



Research Article

The Experience of Selling Second-Hand Wearable (Preloved) Clothing Online: Digital Marketing Strategies and Their Implications for Sustainability

Indra Sudrajat

Fakultas Agama Islam Universitas Wiralodra, Indonesia; buyaindrasudrajat@gmail.com

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The Experience of Selling Second-Hand Wearable (Preloved) Clothing Online: Digital Marketing Strategies and Their Implications for Sustainability

Abstract. Digital transformation has reshaped consumption and distribution patterns in the fashion industry, including the increasing practice of selling second-hand wearable clothing (preloved) online. This study aims to analyze the experience of selling preloved clothing through digital platforms, identify the determinants of business success, and examine its contribution to sustainability principles. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using participatory observation and documentation of digital sales activities.

The findings reveal that the success of a preloved business is determined by product quality, visual-based digital marketing strategies, consumer interaction, and trust-building. Beyond generating economic benefits, this business model supports the concept of sustainable fashion by extending product life cycles and reducing textile waste. The study reinforces recent national research indicating that thrifting and preloved trends represent a shift in consumer behavior toward a circular economy.

Keywords: Preloved, Digital Marketing, Sustainable Fashion, Consumer Behavior, Circular Economy

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the commercial landscape. Social media and online marketplaces have become primary channels for product distribution, including fashion products. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Shopee, and Tokopedia enable micro-scale entrepreneurs to reach wider markets at relatively low cost.

At the same time, the fashion industry faces increasing criticism due to the environmental impacts of fast fashion practices. Joy et al. (2012) argue that mass production and rapid trend cycles contribute significantly to global textile waste. This phenomenon has encouraged alternative consumption patterns such as thrifting and preloved fashion.

Recent national studies indicate that growing interest in preloved fashion is influenced by both economic considerations and sustainability awareness (Fadhillah et al., 2025; Jholanda & Anwar, 2025). Furthermore, digital marketing strategies have been shown to play a crucial role in the success of thrift clothing businesses (Mahfudh, 2025; Maritza & Hariyanto, 2024).

Based on this context, this study focuses on analyzing the empirical experience of selling preloved clothing online and its relevance to digital marketing strategies and sustainability.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) explain that digital marketing involves the use of internet-based media to create customer interaction and value. Visual content strategies, engagement techniques, and real-time interaction enhance consumer loyalty.

National research by Asfi et al. (2023) emphasizes that consistent digital content in online fashion businesses increases brand visibility and sales conversion rates.

1. Consumer Behavior and Perceived Value

Solomon (2018) states that purchasing decisions are influenced by perceived value, which includes both functional and emotional benefits. In the preloved context, affordability and sustainability value become major attractions (Putri & Pramono, 2025).

2. Sustainable Fashion and Circular Economy

Sustainable fashion emphasizes responsible production and consumption (Joy et al., 2012). Research by Simbolon et al. (2025) shows that the integration of e-commerce and green marketing increases interest in sustainable products.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection techniques include: a) Participatory observation as a preloved business actor. b) Documentation of promotional activities and transactions, c) Analysis of consumer interactions. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, thematic categorization, theory-based interpretation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Product Curation and Quality

Product quality is a crucial factor in determining the success of preloved clothing sales. Consumers tend to select items that are wearable, clean, and visually appealing. In practice, the curation process involves several stages: condition selection (ensuring no significant damage), washing and maintenance, brand label checking, and neat, informative product photography.

This process enhances not only the economic value but also the emotional value of the product. As stated by Solomon (2018), consumer perceived value is influenced by quality, aesthetics, and emotional context not merely price. Well-maintained and aesthetically presented preloved clothing can create a satisfying shopping experience and increase customer loyalty.

National research by Putri and Pramono (2025) confirms that Indonesian preloved consumers pay attention to physical condition, brand labels, and authenticity. Well-curated products have up to 60% higher selling potential compared to poorly presented items. Thus, curation is not merely operational but a strategic effort to build reputation and credibility.

