Fashion Re-consumption; developing a sustainable fashion consumption practice influenced by sustainability and consumption theory

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of Master of Arts.

Katherine E. Pears
B.Des.Hons
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Katherine E. Pears

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Introduction

0.1 Contextualising the research

Introduction to the research
This thesis explores the problem of wasteful fashion consumption in light of the current need for individuals to develop a sustainable way of living. The Agenda 21 report from the Rio Earth Summit (1992) determined that sustainable consumption is an issue to be addressed in terms of resource conservation, waste reduction and a reduction of production pollutants. To date, in Australia, there are no policies or strategies in place to reduce wasteful consumption from the consumer’s perspective and it is this research and policy deficit that this thesis research addresses.

According to a recent national study of wasteful consumption, Australians spent approximately 1.7 billion dollars in 2004 on fashion garments and accessories that they did not wear (Hamilton et al. 2005). However, landfill statistics revealed that only a small proportion of textile waste (of which clothing is a subsidiary category) contributes to landfill (ABS, 1998). This discrepancy between the annual expenditure and the contribution of clothing to landfill informed the research hypothesis; that the greater majority of these inactive fashion garments are hoarded in wardrobes rather than disposed of. This hypothesis was tested through an action research case study in the form of a clothing exchange event and related data collection and analysis (part 2 of the thesis). The additional objectives of the clothing exchange event were to activate “fashion waste” (inactive garments hoarded in wardrobes) and simultaneously raise awareness about the need for sustainable development with the view to stimulate individuals to instigate additional sustainable action.

Wasteful consumption as a social and environmental problem
Despite the urgent need to reduce waste and conserve finite natural resources in order to develop a sustainable future, consumers from developed affluent nations (such as Australia and America) are rapidly increasing their excessive consumption. According to a report authored by consumption experts Professor John Fien, Cameron Neil and Matthew Bentley, Australian consumers are now spending twice what they were fifty years ago and this is in part the excessive consumption of mobile phones, cars and other modern luxuries (NYARS, 2004). Consumption critic Juliet Schor and economist Clive Hamilton have both suggested that wasteful consumption is increasing because the richer people become, the more they spend on goods they do not use (Hamilton, 2003 & Schor, 2004). In Australia, GDP (gross domestic product) is currently increasing at four percent which means that in seventeen years, Australians will be twice as affluent as they are in the present day (Dennis, 2007). Therefore, if this proposed
correlation between increased affluence and wasteful consumption exists, the wasteful consumption habits of Australians will continue to significantly increase which would be contrary to the much-needed sustainable development that demands immediate waste-reduction in order to reduce greenhouse emissions to prevent climate change.

There are additional factors increasing the rate and volume of fashion garment consumption. From the production angle, manufacturing developments within the fashion industry such as increased production speed and access to cheaper labour have enabled garment prices to drop and consequently, consumers can afford to buy more garments for their money. They are buying in binges rather than making more discerning purchasing decisions. This increase in the speed and volume of production does not equate to an increase in the diversity of fashion garment styles or the quality of their manufacture. On the contrary, fashion commentators such as L’oreal Fashion Festival Head Karen Webster, are lamenting the homogenisation of fashion design- where the over-exposed globalised industry is suffering as copying seemingly supplements innovation (Webster, 2004). Fashion consumers are now offered limited stylistic choices from what appears to be a plethora of garments and thus their cravings for distinction are going unsatisfied. Additionally, these cheaply produced garments are not constructed to last and are deteriorating quickly and necessitating replacement and thus increasing the rate of consumption (Thomas and van Kopplen, 2002).

Despite the rise in national consumption levels, Australian consumers are not necessarily experiencing any greater form of happiness. In direct contrast, a recent study conducted by the Australia Institute has revealed that people are not only aware of their own wasteful consumption but they may also feel guilty, discontented and unhappy as a result of overspending (Hamilton et al. 2005). This thesis argues that in addition to the environmental problem of waste creation, consumer dissatisfaction with the range fashion garments available and the rising discontent with consumerism are primary social motivations to re-evaluate and redevelop current wasteful fashion consumption practices in addition to the environmental imperative.

0.2 The research objectives

As this research is inclusive of many interrelated discourses, arguments and ideas, the research objectives are listed below as they evolved chronologically through research and discussion. The first two objectives were established in the early stages of research. The latter objectives evolved through the first two research trajectories. Through the initiation and design of the clothing exchange event, additional research avenues were identified, creating the intersections between research and practice that characterise the methodology of action research. These key objectives will be expanded upon and explored in greater depth within the body of the thesis.
1. To understand the tensions between wasteful fashion consumption and sustainability in both environmental and social terms

2. To comprehend the social, cultural and historical significance of fashion consumption in order to understand the challenge of sustainable consumption development for individual consumers

3. On the basis of this understanding (as reach through objectives 1 & 2), develop a sustainable consumption practice that reduces ‘fashion waste’ (ie. Inactive garments that could otherwise be adopted by new owners and reduce the demand for the production of new garments)

4. To analyse and evaluate the success of the clothing exchange as a fashion waste activation project and as an awareness raising exercise.

0.3 Research method

This thesis is comprised of two main components; a literature review (part 1) and an action research case-study (part 2).

Part 1: Literature Review

The literature review constitutes chapters one to three of this thesis. To understand the tensions between sustainability and fashion consumption, there was a need to understand both concepts thoroughly in order to be able to identify the intersections. The primary research objective was to conduct a study of wasteful fashion consumption in Australia. However, this research area was found to be emerging rather than established and so the key arguments regarding wasteful consumption as a social and environmental problem, drew heavily from a discussion paper recently published by The Australia Institute (TAI) entitled ‘Wasteful consumption’ (Hamilton et al. 2005). This sub-section explores some of the key references and terms that informed the development of the thesis arguments by grouping them into discourses.

Sustainability

The Brundtland Report supplied the most common and enduring definition of sustainability as finding a way to meet the current needs of all people today without compromising the needs of generations to come. Sustainability expert David Suzuki defined the task of sustainable development for individuals to be about assessing all kinds of human behaviour with the view to re-develop those that prohibit the development of a sustainable future (Suzuki & Dressel, 2002). The simplicity and sentiment of this definition was considered appropriate for discussion about sustainable consumption development at the individual level within this thesis.

The Agenda 21 Report identified the breadth of the social, economic and environmental issues to be addressed for sustainable development. By extending and developing a more holistic understanding about what constitutes a sustainable future, this report deconstructed the
misinterpretation that environmentalism and sustainability were interchangeable movements. While the Agenda 21 report specified what needed to be done, it did not necessarily clarify how it could happen. These objectives did provide a sound basis for the thesis exploration into possible approaches to sustainable development in chapter three by identifying that for developed nations, a key objective is to develop sustainable consumption and eliminate waste.

**Sustainable consumption discourse**

In consumption theory literature, the primary discourses concerned the relationships between production and consumption, the economy and the social aspects of society. In terms of sustainable consumption as explored by economist Paddy Dolan, the production solution is the relatively straight forward task of introducing sustainability regulations regarding selection of materials and manufacturing processes (Dolan, 2002). From the other side, reducing the environmental impact of the consumption angle is far more confounding as one cannot regulate consumer choice without interfering with the perception of consumer sovereignty and the core values of the free market economy.

Environmentalist Hunter Lovins recently stated that consumption needed to be reduced when giving a lecture recently in Melbourne (2004). This kind of request is mirrored throughout sustainable consumption literature where devoted environmentalists scorn the high consumers for their wasteful consumption habits, demanding they change without acknowledging the social complexity of such a request. To request an instant reduction of consumption negates the social, cultural and historical significance of the practice, especially in regard to fashion. This thesis adopted a holistic approach offered by sustainability theorists William McDonough and Michael Braungart (2003); that with sustainable systems (or sustainable consumption practices) in place, consumers should be able to enjoy consuming a plethora of goods without threatening the sustainable way of living (McDonough & Braungart, 2003).

**Wasteful consumption**

The Australia Institute report on wasteful consumption (2005) was co-authored by Australian economist Clive Hamilton who also wrote ‘Growth Fetish’, another of the primary texts that informed this thesis research. These two sources contained essential but rare statistics regarding Australia’s wasteful consumption habits that were contextualised within a detailed analysis about the social and environmental implications of the consumption habits of Australians. While many economists, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists have critiqued the wastefulness of the consumer society over the last century, Hamilton’s texts provided a contemporary critique that was pertinent to the thesis discussion. His arguments and analysis related specifically to Australian consumers in the current day while most other consumption texts are European or American.
Prior to the Australia Institute’s report, there was very little information detailing the extent of wasteful fashion consumption. The Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that textile waste inclusive of clothing constituted a small, relatively insignificant proportion of total landfill. The TAI’s wasteful consumption study revealed that approximately 1.7 billion dollars a year had been spent purchasing clothes and accessories that were consequently not worn, or used for a short period of time before being rendered inactive (Hamilton et al. 2005). The discrepancy between the Australian Bureau of Statistics landfill statistics and the volumes of fashion waste implied by Hamilton’s wasteful consumption study lead to the formulation of the research hypothesis; that fashion waste does not primarily go to landfill, rather, it sits, unused in people’s wardrobes.

**Fashion consumption theory**

Consumption theory literature is expansive and each research discipline appears to claim a single overriding reason why people consume more than they need to survive where as this thesis argument gives credence to each of these motivations within different contexts. The anthropologists’ perspective presented by Mary Douglas described the practice of consuming to be informed by the values of a collective society and culture (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). The consumption habits of a society are learned, passed along, ingrained and habitual. Social psychologists Vaughn and Hogg (1983) described consumption to be an attempt to reconcile an individual’s identity through the attainment of material things so that this constructed visual identity can be interpreted by the public. So consumption is not for its own sake, but a vehicle for individuals to discover and display the characteristics of their personality, taste and individuality. Hamilton, like many economists, presented the concept that consumption is a by-product of income generation, believing that people spend money on goods because they have the means (Hamilton, 2003).

From the fashion theory perspective, Joanne Finkelstein, in agreement with the social psychologists, believes that the consumption and adornment of fashion is a process of self-actualisation (1996). As fashion theorists Joanne Eicher and Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins explained, the meaning of an identity is social, and relates to an individual’s social status. The pursuit of fashion becomes the act of reconciling one’s identity in social terms. Consumption critics Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter elaborated, presenting the view that people consume either to represent how they are distinctive, or to socially conform (Heath and Potter, 2005).

Rather than seeking to define a precise rationale about what motivates fashion consumption, this thesis sought explore the social significance of the practice with the view to establish a platform of understanding for successive discussions about the social complexity of sustainable fashion consumption development.

*Discontent within consumerism*
Through analysing Hamilton’s book ‘Growth Fetish’ it became apparent that there was a second key motivation for challenging existing consumption practices and this was the rising discontent with consumerism. Further insight into the foundation for this discontent was gained from the Australia Institute’s study into ‘wasteful consumption’ (Hamilton et al. 2005) which revealed that wasteful consumption manifests guilt in the majority of consumers and in turn creates feelings of discontent. Psychologist Paul Watchtel (1983) supported Hamilton’s critique of the affluent consumer society where people are kept or keep themselves in a state of constant disenchantment by constantly up-scaling their needs and believing they always need more than they currently have. The early writings of economist Ernst Franz Schumacher (1973) and Vance Packard (1960) reflect an earlier detection of this fetishisation of growth to the detriment of the social wellbeing of the society and give credence to the contemporary arguments of Watchtel and Hamilton.

From the production angle, disenchantment with fashion commodities is the result of the homogenisation of fashion design as pinpointed by Australian fashion academic and commentator Karen Webster (2002). Regarding consumerism more generally, feelings of discontent have been documented in the form of the culture jamming movement, the voluntary frugality movement and through emerging social groups such as the down-shifter (those taking an income reduction in order to increase their leisure time and embrace non-economic values).

While some of these grassroots movements are gaining momentum, Heath and Potter suggest, the culture jamming movement may not be the undoing of consumer capitalism as it hopes, but it does provide a critique of mass culture and the emerging consumerist discontent (2005). Regardless of the impact of culture jamming, the existence of these and other anti-consumerist groups supports this notion that there is rising discontent with consumerism. It confirms that wasteful consumption is both a social and environmental problem.

Gauging attitudes towards sustainable development
This thesis investigates unsustainable consumption behaviours at the individual level, and so it was necessary to include a study of individual attitudes towards sustainability and environmentalism. According to social psychologists Vaughn and Hogg (1983) attitudes can provide a reliable indication of future behaviours. However, as Hamilton identified, Australians are living with conflicting attitudes; they want to live without harming the environment but they participate in highly wasteful, materialistic lifestyles that do just that (Hamilton et. al. 2005). Vaughn and Hogg’s analysis of attitude accessibility assisted the deconstruction of this contradiction. People can possess contradictory attitudes but the dominant attitude is more likely to influence behaviours. While people possess pro-sustainability attitudes, their behaviours are more likely to be motivated by attitudes that are tied to dominant materialist values. This exploration of sustainability attitudes highlighted the need for future development strategies to include a dimension of awareness-raising, so that people are more likely to adopt sustainable
behaviours in all aspects of living as their pro-sustainability attitude will dominate conflicting
behaviours if strengthened. This approach was adopted and tested in the development of the
clothing exchange case studies (part 2).

Understanding the barriers between the individual and sustainable development
In order to understand why the pro-sustainability attitude is a less powerful determinant of
behaviour, there was an investigation into the scepticism challenging the acceptance of the
climate change. Prominent economist Bjorn Lomborg recently provided a suitable case study as
he went to great lengths to discredit what he refers to as the litany - the threat of climate change.
Lomborg’s critique was well received by those who wish to defend the status quo in order to
preserve their own interests but only hindered the understanding and consequent action towards
the sustainable development required to prevent the most negative environmental ramifications
of climate change.

Despite his claims of scientific inaccuracy on behalf of the scientists claiming climate change to
be a reality, Lomborg’s ‘facts and figures’ were lacking credibility and he was later accused of
committing scientific dishonesty (Hamilton, 2003). Regardless of the accuracy of Lomborg’s
statistics and the social value of his arguments, he successfully contributed to maintaining the
stifling confusion around the climate change debate, thus giving permission for inactivity to those
who desire it. This understanding that there are many forces at work trying to disprove and
ultimately disregard action in response to climate change, lead the exploration of additional
barriers standing between individuals and sustainable development. These barriers informed the
development of the clothing exchange case study which sought to overcome some of the key
challenges of sustainable development for individual consumers.

Second-hand dress
After acknowledging that the current consumption of short-lived fashion garments was a
resource-intensive and highly wasteful practice, it was important to investigate if and how fashion
consumption practices could become environmentally sustainable. As sustainable textile
developments and sustainable design theory is emerging rather than established, it was
proposed that the consumption of second-hand dress should be encouraged as it is the only
tangible sustainable fashion commodity currently available.

Cultural theorist Angela McRobbie provided an early account of the significance of second-hand
dress but fashion theorists Alexandra Palmer and Hazel Clark recently published an in-depth
study of second-hand dress entitled ‘Old clothes, New looks’ (2005) which provided an in depth
analysis of the social connotations of consuming second-hand garments. Local popular media
such as fashion magazines and Newspapers validated the current heightening of interest in
second-hand or vintage dress. Over the last two years (2004-05), Australian fashion publications
such as ‘Rush’ and ‘Yen’ have featured articles about green lifestyles, ethical consumption and
online second-hand clothing trading schemes. Natalie Shukur, a fashion writer for Rush Magazine recently featured several internet sites which facilitate the exchange of expensive designer fashion items. The majority of the sites identified were based in the United States and did not seek to overcome some of the significant barriers between individuals and sustainable development, but the media attention reflected the growing interest in alternative methods of fashion consumption.

Part 2: Action Research
The purpose of the action research was to test the research hypothesis; that second-hand clothes are hoarded inactive when they could be adopted by new users and instead reduce the demand for new resource-intensive clothing production. The primary objective of the case studies and analysis was to increase the understanding about how sustainable consumption practices can be developed through participatory processes (the exchange event) and observation (Action Research Resources, 2005). The process of hosting a clothing exchange event, extracting data and responding to the results by further developing the clothing exchange thus reflected this action research methodology.

The literature review inspired and later directed the development of the clothing exchange, but the act of holding the event itself proved to be a valuable method of gaining further insights into this mode of exchange that could not be attained by engaging with theory alone. The literature review inspired the initial research hypotheses however, making the event a reality tested the validity of the hypotheses, and inspired further speculation. Based on the wasteful consumption report (Hamilton et.al, 2005), it could be assumed that people are buying a significant quantity of clothing that they are not wearing, but until the exchange was conducted, the existence of this ‘fashion waste’ was yet to be proven.

