

Collaborative Fashion Consumption: Second-hand PSSs as agent of change

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Abstract

The second-hand market has been in the spotlight when it comes to circular and collaborative fashion studies. Resale service dynamics and designs have been reinvented over time, currently influenced by consumer demands and their new ways of thinking about the fashion industry. Within this context, this paper aims to draw an up-to-date mapping of current second-hand practices in the fashion sector in the Brazilian context. Through a proposed model - an interpretative framework for PSSs in fashion second-hand market - three different clusters (thrift shops, digital marketplaces, and virtual social communities) were identified, mapped and analysed, representing three different approaches to the servitisation of the sector by establishing variable relations and connections between the ecosystem actors: territories, communities and companies.

Keywords: collaborative fashion consumption; fashion servitisation; sustainable transformation; circular economy.

Collaborative fashion consumption & sustainable service systems: a promising match

In an economic, social, and political context that recognises overproduction and the current consumption model as a stringent risk for managing the planet's environmental and human resources, the notion of collaborative consumption is becoming increasingly relevant. Collaborative consumption, which is frequently associated with the concepts of 'sharing economy' (Park & Armstrong, 2017), 'circular economy' (Colucci & Vecchi, 2021) or 'distributed economy' emerges as a promising approach to limiting the environmental impact of the fashion industry. It is an approach promoted and driven by a growing perceived and acted responsibility on

behalf of consumers (Park & Joyner Armstrong, 2019) in light of the fashion industry's current production model, which is the second most polluting sector in the world. This approach also complements and partially updates the production and consumption model of 'eco-efficient products' to replace products that do not warrant such a qualification, a model whose effectiveness appears to have been overstated (Lorek & Spangenberg, 2014).

Iran and Schrader (2017) were the first to provide a definition and classification of Collaborative Fashion Consumption (CFC) along with a conceptual proposal to assess its environmental impacts. The authors focus on the efficiency and sufficiency effects (respectively, intensification of product use and the satisfaction obtained from reduced use of products and services) to which models of renting, swapping, sharing, second-hand and others may contribute, together, however, with the risk of rebound of additional use of resources. Within this framework, a prominent position is taken by the role of the user: several studies take a user-centred perspective and aim to define user motivations, intentions, attitudes and drivers for adoption and participation (Arrigo, 2021). The value system associated with engagement in collaborative consumption is closely linked to its ability to promote sustainable and positive behavioural change both for the environment and the consumer communities directly involved (Piscicelli et al., 2015). In this sense, in the early 2000s it was argued by Tukker (2014) that the most Product-Service Systems (PSSs) would probably lead to some environmental improvements, being product renting, sharing, pooling and functional PSSs probably the most promising ones. Still, the author affirms that most PSS types could not be expected to result in radical gains. Today, almost 20 years later and with the need to improve our understanding about business models within the sharing economy (Mont et al., 2020), it becomes relevant to analyse and identify the approaches and impacts that PSSs, which broadly enable and perform collaborative business models, have on the ecosystem of actors involved and on the re-definition of the value of the product itself (Vezzoli et al., 2012).

In addition, when it comes to design highly experiential and more meaningful service experiences, bridging the Fashion System with Service Design could offer valuable synergies for moving away from product consumption and into service experiencing (Dennington, 2018, p.15). Service design, when embedded from a sustainable point of view, can be used to increment innovation of existing value propositions and radical innovation for completely new services, physical or digital products (Stickdorn et al., 2018).

This paper contributes to this debate by focusing the object of the research on second-hand practices in the fashion industry in Brazil. The research aims to identify



how PSSs shape the dynamics of exchange, relationship, and interaction in second-hand and how different approaches impact on the territorial system, behaviours, and attitudes of communities, informing transferable shared value systems both on the object of exchange - the garment or accessory - and on the fashion system as a whole. Based on qualitative research, the proposed interpretative model takes a design perspective and highlights the different ways design can operate, promote, and facilitate value creation in collaborative fashion consumption. Focusing on a precise CFC practice and in a country-specific context allowed the authors to identify a definite cluster of case studies to be analysed and, based on primary and secondary research approaches, to propose a conceptual model.

