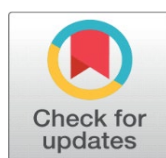
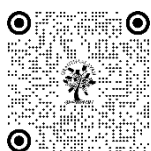


MODELLING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THRIFTING: A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE APPAREL PRACTICES IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Mariya Ali¹, Dr. Sadaf Siraj²

¹Scholar, Department of Management, School of Management & Business Studies, Jamia Hamdard

²Associate Professor, Department of Management, School of Management & Business Studies, Jamia Hamdard



DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.4012](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.4012)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

The global fashion industry is increasingly criticised for its environmental impact, resulting in a surge in alternative consumption habits like thrifting. Thrifting adheres to circular fashion principles by prolonging the lifespan of clothing, thereby diminishing waste and resource use. Cultural characteristics of India, such as resource conservation and frugality, facilitate the adoption of thrifting. Nonetheless, studies of this issue within the Indian setting are scarce. This conceptual study analyses thrifting as a sustainable behaviour in India, connecting it to sustainable clothing consumption. The study provides a paradigm that integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with value-based consumption theories to address the cultural, economic, and environmental determinants of consumer behaviour. This study offers a refined comprehension of the role of thrifting in promoting sustainable clothing practices in India, addressing deficiencies in previous studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The worldwide apparel sector greatly damages the environment through high water usage, greenhouse gas emissions, and the accumulation of textile waste (Khare, 2020). Sustainable apparel consumption has arisen as a remedy to these issues, emphasising the reduction of the ecological impact of clothes manufacture and disposal (Varshneya et al., 2017). Thrifting, a method of acquiring second-hand clothing, closely adheres to sustainable apparel principles by prolonging the lifespan of apparel and fostering circular fashion practices (Padmavathy et al., 2019).

In India, traditional methods such as upcycling and fabric repurposing demonstrate a deep-rooted cultural focus on conscientious consumption (Chaturvedi et al., 2020). This cultural convergence facilitates the positioning of thrifting as a conventional method for sustainable clothes consumption. Despite its increasing significance, thrifting is inadequately examined in India, where swift urbanisation and evolving consumer desires intersect with entrenched cultural beliefs. This research examines the convergence of thrifting and sustainable clothing consumption, offering a framework that integrates cultural, socioeconomic, and behavioural elements specific to India.

2. RESEARCH GAP

The majority of previous studies on thrifting have been undertaken in Western cultures, concentrating on factors such as cost, sustainability, and identity expression. Although these studies emphasise thrifting's capacity to mitigate environmental damage, they are deficient in cultural distinctiveness, especially in developing economies such as India. Furthermore, earlier research has focused on individual motives, often disregarding wider socio-cultural and value-based influences that shape behaviours in collectivist societies.

Moreover, studies on sustainable apparel consumption in India have primarily focused on new sustainable apparel, neglecting the opportunities presented by second-hand markets. This research tackles these deficiencies by connecting thrifting with sustainable clothing practices, presenting a culturally contextualised model that incorporates essential behavioural and value-based aspects.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 THRIFTING AND SUSTAINABLE APPAREL

Sustainable apparel consumption aims to reduce the environmental and social consequences of clothes by prioritising ethical manufacture, waste minimisation, and prolonged clothing lifespans (Dhir et al., 2021). Thrifting mitigates this by diminishing the demand for new apparel, reducing resource utilisation, and decreasing textile waste. Furthermore, thrifting democratises sustainable fashion by providing economical alternatives, hence enhancing accessibility for a wider audience (Norum and Norton, 2017).

Although these advantages are extensively documented worldwide, India's distinct socio-cultural setting offers more potential to integrate thrifting with sustainable clothing consumption (Khare et al., 2019). Conventional activities such as familial clothing sharing and the repurposing of old apparel exemplify intrinsic sustainability, which can be utilised to normalise thrifting. Nevertheless, societal stigmas associated with second-hand clothing, stemming from notions of hygiene and status, provide obstacles that require specialised interventions for resolution.