The three clothing exchange events were structured as case studies to be conducted as a longitudinal study over the duration of one year. This provided an opportunity for some participants to attend multiple events and so the questionnaire could be used to detect how successful the clothing exchange event had been as an awareness raising exercise and as a fashion waste activation project. At the conclusion of each event there was an opportunity to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, via written questionnaires and informal interviews. This descriptive data was analysed by a PhD psychology student who is qualified to interpret questionnaire results and can detect significant correlations in the participant’s responses.

The first exchange, entitled My Sister’s Wardrobe (MSW), included 27 female participants, the second exchange attracted a smaller group of 10 female participants. At the second exchange, participants who were repeating their exchange experience were surveyed about the value of the clothes obtained from the previous event. A third exchange, this time referred to as Walk in Wardrobe (WIW), was initiated to provide a basis for comparison with the results of the first two
exchanges as it was to include both men and women. A different questionnaire (see appendices) was prepared for the returning participants and the new male participants in order to facilitate the comparison. This event design and data interpretation and consequent developments will be elaborated upon in chapters four, five and six.

0.4 The significance of this research

Contextualising the researcher

The researcher has a background in industrial design and has entered fashion research at a postgraduate level. The research has therefore been approached in a manner that differs from that of someone with a pure fashion theory background. Fashion theory and industrial design academics identified that the researcher was following the industrial design paradigm by identifying a specific problem (wasteful fashion consumption) and developing a solution (the clothing exchange). The researcher was based in Melbourne for the duration of this thesis research. The researcher has lived in Melbourne and has grown up in the Australian consumer society.

Significance within the fashion discourse

Specifically within fashion academia, sustainability is an emerging rather than an established discourse. In other disciplines, such as industrial design and architecture, a sustainability discourse has developed as a significant stream. The discussions of sustainability in fashion are production and design oriented, often translated into a discourse of dematerialisation or multifunctionalism from the designer’s perspective.

Fashion consumption and sustainability are often considered to have opposing agendas. There seems to be a clear division between those who ruthlessly criticise fashion and those who are completely enamoured by it. This research investigates the problem of wasteful fashion consumption, while attempting to balance the argument by seeking to understand the social and cultural significance of fashion consumption practices. Instead of polarising attitudes towards fashion consumption held by fashionistas and environmentalists, this thesis seeks to identify how the social significance of fashion can be preserved within the context of sustainable consumption development.

Research method

This thesis is the first action-research project initiated at a postgraduate level in fashion in Australia. Consumption literature focuses on theory, less so with practice and the same is arguably true for sustainable development. There are insurmountable reports detailing objectives for sustainable consumption development, but very little documenting sustainable practice development. The great majority of consumption critiques outline the ‘near-impossible’ challenge of reducing wasteful consumption at the individual level, but few expand the point
beyond suggesting that to regulate would interfere with the notion of consumer sovereignty. The clothing exchange (part 2) sought to take on this challenge of reducing wasteful consumption while empowering individual consumers to adopt a sustainable consumption practice.

0.5 Thesis introduction

The thesis discussion suggests that the need for sustainability should provoke individuals to rethink their excessive and wasteful consumption and hoarding of fashion garments, with a view to adopt or develop more sustainable practices. The first chapter explores the historical roots and social significance of the practice of consuming fashion garments to substantiate its social relevance so that the critique of wasteful consumption is balanced and not purely critical. This chapter begins with an exploration of the history of the consumer society and the evolution of fashionable dress. The aim of this investigation is not to definitively describe a complete history of fashion and adornment, but rather to highlight the significant social developments that have evolved and lead to the current role and appreciation of fashion consumption in Australia.

Furthermore, the first chapter explores how in a modern consumer society, the pursuit of fashionable dress is motivated primarily by the social desires of the individual. Rather than consuming fashion garments to appease basic needs, it is the contention of this thesis that people construct their own style with the view to demonstrate how they conform or stand out from the crowd. In support of this view, fashion theorist Joanne Eicher explains that identities are completely social because they are socially acquired and relate to socially constructed positions within a society (1995). Roland Barthes too substantiates this notion that functionalism is not the primary driving force behind fashion garment consumption with his statement that “there are times when the proposed garment corresponds to a real function; a dress for dancing is used for dancing and also indicates dancing…but in the vast majority of cases the function fashion attributes to clothing are far more complex” (Barthes, 1985)

While later chapters take a more critical view of wasteful fashion consumption, this first chapter demonstrates how where the value of fashion consumption proves to be significant, sustainable development strategies targeting the individual fashion consumer must acknowledge and appeal to these values. To ignore or to pose a challenge without thorough consideration of the social significance of fashion consumption could lead to the rejection of alternative solutions offered, regardless of the fundamental importance.

The second chapter of this thesis identifies the specific tensions between the wasteful consumption of fashion and sustainability, in both social and environmental terms. This chapter begins with an overview of the evolution of both the international and local sustainability discourse to contextualise the current debate. The analysis starts from the 1972 report ‘Limits to Growth’ (Meadows cited by Ryan, 2004) which inspired significant concern for world’s potential
resource depletion. Decades later, the principles of sustainability were identified at the Rio Earth Summit and clarified in a report known as Agenda 21. This report outlined the key objectives for global sustainable development, and specifically established the reduction of waste by addressing consumption as a primary goal for developed nations. This chapter identifies the tensions between wasteful fashion consumption and sustainability and starts to focus on the environmental and social problems of wasteful fashion consumption.

Chapter three confirms the presence of the current social discontent regarding consumerism by identifying some of the emerging social and cultural groups within Australia who are either overtly rejecting consumerism, or are quietly adopting alternative lifestyles and practices outside the conventional consumption-work paradigm. The existence of social groups such as ‘culture jammers’ and ‘down-shifters’ the existence of rising discontent toward consumerism and validates that alternative sustainable approaches should be explored and adopted instead.

This chapter also identifies and explores how there is a need to understand people’s existing attitudes and behaviours before designing sustainable strategies with a view to engage individuals willingly. There is evidence confirming that two of the most prominent and sustainable development strategies in Australia, kerbside recycling and water conservation, have successfully captured an enthusiastic and active response. This, in part, demonstrates that there is a willingness within the Australian population to participate in sustainable development. There is no clear, documented explanation of why Australia’s sustainable development action has not flourished in other areas, considering the will appears to be present. This finding prompted the investigation of the barriers between individuals and their potential participation in sustainable development strategies in the following chapter.

Based on the detection of this untapped willingness, the third chapter examines the barriers between individual consumers and their participation in sustainable development. One such barrier is that the objectives of sustainability remain unclear. Sustainability is often mistakenly misinterpreted by the general public as a substitute for environmentalism. There is widespread uncertainty regarding issues such as the credibility of the threat of climate change and the integrity of the sustainability agenda. Popular media continues to address single, disparate issues rather than the bigger picture, of what a sustainable future can or needs to be.

This chapter addresses the difference between empowering consumers to take an opportunity to participate in reducing their own wasteful consumption rather than a more typical approach from a sustainable consumption perspective- that individual consumers with wasteful consumption habits should take on the responsibility for instigating change that will lead to a more sustainable future. This chapter seeks to acknowledge the difficulties when it comes to developing sustainable consumption practices and how this task becomes confounding because it is difficult to separate consumption from all other living activities (Mont, 2002).
The third chapter leads to the conclusion that at this stage, the dominant objective of sustainable development should be to identify clear problems and develop supportive strategies that appeal to people’s current values and abilities. As the likelihood of sustainable action being undertaken depends on whether it appears easy to execute (Vaughn & Hogg, 1983), sustainable development strategies must appear tangible to a willing audience. Specifically, sustainable consumption strategies need to be accessible and affordable, and complementary to existing lifestyles in order to encourage participation. Approaches such as campaigning and regulating employed in other areas of sustainable development can generate an obligatory response from people, but this chapter presents the idea that a gentler approach, focusing on engaging and empowering individuals is more likely to lead them to adopt sustainable practices and more significantly, a pro-sustainability attitude.

The following chapter demonstrates how the objectives for sustainable development identified in chapter three were translated into the development of a clothing exchange event; a sustainable consumption practice. In response to the problem of wasteful fashion consumption identified in the previous chapters, the clothing exchange event was developed to activate fashion waste. The key motivations behind the clothing exchange were to test its ability to activate fashion waste and simultaneously raise awareness about the need to develop sustainable fashion consumption. This chapter details the specific objectives that evolved and how they were realised through the development of the clothing exchange. There were three clothing exchange events in total. The first and second events were entitled “My Sister’s Wardrobe” (MSW). These first events were directed towards an exclusively female audience. To contrast a third clothing exchange event including both male and female participants, referred to as “Walk in Wardrobe”, was trialled.

This chapter includes a description of the research design and demonstrates the value of the clothing exchange as an action research case study. The act of holding and evaluating the event tested the validity of the research hypotheses (that fashion waste exists and its potential usefulness can be reactivated an supplement the purchase of new clothes) and inspired further reflection and development throughout the subsequent chapters. A questionnaire was developed to investigate the participant’s changing opinions and attitudes towards sustainability, new clothing consumption and second-hand dress. It was also designed to explore how satisfied participants were with the exchange event and the clothing they gained. The data was to be interpreted to help identify the successes and limitations of the exchange events and inspired ongoing improvements to be made. Based on the three exchanges, a total sample group of between thirty and ninety participants would provide substantial data from which informed conclusions could be drawn. In addition to the research design, this chapter specifically details the development of the system of exchange and specifically describes the format of the clothing exchange event.
This data analysis from the three clothing exchange events is explored in detail in chapter five. Each of the three exchange events are examined and compared and the responsive developments are chronologically detailed. The data analysis revealed shifts in participants’ environmental and ethical awareness with regard to fashion consumption, and led the researcher to evaluate the success of the clothing exchange as an exercise in waste activation. Evolving from the exchange analysis, this chapter later explores the potential applicability of this system and mode of exchange. This chapter discusses potential alterations to the context, audience and proposes different applications to other areas of consumption.

The concluding chapter of this thesis positions the role of the clothing exchange case studies in the broader context of sustainable development. The contention being that the clothing exchange case studies demonstrated how unsustainable behaviours such as wasteful fashion consumption can be challenged and redeveloped. It is proposed that the clothing exchange system is an appropriate transitional strategy for individual Australian consumers of the current day as it is based on the familiar practice of sharing, but simultaneously embodies the ideals of the sustainability movement through encouraging frugality, simplicity, waste conservation and adopts a community-oriented approach.
Part 1

1.0 The social, cultural and historical significance of fashion consumption

1.1 Introduction

The vast majority of sustainable consumption literature shies away from a discussion about sustainable development from the perspective of the consumer, beyond the suggestion that the onus should be on consumers to reduce their consumption habits (Dolan, 2002). The social influences that generate and maintain high levels of excessive or wasteful fashion consumption have not been explored nor documented sympathetically within the sustainable consumption discourse to date. Therefore this chapter explores the historical, cultural and social significance of the practice of consuming and wearing fashionable garments, with the view to thoroughly inform the development of sustainable consumption strategies from two perspectives rather than just criticise fashion production and consumption for its wastefulness.

Fashion consumption is the practice of purchasing and adorning oneself with fashion garments and it is inextricably linked to all aspects of living in an affluent modern society. At this time, the onset of climate change demands that people eliminate wasteful practices but this is not a straight forward task. People will express reluctance to sacrifice practices they believe to be important and it may be difficult to revaluate practices that are ingrained and therefore habitual. In order to stimulate consideration about and effectively reduce wasteful fashion consumption, any development strategies need to respond to the values of the society, rather than remaining altruistic and purely visionary.

Fashion consumption (indeed any consumption that leads to the acquisition of goods that satisfy materialist desires) is often dismissed as indulgent and superfluous in an environmentalist critique. While it often remains unsaid in sustainable consumption discourse, the implication that deprivation is synonymous with saving the world is often present. To lay a ‘guilt trip’ upon Australian consumers ignores the forces that create the desire for fashion consumption. To do so would disregard the social and cultural significance of a fashion-oriented consumer society. However, according to consumption analyst Paddy Dolan; “our actions, dispositions, lifestyles and even our identities are transformed through such social relations” (Dolan, 2002), and this is not to be taken lightly even in light of the pressing need to develop a sustainable way of living.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the history of the consumer society and the four key theories underpinning the development of dress and adornment. The aim of this investigation is not to definitively describe all aspects of this development, but rather to highlight that over time significant social developments have taken place, that have led to the current understanding and
involvement of fashion in the current Australian consumer society. This chapter then explores how the historical significance of consuming and wearing fashion translates into a contemporary context. By identifying the cultural, historical and social integration of fashion consumption, this chapter sets up the premise of this thesis; that fashion consumption is inherently socially significant in Australian consumer society, and that this should be considered integral to the sustainable consumption discourse. Where the value of fashion consumption proves to be significant, development strategies must acknowledge, supplement or build upon these values.

1.2 A historical account of want-creation, distinction and the consumer society

This sub-chapter is not a chronological exploration but an identification of key developments that now characterise the contemporary consumer society. It does not constitute an exhaustive critique of key concepts such as capitalism, but rather an acknowledgement of its development and significance in defining the context of Australian living and thus the Australian consumer society.

*From basic needs to the creation of wants*

There was a time when peoples' wants did not extend beyond what they needed for basic survival and to want something beyond these survival needs would have been considered absurd (Maniates, Princten & Conca, 2002). Peasant societies existed for thousands of years without the pressure to acquire more than they needed for survival (Mitchel and Schoeffel, 2002). Contemporary philosopher Noam Chomsky refers to the abolition of slavery in Jamaica as the catalyst for the manufacturing of 'want creation' (Mitchel and Schoeffel, 2002). At this time, the British wanted to move from a slave-economy to a free-economy. When the British freed their slaves, they were shocked to find that they chose to move to unclaimed land, motivated by the desire to live self-sufficiently. Without the peasants to work on their plantations, the owners were at a loss. At this time two very conscious decisions were made by the British Parliament in order to force workers back to the sugar plantations. The first step was to close off the open land so that the peasants stayed within the reach of the British (Mitchel and Schoeffel, 2002). The second step was to develop a way of coercing the peasants back to work at the plantations. By creating a whole new set of wants that consequently created the desire for a wage, the peasants were effectively re-enslaved by what is now referred to as consumerism (Mitchel and Schoeffel, 2002).

Chomsky’s retelling of the development of British ‘want creation’ highlights the potentially manufactured nature of consumer needs. This historical account marks the transition from a utilitarian society to a consumer society when viewed in contrast to the values of the current day, where individual needs are being continually up-scaled through social processes.
The dilemma of development

After the world wars interrupted and slowed the production developments that had been flourishing in the early stages of the industrial revolution, increasing production speed and proficiency returned to the focus of development. Post-war in America saw a significant boom in production that at the time demonstrated the potential to significantly outpace the rate of consumption. As confirmed by journalist’s statement in the advertising and marketing journal ‘Printers Ink’ in 1959, “our automobile plants could turn out eight million cars this year if they dared…but the industry would be lucky to sell half that number (Packard, 1960). This relationship between consumption and production created the ‘developing dilemma’ which was to be solved by encouraging ‘growthmanship’; growing the economy by matching consumption levels to the capacity of production (Packard, 1960).

The method of increasing consumption was to focus on stimulating greater desires and additional wants that could only be satisfied by excessive consumption (Packard, 1960). In the mid 1950’s, the ‘Journal of Retailing’ featured a statement by marketing consultant Victor Lebon outlining the path for the future of economic development; “our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions in consumption…we need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever-increasing rate” (Packard, 1960). This approach to increasing excessive consumption according to the rate of production for economic benefit has developed to the point where now Australians (and those of other affluent nations) are living in consumerist society.

Commodity fetishism and alienated labour

According to Marx, ‘commodity fetishism’ is a principle of believing that something (a commodity) has a super-natural power worthy of being fetishised (Julier, 2000). As he theorised in ‘Das Kapital’, because men were no longer responsible for labouring to produce goods for their own use, they were no longer connected to the process of producing commodities and so the manufacture of those goods remained mysterious to them. He elaborates “there is no necessity for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different to their reality. They take their shape in the transactions of society, of services in kind and in payments in kind” (Marx, 1887). In the current Australian consumer society; individual consumers are not informed about nor responsible for the manufacture of goods they purchase, and if they have the financial means, they have can consume innumerable commodities.

The ‘super-natural power’ of the commodity is constituted by the mystery of production when it is separated from the user or consumer so in order to break down this mystique of commodities, Marx defined the dual values of a commodity to be use-value and exchange-value. The use-value of a given commodity is its function or purpose. In a capitalist society, a commodity has an exchange-value that can be given an equivalent monetary value, creating the notion of relative
exchange. According to Marx in a modern capitalist society, the danger of commodity fetishism is that “in the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange values” (Marx 1887). People are no longer defined by what they do, in a modern consumerist society, they are defined by what they have and display.