Sustainable transformation: how the service system is being reshaped by the new consumers

The consumer behaviour has changed the way companies are engaging and interacting with their potential clients, promoting a paradigm shift within the retail ecosystem. There is an increased velocity in innovation by driving models such as Crowdsourcing, Co-creation, higher business growth and a superior engineering efficiency for most businesses (Deloitte, 2017). This shift, that has been accelerated by Covid 19 pandemic, is highly influenced by the new generations of consumers (Gen Z and Millennials) and their sustainable demands.

Pragmatic idealists, tinkerers more than dreamers and life hackers (Time, 2013), Millennials can be considered the first digital native generation (Ferrer, 2018). Along with Gen Z, they make more than half the world's population (Deloitte, 2019) and by 2025 will make up most of the workforce and thus become the most significant market for products and services (Kotler, 2021 p.39). Focused on small everyday actions such as buying second-hand clothes or sourcing locally or organically produced food, nine in ten Gen Z and Millennials make an effort to protect the environment (Deloitte, 2022) and one in two Gen Zers is less likely to buy from a brand that chooses to promote the opposite side on social issues that matter to them (Snap Inc, 2021).

As the consumers became more demanding and sustainable actions becomes an essential piece of the business plan puzzle for fashion companies, circular business models will have a big role to play in ensuring the sustainable transformation of the industry (Fashion for Good Report, 2019 p.11). Designing products better, extending their useful, lifetime and changing their role within the system will be crucial for the development of a circular economy (EEA Report, 2017). As “products become



services, and services connect consumers” (Francis & Hoeffel, 2018, p.7), Gen Z and Millennials becomes one of the drivers on which the fashion servitization process is grafted. Within this context, the emergence of second-hand services, such as the reselling and rental of fashion items, present themselves not only within the form of start-ups (RentTheRunaway, The RealReal, Vestiaire Collective) but as well as a sustainable strategy of big fashion companies and groups (Kering investment in Vestiaire Collective, Burberry rental and resale initiative with My Wardrobe HQ, COS and Balenciaga partnership with Reflaunt platform). In addition, and contradictorily, fast-fashion brands - often criticized for causing social and environmental damages – are also making a move to please the demands of the new consumers, such as Shein and the creation of their new resale platform “Shein Exchange”, or H&M with RE:WEAR.

Sustainable fashion: the second-hand market in Brazil

The debate about the second-hand culture, although not recent (Gregson & Crewe, 2003), has been growing in the field of fashion. The consumption and reuse of clothing, ideologically related to sustainability, social awareness, and minimalism, contributes to the transformation of the fashion system. Whether motivated by economic, ideological, or aesthetic issues, is allied to the new consumers way of thinking about fashion (de Paula, 2019). From start-ups popping up to big brands surrendering themselves to the second-hand reality, an exponential growth of sustainable practices shows. As a matter of fact, the global second-hand apparel market is expected to grow 127% by 2026, being three times faster than the global apparel market overall (ThreadUp, 2022). The RealReal, world’s largest online marketplace for resale luxury goods, confirms that Gen X is driving the generational closet swap interested in decreased the sustainability/environmental impact and extend the cycle of luxury items. In fact, 40% of TRR shoppers are replacing fast fashion with resale (2022 Luxury Consignment Report). Therefore, it has never been more important to prove authenticity and track a product’s history, particularly in luxury (State of Fashion 2022). While consumers bought less apparel overall throughout the pandemic, many turned to thrifting, picking up a habit they plan to keep, making the second-hand market being projected to double in the next 5 years, reaching \$77B, expected to be bigger than fast fashion by 2029 (ThredUP Resale 2020/21 Reports).

In Brazil, the fashion second-hand market shows its peculiarities. Firstly, it is important to point out the expressive presence of the platform “enjoie.com”, a collaborative digital buying and selling platform based on social commerce tools.