3.2 CULTURAL VALUES AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

India's cultural emphasis on resourcefulness and sustainability correlates with thrifting (Khare, 2020). Upcycling saris into quilts and recycling discarded textiles for domestic applications demonstrate traditional circular consumption. These behaviours align with the objectives of sustainable clothing consumption, rendering cultural values a vital element in advancing thrifting (Khare and Sadachar, 2017).

Modern metropolitan customers are frequently swayed by Western concepts of fast fashion, resulting in a contrast between traditional values and modern ambitions. This study integrates cultural factors into its conceptual framework to address this gap, illustrating how thrifting can function as a culturally significant avenue for sustainable clothes consumption.

3.3 BEHAVIOURAL THEORIES IN SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

The Theory of Planned Behaviour provides a strong framework for analysing customer intentions and behaviours. The Theory of Planned Behaviour elucidates how individuals embrace sustainable habits by analysing attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Abrar et al., 2021). Theories of value-based consumerism enhance this comprehension by delineating specific dimensions—environmental, economic, functional, and emotional values—that influence decision-making (Park et al., 2012).

This paper synthesises existing frameworks, incorporating cultural values as an innovative element to contextualise thrifting in India. This methodology fills a significant void in the literature by offering a thorough framework for comprehending the relationship between thrifting and sustainable clothing use.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) technique to synthesise and analyse existing research on thrifting and sustainable garment consumption, specifically within the Indian context. A systematic literature review guarantees a methodical, transparent, and replicable approach for pinpointing deficiencies in the literature and developing a solid conceptual framework.

4.1 SEARCH STRATEGY

To guarantee thorough coverage, academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were methodically searched utilising a combination of keywords: thrifting, second-hand clothes, sustainable clothing consumption, India, sustainability in fashion, and consumer behaviour. The search was confined to peer-reviewed publications published between 2014 to 2024 to encompass both fundamental and present research. Supplementary filters were implemented to encompass just English-language articles and those concentrating on thrifting, sustainable clothes, or overarching sustainability strategies within the context of consumer behaviour.

4.2 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Studies were selected based on their applicability to one or more of the following criteria:

1. Consumer motives and challenges to purchasing thrifted or second-hand apparel.
2. Sustainable clothing techniques encompassing environmental, economic, and cultural aspects.
3. Contextual pertinence to India or other rising economies exhibiting cultural and economic parallels.
4. Theoretical models, include the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and perceived value frameworks.

Research concentrating exclusively on the technical dimensions of sustainable fashion, such as production methodologies or material advancements, was omitted due to their divergence from the behavioural emphasis of this study.

4.3 DATA EXTRACTION AND ANALYSIS

Reviewed studies were analysed to extract information on study aims, techniques, principal findings, and theoretical frameworks. A thematic analysis was used to discern recurrent factors, linkages, and deficiencies in the literature. The findings were classified into three primary themes.

1. Behavioural determinants affecting thrifting and sustainable clothing use.
2. Cultural and sociological factors influencing the adoption of second-hand apparel.
3. Value perceptions influencing sustainable fashion decisions, encompassing environmental, economic, and emotional aspects.

4.4 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

The analysis indicated that whereas thrifting is extensively examined in Western contexts (Norum and Norton, 2017), research in rising countries such as India is scarce. Current research emphasises buyer attitudes and environmental issues as key motivators, although neglects to address cultural factors or the influence of digital platforms. Furthermore, previous studies frequently regard thrifting and sustainable clothes as distinct entities, neglecting their interrelation.

4.5 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The findings informed the creation of the conceptual framework by synthesising ideas from the Theory of Planned Behaviour and perceived value theories with culturally unique elements relevant to India. The incorporation of cultural values, including frugality and resourcefulness, rectifies a significant deficiency in previous models. Furthermore, highlighting the multi-dimensional perceived value—environmental, economic, functional, and emotional—enhances the framework, illustrating the varied incentives for thrifting.