Following on from Marx’s theories, in the 20th century, Marxists sought revolution for the workers or producers of goods. To their surprise, the workers cast a vote for reform in the nature of incremental change rather than for a complete system overhaul (Heath & Potter, 2005). At this time, theorist Antonio Gramsci began to argue that capitalism was creating an entirely false consciousness for the working class. Gramsci proposed that “a complete cultural hegemony that reinforced the capitalist system had been successfully established” and that this culture of beliefs was based entirely on the ideology of the bourgeoisie (Heath & Potter, 2005). This notion that consumers are being duped by the system and are locked-into a consumerist web that services economic development is still prevalent in consumerist critiques today.

In response to the lacking revolutionary vision of workers, philosopher Theodore Rozak later proposed that people genuinely might like capitalism (Roszak, 1969) as the workers had chosen not to revolt and had maintained an interest in the ‘life of plenty’. Rozak concluded that it was possible that people wanted a plethora of consumer goods and that this may not be a problem because people “may not have any deeper needs” (Heath & Potter, 2005). This arguably reflects that peoples needs have changed alongside the changing values of the society, whether this be driven by economic development or influenced by social changes.

History of dress and adornment

The origins of dress and adornment are debated within fashion literature. There are four key theories are commonly explored by fashion theorists. These theories are based on whether the need for dress emerged from the desire for symbolic adornment, protection from the environment, social modesty or from the desire to be immodest for the purpose of attraction and procreation.

According to fashion theorist Susan Kaiser (1990), primitive cultures were symbolically adorned rather than clothed for the purpose of preserving modesty. In this context, adornment refers to the decorative nature of clothing and appearance modification for the purpose of display, attraction or aesthetic expression. The premise of the adornment theory is that the desire for modesty evolved from the earlier practice of adornment. It is proposed that as people adorned themselves, they became acquainted with the functional potential of clothing (Kaiser, 1990). People of early European societies were dressed modestly but still with the intent to be adorned.

The “modesty theory” evolved from Christianity and according to Kaiser; “people first wore clothing to cover or conceal the private parts of the human body”. This motivation is based on
the idea that morality is dependent on modesty and this is expressed by concealing parts of the body. The main argument discrediting this theory as the founding catalyst for dress is that children are not instinctively modest. Children have to socially learn to be modest, so it becomes unlikely that this would have been the first motivation to dress. Standards of modesty also vary from culture to culture indicating that it is a subjective assessment rather than derived directly from human instinct (Kaiser, 1990).

In direct contrast to the modesty theory, it has been proposed that individuals first wore clothing in order to attract attention to the sexual organs with the view to attract sexual interest from a mate for the purpose of procreation. Whilst many theorists concede that sexual appeal is one of the influences behind dress, it does not capture the same theoretical following as the modesty theory (Kaiser, 1990).

The protection theory is based on the premise that people originally wore clothes as protection from “elements, animals or even supernatural forces” (Kaiser, 1990). From this perspective, clothing is considered to be one of the basic needs for survival and its use was a response to human instinct. While the definitive motivation for dress remains speculative, the four basic theories maintain their relevance in a contemporary understanding of why people adorn and dress themselves in the current day.

**History of taste and the need for social distinction**

Social critic Thorstein Veblen identified the potential for dress to assist or reflect social mobility within class structures where previously, before the nineteenth-century, European governments passed sumptuary laws that regulated dress to control social mobility (Douglas, 1978). Essentially, Veblen (1899) successfully described the emerging desire of the individual to appear prosperous through conspicuous consumption and display. How by modifying one’s physical appearance, the social interpretation of that appearance is altered. According to Veblen, in this type of acquisitive society; “the ownership of wealth did more to confer prestige on its owner than either family lineage or individual talent” (Wilson, 1985).

Veblen also presented the idea that individuals possess “native taste”, that is, an implicit understanding of what constitutes essential good taste. As explained by Pierre Bourdieu; taste is the art of knowing what to consume according to class (Bourdieu, 1979). Bourdieu proposed that “consumption is a stage in a process of communication that is an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code...the capacity to see is a function of the knowledge or concepts, that is, the words that are, as it were, programmed for perception”. For example, a work of art only has significance to an individual who has the “cultural competence” to decode its meaning (Bourdieu cited by Lee, 2000). Taste informed consumption, and the “cultural competence” of the audience defines the social translation in terms of class positioning.
By highlighting these social and historical perspectives, this sub-chapter has outlined the evolution of the consumer society in response to the need for economic development and where social needs have become prominent motivators for excessive consumption. This sub-chapter also explores the separation between user and maker and so now individuals are defined by what they consume rather than produce, by how they adorn themselves according to their individual identity mediated by the laws of taste that trickle down from the bourgeoisie society.

1.3 The current significance of fashion consumption

In a post-modern consumer society, it can be argued that the pursuit of fashionable dress is motivated by an individual’s desire either to appear distinctive or to conform. The fact that these two desires interrelate and influence peoples’ consuming decisions indicates that while people wish to reflect how they are in some way unique and special, they also wish to feel a sense of belonging, whether this may be within their peer group, subculture or broader community.

**Distinction**

According Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, people consume goods to signify their distinction; “most people spend the big money not on things that help them fit in, but on things that allow them to stand out from the crowd” (Heath and Potter, 2005). The desire to appear distinctive relates to the growing interest in individuality and self-discovery. It is most often the conclusion of fashion theorists that constructing a visual identity using fashion garments, relates to the reconciliation of a personal identity within the context of social relationships. According to Eicher, identities are completely social because they are socially acquired and relate to socially constructed positions within a society. An individual’s identity is based on their relative social position, and potential mobility within these social structures (Eicher, Roach-Higgins & Johnson, 1995) and this is interpreted and projected through dress.

The process of fashion consumption aids the process of self-discovery and also allows individuals to develop their social identification (Finkelstein, 1996). According to social psychologists Vaughn and Hogg; “a person may adopt a fashion due to the perceived consistency between what the fashion symbolizes and his or her self-concept”. People purchase garments that represent who they are, but they also acquire garments that reflect the kind of person they wish to be, and, the kind of person they wish to be seen to be.

Cultural theorist Jeff Rice (cited by Heath & Potter, 2005) defines distinction to be the quality of being “cool”. His understanding of the quality of “cool” is that it is ‘the universal stance of individuality’ and distinction, where to be an individual is not being who you want to be but doing what other people are not doing. Considering fashions are transient, what is cool or distinctive is
always changing so the consumption of new fashion items becomes a constant necessity for the cool, distinction-seeking consumer.

**Conformity**

By definition, fashion is about styles being popularly accepted by the consuming public and so there is an element of conformity in the act of fashion consumption even when it is considered an act of individualisation (Sproles, 1979). The will to conform is most evident in young consumers where the specificity of what children and teenagers buy and wear is informed by schoolyard banter. The desire to conform is maintained throughout adult life but is likely to be mediated by the simultaneous desire to be distinctive. Whether the desire for conformity overrides the desire for distinction will depend on the context of consumption. For example, an adult may wish to conform to a professional working dress code in an office environment during work hours but may adopt a more individualistic style of dress for the weekend. The desire to conform and be distinctive can exist simultaneously, and it is possible that one may be consuming to be distinctive within the boundaries of social conformity.

**1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter’s exploration confirms the notion that the contemporary consumer society is based on a complex evolution of social change and economic development. People consume fashion garments because it is habitual, integrated into various other activities, socially desirable and because to an extent it is ingrained in Australian culture. This understanding of the social, cultural and historical significance of the practice of fashion consumption is pertinent in the next chapter, where the sustainability discourse proposes wasteful or excessive fashion consumption be re-evaluated and reduced or eliminated. It is essential for the success of sustainable development that the value and significance of the practice of consuming and wearing fashion garments be understood. Future sustainable consumption strategies should be derived from consideration about preserving what is culturally and socially valued in the current society so that sustainable development need not be about social compromise or the depravation of what people currently value.
2.0 Exploring the tensions between sustainability and fashion production and consumption.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the tensions between sustainability and excessive, wasteful fashion consumption with the view to understand how Australia’s excessive consumption habits conflict rather than align with the objectives of sustainability. As the first chapter identified, the practice of consuming fashion is inextricably linked with many of the activities that constitute modern life in an affluent nation such as Australia. The need to initiate sustainable development through waste reduction in order to reduce pollution and conserve finite natural resources, is the imperative for revaluating and redeveloping wasteful fashion production and consumption in terms of how they are socially and environmentally problematic.

To contextualise this discussion, this chapter commences with an exploration of early environmentalist theory, which broadened and developed into what is now the sustainability movement in response to climate change. Following the detection and establishment of the problem of climate change there was a rise of environmentalism which developed into a more holistic approach to sustainable development as identified most clearly by the Agenda 21 Report (Rio Summit, 1992). This chronological exploration contextualises and give due importance to the enduring characteristics of the sustainability discourse and debate. After reaching an understanding of what a path to a sustainable future may entail based on this chronology, this chapter reflects broadly upon how this has translated into sustainable consumption development within an Australian context.

Following this, the chapter investigates the social and environmental tensions specifically within the system of fashion production and consumption. Three primary tensions between the fashion consumption and sustainability are addressed; notions of inequity, labour ethics and the problem of wasteful consumption. This chapter explores how the production structures between developed and developing nations perpetrate global inequities. Additionally, it analyses how labour ethics are compromised in the sphere of production with the emergence of sweatshops and outworking labour. This chapter also defines the environmental and social problem of “fashion waste” which becomes the specific focus of this thesis and related case studies (part 2).


2.2 Exploring the evolution of sustainability theory and related action

In 1960, Vance Packard provided one of the earliest critiques of the perils of the consumer culture in his diagnosis of the American ‘Waste-makers’ (Packard, 1960). Stimulating excessive consumption to match production had become the answer to the ‘development dilemma’, the way to ensure continual economic growth. At this time, Packard warned that the United States and Europe would soon face the challenge of “coping with a threatened overabundance of the staples and amenities and frills of life” as well as the depletion of finite resources. He feared that “perhaps the United States has no acceptable alternative to the ever-rising and wasteful consumption” (Packard, 1960) but conceded that “something will have to give—either the mode of living or population growth or both—long before a mere century has passed” (Packard).

In 1972, the Club of Rome Report, ‘Limits to Growth’ inspired grave concern about the world’s potential resource depletion identified by Packard. It was contended that “if the present growth trends in the world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime in the next 100 years” (Meadows, cited by Ryan, 2004). The acknowledgement of the limits of finite natural resources and problem of pollution and global warming inspired early environmentalist thinking. The primary focus of the environmentalist movement that developed was the preservation of natural resources and specifically in Australia, there was a need to focus on repairing the ozone layer that brought environmentalist concerns to the forefront in the 1980’s.

In 1987, The World Commission on Environment and Development brought the broader notion of sustainable development into public debate as the single-issued approach of environmentalism had failed to maintain momentum. The resulting publication commonly described as the ‘Brundtland Report’ defined the search for sustainability to be “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This challenge of working towards global and intergenerational equity has defined the task of sustainability ever since. This precautionary approach asks the current generation to find a way of the quality of the natural environment and its resources for generations to come. In order to support sustainable development, the Brundtland Report identified the need to create harmony between economic activity and the environment (Ryan, 2004). Coupled with additional objectives concerning social justice and human rights, these challenges have continued to be included and developed within the scope of sustainability.

The sustainability discourse continued to make this transition from being environmentally-oriented to a more unified, comprehensive understanding about the need to address global social, economic and environmental challenges synonymously. As described in the Agenda 21 Report from the Rio Summit of 1992; “humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty,
hunger, ill health and illiteracy and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our wellbeing” (Agenda 21, 1992). This report outlined the most specific breakdown of the objectives for sustainable development to date while clearly uniting issues of human welfare with the environmental agenda.

Disappointingly, rather than using the document as the basis for globally-unified sustainable development, independently, nations have struggled to initiate their own separate agendas for sustainable development. The Kyoto Protocol on climate change represents the most recent attempt to globally unify the sustainability movement by negotiating and setting goals for reducing carbon emissions, but regrettably, it did not gain global support. The unwillingness of the American and Australian governments to ratify this protocol has arguably created greater divisions between nations and confirmed the ever-increasing disinterest of the Australian government when it comes to acknowledging and responding to the threat of climate change (Singer and Greig, 2004).

Currently in Australia, Non Government Organisations, individuals and small communities are driving sustainable development at the grassroots level. There are indications to support the notion that individuals are taking a greater interest in developing a sustainable future. In Melbourne, Australia, the sustainability movement is gaining support and some momentum from independent grassroots groups and communities. The ideology of sustainability is becoming part of the collective consciousness, even if people are unsure how to participate in sustainable development beyond kerbside recycling. The Sustainable Living Foundation, for example, stages an independent annual festival with the support of the Melbourne community. The festival attracts attendance beyond 100,000 people over the duration of a three-day weekend. This example represents the public interest as the attendants are actively seeking information about how they can contribute to the development of a sustainable future.

The priorities of the current Australian government are clearly aligned with the interests of certain groups within business, particularly the resources and fossil fuel industries and it is only in very recent months that climate change has registered as a significant political issue. Until the Federal and State governments make a comprehensive commitment to sustainability and develop supportive legislation accordingly, in Australia, the race to sustainability is primarily being run by individuals, community groups and grassroots activists.

2.3 Exploring the social and environmental problems within fashion production and consumption

This sub-chapter identifies the tensions between the objectives of sustainability and the wasteful dimension of fashion production and consumption. It examines how fashion production
compromises humanist ethics and how the relationship between the producers and consumers of fashion perpetrates global inequities. In addition, it identifies how the production, consumption and rejection of fashion garments contribute to the problem of resource wastage, the creation of pollution and environmental degradation.

While it is within the scope of this thesis to identify the social problems associated with the compromising of labour ethics and perpetration of global inequities, in subsequent chapters the discussion is refined to an exploration of the social and environmental ramifications of wasteful fashion consumption.

**Inequity**

The current production-consumption relationship between developing and developed nations is inequitable. The Agenda 21 Report sites the “unsustainable lifestyles of the richer segments” as a major stress on the environment and for perpetrating global inequities. At this time, the privileged, affluent 20% of the global population (mostly from developed nations) are consuming 80% of the earth’s finite resources (Adbusters, 2004). The current system of fashion production only exacerbates this inequitable relationship between developed and developing nations. High volumes of clothing are manufactured in developing nations for the affluent consumers of developed nations to purchase.

Additionally, there is an increasing polarisation of price extremities within the global clothing market that reflects the global wealth distribution. Since the Asian financial crisis (1991), wages in Asia have decreased and so have clothing prices (Schor & Taylor, 2002). As mass produced clothing becomes cheaper, the top-end fashion garments are becoming increasingly more expensive. As Schor has observed; “paradoxically, the system of low prices and high volume is anchored at the top by outrageously priced merchandise” (Schor & Taylor, 2002). According to Schor, “the existence of such an upscale apparel market is a troubling symptom of a world in which some people have far too much money and far too little moral or social accountability in terms of what they do with it” (Schor & Taylor, 2002). Klein summarised the inequitable relationship between producers and consumers by referring to the Indonesian workers who knew how to assemble entire computers but were unable to afford to own and use them as despite being overworked, they are significantly underpaid (Klein, 2000).

Consumption theorist Nick Robin points to the potential for sustainable production regulations to further exacerbate inequalities; “sustainable consumption is seen as a way of denying developing countries the fruits of development and also in posing new green protectionist trade barriers against their exports” (Robin, 1999). Developing nations could perceive regulations as a ploy of developed nations to prevent competitive industrial development (Robin, 1999). To overcome such potential misunderstandings and unify global sustainable development, the Agenda 21 Report states that there must be two distinct agendas for developing and developed nations to gain the interest and support of developing nations. For developing nations the task is
to develop in line with the principles of sustainable development. For the developed nations, the task of addressing consumption is potentially that of reinventing consumption practices and this is considered to be a confounding challenge.

Production ethics within Australia
Contrary to the common misconception that sweatshops and outworking only occur overseas in developing nations such as China and India, the compromising of labour ethics has become a significant, quantifiable problem within Australian borders. Dr Christina Cregan conducted a study interviewing one hundred local outworkers. Her research revealed that workers, who were often paid per garment rather than per hour, receive an average wage of three dollars an hour when the garments they make sell for hundreds of dollars (Cregan, 2004). When living within an Australian value system, the outworkers are required to work up to seventeen hours a day in order to earn enough money in order to afford basic necessities while the designers, production managers and retailers each profit significantly. At a local level, the inequities between rich and poor are effectively being amplified within the realm of fashion garment production and this is conflicting with the goal for an equitable society championed by sustainability.