Created in 2003 initially as a WordPress page for the sale of used objects and utensils, it functioned as a kind of online thrift store (Barbieri, 2015). Today, the platform has more than 370 thousand sellers and more than 2 million products registered, distributed among different items, from fashion to house electronic devices and books (Enjoei, 2022).

A study focused on the fashion second-hand Brazilian market run by BCG in partnership with Enjoei (2022) states that 56% of Brazilians claim to have made at least one transaction (buying or selling) with second-hand items. Furthermore, the study categorizes the Brazilian consumer profile in relation to the second-hand market into 6 categories: the ones looking for exclusivity and quality, but at lower prices when compared to new items ('demanding and aware'); the ones that value the circular economy and prefer to buy with the least impact to the environment ('sustainable consumers'); the ones that look for unique items, not able to find in traditional retailers ('hunters'); the ones that wait for the biggest difference in prices between new and second-hand items ('wardrobe renewers'); the ones not engaged with sustainable causes ('exclusive sellers'); the ones that value convenience, are not that interested in fashion, and love to bargain ('savers'). The last profile happens to be the most common among the Brazilians, according with BCG (2022).

Concerning practices implemented specifically within the Brazilian fashion context, since the beginning of 2021, 6,700 thrift stores (known in Brazil as *brechós*) have been opened in the country (Sebrae, 2022). The second-hand Brazilian scenario is broken down into different formats, discussed further in this article. One, for example, is the digital platforms focused on fashion luxury product, where the strategy behind it is often linked to Brazilian influencers and their personal closets (TROC and Gringa); other is based on the concept of community, where specific groups are created guided by geographical positions/age/financial status (Facebook and WhatsApp exchange/resale groups). In addition, even though some initiatives start within the digital dimensions, it happens that latter on they integrate the physical space into the business model (caseivendi).

Methodological model: an interpretative framework for PSSs in fashion second-hand market

This paper aims to draw an up-to-date mapping of current second-hand practices in the fashion sector in the Brazilian context. Based on this mapping, the paper identifies forms, models and servitisation approaches that support current practices and how they impact shaping the relationships and behaviours of the different actors



involved in the fashion value chain. The proposed model aims to analyse, from a qualitative point of view, three different second-hand clusters that appear either established or emerging in the Brazilian context through the adoption of four research trajectories related to the most recent studies on collaborative consumption in the fashion industry (Arrigo, 2021; Ek Styvén & Mariani, 2020; Jin & Shin, 2020; Zaman et al., 2019). The first three research trajectories, in particular, emerge from a systematic study of the literature review conducted by Arrigo (2021) and are here revised and adapted to the specific context of the reselling market in the fashion industry: the first topic is based on the consumer perspective and focuses on the exploration of consumer engagement in the purchase and consumption of second-hand; the second topic is based on the business perspective and focuses on business models and their impact on value creation; the third topic is based on the sustainability perspective and focuses on awareness-raising practices towards circular economy concepts and conscious consumption. This research adds a fourth trajectory based on the infrastructural perspective and focuses on the ecosystem of enabling platforms, both physical and digital, that support the service system.

From an operational point of view, each research trajectory was associated with two polarities that encoded its identifying variables and through which the clusters of cases examined were determined, analysed, and described. Overall, the axes of the interpretative model correspond to the following:

- consumer perspective (polarities: mediated & business-driven community network vs. non-mediated & user-driven community network).

The consumer's role in the promotion of collaborative consumption patterns is crucial, and it is driven by multidimensional motivations and attitudes that can be economic, critical, hedonistic/recreational (Machado et al., 2019) or driven by needs for authenticity and uniqueness ('fashionability') (Ferraro et al., 2016). Within the second-hand market, within which consumers play the dual role of sellers and buyers of products and services, their motivations and attitudes converge and shape different patterns of exchange: on the one hand, a codified approach within which the community of users interacts according to logics, experiences and connections informed, and mediated, by the 'implementing' party of the exchange (physical or digital marketplace) and informing a mediated & business-driven community network; on the other hand, an informal and self-organised community network within which individuals, under a horizontal and open non-hierarchicalisation, guide and shape channels and trajectories of rhizomatic, mobile, and unmediated relationships and connections.