5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study presents a conceptual framework that ties thrifting to sustainable garment consumption in the Indian context by combining behavioural, cultural, and value-based characteristics. This framework, informed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and value-based consumption theories, examines the collective impact of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, cultural values, and perceived value dimensions on consumer behaviour regarding thrifting as a sustainable apparel practice.

5.1 ATTITUDE

Attitude represents an individual's judgement of thrifting, informed by their sense of its environmental, economic, and social benefits. In the area of sustainable fashion, favourable perceptions of thrifting arise from its congruence with the concepts of waste minimisation, resource preservation, and cost-effectiveness (Yazdanpanah and Forouzani, 2015). Consumers who perceive thrifting as an environmentally sustainable and financially advantageous alternative to fast fashion are more inclined to embrace the practice. In India, where cost-consciousness often overlaps with increased environmental awareness, attitudes are predicted to play a vital role in encouraging thrifting behaviour.

5.2 SUBJECTIVE NORMS

Subjective norms denote the perceived social pressure to participate in or refrain from a behaviour (Dagher and Itani, 2014). In collectivist societies such as India, social acceptance, especially from family, friends, and influencers, profoundly influences consumer decisions (Kautish et al., 2019). The normalisation of thrifting via social media advocacy, celebrity endorsements, or peer group approval might augment its appeal. Young Indian consumers, influenced by foreign trends, may embrace thrifting if it becomes popular in their social circles, coinciding with their aspirational lifestyle objectives.

5.3 PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL

Perceived behavioural control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty an individual experiences in adopting thrifting, influenced by access, knowledge, and convenience (Kautish et al., 2019). Elements such as the accessibility of charity stores, the rise of internet platforms, and transparent information regarding product hygiene and quality can affect this image. In India, where conventional second-hand markets are generally disorganised, boosting accessibility and transparency through digital platforms might strengthen perceived behavioural control and promote thrifting as a mainstream choice.

5.4 CULTURAL VALUES

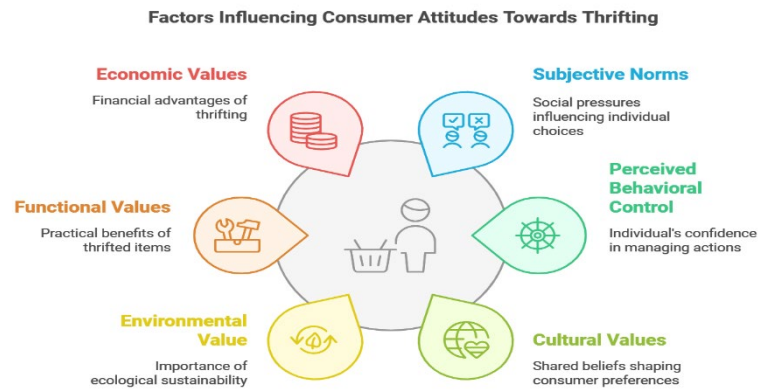
Cultural virtues such as frugality, resourcefulness, and familial sharing are profoundly ingrained in Indian customs (Khare and Kautish, 2020). Practices like reusing vintage apparel or transferring clothing across family members exemplify intrinsic sustainability. This cultural inclination might act as a natural drive for thrifting, especially when portrayed as a continuation of these ideals. For example, portraying thrifted apparel as a modern take on traditional resourcefulness helps transcend generational and cultural boundaries, making it more accessible to younger consumers.

5.5 PERCEIVED VALUE DIMENSIONS

The framework incorporates four dimensions of perceived value:

1. **ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE:** Understanding thrifting as a method to diminish waste and preserve resources corresponds with consumers' increasing environmental awareness.
2. **ECONOMIC VALUE:** Thrifting offers economical access to high-quality clothing, appealing to budget-conscious Indian buyers.
3. **FUNCTIONAL VALUE:** High-quality pre-owned apparel, frequently from luxury labels, provides functionality and usefulness.
4. **EMOTIONAL VALUE:** The distinctive, retro, or sentimental allure of thrifted apparel appeals to shoppers desiring uniqueness and genuineness in their fashion selections.