Wasteful consumption
The fashion industry was pronounced to be the most wasteful industry according to designer Katherine Hamnet (2004). This is in part because the defining nature of fashion is its transience and in no other industry are goods becoming so readily obsolete and necessitating replacement through additional and excessive consumption. According to Helen Lewis from the RMIT Centre for Design; “one of the most fundamental environmental issues associated with the clothing industry is its focus (and dependence) on ever-changing fashion. Most clothes are not worn-out; they simply get replaced by the latest designs and colours” (Lewis, 2001).

The consumption of fashion commodities has become a highly accelerated process where the rate of consumption outpaces use. This is problematic because as Dr Graham Treloar’s waste and emissions studies have revealed “while the environmental impacts of the clothing sector are small in absolute terms, the relative impact of the upstream supply chain is paramount” (Treloar, et al, 2003.). This upstream supply chain is inclusive of the harvesting of the raw material, dyeing, garment assembly and transportation. In addition to the high volumes of wasted materials and resources, there are high levels of pollution and chemical dangers in the form of emissions, pesticides and dye waste (Treloar et.al, 2003). There is a need to reduce the environmental impacts of new garment production through eliminating such waste, reducing the production emissions and eliminating the use of chemicals that are harmful to people and the environment.

To date there is no specific, statistical information addressing the volume of wasted fashion garments within Australia. However it is possible to gauge the magnitude of the problem by
viewing it from the economic perspective. According to the TAI wasteful consumption study, Australians spend approximately $1.7 billion dollars annually on clothing they do not wear (Hamilton et al. 2005). This study revealed that clothing consumption is the third highest waste category for the mass population. For young consumers (aged eighteen to twenty-four years) it is the second most wasteful consumption activity (Hamilton et al. 2005). As mentioned in the thesis introduction, unlike rubbish or conventional forms of waste, this ‘fashion waste’ is not contributing to landfill, rather, it is hoarded in closeted detention where its potential use is squandered while the demand for new clothing consumption increases.

Australians are adopting increasingly wasteful fashion consumption practices as a result of social, economic and production-oriented developments. The fashion industry is increasing its emphasis on improving production efficiency while the manufacturing quality, design integrity and perceived consumer value are compromised (Webster, 2002). As garments have become significantly cheaper and people are becoming more affluent, they can afford to binge-purchase several garments, where previously a single garment would have sufficed.

As the homogenised, low quality of many fashion garments is failing to satisfy, consumers need to consume more items in a single outing to obtain the elusive shopping buzz (Debord, 2002). This binge consumption, like binge drinking, is seemingly senseless as fashion theorist Alexandra Palmer explains- “we struggle ideologically to consume at the rate we produce” (Palmer and Clarke, 2005). For the binge consumer, their shopping bags could be empty and they could still be satisfied, as owning the garment is not as important as the purchasing experience and the momentary elation of over-indulging.

Recently psychologists have identified a pathological condition known as ‘oniomania’ or ‘compulsive shopping’. It has been defined in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as an obsessive-compulsive disorder (Hamilton, et al. 2005). Compulsive shoppers return home with “bags full of things that they could not resist which do not get opened” (Hamilton, et al. 2005). After shopping sprees, compulsive shoppers experience feelings of regret, but they are unable to prevent repeat purchases (Hamilton, et al. 2005). Alarmingly, this diagnosis is applicable to the majority of Australian consumers according to the findings of the TAI wasteful consumption study (Hamilton et.al, 2005).

Who Wastes?
Most Australians surveyed for the TAI wasteful consumption study possessed some level of awareness about their wasteful consumption. The exceptions are those who Hamilton describes as the “in-denial wasters”. Approximately 15% of Australians fall into this category (Hamilton et al. 2005). They are predominantly young (aged eighteen to thirty-four years), or rich (earning above $100,000 each year) or both (Hamilton et al. 2005). Their consumption habits are highly wasteful, however they believe that very little of what they purchase is wasted. The response of
in-denial wasters could relate to the respondents' perception of what waste is. It is a common understanding that waste equates to rubbish that is consciously disposed of in landfill. However, the Australia Institute based their survey on wasteful consumption as defined to be goods that are purchased and not used or their use is only partially extracted (Hamilton et al. 2005) and this clearly broadens the understanding of what constitutes waste beyond the common understanding of it being only rubbish.

The TAI wasteful consumption study revealed that those who are young (18-35), affluent, or both are the highest waste-generating consumers. Arguably, younger consumers are more actively consuming to reconcile their identity as they are going through a transition into adulthood, and as they are experimenting they are more likely to make purchasing errors. The national study into wasteful consumption revealed that young consumers spend at least $100 per year on clothing they do not wear at all (Hamilton et al. 2005). The wasteful consumption paper questioned whether young people waste because they are at an exploratory stage of their life, or whether there is a more concerning shift towards becoming more and more wasteful in relation to increasing affluence (Hamilton et al. 1998).

In addition, the TAI’s study into wasteful consumption found that those with a higher disposable income waste more than those with less. According to the study, those on low incomes say they think more carefully about their purchases. Hamilton identified a concerning relationship between wealth and consumption stating that; “the evidence suggests that, other things being equal, the richer we become, the more we spend on goods and services that we do not use” (Hamilton et al. 1998). As Australians are becoming increasingly more affluent, this is an alarming correlation that poses a threat to the development of sustainable consumption

**Defining fashion waste**

In the context of this thesis, ‘fashion waste’ refers to garments that are inactive, rendered useless even though they may have the physical potential to maintain their use. As fashions are transient forces that popularises certain styles of garment at a particular time, when a garment becomes unfashionable this renders it inactive to those who wish to follow fashion, despite its physical potential for wear. As fashion is often perceived to be cyclic, the owner may get a new lease of life out of the formerly unfashionable garment when it is revived by a new fashion trend but this is not always so as often the repeated cycle popularises a slightly varied set of styles to the original fashion with the view to stimulate consumption and maintain the credibility of fashions transience and consequent importance.

In order to make garments quickly and cheaply, manufacturers cut corners and by decreasing the quality of fabric and are choosing time efficient methods of garment construction over more lasting techniques. As a result, mass produced garments may stretch, pill, fade, shrink or distort and become fashion waste with increasing regularity within shorter time frames post-purchase.
Garments can become fashion waste when the owner changes in size or shape and it no longer fits, or flatters the body. Fashion garments are made in standard sizes and only certain methods of tailoring facilitate size variation. The current owner may hoard the garment with the intention that they will wear that garment again, upon returning to their original size, but once again, it is likely to remain unworn in the wardrobe for years.

A garment can become fashion waste when it is superseded by a superior version that may be superior in style, cut, fit or more fashionable. When a new garment takes over the role of the original version, the old item is unlikely to have an active role in the wardrobe. The wearer may still have a fondness for the original garment, and may not necessarily be conscious of the fact that it has become inactive, as their focus is on the superior version.

If a fashion garment no longer suits the desired image or ideology of the wearer then it will surely be cast aside. Garments that are attributed to ‘discontinued identities’ are unlikely to be worn again (Banim & Guy, 2001). Any fashion garment that plays an active role within the wardrobe must connect to the wearer’s current perception of themselves (Banim & Guy, 2001). By holding onto garments that represent their ‘discontinued identities’, women have a visible testament to who they are not (Banim & Guy, 2001). These garments represent where they have moved on from, or may relate to what or whom they have chosen to leave in the past.

When a garment becomes fashion waste, the owner may have consciously decided to cease wearing it, or may be subconsciously ignoring it. The owner may be yet to have thoroughly determined the fate of a particular garment as fashion waste and without a stimulant to do so, it is unlikely to be worn or put to effective use, instead it occupies space by taking on the form of ‘housefill’. This indecision is likely to eventuate with regard to transitional garments that have never found a precise role within the context of the wardrobe, most often because they fulfill a very specific purpose. One woman interviewed in Guy and Banim’s wardrobe survey described items from her transitional wardrobe: “I have two hideous nighties which I never wear. I keep them in case I have to go to hospital”. This reference highlights the potentially tenuous nature of justification of garment ownership as garments can be kept when they do not have an active role in the wardrobe or a significant potential use.

Garments that are linked to the individual’s ‘continuing identity’ are still highly relevant to the owner (Banim & Guy, 2001). Even if the garment is no longer worn, a strong connection is maintained as the clothes clearly reflect how the current self-image has been achieved and in this instance, the kept clothes are treasured not merely hoarded in inactivity as the definition of fashion waste denotes. The thesis argument is not purely critical of ownership beyond active use if there is social or sentimental importance between the owner and garment. The hoarding of inactive garments that have no current significant relationship with the owner should be
viewed as a wasteful, unsustainable practice and therefore has scope for development. According to environmentalists David Suzuki and Holly Dressel, at the individual level, “to search for sustainability involves studying how much and what kinds of human activity can be maintained over the long-term” (Suzuki and Dressel, 2002) and the hoarding of fashion waste or any other kind of housefill is one such practice that should be subject to re-evaluation within the context of sustainable development.

2.4 Exploring the social impacts of wasteful fashion consumption

In Australian social life, excessive and wasteful fashion consumption is encouraged. In popular media, the benefits of retail therapy and leisure consumption are promoted, and thus consumption for its own sake becomes a short-term cosmetic solution for deeper social inadequacies and problems. Many consumers are looking to compensate materialistically for what they feel they are missing emotionally. As theorist Jean Baudrillard identified; “whatever is lacking in the human subject is invested in the object” (Lane, 2000). The myth that consuming fashion provides mental ‘therapy’ pervades as it offers instant gratification to people who are time-poor and have a short attention span. Despite the therapeutic claims, once the purchasing elation has passed, the repercussions of excessive consumption can include the accumulation of debt and other post-consuming feelings of woe. People experience guilt when they feel they have wasted money or spend beyond their means.

The unreliable relationship between wealth and wellbeing

Despite the acknowledgement that money cannot buy happiness, consumer behaviour indicates belief in the contrary. As Heath and Potter confirm; “Most people feel quite rightly, that there is some connection between material prosperity and happiness, however tenuous” (heath and Potter, 2005). There is a significant correlation between wealth and happiness on for those who exist below the poverty line for the purpose of accessing healthcare and other basic necessities. The greater majority of the Australian population reside well above the poverty line and have access to all the basic necessities of life. The research of Heath and Potter, Hamilton and psychologist Paul Wachtel (1983) all attest to the fact that the correlation between wealth, material prosperity and happiness does not increase proportionately or in many cases, at all, for those above the poverty line.

As an affluent, developed society, Australians tend to concluded that they are better off and therefore happier than poorer people of developing nations. In a global happiness survey conducted in 1974, Nigerians, Filipinos, Japanese, Israelis and West Germans all rated themselves to be in the middle of the happiness scale. As asserted by psychologist Michael Argyle at the time; “there is very little difference in the levels of reported happiness found in rich and very poor countries” (Jackson, 2005). Having more disposable income also has little bearing
on increasing wellbeing. The National Opinion Research Centre of the University of Chicago found that America’s are no happier now than in the 1950’s despite having nearly doubled their consumption (Jackson, 2005).

The time-poor society
As people are choosing to work more hours in order to generate additional income or excel in the workplace, they can find themselves with little or no leisure time within which they can essentially enjoy the fruits of their labour. The national working hours are increasing in Australia and this reflects the prioritisation of wealth and consumption and in exchange for the devaluing of leisure time. According to Hamilton’s (2002) discussion paper addressing the Australian ‘middle class battler’ 30% of Australians work more than 48 hours every week. That means, a substantial proportion of Australians are working either six out of a possible seven day week or exceptionally long hours, leaving little time for recreation and recovery. This is a significant shift from the traditional forty-hour week which used to include a restful two-day weekend.

As national consumption levels are increasing proportionally to wealth, people are accelerating their consumption habits within their increasingly small pockets of leisure time. The fact that people are focusing on wealth-creation and want satisfaction through consuming commodities, reinforces that there has been a shift where people are now recognised for what they own, no longer by what they do in their leisure time. In the time-poor Australian society, people are caught somewhere between wealth generation and the futile pursuit of consuming things they lack the time to appreciate. People are pursuing a life of riches rather than a rich life (Hamilton, 2004).

The accumulation of debt
Fashion consumers are even more likely to suffer from post-consumption regret when they have impulsively spent beyond their means, or when their emotional investment is high. Retail payment options such as lay-buying and using credit only encourage people to spend money they do not have. As noted by theorist Neil Cummings; “credit as a technology allows for the extension of desire...it allows the customer to enjoy the experience of owning the goods ahead of time” (Cummings and Lewandowsksa, 2000). Until they receive their credit card bill, consumers can enjoy the feeling of having seemingly outwitted consumption by escaping financial responsibility in the short term. When the credit bill is received, the reality of making the payment is when the true investment of time and money in the purchase must be acknowledged.

Australians now have four times the collective credit debt that they did eight years ago (Hamilton et al. 2005). Cultural attitudes towards debt have changed over the last twenty years and people are more willing to accrue debts in return for material gratification. While people are willing to create higher debts this makes people feel guilty and become anxious as they lose control (Hamilton et al. 2005).
Burdened by the ownership of too many clothes

The increased accumulation of more and more ‘stuff’ resulting from excessive consumption creates the relative need for maintenance and storage. In the context of fashion consumption, unwearable garments are hidden in drawers, on the top shelf of a cupboard or stored in the garage. As Australian consumption levels accelerate, the average house size is significantly increasing. Over the last fifty years, the average Australian house has nearly doubled (Hamilton, 2003) which is proportionate to increased levels of consumption. The act of managing and owning ‘stuff’ is expensive, as storage systems, additional housing space and even house cleaners need to be funded.

The homogenisation of fashion garments

As fashion consumption assists the process of constructing and projecting an individual’s identity, then the homogenisation of fashion garments in the mass market is making this desire difficult to fulfil. Globalisation has increased access to global fashion media and trends has lead to the homogenisation of fashion design. Additionally, a “quest to capture the global market has homogenised fashion” so that everything looks more like everything else (McDonough & Braungart, 2003). The popularity and profitability of replicating ‘leading’ fashion labels has also decreased the differentiation between high fashion and high street clothing. If a woman carries a Louis Vuitton handbag, a observer would be forgiven for being uncertain as to whether it is genuine or a much cheaper fake. The internet has allowed images of popular fashion to circulate the globe and there is greater international mobility, allowing buyers to travel and garment designs to circulate. With this access to trends and the increased production capabilities, styles can be replicated by the high street stores before they have been sold through the original designer’s store.

While there is a greater quantity of fashion garments available, the opportunity to purchase a garment of a distinctive style and of high quality is becoming rare. As Webster explains; “from an en-masse perspective the mainstream sector of the industry still continues to bore the consumer with homogenised product” (Webster, 2002). This increased quantity is not synonymous with increasing variety or quality. The context of fashion retailing must therefore create the illusion of choice in order to dupe the consumer into buying more. As suggested by Cummings, retailers are relying on finer nuances to make their products distinctive and appealing to consumers; “objects are no longer the means by which we can gauge the strength of our desires; fashion and promotion have turned them into mere carriers for images and information in the form of logos, brands and labels”.

Individuals are not consuming the utility of the garments but rather they are seeking to participate in this complex coding of brands, style and status of the objects to communicate their values and identity to the society of observers. For example, an individual is not differentiated from the
mass population because they own shoes, because in an affluent society everyone owns shoes. An individual finds differentiation in owning five pairs of Manolo Blahnik high-heeled shoes, or because they wear the Nike swoosh on the sides of their sneakers.

The poverty of affluence
Despite being considered an affluent society, 62% of Australians believe that they cannot afford to buy all the things that they really need (Hamilton, 2002). According to the TAI’s research, 46% of these respondents were actually from the wealthiest Australian households. Popular media is a reference point that reinforces that people are poor relative to those who are portrayed as the norm on the television programs (Hamilton, 2002). People would not feel so poor without significant persuasion and through coming off second best in comparative assessments to those more affluent. As Hamilton noted; attempting to emulate the lifestyles of the very richest people makes those who are wealthy by historical and international standards feel poor by comparison. It is the relative position of the middleclass as compared to the most wealthy that maintains these feelings of comparative deprivation.

While people’s desires outpace what they currently own, they will strive to increase their income and spending, which just happens to sustain the growth of the national economy. In fact, the extent of what people desire has increased steadily over time, mirroring the overall rate of economic growth (Heath & Potter, 2005). People’s aspirations are constantly being raised, just a few purchases out of reach. The dramatic up-scaling from basic needs has reached the point where most people actually believe their consuming desires are based on the necessities of life, rather than the product of ‘luxury fever’ (Jollant, 1991). As described by consumption theorist Francois Jollant (1991), over time products once considered luxury items have become the norm- what constitutes the basic material requirements. To demonstrate this democratisation of luxury and the up-scaling of perceived needs, philosopher Alain de Botton) pointed out that in the United Kingdom 3% of people in the 1970s considered a second television to be a necessity, in the 2000s it is now 75% that consider this to be so (de Botton, 2004).

