collecting, sorting, and repurposing these garments, which are then purchased by middle-class families for their housemaids at affordable prices

Customer reviews on recycling textile waste are represented in [Figure 1](#) the number of people who know about textile recycling can reusing reused garments is 85.2%. many people are aware of textile recycling whereas 14.8% of respondents are unaware of the process and were not involved in the process so we can say that only 85.2% of the consumers are contributing to the silent barter system existing in the Indian market. With the concept of recycled fashion, individuals are sensitized that recycling has an optimistic influence on the globe and is valuable to society as it recovers the value of life, so people need to learn about recycling.

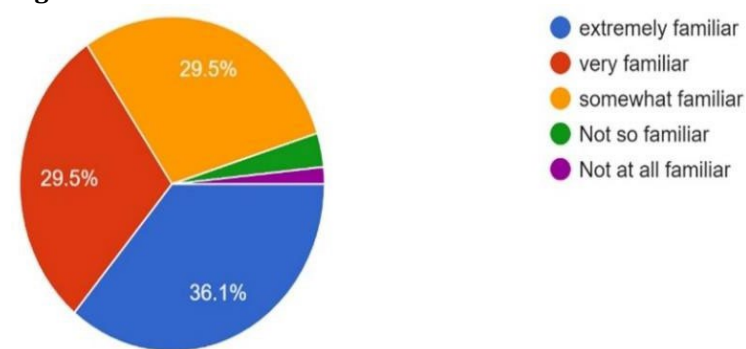
**Figure 1**



**Figure 1**

Similarly in [Figure 2](#) the extremely familiar 36.1% were involved in this silent barter system and contributed to it whereas 29.5% were less familiar and 29.5% were somewhat familiar. Whereas 4.9% were not at all contributing to the system.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2**

[Figure 3](#) represents the quality of the textile waste product reviews of customers are using recycled garment products out of 610 respondents 57.4% experienced good whereas 21.3% experienced excellent quality and 21.3% fair quality waste and recycled garment products.

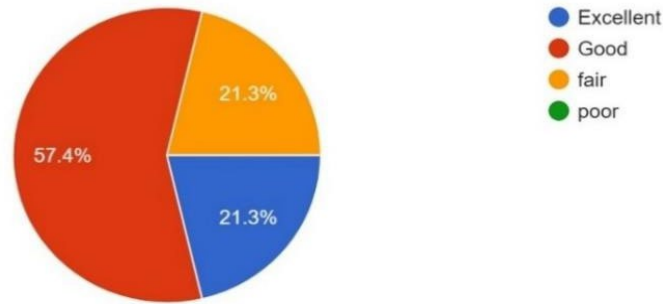
**Figure 3**

**Figure 3**

Figure 4 represents how many people are willing to pay more for sustainable and recycled clothing .610 respondents 39.3% agree to pay for upcycled clothing while 44.3% of respondents agree with sustainable clothing but not contribute to this sustainable practice.

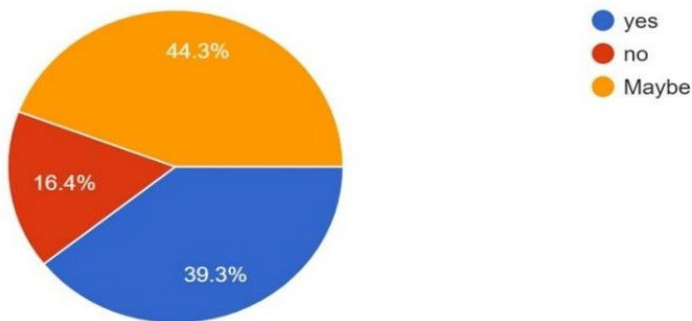
**Figure 4**

**Figure 4**

Figure 5 shows the durability of these recycled clothes 52.5% of respondents used products for months whereas 39.3% of respondents used products for years. Whereas 8.2% of respondents used garments for days some of them haven't used some have depended upon the fabric. 39.3% of respondents are extremely familiar with the concept of the traditional barter system of India.