- business perspective (polarities: collaborative value creation vs. collaborative consumption promotion).

In a context within which the promotion of collaborative approaches to the fashion supply chain becomes increasingly relevant from the perspective of sustainability (Iran & Schrader, 2017) and business responsibility (Pal, 2016), the adoption of a business perspective is aimed at identifying and analysing how different approaches to the second-hand market create value within the system of the involved stakeholders (Zott & Amit, 2010). A collaborative approach to value creation is linked to the ability to activate partnerships and cross-stakeholder interactions to co-create services and generate added value for both the object of exchange and the actors involved. The promotion of collaborative consumption, which is more relevant in a peer-to-peer (P2P) interaction model, is linked to high expectations in terms of societal benefits (Khitous et al., 2022) and confirms an increasing focus on aspects related to the circular economy and responsible consumption (D'Adamo et al., 2022).

- sustainable perspective (polarities: consumer advocacy vs. business advocacy).

Parallel to the consumer and business-oriented perspectives, adopting a sustainable perspective is crucial and closely related to the first ones. Several studies investigate the positive impact that the servitisation of the fashion industry, and the consequent push towards collaborative and more responsible consumption models, could have in terms of reducing resource use, tackling waste, and enhancing awareness and responsibility on behalf of both consumer and business communities (Tukker, 2015; Vezzoli et al., 2015). Within this framework, two parallel and converging drivers can be identified that are stimulating and supporting a shift towards more sustainable and responsible consumption practices: on the one hand, consumer awareness driving him/her to search for alternative consumption models guided both by awareness of the impact of mass production on the environment and by the ethical rejection of the traditional production chain (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Machado et al., 2019); on the other hand, the adoption of corporate policies that promote environmental, economic and social sustainability strategies, actions and projects aimed at all stakeholders in the supply chain within Corporate Social Responsibility agendas (Pal, 2016; Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020).

- infrastructural perspective (polarities: distributed vs. centralized).

Finally, the last research trajectory focuses on enabling platforms, understood as infrastructures within which the system of second-hand services is organised or self-organised and which can be managed by a central and normative entity or distributed and more open to co-innovation and co-creation (Romero & Molina, 2011). We are referring here both to physical platforms - such as the different retail spaces that can



be neighbourhood shops or spaces belonging to the community and temporarily used for this purpose-, and to digital platforms - structured around the service of selling and buying second-hand goods or social platforms ‘hacked’ for this purpose.

The interpretative model is represented operationally as a qualitative radial diagram, conceived as a visual and meta-analytical tool, whose axes correspond to the four perspectives described above (Figure 1).

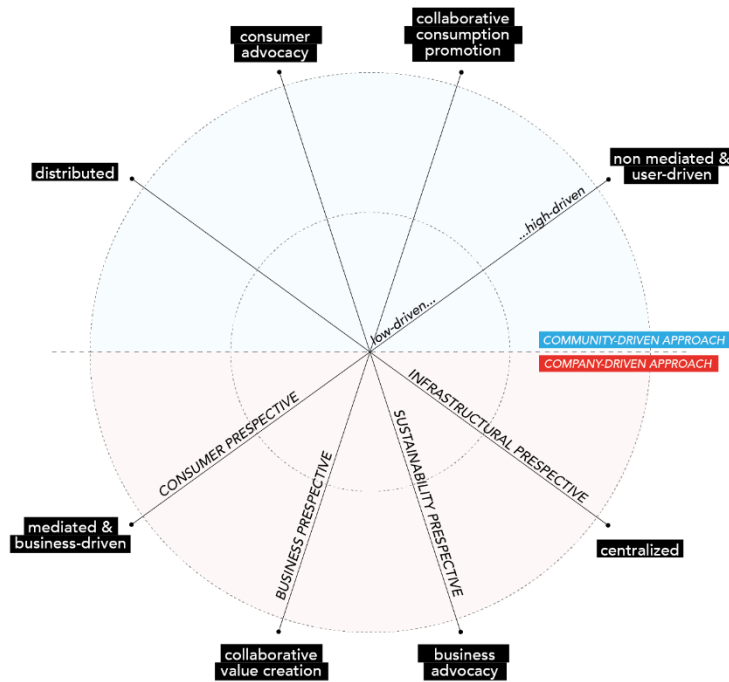


Figure 1. Interpretative framework diagram – Second-hand retailing services in Brazil (created by the author)