Schor believes a change in consumer reference groups has lead to the current state where “in general, people today are more and more aspiring towards luxury and affluence, as opposed to an earlier era in which achieving a comfortable and decent middle-class existence was the more common goal”. People used to treat their neighbours or peers as their reference for competitive or defensive consumption. Since the 80’s and 90’s, the relationship between people and the media has become closer and this is still developing to the point where peoples relationships with the media have started to replace their relationships with real people. As Schor diagnosed; “levels of face to face interaction with real people have declined” (Schor, 2004) and their relationships with the media have increased proportionately. In current popular media, upscale lifestyles are portrayed as the cultural norm and this sets the benchmarks for peoples’ aspirations” (Schor cited by Soron, 2004).
Heath and Potter have observed that those who are not competitive consumers involved with driving the up-scaling of needs are instead being forced to partake in a kind of defensive form of consumption in response. For example, two friends may have had an unspoken agreement that they spend $50 on each others birthday presents. If one friend chose to give the other a decidedly more lavish and expensive gift beyond the agreed standard and price, the recipient may feel grateful but also frustrated as they will have to match the level of generosity when gifting in return. In this case, the recipient of the gift has no independent desire to buy a more generous gift than they had in the past, but if they fail to do so they may appear to dishonour the friendship by appearing overly frugal. The recipient will be forced into an act of defensive consumption in order to maintain their original social position as an appropriate gift-giver.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored how consumers are prone to feelings of disenchantment, disappointment and regret when their consuming expectations are not met or not maintained. This sub-chapter has specifically avoided a discussion concerning the benefits of fashion consuming and instead provided an alternative critique to the glorification of consumption.

When critiquing the practice of wasteful fashion consumption it is clear that there are layers of social, environmental and ethical problems. This chapter has presented an additional motivation beyond the need for sustainable development to be the emerging discontent within the consumer society. This chapter questions the value of maintaining the consumerist status quo when the repercussions of the wasteful consumption offer no clear benefits to human wellbeing. The following chapter investigates the social and consumer groups who are voicing their discontent towards consumerism with the view to validate the contention that excessive consumption can have repercussions that are detrimental to human wellbeing and conflict with the objectives of social sustainability.
3.0 Investigating and developing an approach to sustainable fashion consumption

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter identifies what is happening in terms of sustainable consumption development strategically, and in opposition to over consumption. It profiles some of the emerging social and cultural groups within Australia who are either actively rejecting consumerism or are quietly adopting alternative lifestyles and practices. The existence of social groups such as “culture jammers” and “down-shifters” supports the claims that there is rising discontent with consumerism and alternative, sustainable approaches should be explored.

This chapter confirms that there is a need to understand people’s existing attitudes and behaviours before developing sustainable consumption strategies, to increase the likelihood of engaging them. Acknowledging some of the key barriers between individuals and sustainable consumption, this chapter describes aspects of an approach to sustainable consumption development generally, but makes specific references to wasteful fashion consumption when appropriate. The approach described in this chapter is later applied to the development of the clothing exchange case study in the following chapter.

3.2 Defining a willing audience for sustainable fashion consumption development

As mentioned in the Introduction, this thesis addresses the need for sustainable consumption development at the individual level in lieu of, or to compliment future regulatory action from the Australian government or business sector. It is imperative that while calling upon the individual to action sustainable consumption, there be a difference between delegating consumer responsibility and creating consumer opportunity as it is unfair to coerce people into believing that they are personally responsible for changing their consumption patterns because they have been born into a society that values free choice and consumer sovereignty (Bookchin, 2000). Delegating such an obligation to individuals could lead them to experience guilt or react in frustration, because individuals are not necessarily aware of the collective environmental and social ramifications of what they perceive to be ordinary living behaviours. To reprimand or regulate individual consumption is unlikely to lead individuals to adopt sustainable consumption lifestyles so this chapter discussion will not centre on a discourse of blame and the delegation of responsibility. Alternatively, future chapters will focus on the role of consumer empowerment
with the view to stimulating willing and enthusiastic participation in sustainable consumption development.

A discussion about the empowerment of the consumer does bring forward an inquiry about how much power is available to the individual consumer. The power of the individual may not be supreme and possess the capacity to redefine consumption. Arguably, in a consumer society the individual’s power depends greatly on their independent wealth or ‘buying power’. The richer the consumer, theoretically, the more powerful they are as they can support sustainable consumption through their purchasing decisions (Dolan, 2002).

As mentioned in the introduction, economically-oriented strategies for development have been focused on manipulating consumer demand to match the increasing rate of production. To instigate sustainable consumption development from the consumer’s perspective would need to first begin with a reclaiming of consumer power. Until there is significant demand from consumers for reduced or more environmentally-friendly production, it will be business as usual prior to government imposed regulations.

Outside the consumerist web, there are emerging social groups that are either adopting a stance against consumerism or choosing to adopt alternative non-materialist values and behaviours. While the culture jamming, anti-consumerist, anti-branding movement forms the basis of a very vocal counterculture to consumption, social movements such as the voluntary simplicity movement are initiating independent action based responses such as ‘down-shifting’. While the different approaches have varying impacts on consumerism, they confirm the social desire for its redefinition.

**Culture Jamming; the voice of the counterculture**

Culture jamming is one example of an established, international, active anti-consumerist movement. The intention behind the culture jamming movement is “to liberate the mental environment from the powerful grip of the market-structured consciousness by reclaiming airwaves and public spaces to propagate ideas instead of plugging products” according to consumption theorist Michael Maniates (2002). Schor notes that a growing number of young people critique their generation’s slavish devotion to well-known, highly regarded brands and companies (Schor & Taylor, 2002). The subversion of well-recognised brands, slogans and campaigns captures the attention of more radical individuals who actively support the development of a counterculture to consumerism. Groups such as ‘Adbusters’ are waging guerrilla warfare against advertising- the language of consumerism (Maniates, 2002).

According to Heath and Potter, the intention of the counterculture; to bring down consumerism, only reinforces consumerism as it too becomes a capitalist pursuit. By participating in activities such as image subversion with the aim to represent the anti-consumerist views, the counterculture has created a whole new demand for countercultural products and therefore makes one of the purest contributions to capitalism. Heath and Potter criticise Adbusters for the
development of the ‘black spot sneaker’ and claim it as the symbol of the profiteering counterculture. Rather than radicalising capitalism, the counterculture critiques mass culture and plays along by participating in the process creating another competitive market with their own set of products.

The conservationists
Consumption theorists Schor and Taylor have referred to what they call ‘the minimalist shopper’ (2003). According to Schor and Taylor, the minimalist shopper buys as few clothes as possible and prefers second-hand clothing consumption. The contention of this minimalist approach is that there are more than enough clothes in the world, so it is preferable not to spend the money and waste resources when there is surplus clothing available. It is simultaneously a resource-driven and budget-conscious approach.

Down-shifters
In Australia, 23% of thirty to sixty year olds have downshifted between 1998 and 2003 (Hamilton, 2003). According to Hamilton; “many people in rich countries have already made a decision to reduce their work, incomes and consumption”. Down-shifters are opting out of excessive consumerism, choosing to have more leisure time in their schedules. This means a slower pace, more time with their kids, more meaningful work and lives that represent a kind of balance in tune with their own values. The down-shifters indicate their willingness to embrace what the consumer society is arguably missing; a more human-centred approach to living. The down-shifters are part of what is known as the voluntary simplicity movement which is based on various alternatives to consumption for its own sake. These social groups may be motivated by the desire to improve their wellbeing, but there actions simultaneously signify a step towards a sustainable future.

Neo-consumers
Ross Honeywill from the Centre of Customer Strategy in Australia has identified a new group of ‘Neo-consumers’ who feel comfortable with their place in the world and define themselves by their values and attitudes rather than objects (Teutsch, 2004). Neo-consumers have recognised the abundant consumerist market as problematic and like the down-shifters, have embraced what they feel is missing. This group is searching for greater social and cultural meaning in what they do, buy or experience. ‘Neos’ still consume, however they do so to further their education, enhance their life experience or pursue an interest. For the Neo-consumer, making a financial investment in something is a personal, reflective process rather than a quick knee-jerk response to the persuasion of advertising.

Generations X and Y
According to International Young Professionals Foundation (IYPF) director Cameron Neil, recent studies have shown that “many young Australians are clearly unhappy and unfulfilled by
consumer society” and they are seeking out other, often sustainable alternatives. Neil has identified that young people who desire a more sustainable way of living are realising that no one else is going to create this path for them and so they must act accordingly (Neil, 2005). Not unlike the Down-shifters and Neos, it has been identified that these younger generations want a balance between work and life (Verrall, 2004). They are looking for a kind of spirituality, authenticity and richness that they feel is currently missing. In Australia, generations X and Y constitute more than fifty percent of the population, so this group may be integral in shaping a wider adoption of sustainable consumption practices.

The existence of these groups either confirms the existing discontent with consumerism, or represents a desire to embrace non-materialist values through adopting a different way of living. The fact that there are large groups of people within the Australian society identifying different needs or adopting different practices could represent the beginnings of social change. Whether the intentions of these groups are socially or environmentally oriented, could lead the wider Australian population in a more sustainable direction.

Detecting interest in sustainable fashion consumption

There has been a spike of interest in ethical consumption (Thomas, 2005). In the United Kingdom, current periodicals include the ‘New Consumer’ and the ‘Ethical Consumer’. The publication of a ‘Rough Guide to Ethical Consumption’ supports that there is significant consumer interest as it is directed towards a large, international readership. There are “a growing number of professionals responding to a latent public demand for ethical and green products” (UNEP, 2003). There has been a resurgence of ‘green products’ that may appear to replicate the development of ‘green wash’ that plagued the eighties retail sector. However, the primary difference between the current market for green products and the failing of ‘green wash’ is that the latter traded on conspicuous, but not necessarily significant, environmentally-oriented features while the former’s environmental credentials are more likely to stand up to scrutiny, but may not be so obvious.

Specifically within the fashion industry, ethical and eco-oriented labels are flourishing. Eco-fashion labels including The People Tree, Gaelyn and Cianfarani, On and On Ecolo-chic and locally, Hunter Gatherer and A name is a Label are producing fashion items that show none of the conspicuous visual trademarks of ‘green wash’. These labels produce clothing using second-hand fabrics and materials with an environmental conscience in a discreet manner. Their garments appear first and foremost to be fashionable and aesthetically desirable. Upon closer examination, the consumer becomes aware of the sustainable production processes that lead to the creation of garments. The new ‘eco-fashion’ labels show no signs of aesthetic or stylistic compromise and so sales are not reliant on moralised or short-term fad-based consumer support. This approach can therefore represent a shift in production processes within the fashion industry rather than a marketing-oriented eco-fad likely to repeat the failings of ‘green-wash’.
A consumer survey conducted in 2003 by Price Waterhouse Coopers showed that 64% of consumers want to be informed about the production methods of the goods they buy, and that 73% would be influenced by social labels in their purchasing decision (UNEP, 2003). A recent and local trend analysis conducted by WGSN found that young Australians believed that ethical and environmental issues would certainly dictate their buying decisions (2005). The majority of those surveyed were prepared to pay more for something that was made ethically and with respect to the environment (WGSN, 2005). However, the survey also revealed that these honourable intentions were not always translating into supportive action when shopping budgets were limited (WGSN, 2005). The next section of this chapter explores these and other potential barriers that stand between individuals adopting sustainable consumption practices.

3.3 Exploring the existing barriers between individuals and sustainable development

This sub-chapter explores the barriers between people idealising a sustainable future and actually taking action to assist development. It is the contention of this thesis that people are generally willing to participate in sustainable development, but they need to be offered practical and appropriate ways to do so.

Barrier 1. Extremism, fear and alienation
Sustainability is often mistakenly misinterpreted as a substitute for environmentalism because it shares similar objectives in terms of environmental preservation. The values of environmentalism constitute one portion of sustainability which is a more holistic approach to reconciling the environmental, social and economic needs of the global community.
It is often the case that enthusiastic environmentalists are cast as fanatics who represent ‘special interests’ by those seeking to disprove or discredit climate change. Unfortunately, in Australia, environmental activists have a well-established stigma as being ‘tree hugging hippies’ and like-thinkers and this is arguably more to do with their past civil disobedience rather than their philosophical beliefs. Some environmentalists use shock tactics in order to focus attention on specific issues such as anti-whaling or in the case of the Wilderness society, bombard passers by in street canvassing. Such confrontational approaches receive mixed responses because presenting an idea in a very confronting way can arouse so much anxiety and panic that people do not absorb the factual content and value of the message and reject such bombardment (Vaughn & Hogg, 1983). Psychologists Janis and Feshbach (1953) have found low-fear persuasion techniques are more successful than moderate or high fear techniques (Vaughn & Hogg, 1983) so arguably, this is the way to raise awareness about the need for sustainable development in response to climate change.

Conversely, if the impact of an awareness-raising strategy is too light it may fail to resonate as humans are arguably becoming increasingly numb to the impact of emotional dramas (DeGrandpre, 2004). Adbusters writer Richard DeGrandpre has described the current society where people commonly medicate to shut down their emotions and where empathy has eroded to the point where we are just not inspired enough to take action as there are too many problems to necessitate committed involvement to just one (DeGrandpre, 2004).

It is also possible that the lack of inspiration for sustainable development can be partially attributed to the way that in the current Australian society, people generally focus on problems that occur within their immediate family or friendship circle, rather than actively responding to national or global issues (Singer, 2003). As sustainable development is a global issue, it requires people to consciously open their gaze to include those outside their own backyard and even, those of generations yet to exists. This kind of extension poses a significant challenge as it goes against the norm for an individualistic society, which is to focus primarily on oneself.

**Barrier 2. Uncertainty, debate and trivialisation in the media**

There is widespread uncertainty regarding the credibility of alarming global warming predictions and therefore the integrity of the sustainability agenda remains insecure. As environmentalist Hunter Lovins explains; “sustainability is not a belief system; it’s an observable scientific fact” (1999). Despite conclusive scientific evidence, sustainability issues may be ignored with justifications about how “global warming can seem too remote to worry about, or too uncertain for something projected by the same computer techniques that often can’t get next week’s weather right” (National Geographic, 2004). As climate change is by nature prediction, albeit very well informed, it is vulnerable to dispute. Theoretically, there is always the possibility of finding new disproving arguments, or conflicting evidence that could contradict predictions.
Popular media delivers an incoherent portrayal of the sustainability agenda. Those with vested interests such as politicians and representatives from industries concerned about adverse impacts on their interests such as manufacturing, logging and mining have the most resources, access and control of the media. If the credibility of the climate change debate is constantly thrown into question by the few sceptics that still exist, the eventuating confusing is enough to keep the mass population from forming a solid stance in favour of sustainable development. The media’s portrayal reflects a broader international conflict. Scientists battle for credibility against sceptics who make it their agenda to disprove environmentalist statements in order to maintain the status quo for those who will continue to benefit (The Australia Institute, 2003).

A recent example is statistician Bjorn Lomborg, whose study damaged the credibility of the environmental debate. He investigated the scientific proclamations about depleting natural resources, fears for overpopulation, threats to biodiversity and worsening pollution (Lomborg, 2001). Lomborg searched for examples of scientist’s exaggeration of environmental indicators and upon finding some examples, attempted to discredit the entire sustainability movement (The Australia Institute, 2003). He was criticised and subsequently examined by the Danish Scientific Committee for using his own miscalculated statistics and trialled for ‘scientific dishonesty’ (Hamilton, 2003). Despite his condemnation and refutation of many of his claims, he presented a case that appealed to economists and like-thinkers resistant to change from a growth-dependent system regardless of the consequences. This debate and resulting confusion undermined the credibility of the scientific perspective on climate change and this has been part of what slows down the public and the political response.

The media’s infatuation with drama and short-term sensationalism, overshadows long-term issues associated with the sustainability movement, as it is likely to sell more newspapers or television time (Lomborg, 2001). Popular media continues to address single, disparate issues such as the Kyoto Protocol, water restrictions and Tasmanian growth forests. The bigger picture of the sustainability movement is rarely put forward to the mass population as an emerging movement or a coherent set of objectives for development. As a result sustainability becomes a passing interest rather than a priority. This may stimulate some responsible behaviour such as recycling and the carrying of green bags. However, these are essentially small-scale improvements that are arguably providing cosmetic comforts. While these initiatives are can be considered to be important catalysts for sustainable development, as Hamilton has stated; “the very success of waste reduction and recycling programs aimed at business and community have lulled us into believing that the problem is being solved”- as an end in themselves they can be a barrier to further innovations (2005).