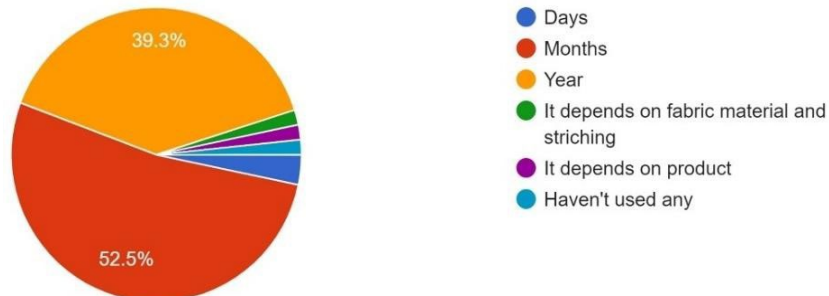
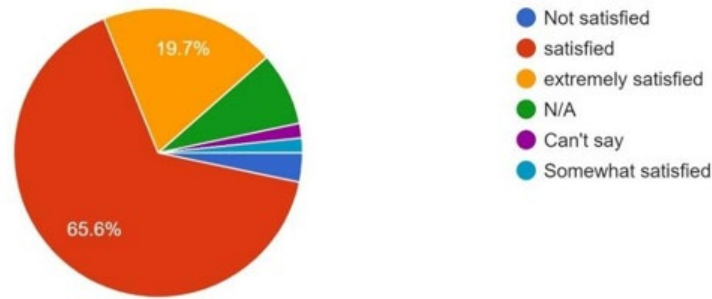
**Figure 5**

**Figure 5**

Figure 6 represents customers who are satisfied with the pricing of these recycled textile waste products from these customer reviews 65.6% of respondents



were fully satisfied by the pricing of products, and 19.7% of respondents were extremely satisfied.

**Figure 6**



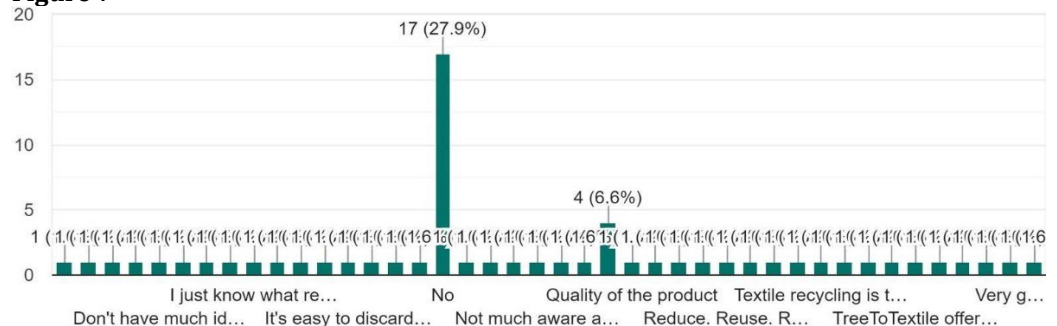
**Figure 6**

Customers who know the value of recycling textile waste in their households are fully satisfied with the pricing of recycled textile waste by exchanging products. Pricing is inherently subjective and influenced by individual perceptions of value. When customers exchange recycled textile waste for products without using money, their satisfaction stems from their awareness of the environmental benefits and the perceived value of contributing to sustainability. Hawkers, on the other hand, assess the value of the textiles based on factors such as market demand, the condition of the materials, and their potential for profit through repurposing. In the absence of money, alternative pricing techniques like direct exchange, negotiation, and perceived utility come into play. Consumers and hawkers negotiate and agree on what they consider a fair trade, reflecting the subjective nature of value. This barter system leads to mutual satisfaction, as both parties see the exchange as beneficial and valuable based on their perceptions and needs.

In the absence of money, hawkers and consumers might use bartering or non-monetary exchanges to handle the value of recycled textile waste. Consumers who understand the importance of recycling are fully satisfied when they receive useful goods or services in exchange for their textile waste. This satisfaction comes from the practical value of the exchanged items and the environmental and social benefits of recycling. Hawkers, in turn, receive materials they can repurpose or sell, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. The perceived value of the exchange depends on the utility and desirability of the goods or services provided by the hawker.