Based on this model, three different clusters related to second-hand fashion in Brazil have been identified, mapped and analysed, representing three different approaches to the servitisation of the sector. The first cluster refers to the ‘traditional’ thrift shop model, usually deeply rooted in specific territorial contexts and their communities of reference and open to the experimentation of high value-added and culturally significant service systems. The second cluster refers to large marketplaces supported by digital platforms, which eradicate the collaborative consumption model from local and community settings to open up to a national/international level. The third and more recent model relies on strategic networks, the so-called Virtual Customer Communities (VCCs), which act in a self-organised, informal and fluid way following both commercial and non-commercial logic and exploiting digital platforms,



mainly messaging systems and social media (Laurell & Sandström, 2017; Romero & Molina, 2011).

Second-hand retailing services in Brazil

Thrift shops: a service-driven approach to communities' sustainable demand

The first store selling clothes and second-hand objects in Brazil, appeared in Rio de Janeiro in the 19th century, founded by a Portuguese merchant named Belchior (Ricardo, 2008). Since then, the space occupied by this practice in the country has changed. According to a data released by Sebrae (2022), between the first half of 2020 and 2021, establishments that sell second-hand products grew by 48.58%. In addition to the association of the thrift store with sustainable and conscious fashion, this growth can be attributed to other factors, such as the increase in debt and unemployment, which ends up driving the public to look for cheaper alternatives to those found in fast fashion stores (Freitas e Costa, 2019).

Currently, traditional Brazilian thrift shops such as Minha Avó Tinha Brechó (São Paulo, created in the 90's), B.Luxo Vintage Shop (São Paulo, 2007), Brechó Balaio De Gato (Curitiba, 2012), Me Gusta Brechó (Porto Alegre, 2012), Brechó Fast Fashion (Rio de Janeiro, 2007), Brilhantina Brechó (Belo Horizonte, 2003), are still faithful to their physical space. However, this business, that once didn't rely upon supportive digital tools, now integrate the use of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp as a tool to aid in their organic promotion and sale processes. A common point among the thrift stores mentioned above is the inclusion of vintage pieces, national or international, not necessarily luxury, in their establishments. As a peculiarity, Brechó Balaio De Gato also advocates on strengthening the local market, reselling authorial and regional pieces. Moreover, planned dissemination and marketing techniques are not generally identified as a strategy, structured discourses or promotions on sustainable consumption matters are absent.

However, the emergence of physical thrift stores that were originally born within the digital environment, as is the case of the "brechó no fundinho" created by Yasmin Stevam, who, encouraged by a friend, started selling her own clothes on Instagram in 2017. The concepts of entrepreneur and circular economy only came later, when Yasmin understood that her online retail was entrepreneurship (Exame, 2021). Need Brechó (2015), Las Hermanas Brechó (2015), Mercado Poucas e Boas (2017) are inserted within the same concept. In these cases where digital platforms are the main means of sale and interaction but relies also upon the physical space, the advocacy



in favour of circular and sustainable fashion runs in form of a collaborative consumption promotion, even if they do not have specifically a P2P approach.