By incorporating these characteristics, the framework elucidates how thrifting fulfils both rational and emotional requirements, thereby supporting its significance in sustainable clothes consumption. This model provides a thorough analysis of thrifting as a sustainable clothing strategy in India. It stresses the interplay of cultural, behavioural, and value-based elements, addressing gaps in worldwide literature by contextualizing findings within the Indian socio-cultural setting.



6. RESULTS

This study presents a conceptual framework that connects thrifting to sustainable clothing consumption in India, incorporating essential behavioural, cultural, and value-based factors. The paradigm, however hypothetical, predicts substantial correlations among these parameters, providing insights into the role of thrifting in promoting sustainability in clothes purchases.

The attitude towards thrifting is anticipated to be crucial, as consumers who view thrifting positively as an environmentally sustainable and cost-effective practice are more inclined to embrace it (Sharma and Aggarwal, 2019). In India, increasing awareness of environmental issues and worries regarding affordability are expected to cultivate positive attitudes towards thrifting.

Subjective Norms, or the influence of social groups, are anticipated to exert a significant impact in India's collectivist society (Khare, 2019). Validation and support from peers, family, or social media influencers can render thrifting a normalised, aspirational, and sustainable lifestyle option. Young consumers, in particular, are prone to adopt thrifting if it coincides with their social identity and trends.

Perceived Behavioural Control is posited to influence the facilitation of adopting thrifting. Access to structured thrift markets and digital platforms, together with clear information about product quality and sanitation, can boost consumers' confidence in purchasing second-hand apparel (Steward, 2017). This is especially pertinent in India, where conventional second-hand markets sometimes exhibit disorganisation.

Cultural values, including frugality and ingenuity, are anticipated to significantly influence the promotion of thrifting (Chakraborty and Sadachar, 2022). Practices such as repurposing and sharing apparel, grounded in Indian customs, harmonise effortlessly with sustainable fashion ideas, rendering thrifting culturally significant.

Perceived Value Dimensions—environmental, economic, functional, and emotional—collectively support the attraction of thrifting. Environmental and economic value address practical problems, while functional and emotional values contribute elements of quality and originality, hence boosting consumer happiness (Steward, 2017).

By integrating these variables, the framework offers a comprehensive insight into thrifting's capacity to revolutionise clothing consumption in India. This study emphasises the significance of cultural alignment and multi-dimensional value judgements in promoting sustainable practices, setting it apart from previous studies concentrated on Western contexts.

7. DISCUSSION

This study presents a conceptual framework for comprehending the possibilities of thrifting as a sustainable clothing consumption behaviour in India. By amalgamating behavioural theories with cultural and value-based components, it offers a refined approach that rectifies significant deficiencies in previous research.

Previous studies on sustainable apparel consumption have predominantly concentrated on Western contexts, highlighting factors such as cost-effectiveness, environmental awareness, and self-expression. Nevertheless, these studies frequently neglect socio-cultural elements specific to collectivist cultures such as India, where consumer behaviours are profoundly shaped by cultural norms and values. Moreover, current studies in India have predominantly focused on sustainable new clothing, overlooking the significance of second-hand marketplaces and the role of thrifting in sustainable consumption.

This theory addresses these inadequacies by situating thrifting within the cultural context of India. It acknowledges old activities such as textile repurposing and familial sharing as antecedents to sustainable behaviours, associating thrifting with enduring principles of frugality and creativity. Furthermore, by integrating perceived value dimensions—environmental, economic, functional, and emotional—it tackles the multi-dimensional incentives driving thrifting, extending beyond the single-variable focus of past research

8. IMPLICATION

8.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The research enhances the Theory of Planned Behaviour by including cultural values as a separate component. Although the TPB typically analyses attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, the incorporation of cultural values enhances the framework's relevance to the Indian setting. Moreover, the integration of perceived value aspects enables a complete knowledge of consumer behaviour, combining logical concerns like cost and environmental advantages with emotional and functional attractions.