Barrier 3. Sustainable development remains unclarified and intangible

If the sustainability agenda is to translate into action at the individual level, there needs to be clarification about what a sustainable future is and how people are going to make it happen. As
environmentalist David Korten has stated; “until we have a reasonable idea of where we want to go, we are unlikely to get there” (Suzuki & Dressel, 2002).

The likelihood of sustainable action being undertaken depends partially on whether it appears easy to execute (Vaughn & Hogg, 1983). In order for the individual to be able to participate, there is a need to establish tangible strategies that people can relate to and participate in. The ‘green bags’ (re-usable shopping bags) that are successfully replacing conventional plastic bags are one such example. In Australia, 2.2 million green bags have been sold by Woolworths in little over a year (Haigh, 2005). The ‘green-bag’ concept appeals to people with a consumer-mindset because buying a ‘green bag’ contributes to sustainable development while being instantaneous and inexpensive.

**Barrier 4. Conflicting desires**

Australians seem to be living with a paradox, they indicate they respect and wish to preserve the environment and yet they participate in highly materialistic and wasteful consumption (Hamilton et al 2005). In this case, the pro-sustainability attitude may be superseded by higher priority values and the outcome of which are behaviours that are wasteful and unsustainable. From the social psychological perspective, attitudes are considered a reliable guide for predicting behaviours (Vaughn & Hogg, 1983). In the case of materialism versus the desire for a sustainable future, the relating attitudes are conflicted and the dominant attitude dictates the behavioural outcome. The dominant attitude may be the one that prioritises doing the right thing by the individual, over the action that supports global sustainable development. For example, the desire to appear fashionable, well-presented, and alluring may be a more powerful driver for consuming behaviour than the will to support sustainable consumption.

**Barrier 5. The delegation of responsibility**

There is no team of caped, sustainability super-heroes hiding away, working to develop the ultimate solution that will lead to a sustainable future. Most people do not conceptualise such fantasies, but people often invest misguided hope in technology that is yet to exist, in the idea that the warming of the globe is cyclic and the earth will correct itself, or they refrain altogether from such consideration. This disengagement could be the result of blind optimism, fear, or a willingness to delegate responsibilities for a task that may appear to be too difficult to manage.

To the individual, the climate change debate can be confounding and disempowering as the problem is perceived to be too big and an individual’s contribution appears to be meaningless. It is the contention of this thesis that there is not one singular action that can create a sustainable way of living (Pears, 2004), but rather sustainable development must be a combination of many endeavours from large-scale technological strategies to grassroots and individual action.
Additionally, environmentalist campaigning can patronise and dictate action and relies on a highly moralised and obligatory response. A recent Australian campaign specifically told people to turn off their lights to save energy, essentially subscribing to the outdated myth that people should save the world, by sitting in the dark. This notion is out-dated because sustainable development is often about developing sustainable systems that improve human wellbeing while being environmentally responsible.

3.4 Describing an approach to sustainable fashion consumption development

This chapter has lead to the conclusion that at this stage, the dominant objective of sustainable development should be to raise individuals awareness about climate change and the need for sustainable development and to then develop supportive, tangible strategies that appeal to people existing values and abilities. By raising individual and collective awareness about the need for sustainable development to strengthen the pro-sustainability attitude may have the temper other behaviours in an individual's life. Approaches such as campaigning and regulating that generate an obligatory response are less likely to engage enthusiastic participation than a gentler and more positive approach that focuses on engaging and empowering a shift towards sustainable consumption. This sub-chapter identifies the broad objectives for engaging individuals to adopt sustainable consumption practices that informed the development of the clothing exchange described in successive chapters.

Building awareness
It is increasingly important that the objectives of sustainability be translated and clarified for an Australian audience. As the globe is warming, it is essential that consumers be made aware of the need to address all unsustainable behaviours with the view to challenge, re-evaluate and redevelop in a sustainable way. With regard to fashion consumption, this involves raising awareness about the ethical and environmental ramifications of new garment production to foster a willingness to engage in more sustainable consumption.

Advocating a practice based approach over product-oriented approach
In the case of the popular 'green bags' strategy, maintaining a product-focus conveys the message that consumption itself is a solution. As stated by Mont; “stimulating consumption of green products is clearly a part of the ‘more is better’ mindset, which is certainly insufficient for combating increasing levels of consumption” (Mont, 2002). According to Maniates green consumption will not lead to lasting social action (Maniates, 2002) because in this case, the attitude that is the enduring determinant of behaviour remains unchanged. This thesis advocates practice-based sustainable development over the development, of sustainable products, with the view to challenging consumer attitudes and behaviours and thus consequently instigating an attitudinal shift in support of sustainable development. The task of developing sustainable
consumption becomes confounding because it is difficult to separate consumption from all other living activities (Mont, 2002). It is therefore important to develop sustainable practices that are transferable to all aspects of living to enable a total shift towards sustainable consumption rather than initiating disparate initiatives.

**Engaging a willing audience**

The goal for sustainable development in the short term should be to position sustainable consumption as an ongoing political project (Dolan, 2002). The public needs to be exposed to and engaged by the political nature of the sustainability debate and consumerism in this way. Individuals need to be encouraged to respond to their personal politics and feel empowered to initiate related action.

As campaigning is arguably a method of dictating action that captures an obligatory response, the following chapter will investigate an alternative experience-based method of engagement of an audience in sustainable development. Allowing individuals to test and trial alternative fashion consumption practices encourages them to make an informed decision about the validity of integrating the practice into their lifestyles. If an individual decides to adopt a particular sustainable behaviour, they will do so because it aligns with their values and fits within their lifestyle. This thesis hypothesises that when participation in sustainable action engages a willing audience, the enthusiasm with which the action is carried out is likely to be greater is therefore more likely to be sustained.

**Developing complimentary strategies**

Sustainable practices need to fit within people’s existing lifestyles before they can challenge them. Sustainable strategies need to be accessible, affordable and complementary to existing lifestyles in order for people be both willing and able to participate. As the practice of consuming fashion is so intertwined with social and cultural meaning, it is understandable that while peoples’ intentions may be environmentally oriented, they are simultaneously fuelled by a desire to have a materialistic and fashionable lifestyle. This contradiction can only be reconciled when the values that influence these materialist desires are integrated within a sustainable practice. McDonough and Braungart advocate an approach to sustainable development that allows people to enjoy what they currently value (McDonough & Braungart, 2004). In the context of fashion consumption, this means potentially being free to acquire an abundance of garments in a sustainable way.

**3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the barriers between individuals and sustainable development. It is proposed that this knowledge should form the platform of understanding off which sustainable
strategies can be developed. It is essential that strategies are developed with sympathy to the existing values and lifestyles of the people they wish to engage. If not, they are likely to be rejected or ignored.

As Hamilton recognised; “it is likely that capitalism has never been this fragile as there is a possibility that consumers could all choose to stop participating in consumption” (Hamilton, 2003). There are already groups of consumers who are looking for gratifying stimulation beyond consumption, it is entirely possible that many others will follow. As identified within this chapter, people are already beginning to show signs of consumer leadership through a willingness to adopt more human-centred approaches to living. This audience exists and there is the potential to encourage others to follow in this direction. It is a matter of developing tangible solutions that appeal to people's current attitudes, values and fit within or naturally extend from their existing lifestyles.
Part 2

4.0 Developing a sustainable fashion consumption practice

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters focused on diagnosing the problem of fashion waste and proposing objectives for an approach to sustainable consumption development in the previous chapter. From this, a sustainable consumption practice in the form of a clothing exchange was developed according to these objectives and approach proposed. This chapter specifically details how they were realised through the development of the clothing exchange events.

The additional motivations behind the clothing exchange included testing its ability to activate fashion waste and simultaneously raise awareness about the need to develop sustainable fashion consumption practices. Other objectives (identified in chapter 3) included making the exchange event tangible for the target audience, creating an experience that would engage them and empower them through social and collective participation in sustainable consumption development.

As fashion waste or second-hand clothes were to become the commodity for exchange, it became essential to understand the social and cultural role of second-hand dress in society in terms of how it is currently valued, exchanged and consumed. Through this research, it became clear that second-hand clothing is becoming more desirable for distinction-seeking consumers who are dissatisfied with the homogenisation of new fashion garments in the mass market and this is leading to its popularisation by fashion at the current time.

This chapter begins with the description of the research design rather than a chronological account of the exchange development to establish the links between the exchange event and the research objectives. It specifically details the development of the system of exchange and the format of the clothing exchange event. There were three clothing exchange events in total. The first and second events were entitled “My Sister’s Wardrobe” (to be referred to as MSW throughout this chapter). The MSW events were directed towards an exclusively female audience. To contrast with the MSW event, the third clothing exchange case study included both male and female participants and was referred to as “Walk in Wardrobe” (or WIW for this chapter).
4.2 The research design

The clothing exchange case study was to be trialled to test how the objectives for sustainable consumption development; tangibility, accessibility, enjoyment, engagement and empowerment, could be realised. These two key aims; waste reduction and awareness raising, were to be integrated within the sustainable consumption practice development. The aim of the clothing exchange event was to shift attitudes that fetishise new fashion garments that drive excessive consumption through educating for sustainability and stimulating the reassessment of wasteful consuming behaviours.

The clothing exchange was to be translated into action research longitudinal study to further the development of this thesis research. There were to be three clothing exchange case studies, each with a sample group of approximately thirty participants. It was anticipated that some participants may attend multiple events, and this would provide an opportunity to contrast the experience of new exchange participants with experienced exchange participants. Based on the three exchanges, a total sample group of between thirty and ninety participants would provide credible data from which reasonably informed conclusions could be drawn.

The researcher collaborated with a PhD psychology student from Melbourne University to develop the data collection for this longitudinal study. The questionnaire items were to be answered on a rating scale (see below). The data would generate descriptive statistics that would indicate how successfully the objectives of the clothing exchange had been realised.

Figure 1.1

1. Usually, how willing are you to acquire second hand clothing?

1 2 3 4 5
never willing moderately willing always willing

Quantitative data

The first MSW questionnaire (Questionnaire 1A, see Appendix) was developed to be distributed on the night of the event to determine the successes and limitations of the event itself. The first section of the questionnaire (Section 1, questions 1-3) was designed to gauge the pre-existing attitudes of the exchange participants in order to confirm the characteristics of the exchange audience. It was anticipated that this data would detect any attitudinal shifts towards wasteful fashion consumption as the longitudinal study was conducted and assessed. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to extract information about participant’s satisfaction with aspects of the event design and also to gauge their perceptions of the quality of garments contributed and obtained.
Qualitative data

The questionnaire included space for participants to freely express their opinions about the clothing exchange in order to capture ideas that were not anticipated by the researcher. Throughout the event, the researcher planned to mingle with the participants and observe the qualities of the event that could not be documented empirically. The event was to be filmed so that aspects of the event could be reviewed and reflected upon afterwards. Throughout the event, the interviewer and interviewees could respond to the moment by forming spontaneous and relevant inquiry.

Through the analysis of this data, any limitations or problems within the event design could be reflected upon between the first and second MSW events. It was anticipated that suggestions provided by participants would provide further development of the event design.

When sampling returning participants at the second MSW event, the questionnaire (Questionnaire 2A, see Appendices) was designed to detect what proportion of the clothing taken from the events had become part of participant’s active wardrobe, and whether there had been any attitudinal shift. This follow-up questionnaire was to be distributed at least six weeks after the event, so participants would have ample opportunity to wear the garments obtained. The follow-up questionnaire (2A) would provide data that would form the basis of comparison with the data collected from the first exchange. This data was to indicate how successful the clothing exchange had been as a waste activation project and as an awareness-raising exercise.

The MSW surveys were appropriated for the WIW events (Questionnaires 1B and 2B, see Appendices). It was hypothesised that by comparing the data from the two distinct sample groups, assumptions about the ideal exchange audience could be made.

4.3 Identifying the specific objectives of the clothing exchange

Waste activation

The primary objective of the clothing exchange was to design a practice as a response to the problem of fashion waste by seeking to reactivate it. As defined in the second chapter, fashion waste refers to the inactive garments that are hoarded in wardrobes rather than landfill (Waste Profile Study of Victorian Landfills 1999). Garments become fashion waste when they no longer fit, cease to appeal visually and ideologically, or are superseded by a superior version. The clothing exchange sought to challenge the generation of fashion waste created by the consumption of new fashion garments, by finding a way to utilise their physical potential. The consumption of second-hand clothing is a sustainable alternative to the consumption of new clothes. By reusing and re-adopting existing garments, the demand for new clothing production
is reduced so there is no need for processes that have a negative impact on the environment and people.

_Raising awareness_

The clothing exchange was endeavouring to raise people’s awareness about the unsustainable nature of the fashion industry. While the media has heightened the awareness of international sweat-shop scandals, Australians are less aware of the problem of outworking occurring locally. In Victoria, currently, outworking is common practice, with predominantly Vietnamese workers being significantly underpaid and needing to work up to seventeen hours a day to earn a living (Cregan, 2004).

Furthermore, the clothing exchange was created to raise awareness concerning the wastefulness of new clothing consumption with the view to develop the sustainability discourse within fashion. The sustainability discourse regarding fashion consumption is emerging slowly, but its existence is far from popular debate. Fashion consumers are more familiar with ethical debates within the industry regarding sweatshops, sizeism, ageism and fur trading. Alongside these issues, there is a need for the industry to catch up and bring sustainability to the forefront.

_Re-evaluating ownership_

According to a recent survey conducted by Cotton Incorporated, approximately 35% of women clean out their closets and 27% do it twice a year. Rather than throwing out inactive garments or giving them away, they are simply organising and consolidating them in order to make room for new garments to come. Even when they have not worn something in years, 65% of women surveyed said they would still choose to retain the clothing (www.cottoninc.com, 2005). Garments are hoarded because they are imbued with the potential to become useful. Also, as the unpredictable nature of fashion remains, garments are kept because one is never to know when the fashion cycle will readopt it, making it fashionable again.

The clothing exchange was designed to be a catalyst for editing the fashion waste from wardrobes. When participants are selecting garments to contribute to an exchange, they are being encouraged to take part in an evaluation process where memories, emotional ties and the relationship between the clothing and their current identity are critiqued. This process aims to extract surplus clothing while affirming the lasting value of garments kept. Guy and Banim conducted a survey of English working class women and found that “women referred to kept clothing in ways that reflected their continuing connection with a self-image that they had achieved using these clothes” (Guy and Banim, 2003). They concluded that women choose to keep clothes because they connect to either their continuing, transitional or discontinued identities. It was hypothesised that exchange participants would contribute clothing that related to their discontinued identities with the view to exchange them for garments that related to their continuing identities.
They would be swapping inactive fashion waste for a new, active wardrobe and this would reduce the need for new clothing consumption. The aim of sharing goods is to increase the intensity of their use while reducing the material intensity (Mont, 2004). It is an inherently sustainable concept based on the principle of reuse. However, the implementation of sharing-based initiatives can be confronting for people as the “system of sharing contradicts the well-established norm of ownership” according to economic theorist Oksana Mont (2004). People are used to having the security of owning ‘things’ that have value. The clothing exchange calls for the re-evaluation of the value of owning garments and seeks to amplify the practice of sharing in its place.

Changing perceptions of waste
Waste is commonly perceived to be rubbish, or that which is consciously disposed of. Thus waste is considered useless and undesirable. The clothing exchange aimed to broaden the participants’ conception of waste to include garments that are potentially useful but are kept inactive. In designing this research, it was hypothesised that the clothing exchange could be an incentive that would stimulate the critical assessment of every garment within the wardrobe. By challenging the perceptions of fashion waste, participants may subsequently alter their assessment and treatment of waste for other items of ‘house-fill’. This may encourage a critical reflection of their purchasing patterns. If people acknowledge the potential usefulness of the items they would otherwise hoard, they may be more inclined to pass them onto a new owner. Maximising the use of garments through reuse means that new garments are not necessarily required and this is a significant step in a sustainable direction.

Supplementing and value-adding
One of the aims of the clothing exchange was to present an alternative to unsustainable new garment consumption. The clothing exchange confirms the practice of consuming second-hand clothes to be sustainable. It effectively champions those who are already purchasing second-hand clothes and provides further encouragement. A key objective of the clothing exchange was to preserve the benefits and simulate the joys of new garment consumption in a way that is sustainable. It was hypothesised that the process of gaining ‘new’ (second-hand) garments from the exchange could supplement the need for new garments, potentially appeasing the participant’s desire for novelty consumption.