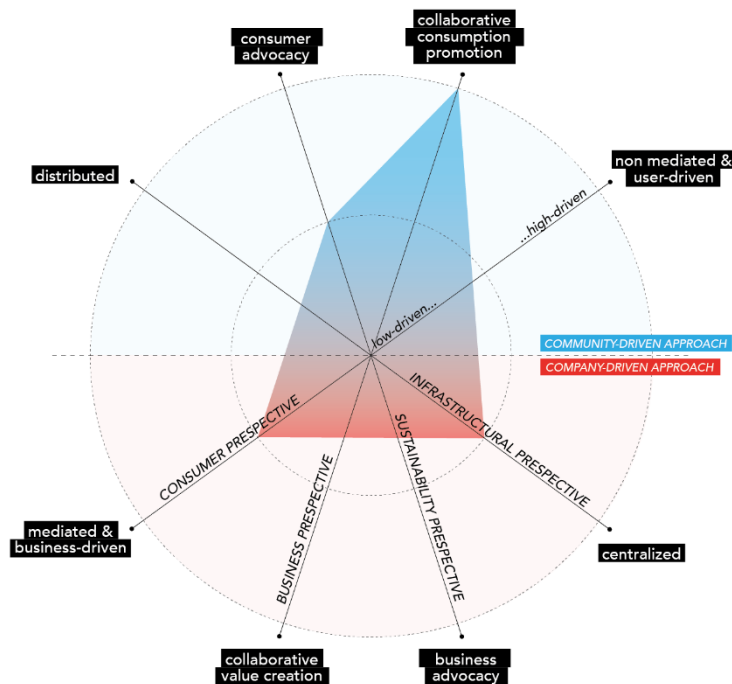


Figure 2. Interpretative framework diagram – Thrift Shops (created by the author)

Thrift stores services variations (Figure 2), which respond to the sustainable needs of a community, are now being reinvented within the fashion consumption scenario. If once they first appeared as a physical space, now they also do the opposite way. In one way or another, this type of centralized service aims to organically encourage the reformulation of sustainable practices within the fashion system, since at least in the case of the most traditional ones, they often do not invest in marketing campaigns or actions.

Digital marketplaces: a business-driven approach to fashion servitisation evolution

One of the reasons for the expansion of second-hand stores in Brazil is the increase in prices and the two years of high inflation, which reduced the purchasing power of the population (Sebrae, 2022). Specifically, the second-hand luxury market has emerged to meet the demand of medium and high-income consumers who have a desire and aspiration for these products, but do not yet have the purchasing power to purchase new items (BCG, 2022). Within this context, relevant digital marketplaces within the Brazilian context were analysed (Figure 3). First, TROC platform, founded in 2016 in Curitiba and since 2020 part of the Arezzo & Co Group. Second, Gringa,



founded by the Brazilian model and actress Fiorella Mattheis in 2020 and almost acquired by Enjoei in 2022. Third, Repassa, start-up founded in 2015 and today part of the Renner group.

In the case of TROC and Gringa, these mediated and business driven communities network promote collaborative consumption through strategies involving Brazilian influencers, who, as “ambassadors”, share their own wardrobes. On either of the two platforms, there is a specific tab dedicated to celebrities. In addition, Gringa sporadically promotes "live shop" where the influencer sells their items through a live on social media.

Promoting the circular economy in order to reduce the impacts of fashion industry on the planet (Gringa), the re-signification of consumer culture (TROC), and the extension of clothing lifecycle (Repassa), these platforms work with a precise curatorial process, where it is not up to the lender/user/client to decide what will be sold and under what conditions. Unprofitable actions are also presented. Gringa, for example, every Thursdays holds an online auction, with 100% of the proceeds going to NGOs. Furthermore, besides the digital platform, TROC opened a Pop-Up Store in the Patio Batel luxury mall located in the city of Curitiba. GrinGringa works only under appointments in its showroom s only under appointments in its showroom located in Rio de Janeiro, while Repassa operates only in the digital realm.