This uniqueness differentiates the framework from previous models, which frequently neglect the interaction between cultural and behavioural components. It illustrates how traditions may influence contemporary sustainable consumerism, establishing a culturally relevant approach to advocating for thrifting.

8.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

For organisations and companies, the findings reveal concrete measures to encourage thrifting as a sustainable clothing habit. Awareness efforts should highlight the cultural congruence of thrifting with Indian traditions of resourcefulness and sustainability. Utilising social media and celebrity endorsements might normalise second-hand apparel among younger groups, mitigating social stigmas typically linked to thrifting.

Digital platforms providing selected, hygienic and premium thrifted apparel can improve accessibility and perceived behavioural control. By highlighting affordability and distinctiveness, these platforms may leverage perceived value aspects, transforming thrifting into an aspirational option rather than a concession.

Thrifting enhances sustainable clothing consumption by prolonging apparel lifespans, minimising waste, and decreasing the need for new manufacturing. This technique in India can match with the overarching objectives of circular fashion, providing a cost-effective and culturally suitable alternative to fast fashion. This study highlights the environmental, economic, and emotional advantages of thrifting, establishing it as an essential element of sustainable garment practices in India.

This research is one of the initial studies to clearly connect thrifting with sustainable clothing consumption in India, examining both cultural and behavioural aspects. Its novelty resides in its comprehensive approach, which amalgamates proven theories with contextual insights, providing a framework that is both theoretically sound and practically applicable.

By portraying thrifting as a culturally resonant and multi-dimensional practice, this research not only contributes to the global sustainability debate but also gives actionable insights for boosting sustainable clothing consumption in India.

9. LIMITATIONS

First, the study is conceptual and lacks empirical confirmation. The postulated links between factors such as cultural values, perceived value dimensions, and behavioural intents require investigation using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Without empirical proof, the framework's application across multiple customer sectors in India remains theoretical.

Second, the analysis does not account for the heterogeneity of Indian customers. India's complex socio-economic and cultural environment implies that views toward thrifting and sustainable clothing consumption may vary greatly between urban and rural locations, as well as across different age groups, income levels, and educational backgrounds. This variation might impact the generalizability of the suggested approach.

Third, the study largely focuses on the behavioural and cultural determinants of thrifting without examining structural and market-level issues. For instance, the lack of organized thrift markets, restricted internet channels, and concerns about product quality and cleanliness may represent substantial challenges to adoption. Addressing these systemic difficulties is crucial for converting the framework into concrete initiatives.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research should empirically validate the theory utilising a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative research may include surveys or structural equation modelling (SEM) to evaluate the correlations between variables, while qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, could give deeper insights into customer motivations and challenges.

Comparative investigations between rural and urban consumers, or between various areas of India, would expand the knowledge of cultural and socioeconomic factors on thrifting. Additionally, researching generational disparities, particularly between Gen Y and Gen Z, might shed light on developing consumer attitudes toward sustainable clothes.

Research might also study the function of internet platforms in encouraging thrifting. The development of e-commerce and social media offers unique potential to boost accessibility and customer confidence in thrifted clothes. Studies evaluating the influence of these platforms on customer behaviour might give significant information for firms and regulators.

Finally, longitudinal research tracking changes in attitudes and behaviours toward thrifting over time might give a more dynamic understanding of its involvement in sustainable garment consumption. Such research would assist in assessing the long-term feasibility of thrifting as a sustainable practice in the Indian setting.

11. CONCLUSION

This study presents a conceptual framework that connects thrifting to sustainable garment consumption within the Indian context, focussing on behavioural, cultural, and value-based aspects. The framework elucidates the distinctive elements affecting thrifting in India by merging the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with dimensions of perceived value and cultural values. These encompass affirmative dispositions, societal approval, accessibility, cultural customs of originality, and judgements of environmental, economic, and emotional value.