Figure 7 indicates the individual suggestions given by the respondents regarding what they want to share about textile recycling. There are individual suggestions for using recycled textile waste and going with sustainability.

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7**

- out of 610 respondents 72.1% of customers have given suggestions regarding textile recycling whereas 27.9% of respondents haven't given any suggestions.
- 6.6% of respondents said upcycling is a good idea It will be very useful for clothing and also be eco-friendly for the environment.
- 1.4% of respondents said, "I think textile recycling is a great initiative that positively impacts society and aids in helping the environment

Based on the responses from an online survey of 610 respondents, [Table 2](#) highlights various customer insights and sentiments about textile recycling. The feedback provided by the participants offers a rich understanding of their perspectives on this practice. Many respondents expressed positive views on the importance of recycling textiles, emphasizing the environmental benefits and their commitment to sustainability.

Some respondents shared innovative ideas for improving recycling processes and suggested increasing awareness and accessibility of recycling programs. Others highlighted challenges they faced, such as the lack of convenient recycling options and the need for better information on how to recycle textiles effectively. A few respondents mentioned the satisfaction they derive from exchanging recycled garments for new products, finding it both economically and environmentally rewarding. Overall, the survey responses underscore a strong consumer interest in and support for textile recycling, coupled with constructive feedback on how the process can be enhanced.

**Table 2**

Table 2 Customer-Provided Innovative Ideas for Enhancing Recycling Processes
It just a I have never been wear recycled clothes but have seen
No don't want to say anything
Upcycled textlie for fashion is good idea,It will be very useful for clothing and also be eco friendly for environment
No
N/a
No
Very good
Quality of the product
Not much aware about it.
No
Good work !!
Go green
Awosem quality
No
No Thanks
Good use of resources
No
No
No
I know what to recycle the cloth. I don't know it's price, durability, quality, it's experience.
This procedure of recycling the textile surely conserves the natural resources.
Nothing

No
No
Nothing
Recycled textile should of low cost.And have high quality.
Nothing
No
Don't have much idea about it
Textile recycling is the process of recovering fiber, yarn, or fabric and reprocessing the material into new, useful products. Textile waste is split into pre-consumer and post-consumer waste and is sorted into five different categories derived from a pyramid model.
Textile recycling helps in Green & clean environment
Tree To Textile offers a new technology to produce biobased textile fibers with a low environmental footprint at an attractive cost level.
I think textile recycling is a great initiative that impacts society in a positive manner and aids in helping the environment.
Recycling
It's easy to discard old, worn clothes. However, in the end, there is only one place it can go the trash dump. How can we fix this
No
No
Rather than wasting textiles it is better to recycle them and make new products from them
No
No
No
No maam
Textile recycling is very important bcz in this Era of fast fashion the textile waste creates lot of harm to the environment
Not really
By textile recycling, it decreases landfill space, creates less pollution, and reduces the consumption of power and water.
It is a good idea.
Try to reduce any kind of waste as much as possible
NA
Make a correction in quality of waste and recycled product option add something like N/A or don't know for people who actually haven't used or seen such recycled textile, Hope u got it!
The idea should be implemented
Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.
Textile recycling is good for environment
Nothing
Not now
Textile West is not so harmful as compared to plastics for the environment but recycling, reuse of any material minimise the the storage of wastes in our surroundings as well as our environment.
No
no it's good
Very Good Concept, Carry on and share to Everyone.
No