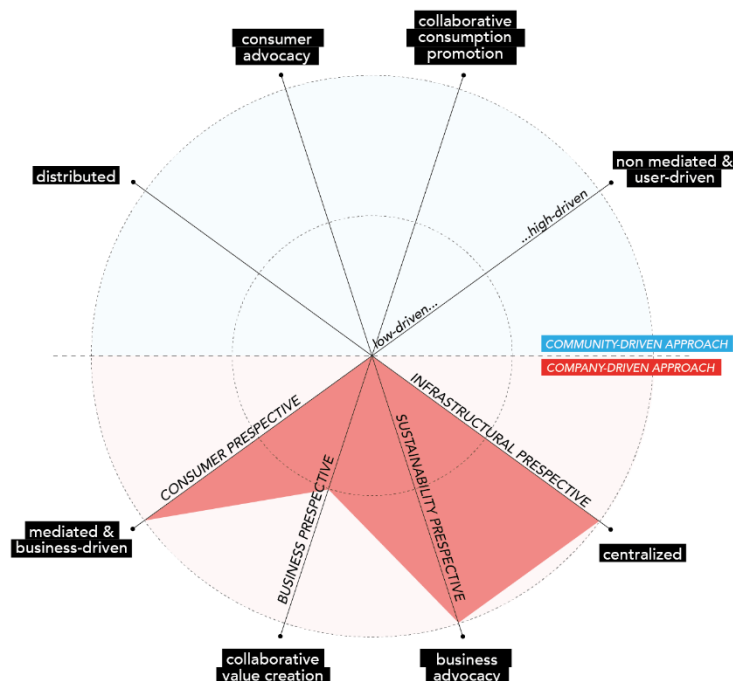


Figure 3. Interpretative framework diagram – Digital marketplaces (created by the author)



Digital Marketplaces are from one point of view a centralized service, but from the point of view of territory and community they are also decentralized due to the peer-to-peer connections between users that occurs on a national scale. Second-hand digital markets are somehow the evolution of traditional thrift stores where the dynamics of selling used items is reinvented not only through digital tools, but also through interactions - strategically articulated - between customers and the platform, user and the other users, and customers and 'brand ambassadors. This flux promotes co-creation practices while generating value regarding both the object of exchange and the actors involved.

Virtual social communities: a community-driven approach to 'informal' collaborative consumption

Digital presence it's of paramount importance in Brazil since 158 millions of Brazilians have a smartphone, and the 3 most present apps on the home screen are WhatsApp (55%), Instagram (46%) and Facebook (36%). In addition, 99% have WhatsApp installed in their smartphones (Mobile Time, 2022). This large adherence to social networks triggers social phenomena in the digital context, one of them are the virtual social communities This typology of service, that follows a community-driven approach, carries informal dynamics organized by communities, whether divided by geographical location or tribes, resale groups found on social networks are an example, as investigated in this research (Figure 4).



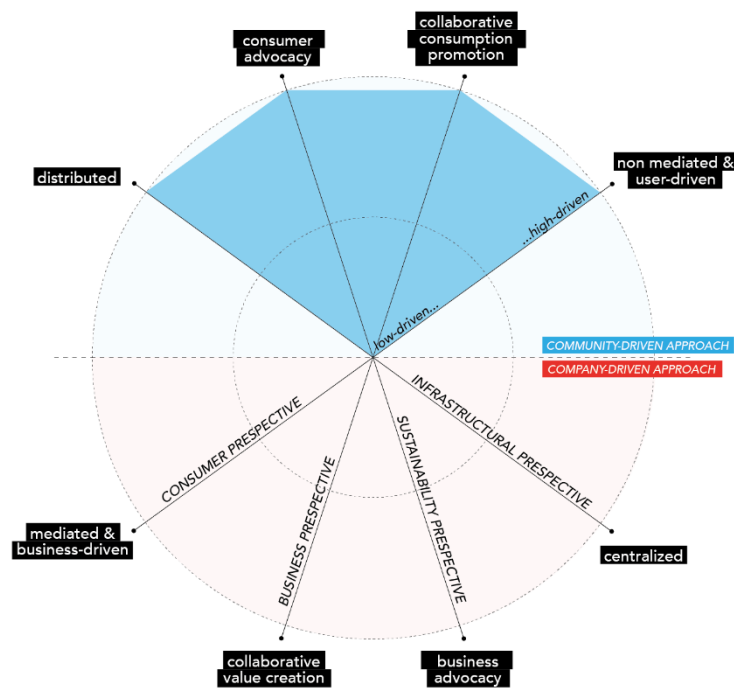


Figure 4. Interpretative framework diagram – Virtual Social Communities (created by the author)