Product curation may also include consumer education, such as providing care instructions, product origin information, or short narratives about the clothing, enhancing emotional attachment.

Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing strategies are central to building visibility and engagement in preloved businesses. Observations show that sellers apply several strategies:

1. Attractive Visual Content – High-quality photos, optimal lighting, and creative styling enhance visual appeal. Maritza and Hariyanto (2024) found that engaging visual content can increase Instagram click-through rates by up to 45%.
2. Hashtag and Trend Utilization – Popular hashtags such as #thrift and #prelovedfashion help increase product discoverability.
3. Live Selling – Real-time interaction during live sessions enhances transparency and trust. Mahfudh (2025) notes that live selling allows consumers to view the actual condition of products and ask questions directly.
4. Reviews and Testimonials – Positive testimonials function as social proof. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) show that social proof can increase conversion rates by up to 30%.

Asfi et al. (2023) add that consistent posting frequency, aesthetic uniformity, and active interaction strengthen branding and long-term loyalty.

Consumer Behavior, Trust, and Loyalty

Trust is essential in online preloved transactions. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize that long-term customer relationships increase loyalty and purchase frequency.

Observations indicate that:

- Consumers prefer responsive sellers.

- Transparency about product condition and minor defects increases satisfaction.
- Testimonials and user-generated content enhance credibility perception.

Environmental and ethical considerations also influence consumer decisions. Fadhillah et al. (2025) state that sustainability perception significantly affects preloved purchase decisions.

Loyalty can be strengthened through personalized communication, thank-you messages, and reward programs. Emotional relationships between sellers and consumers are as important as product quality.

Economic and Environmental Impact

a) Economic Impact

Preloved businesses offer low-capital opportunities with minimal financial risk. Sellers may achieve profit margins between 20–40%, depending on brand and condition.

This business model also enhances digital literacy among micro and small enterprises (UMKM). Sari et al. (2025) highlight that such experience improves long-term entrepreneurial sustainability.

b) Environmental Impact

Preloved businesses support circular economy principles by extending clothing life cycles, reducing new production demand, and minimizing textile waste. Joy et al. (2012) emphasize that fast fashion generates significant waste; preloved practices help mitigate this impact.

Research by Simbolon et al. (2025) and Jholanda and Anwar (2025) confirms that environmentally conscious consumers tend to prefer preloved products.

c) Operational Challenges

Key challenges include:

- Intense price competition on large platforms
- Limited stock of unique items
- Sudden order cancellations
- Logistic constraints and shipping costs

Mitigation strategies involve efficient stock management, proactive communication, and continuous digital innovation. Diversification, influencer collaboration, and analytics use are recommended for competitiveness.

Integration of Strategy and Business Model

The success of a preloved business requires integration of:

1. Product Quality → Perceived Value
2. Digital Marketing Strategy → Engagement & Visibility
3. Consumer Trust → Loyalty & Reputation
4. Sustainability Contribution → Social & Ecological Value

This integration ensures economic sustainability while contributing to consumer behavior transformation and digital MSME development in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

1. **Product Quality and Curation**
Well-curated products significantly enhance perceived value, credibility, and sales opportunities.
2. **Digital Marketing Strategy**
Visual content, live selling, hashtag utilization, and testimonials effectively increase visibility and loyalty.
3. **Consumer Trust and Loyalty**
Transparency and responsiveness build long-term relationships and strengthen reputation.
4. **Economic and Environmental Impact**
Preloved businesses generate economic benefits while supporting circular economy principles and reducing textile waste.
5. **Operational Challenges and Adaptation**
Strategic adaptation is necessary to maintain competitiveness amid market challenges.
6. **Strategic Integration**
The integration of product quality, digital marketing, trust-building, and sustainability contribution ensures both economic viability and positive social-ecological impact.

In conclusion, preloved business is not merely second-hand trade but part of a broader transformation toward sustainable fashion and digital MSME development in Indonesia.

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