The exchange event was created so that it could operate outside the traditional consumerist framework. It was to be designed to operate without the need for a money-based exchange, instead trading on mutual generosity. In this way, participants would receive ‘new’ clothes without the need to part with money, regretfully incurring credit debt, or the guilt associated with negatively impacting the environment, or utilising the services of an underpaid outworker.
Empowering participants

To avoid the disempowering nature of individualising responsibility for sustainable consumption development, the clothing exchange event sought to bring people together, so that they could share and witness the collective impact of their sustainable action. It was hypothesised that the enjoyment and social aspects of the event would generate enthusiasm from the participants increasing their willingness to adopt the exchange as a regular practice of their own accord. Instead of campaigning or dictating action, the clothing exchange sought to firstly to appear to entertain and engage, and secondly to educate and inspire sustainable action.

The exchange was to provide an opportunity for participants to experience the practice and make an informed and personal decision about whether to adopt it. This process was to be more empowering for people than dictatorial approaches such as regulation and campaigning. Journalists Andrew Darwby and Stephanie Peating criticised; “campaigners haven’t learnt to talk….when they do it’s to tell people they’re all wrong” (Peatling & Dawrby, 2004). The clothing exchange approach is suited to an audience willing to experiment and engage in sustainable consumption. Such an audience does not need to be coerced into participating in sustainable action; they just need a tangible practice to provide direction.

4.4 Exploring the sustainable consumption of second-hand garments

This sub-chapter investigates the rationale an appeal of the consumption of second-hand clothes. It explores and evaluates the existing consumption practices for second-hand clothing such as op-shopping, vintage-hunting and internet shopping and analyses the benefits and limitations of each with the view to the development of the clothing exchange.

Why consume second-hand clothing?

While this thesis investigates the value of second-hand garment consumption from a sustainability perspective, this section investigates the motivations that currently inspire the consumption and support of second-hand clothes.

Second-hand ‘style’ has greater longevity and continues to influence contemporary fashions just as the current fashion will dictate what is popular within the second-hand clothing supply. The contemporary wearer of a particular second-hand style is not striving to recreate the past; rather they are re-appropriating the past style within their contemporary environment. As stated by fashion theorist Angela McRobbie, “the reproduction of the historic style does not aim at a reconstruction of ‘original’ meanings, but serves new constructions of meaning instead, as they are relevant to the historic actors in a new historic context” (McRobbie, 1989).
There is a definable second hand clothing style that is popularised by fashion at any given time (McRobbie, 1989). When mainstream fashion popularises a particular style of second-hand dress, fashion-savvy consumers will seek out that particular item in op-shops or second-hand retailers. One such example was the popularisation of the second hand men’s tuxedo for female consumers as influenced by the character of Annie Hall in the 1980’s (McRobbie, 1989).

Another motivation for attaining second-hand garments is the desire to rediscover what has been lost. This consumption of nostalgia is motivated by an appreciation for lost craftsmanship, retro or vintage fabrics of higher quality and special attention to details. Fashion theorist Alexandra Palmer writes; “fashion that is commonly trivialised and considered disposable, has the potential for becoming a valuable commodity” in the form of vintage dress (Palmer & Clark, 2005). These garments are not necessarily fashionable, but they have enduring aesthetic appeal and become credible and classic- a point of historical reference. This transformation from being considered old clothes to being declared collectable vintage pieces ensures their continual desirability and circulation.

*Exploring consumption practices; The Op-shop*

This sub-section investigates the current modes and contexts within which second-hand clothes are traded.
Charity Opportunity shops, or ‘Op-shops’ as they are commonly known in Australia, often contrast with the orderly layout of new clothes stores by selling second-hand clothes in an environment of disorder and chaos. The Op-shops clothing stock is usually ordered into garment and gender categories but clothes racks are usually overcrowded and lower quality stock is stuffed into boxes that line the floor. Dusty cabinets are home to ‘tacky knick-knacks’, strange jewels and the occasional ‘treasure’. Opportunity shops are filled with the social surplus- the goods people reject and are happy to donate knowing they will generate funds for charity. They are known for being home to the strangest novelty items, cheap treasures and design relics.

In this context, consuming second-hand clothes is comparable to launching a treasure hunt. It is unpredictable and potentially exciting for consumers who are interested in the challenge. Through experience, the consumer becomes a skilled shopper; a connoisseur who knows what to look for and where it is likely to be found. Connoisseurs are able to stay calm when confronted by a great volume of second-hand clothing that may overwhelm the inexperienced op-shopper. They have perfected a method that structures their searching and helps discern what is valuable from what is not.

The allure of the treasure hunt has inspired vintage and retro dress devotees to go to considerable efforts when on the op-shop trail. As Palmer describes; “vintage whores are prepared to get their hands dirty and sift through consignment stores and charity shops” (Palmer & Clark, 2005). Writer Jill Stark recalled her op-shopping experience; “entering the shop, I immediately realise this is the iconic op-shop where buried treasure is quite literally buried. There's no room to swing a cat, although the vintage smell suggests one might have suffocated under a pile of men's trousers” (Stark, 2005). The thrill of finding riches amongst the rags means dedicated consumers are willing to go to shabby stores that smell strange, forgoing the pristine new clothing stores. Second-hand clothing usually retails for a fraction of the price of a new equivalent and so op-shopping can be a bargain-hunter’s delight. However, op-shops are modernising, becoming organised and spotless. Garment prices are raised accordingly as inspired by the successes of the second-hand dealers (Stark, 2005). The Salvation Army has
recently refined one of its inner-city charity op-shops in this manner. This store, located in the popular shopping strip along Chapel Street, Prahran, has been redecorated, the stock refined to the best donations and the prices significantly increased.

Searching for good quality second-hand clothing can be a frustrating and ungratifying experience for the impatient consumer. Palmer states, “time spent shopping does not necessarily result in immediate gratification” unlike new garment consumption (Palmer & Clark, 2005). The consumer can be excited by the challenge of the hunt and motivated by the thought of finding a vintage treasure, but it takes patience and conviction to persevere when the special finds are well-hidden. Second-hand clothing consumption involves the expenditure of more time rather than money and so busy people can not necessarily participate. According to Stark it is “this that makes bargain-hunting more of a test of endurance than an exercise in retail therapy” (Stark, 2005). In a time-poor society, the practice of op-shopping has become a specialised practice restricted to those that actually have time available within the limited op-shop trading hours.

The second-hand dealer

In Melbourne, there has been a recent increase in the number of second-hand clothing dealers. These dealers seek second-hand clothing in particular, fashionable styles and offer consumers a refined selection of second-hand clothing to choose from. Dealers either copy the ‘chaotic abundance’ of op-shop, or seek to emulate the orderly nature of the new garment retailers. These stores provide seemingly random conditions that authenticate the experience even though the ‘random goods’ are refined selections (McRobbie, 1989). One such store is Episode, a three
store chain of second-hand dealers. It is stocked with predominantly second-hand garments, many of which have been imported from Europe. This store also stocks a line of new garments in retro styles which blend easily with the second-hand stock. Whilst the store layout is orderly, Episode retains the perks of op-shopping culture while offering the convenience of new retailers. Each garment appears to be original and authentic but orderly layout makes the stock easier to negotiate.

The internet

Inspired by the success of online retailer “eBay”, there are several new websites that facilitate the purchasing and trading of second-hand clothes. Writer Nikas Boulas has noted that “the internet has attracted a whole new crowd of connoisseurs who are picking up one-off vintage designer bags and shoes” (Boulas, 2005). The success of eBay has been well-documented and it has attracted fourteen million registered users worldwide (Boulas, 2005). The online stores are particularly successful with regard to clothing sales as every seventeen seconds another item of clothing is sold (Boulas, 2005).

There are online swap sites where outdated handbags can be exchanged for one of the current season (www.swapstyle.com). These sites are emerging, rather than established and most are directed towards the more affluent of consumers, or those who regularly consume the latest fashions and constantly update their wardrobes. Most of the sites identified by fashion journalist Natalie Shukur are based in America, where there is sufficient demand. An advantage of the online swapping practice is its anonymity as the swapping is conducted by a “trustworthy middleman” (Shukur, 2005). This perceived advantage can also be the source of difficulties as the consumer relies heavily on the integrity of the seller and their ability to measure and describe the garment for sale. It can be difficult to make a clear assessment on the basis of photographs.
which can be of low quality and clarity. Some sellers choose to display a photograph from a magazine rather than the specific version of the garment for sale. The depth and clarity of the seller’s descriptions varies greatly and can be only a vague size range and fabric description. The fact that the consumer is unable to experience the feel of the fabric, accurately gauge the scale and proportions or try garments on means that it is easy to purchase something that presents well in a digital image but is unwearable in reality. Many consumers are willing to take the risk, knowing they can resell the item in the same way it was attained, forgoing only the postage costs.

The primary advantage of the online second-hand clothing consumption is that it is time efficient and therefore fits into busy lifestyles. It is possible to access many different garments from all over the world in minutes. This is the opposite of the time consuming op-shopping experience. Online stores can be the source of a bargain, but the fact that anyone around the world can access the same set of items means that the competition drives up prices. From the researcher’s observations, there have been many instances when the price of a dress selling on eBay is competitively raised far beyond its worth. The selling structure is based on the principle of auctioning and consumers can get carried away when the bidding is closing. A second-hand polyester dress was sold recently on eBay for $81.00 because it was visually striking. A similar dress would retail at Hunter Gatherer, a moderately-priced second-hand clothing dealer, for approximately $35.00. In this instance it was to the seller’s advantage that consumers could sight the dress, but not feel the fabric.

The unsustainable consumption of second-hand garments

It has been proposed that “investing now and storing clothes to age, as one does wine, is advised as a form of future vintage consumption that validates buying contemporary fashion” (Palmer & Clark, 2005). Consumers adopting the role of a fashion forecaster can result in overflowing wardrobes. This advanced consumption encourages the practice of hoarding where garments are retained with the hope of being popularised by fashions to come. Consumers can become overzealous and make impulsive purchases because the financial outlay is considered to be insignificant. As Starck reflected; “that’s the danger of op-shopping- your wardrobe may not require a red-and-white-polka-dot Minnie Mouse style dress but if it’s only $7.50- I am sure I’ll wear it someday” (Starck, 2005).

It is generally assumed that donating to a charity op-shop is a moral and socially beneficial act, but this can be a misguided understanding and there are better solutions. In Australia there is a surplus of second-hand clothing that exceeds what second-hand retailers and opportunity shops can sell (www.networkideas.org). This surplus clothing becomes damaged when overflowing from charity donation bins or in inadequate storage. A large proportion of excess clothing is shipped to developing countries according to the International Textile, Garment and Leather
Workers Federation (2004). This clothing is then sold to local traders for “a few pennies a pound” (www.networkideas.org). They in turn, triple the prices and sell it in street markets.

In Zambia this has become a problematic practice, where demand for second-hand Western garments detracts from locally-produced clothing (ITGLWF Press Release 2000). The second-hand Western clothes are considered more desirable than local garments as “the young people really love wearing the clothes they see the American rappers and the athletes wearing” (www.networkideas.org). Over the last decade it is estimated that 30,000 jobs have disappeared as South Africa’s thriving clothing industry has suffered and effectively vanished. The local clothes industry could not compete with the influx of Western second-hand clothes that began when Zambia was opened to foreign trade ten years ago (www.networkideas.org). It is preferable that Australians utilise their local clothing surplus instead of exporting unwanted garments, thereby exacerbating global inequities, threatening Africa’s cultural sustainability and creating transport emissions.

4.5 The current social and cultural relevance of second-hand dress

This sub-chapter explores how the practice of second-hand consumption answers the current needs and values of the consuming public, specifically those of a younger consuming audience. Second-hand garment consumption is an authentic experience; a seemingly rare experience, an opportunity to seek out garments that are likely to be one of a kind that have pre-determined histories and stories behind them. In the affluent contemporary society, where everything can be attained efficiently from homogenised retail environments, the chaos of the opportunity shop, second-hand retailer or flea market appeals to those seeking authenticity and distinction. Consumption critics Neil Cummings and Marasia Lewandowska (2000) noted that in the age of mass production and mass homogenization, the task of finding differentiation has become difficult. As consumers are looking for distinction in a world of homogenised fashion they are unlikely to find what they are looking for. “Consumers are increasingly desirous of individualized clothing” (Schor & Taylor, 2002) and it is becoming increasingly difficult to actualise individuality when conformity is all that seems to be on offer.

Historian Heike Jenß states; “the shopping and the searching out is an important component in the practice of ‘authentic’ style as a means to perform identity and construct difference, in contrast to the consumers of mass-fashion” (Clark & Palmer, 2005). The ‘authenticity’ of the item is transferred to the self and to the performance of a unique and authentic identity” (Clark & Palmer, 2005). The individuality of the second-hand consumption experience is to discover special garments that had previously gone unrecognised. To an authenticity-seeking consumer, the thrill of the chase and the potential for finding greatness while risking only potential dissatisfaction is part of the appeal.
Consumers in the average shopping mall are at times overwhelmed by the sheer abundance of new garments, making them incapable of keeping up with the speed of change of new fashions. People are responding by embracing alternatives such as second-hand clothing consumption. Cultural critic Paul Virilio interpreted the return to op-shopping as a reaction against the accelerated progression of fashion;

“We are regressing because we have reached the limit of acceleration. The speed with which we learn of the latest fashions makes it impossible for the average person to incorporate the new array of designs into a wardrobe, either for financial reasons, and/or because we do not have the time to constantly shop for the latest styles. But more importantly, we are not able to transform our mental images of ourselves so rapidly. We struggle intellectually to consume at the rate we produce” (Virilio cited by Palmer & Clark, 2005).

The current appeal of second-hand dress is in part due to the revived interest in nostalgia. Writer Dan Jones states; “we love to look back to the past, to reminisce over a misspent youth and we seek any way to recapture those forgotten memories” (Jones, 2005). By consuming past fashions, consumers are identifying with fond pasts. This is a form of enjoyable escapism from the confusion and tensions of contemporary times. The value of this nostalgic force has not gone unnoticed by marketers (Jones, 2005), and the cult-appeal of nostalgic dress has been appropriated for new mass produced garments. The impact of this appropriation of nostalgia-creation as a marketing tool has meant that nostalgic dress has been fit into the fast paced fashion consumption system. As for new fashions, the nostalgic or ‘retro’ styles are being adopted, enjoyed and quickly rejected, creating the demand for the recycling or more and more recent histories (Jones, 2005).

It is difficult for a younger audience experiencing nostalgia for fashions before their time, unless they are encouraged to feel as though they have missed something important. Brown summarises the phenomenon; “with hindsight, we know we missed out on something genuinely inspiring and progressive and re-edit our histories to include them” (Jones, 2005). It is a form of ‘faux-nostalgia’ that is also based on the fact that upon reflection, young people identify with certain eras indicative of certain values that align with their own. As young people do not experience true nostalgic feelings due to their age, they become highly educated and can enjoy nostalgia through becoming an informed authority. This younger demographic is choosing to adopt past fashion at a primarily aesthetic level, but are also appropriating the historical dress within the contemporary environment.

In addition to the interest of regular consumers, fashionistas, designers and fashion commentators are embracing vintage styles to inspire a ‘new’ fashion direction or design. This
has imbued the practice of consuming second-hand garments with additional market value through the inflation of their perceived fashion credibility. The Australian editions of Vogue magazine and Harpers Bazaar regularly feature vintage pieces within their fashion pictorials. Over the last three years, Melbourne-based second-hand garment retailers 'Shag' presented a catwalk show in the major Melbourne Fashion shows.

4.6 Defining an audience for the clothing exchange

This sub-chapter investigates the founding interest in second-hand dress and describes the current audience consuming second-hand garments with the view to determining an appropriate audience for the clothing exchange case.

A history of subversion
In Britain, youthful consumers rejected Thorstein Veblen's notion of 'conspicuous consumption' and subverted their middle-class identities by masking bourgeoisie values in shabby second-hand clothing (Palmer & Clark, 2005). Cultural critic Tom Wolfe satirised the American middle class youth for being wealthy enough to be able to afford to play with the idea of looking poor. This subversion was initiated within the 1950's Beat movement, but was popularised on a grander scale by the Hippy movement spanning the 1960's and 70's (Palmer & Clark, 2005). This trend continued to be appropriated by the 1980's Punk movement and the following 1990's Grunge fashions. It has been revived today in the form of 'retro' dress or 'vintage' dress. Historically, it is youth culture, the bohemians and the activists that embrace second-hand styles and make them their own.

The affordable nature of second-hand clothing
The fact that second-hand clothing is considered very inexpensive in relation to new clothing means it maintains its appeal to those who earn low and have little disposable income. Although many consumers are willing to overlook any negative stigmas in favour of a bargain, second-hand clothing maintains its historical association with poverty (Palmer & Clark, 2005) and so there are certain cultural and social groups of people that find no appeal in wearing second-hand clothes (Palmer & Clark, 2005). This is partly due to the mystery of the origin of the clothes and the lack of familiarity with the previous wearer who may be responsible for creating marks and wear and tear.