A basic search with the word “*brechó*” on Facebook using the “groups” filter will lead to several reseller groups, often divided by cities. Facebook itself allows the user to filter the city of choice. These groups - at times public, at times private - can be split up in female and male, children and adults, and even in specific categories of products such as children’s clothes, special occasion clothes, shoes, luxury items, plus size clothes, *heavy metal* clothes, among others. In such cases, the community itself mediates the interactions, the users have the autonomy of taking, selecting, and posting their own photos of the products intended to be resold, as well the independence to negotiate the payment and delivery forms. The practice of resale within the scope of Facebook takes place through community trust, where the platform becomes a facilitator of the transition and not responsible for the authenticity of the content.

One of the obstacles that a non-mediated and user-driven community network presents is to maintain the group with its initial purpose. Without precise mediation and organizational rules to follow, users end up using the space to sell items that do not correspond to the group’s purpose or to promote services that also do not correspond to the category addressed. For instance, in the public group “Brechó de luxo Curitiba”, theoretically dedicated to the resale of luxury items in the city of Curitiba- Paraná, there are advertisements for beauty services, new clothes or even



house rentals. In opposition, the group “(Vendas e Trocas) Brechó Grunge - grupo só para meninas | Bazar Das Manas”, is a mediated group who are guided by rules. This community is dedicated only to women and linked to a specific thrift online shop (Brechó Grunge) and to a specific cultural fair focused on female entrepreneurship and fashion consumption (Bazar das Manas). This geographic and gender outline is situated in a collaborative environment where, based on P2P dynamics, both the mediator (group administrators) and users co-create and promote conscious consumption and social sustainability.

Conclusion

In the specific case of this article, the contribution concerns the debate on second-hand practices in the Brazilian fashion industry. Through an interpretative framework for PSSs in fashion second-hand market, the authors were able to map, analysed and identify the different dynamics occurring inside the country regarding the fashion second-hand market.

The present research evidenced the diversity regarding Brazilian second-hand services. If, on the one hand, the traditional physical thrift stores continue to exist, on the other hand, digital marketplaces and social network communities today re-signify the practice of resale. In any of the clusters mentioned in this article (digital marketplaces, thrift shops, social network communities) the presence of digital tools is unanimous, even the oldest thrift stores have integrated digital support into their service model, be it Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp. In addition, this investigation also showed how the cultural influence directly interferes in the dynamics of the second-hand luxury market in Brazil. The platforms TROC and Gringa have as a large part of their strategy to rely on the image of great influencers and famous figures (singers, actresses) in order to promote the resale of luxury articles. Furthermore, the interest of important groups in investing in the second-hand sector (such as the Arezzo & Co group when buying TROC and the Renner group when buying Repassa), confirm the adherence and watchful eye of big fashion players in relation to the sustainable positioning demanded by the new generation of consumers.

The three clusters analysed demonstrated three different models of servitization / PSSs, being them: 1. Thrift stores: a structured service response to a request from local communities, usually inserted in a specific territory. As they mainly focus on their physical spaces, this cluster, in terms of services, is made up of traditional presential sales practices, relying on social platforms/message applications for



communication with its consumer (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp); 2. Digital Marketplaces: a centralized service, that is at the same time, decentralized from a territorial and community point of view, enabling one-to-one connections between users on a national scale. Marketplaces differentiate itself from traditional thrift shops, that have a strong relationship between the products and the owner of the shop (recurrently very judicious in relation to the choices of the items); 3. Virtual social communities: an informal and self-organised response to a community needs, that transform and shape the service in an autonomous and non-coded way using the means available to them (social networks).

The impact generated by the fashion industry worries the new generation of consumers, raising questions about consumption practices in society. In this context, service design – that brings strategic benefits for companies, from business strategies to the impact those new approaches have on consumer relationships - plays an important role. In terms of second-hand services, it can position itself as an agent of change, by rethinking, within the peculiarity of each territory and community, the practices applied to business within the scope of fashion.

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