This study highlights thrifting as a culturally relevant and sustainable practice, in contrast to previous research that concentrates on Western contexts or new sustainable clothing. It addresses deficiencies in current literature by integrating socio-cultural factors and multi-faceted value views, providing a comprehensive insight into consumer motives.

The study highlights thrifting's potential to enhance sustainable apparel consumption by prolonging garment lifecycles, minimising waste, and promoting affordability. It offers practical ideas for enterprises and governments to normalise thrifting by utilising digital platforms and social media to improve accessibility and attractiveness.

This research offers originality by contextualising thrifting within India's socio-cultural framework and sustainability discussions. Empirical validation and longitudinal research are recommended to enhance the framework's application, ensuring its pertinence in promoting sustainable clothing practices in India.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Abrar, M., Sibtain, M. M., Shabbir, R. and Corona, C. G. (2021), "Understanding purchase intention towards eco-friendly clothing for generation Y & Z", *Cogent Business & Management*, Vol. 8 No. 1.
- Chakraborty, S. and Sadachar, A. (2022), "Can a connection with the indigenous cultural values encourage sustainable apparel consumption?", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 80-99.
- Chaturvedi, P., Kulshreshtha, K. and Tripathi, V. (2020), "Investigating the determinants of behavioral intentions of generation Z for recycled clothing: an evidence from a developing economy", *Young Consumers*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 403-417.
- Dagher, G. K. and Itani, O. (2014), "Factors influencing green purchasing behaviour: Empirical evidence from the Lebanese consumers", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 188-195.

- Dhir, A., Talwar, S., Sadiq, M., Sakashita, M. and Kaur, P. (2021), "Green apparel buying behaviour: A Stimulus–Organism–Behaviour–Consequence (SOBC) perspective on sustainability-oriented consumption in Japan", *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 30 No. 8, pp. 3589-3605.
- Kautish, P., Paul, J. and Sharma, R. (2019), "The moderating influence of environmental consciousness and recycling intentions on green purchase behavior", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 228, pp. 1425-1436.
- Khare, A. (2019), "Green Apparel Buying: Role of Past Behavior, Knowledge and Peer Influence in the Assessment of Green Apparel Perceived Benefits", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 109-125.
- Khare, A. (2020), "Antecedents to Indian consumers' perception of green apparel benefits", *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Khare, A. and Kautish, P. (2020), "Cosmopolitanism, self-identity, online communities and green apparel perception", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 91-108.
- Khare, A. and Sadachar, A. (2017), "Green apparel buying behaviour: A study on Indian youth", *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 41 No. 5, pp. 558-569.
- Khare, A., Sadachar, A. and Manchiraju, S. (2019), "Investigating the Role of Knowledge, Materialism, Product Availability, and Involvement in Predicting the Organic Clothing Purchase Behavior of Consumers in the Indian Market", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 228-242.
- Norum, P. and Norton, M. (2017), "Factors affecting consumer acquisition of secondhand clothing in the USA", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 206-218.
- Padmavathy, C., Swapana, M. and Paul, J. (2019), "Online second-hand shopping motivation – Conceptualization, scale development, and validation", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 51, pp. 19-32.
- Park, J., Runyan, R. C. and Ha, S. (2012), "Understanding pro-environmental behavior", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 388-403.
- Sharma, H. and Aggarwal, A. G. (2019), "Finding determinants of e-commerce success: a PLS-SEM approach", *Journal of Advances in Management Research*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 453-471.
- Steward, S. (2017), "What does that shirt mean to you? Thrift-store consumption as cultural capital", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 457-477.
- Varshneya, G., Pandey, S. K. and Das, G. (2017), "Impact of social influence and green consumption values on purchase intention of organic clothing: a study on collectivist developing economy", *Global business review*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 478-492.
- Yazdanpanah, M. and Forouzani, M. (2015), "Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour to predict Iranian students' intention to purchase organic food", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 107, pp. 342-352.