## 6. LIMITATIONS

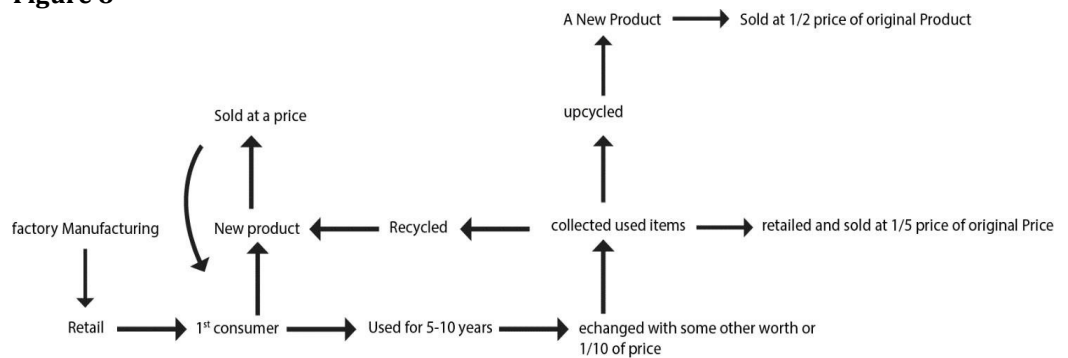
The research is limited due to its focus on the traditional Indian model of garment reuse sustainability. As this is qualitative research, it is a time-consuming process to interview each hawker. The bias of sampling as a survey is limited in one

state. India no longer has a barter system, it does not have a standardized measurement system, which makes it difficult to compare the value of different goods and services. The barter system still exists in India; it is not a widely used form of trade in present-day India.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

After this once complete research has been done it has been observed that the Indian silent barter system exists in non-organizations. the recommendation is that the system can be more fruitful if the people are more aware of the system and can take benefit of it so that the concept of the sustainability of the product which includes the garment-textile and the other staple products and nonstable products can be promoted on a high scale and once the system is achieved the sustainability model will be more prominently visible in the business industry. The promotion techniques which can be recommended are as follows.

**Figure 8**



**Figure 8 Sustainability Model**

- Conduct workshops and training programs on upcycling and transforming clothing. Provide individuals with resources and ideas to creatively use their old clothing.
- To Establish community repair centers or provide resources for individuals to learn basic clothing repair techniques. Promote the importance of repairing and modifying clothing as a sustainable practice.
- Promote the concept of donating clothes through educational campaigns, workshops, or community events. Emphasize the benefits of preserving cultural heritage and reducing waste through this practice.
- Promote the use of sustainable textiles by supporting local artisans, weavers, and the textile industry. Encourage designers and fashion brands to incorporate traditional techniques and fabrics into their collections.
- conduct awareness campaigns through social media and organize community workshops and events to educate people about the traditional Indian model of garment reuse.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The study shows that India's traditional model of garment reuse sustainability with a barter system offers valuable insights and practices that can inspire a more sustainable future for the fashion industry. The existence of the traditional Indian model also emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage and sustainability. By

appreciating and preserving garments, this model showcases the rich history, craftsmanship, and traditions associated with Indian textiles and clothing. It encourages a departure from the fast fashion mentality and emphasizes the importance of quality, durability, and longevity of clothing

By adopting and adapting this model, individuals and communities can contribute to a more sustainable and socially responsible fashion ecosystem. The barter system supports a shift towards more sustainable and considerate consumption patterns. Instead of preserving a culture of fast fashion and constant shopping, it encourages the reuse and exchange of existing resources. This approach challenges throwaways and encourages individuals to value and extend the life cycle of clothing, supporting a more sustainable and circular fashion ecosystem.

The barter system facilitates community engagement and social interaction. It creates opportunities for people to connect, share and collaborate within their local communities. Clothing swaps promote interpersonal relationships, trust, and cooperation, promoting a sense of belonging and collective responsibility for sustainable practices.

Recycling textile waste in exchange for clothes through a barter system has great potential to reduce waste, promote sustainable consumption and promote community engagement. By adopting this model, individuals and communities can contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry and create a stronger sense of interconnectedness and shared responsibility for environmental control.

In India, the term unorganized market refers to economic activities that are not regulated by formal structures. The unorganized sector comprises a significant portion of the Indian economy and includes various informal activities, such as street vendors, small-scale industries, daily wage laborers, and self-employed individuals. The unorganized market is not entirely tax-free.

## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

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