In the affluent Australian society, students are one of the most enthusiastic audiences for second-hand clothing consumption and this research considers them the target demographic for the clothing exchange case studies. They are some of the lowest income earners as their time is monopolised by study and they have limited time for paid work. While gathering skills, they often take relatively low-paying, menial part-time jobs that fit into the time periods free from study.
Once the rent and bills have been paid, there is often only a small allowance for clothing. Young people are often very image-conscious and must be resourceful to appease their materialistic desires. The TAI study revealed that younger consumers (aged 18-24 years) are the most wasteful within the population and is an additional reason for making them the target group for this sustainable fashion consumption development. It was also anticipated that the exchange event would appeal to a younger, adventurous and experimental audience.

The individualist

Sociologist Ruth Rubenstein and fashion historian Valerie Steele identified that “the ‘vintage cool’ person see’s herself as an individualist who likes to try to create different personae through clothes” (Palmer & Clark, 2005). Even though it is often lead by the pursuit of individual style, vintage dressing has accrued fashion credibility. Vintage shopping is often seen to be the pursuit of fashion innovators and initiators. Alexandra Palmer clarified this as, “today vintage fashion has moved away from its historical, shabby associations, and has become a mainstream and highly commodified fashion alternative to wearing new designs” (Palmer & Clark, 2005). Vintage dressing has been popularised by television and film screen icons such as Sarah Jessica Parker and actress Nicole Kidman who have successful promoted vintage dress to the mass population.

Defining the clothing exchange audience

It was hypothesised that the clothing exchanges would appeal to young adults who are willing to experiment with the consumption of their fashion garments as they actively seek authentic experiences. Given the age-range of the exchange demographic (18-35 years), it was hypothesised that many would be university students, or low-income earners who would be interested in acquiring second-hand clothing, while participating in a social event. The concept of exchanging clothes was most likely to appeal to young women and men who currently consume new fashion garments with greater regularity than older women. It was anticipated that some of the participants may be ‘op-shopping veterans’ who would be excited by an opportunity to collect second-hand garments in a new context. Based on the composition of this audience, the clothing exchange event was to be staged in the evening when students would have time available to participate. It was hypothesised that the exchange event could fill the same social purpose as seeing a film or visiting a café with a friend.

4.7 Developing the system of exchange and the format of the event

This sub-chapter describes how the system of exchange and the event format were designed to be equitable and easy for participants to understand and execute.
The “check-in”

The exchange event is designed to replicate a shop format so that participants could identify how to behave and participate with ease. There was to be a clothing counter at the entry to the exchange room where garments could be handed in, examined and counted. At this point the participants were to receive buttons as mock currency for their garments. It was hypothesised that participants would be comforted by having these tokens that guaranteed their ‘purchasing’ power. Each garment was to be worth one button. For each button another garment could be ‘bought’. In using this system of exchange, the onus for quality control was placed on the participants as there was no authority conducting such an assessment. It was hypothesised that this could interfere with the goodwill created through the process of sharing. The success of the event was to rely on the mutual generosity and equitable behaviour of the participants.

Participants were to be encouraged to bring approximately six to eight high-quality garments and accessories so that there would be a variety but some quality control. If the number of clothes were to be left unspecified, it was suspected that participants may bring bagfuls of clothing to exchange that would become difficult to manage. By asking participants to choose a smaller selection, it was anticipated that they would select the higher quality contributions from the inferior garments, and donate the former. As the system of exchange was to utilise buttons as mock currency, the task of ‘spending’ many buttons may become difficult within a relatively short period of time. If participants were to bring too few garments, then the variety of styles and sizes would be limited.

The flexibility of the system

The system of exchange was designed to be applicable to varying numbers of participants, as they are allowed to take up to as many garments as they donated. It was hypothesised that the more people, the more garments and therefore the greater the variety of styles and sizes. This would increase the choice and participants’ satisfaction and consequent enjoyment of the event. It was hypothesised that an ideal sample group would be thirty people for the all-female event so that there would be ample clothing variety but limited chaos.

The “check-out”

Once the participants had finished exchanging, they would head to the “check-out” where they would ‘pay’ for their garments with their buttons. It was anticipated that participants may choose not to take as many garments as they donated, as they may be planning to clear out their wardrobes. The remaining garments would be donated to charity at the conclusion of the event.
4.8 Event preparations and planning

**Invitations**

Approximately four weeks prior to the event, invitations designed, printed and distributed via post and email. Multiple invites were mailed to friends of the researcher who had expressed interest in the clothing exchange concept. It was hypothesised that starting from a core friendship group there would be some familiarity amongst the group, which would enhance the social aspects of the event. The invitations requested that people confirm their attendance two weeks prior to the event, as it was important to have an adequate number of attendees to enable the exchange to function; that there would be a variety of clothing styles and sizes, but not so many that the function room would become over-crowded.

There was a range of additional printed material prepared prior to the exchange event. The questionnaires, consent forms and a detailed event description were provided for participants to view prior to their participation. It was important that participants gave informed consent for researcher a photographer to document the event and film interviews. It was a requirement of the RMIT University that Ethics Approval be granted for the methods of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, and that participants receive notification and give informed written consent for these processes prior to their participation in the event.

**Education**

There was to be printed material provided to raise participants’ awareness about the ethical and environmental tensions within the fashion industry. There was information about anti-sweatshop campaigning from Fairwear and an op-shop trail included to inspire the consumption of second-hand clothing beyond the duration of the clothing exchange event. In addition to this printed material, the researcher would address the group and explain the less obvious motivations behind the event before its commencement. The researcher intended to draw participant’s attention to the fact that they were to be involved in a sustainable and ethical consumption practice, free of the impact of wastefully consuming new fashion garments.

**Venue**

The exchanges were to be held at the Windsor Castle Hotel function room in Prahran, Melbourne. This room was selected because it was private having no public access. To make participants feel more comfortable, there were to be modesty screens provided for those who wished to change clothing in privacy. The space was to be intimate and the lighting low to enable participants to feel comfortable rather than exposed. The function room chosen was highly ornate to form an attractive backdrop to the eclectic nature of the clothing styles. There was to be complementary music playing that would enhance the enjoyment of the event, but not interfere with conversation.
Event schedule

The event was planned so that at 6.30 pm, the researcher and three assistants would arrive at the venue with the equipment to set-up. The exchange event was to commence at 8pm. Clothing racks, (to order and display the garments), would be placed around the room, parallel to the walls. This way the racks would be safe and unlikely to obstruct participants. Mirrors and modesty screens were to be positioned around the room to assist dressing and the assessing of garments. The lighting in the function room was to be moderate, not so dim that the clothes could not be seen clearly, and not so bright that participants would feel exposed and uncomfortable. In order to guide participants to the space, brightly coloured signs were to be posted around the ground floor of the Windsor Castle. To commence the event, the researcher would describe the methodology of the exchange and share advice about its conduct to assembled participants. It was to be recommended that each participant take up to two garments at any one time, to prevent chaos and maintain the perception of fairness. A cooperative approach was also to be encouraged through this initial group address.

No official timeframe was suggested as the duration of the event was to be dependent on the quantity of garments and the endurance of the participants. It was anticipated that after the first participants were ready to ‘purchase’ their garments, the ‘check-in’ desk was to be transformed into the ‘check-out’. After all participants had purchased their garments and filled out the questionnaires, the researcher and assistants would pack-up the exchange equipment and leave the venue.

Collecting data and thanking participants

After participants found suitable clothes they were to proceed to the check-out and ‘pay’ for their garments with their buttons. At this time, participants would be given a questionnaire to gauge their pre-exiting attitudes towards consumption and their satisfaction and perceptions of the clothing exchange event. The questionnaire was to vary according to how many exchanges participant had attended. The questionnaire was brief so as not to demand too much time or effort from the participants, or detract from the upbeat mood of the exchange. Participants would then be thanked and offered a ‘show-bag’ containing the op-shop trail and information from Fairwear. A mailing list was also prepared so that the participants would have the opportunity to provide their personal details so that they could be updated with the progress of the clothing exchange, and be invited to successive events.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the development of the clothing exchange events. The specific audience for the clothing exchange was defined to be youthful, experimental and socially aware and likely to be university students with minimal incomes. The exchange events were designed to fit within
the audiences existing lifestyles. The exchanges were also to be enjoyable and engaging social events to build upon participants existing willingness and increase their enthusiasm for its adoption. While the clothing exchange was to stimulate a reassessment of wasteful fashion consumption practices, the exchange had clear benefits for participants in the form of “free” clothing. The system of exchange was designed to carry through the objectives for sustainability by being equitable and fair to all participants. The format of the event was planned to emulate a retail environment for ease of participation and to support the system of exchange. The events would provide quantitative and qualitative data to be interpreted so that assessments about the benefits and limitations of the clothing exchange could be made. The data analysis was also to reveal any shifts in participants’ environmental and ethical awareness with regard to fashion consumption and determine the success of the clothing exchange as an exercise in waste activation. The following chapter details how the research hypotheses were supported and challenged by the clothing exchange data analysis.
5.0 The clothing exchange post-event analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates and assesses the system of exchange and the exchange event design, based on the researcher’s observations and the analysis of the questionnaire data. The act of holding and evaluating the event tested the validity of the research hypotheses; that fashion waste exists and should be reactivated, and inspired further reflection and development. Each of the three exchange events are examined the responsive developments chronologically detailed. This chapter reflects upon the successes, limitations and potential applications of the exchange events in terms of being an awareness raising exercise and a fashion waste activation project.

This chapter includes photographs of the exchange with the view to convey the mood, ambience and dynamics of the exchange events. Additionally, there is a ten-minute film (recorded on DVD) that informally documents these aspects and includes interviews with exchange participants (see back cover of thesis).

5.2 My Sister’s Wardrobe; The first clothing exchange event

The event analysis is divided into two parts; a qualitative, observational study based on the researcher’s experiences, and the analysis of the quantitative data collated from the participant’s questionnaires. The first MSW exchange comprised a sample group of twenty-seven female participants.
Observational study: Set-up
The set-up process involved the setting up of modesty screens, mirrors, lighting and organisation of the show bags and printed material for distribution, was manageable within the designated timeframe, taking a single hour to complete. The three assistants were delegated roles, one to count and check-in participants’ garments, while the other two assistants were to display and order the clothes as they were donated.

Check-in
The majority of participants arrived close to the starting time of 8pm and had to form a queue at the entrance of the function room. As participants were not sure what to expect, they were inclined to be punctual so that they would not miss out on significant events. The majority of the participants contributed more than the recommended six to eight garments to the exchange. One participant brought eighteen garments. Fortunately, the system of exchange could facilitate such a contribution.

To avoid chaos, the participants were sent to the bar for a pre-exchange drink, while the garments were checked-in and displayed. As there were far more clothes than there were coat-hangers, the assistants were challenged to find ways to display them. Clothing without hangers was draped over screens and across bar stools, so the room looked like the inside of someone’s wardrobe. Participants were curious and excited and they started to reconvene in the exchange room before receiving such direction. The room became crowded and this made the task of displaying garments somewhat difficult. Some of the participants offered assistance making the set-up more inclusive as it encouraged them to take ownership of the event.
The exchange

When the exchange commenced, participants were clearly excited, but they proceeded to begin the search respectfully. Participants were encouraged to try on two garments at any one time and this advice was followed. As they tested and tried the garments available, participants shared stories and histories of the garments donated. One participant appeared pleased to see another selecting her self-made shawl, and she happily described the origins of the garment to the new recipient. The participants were excited to see their old clothes given new life. Some participants conducted a quiet, focused search, whilst others enjoyed parading around and seeking the opinions of others.
**Check-out**

After approximately an hour and a half, the first participants were finishing their search and were ready to head to the "check-out". An assistant was ready to facilitate their ‘payment’ of buttons in return for their garments of choice. At this point, the questionnaires were distributed. Upon returning the completed questionnaire, if the participant desire so, their contact details were added to the mailing list by hand and they were given a show-bag. After approximately two hours, the last participants appeared weary and were ready to finish their search. At the conclusion of the event, what had once been a room full of clothes had become a small pile on the floor.

**Feedback**

After the room had been cleared of the clothes and equipment by the researcher and assistants, the remaining group chatted informally about the exchange. The participants were very willing to share ideas about the successes of the event, and they were just as willing to offer suggestions for improvement. Some participants felt that the lighting was too low to be able to view garments properly, and requested that mirrors be positioned near a light source in order to improve the clarity of their viewing. For the successive exchanges, additional lamps were positioned close to mirrors to provide a more appropriate level of light.

While there were a few participants who felt the room became overcrowded, others enjoyed the environment and compared it to being inside their sister’s wardrobe. For the Windsor Castle venue, it was decided that the number of participants exchanging would be limited to twenty-five to prevent overcrowding.

One participant suggested that plastic bags be provided so that as participants collect garments they have a place to store them. This particular participant had temporarily lost one of her chosen garments as it had been picked up by another. The two participants had reconciled the situation, but for future events, recycled plastic bags were to be supplied. It was also recognised that there were not enough coat-hangers to display the garments. For the following events, participants were encouraged to loan coat-hangers to the exchange and the researcher sought to provide more.
MSW first exchange; assessment of questionnaire data

This analysis will include the questionnaire question before the exploration of the related data, so that the reader can relate the interpretation back to the question with ease. For each question the median response of participants has been marked with a cross. The complete questionnaire (Questionnaire 1A) is included in the Appendices. This data analysis is based on a sample group of twenty-seven female participants.

Gauging pre-existing attitudes

1. Usually, how willing are you to acquire second hand clothing?

   1  2  3  4  5
   ___ ___ ___ ___ X ___
   never willing  moderately willing  always willing

2. How frequently do you acquire new clothing?

   1  2  3  4  5
   ___ ___ ___ ___ X ___
   Once a year  Every 2 months  Every 2 weeks

Questionnaire 1, questions 1 and 2 (see above) explored the participant’s pre-existing shopping habits and confirm the shopping characteristics of the MSW exchange audience. The average response from participants suggested that they had a moderate to high interest in second-hand
clothing before the clothing exchange as they responded that they were always willing to acquire second-hand clothes.

According to the data, participants acquire new clothing with moderate frequency (purchase a new garment approximately every seven weeks according to the rating scale). This question was designed to reveal whether participants were interested in consuming fashion generally, or specifically interested in second-hand clothing. These results confirm that the exchange event appeals to a demographic with a pre-existing interest in second-hand clothes, and a relatively high propensity to consume new clothing. Whether they regularly pursue this interest by consuming second-hand clothes has been left undetermined, because the clothing exchange is designed to build participant’s willingness to do so. By providing a convenient opportunity for participants to consume second-hand clothing, it simplifies and encourages this practice of sustainable consumption.

3. **When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, do you consider…**

   a) the environmental impact of the clothing
   
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   Not at all | Very much

   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture
   
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</table>
   
   Not at all | Very much

Questions 3a and 3b investigated the pre-existing awareness of ethical and environmental issues within the fashion industry. The results indicated that consideration of the environmental impact of production and consumption was low. The data showed that the ethical considerations were a slightly higher priority and therefore more likely to influence purchasing decisions. This outcome is unsurprising as the literature review (part 1) revealed that the ethical tensions such as labour ethics and sweatshops are high profile issues within the fashion and popular media. It is possible that participants consider these factors, but they may have alternative priorities, or lifestyle factors that lead them to consume more new clothing. The results detected that there is an awareness of both issues, but it does not test whether related concern is actualised through purchasing because the aim of the inquiry is to detect a willingness to consume sustainably not to profile existing consumption habits.
Assessing the event design

4. **Was the clothing exchange system easy to understand?**

```
1 2 3 4 5
I I I I X I

difficult very easy
```

The ease and simplicity of the clothing exchange practice were key objectives in the planning stages of the event design. The planning was effective as the participants rated the clothing exchange system to be ‘very easy to understand’ (question 4 above). The operation of the clothing exchange was described to the participants when invitations were distributed, prior to the event and during the event. The system of exchange mirrored that of traditional retail-based consumption and this familiarity assisted the participants comprehension.

5. **Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?**

```
1 2 3 4 5
I I I I X I

unfair reasonable very fair
```

When asked to rate the fairness of the event (question 5, see above), overall, the participants thought the event was ‘very fair’. This could be attributed to the uniformly high garment quality (see question 7-9 analysis below). Maintaining fairness was considered during the planning stages, as it was to be in keeping with notions of equity, integral to sustainability. The event commenced when all participants had checked in their garments so that no one appeared to be at an advantage. Participants were also encouraged to try only two garments at any one time to discourage people from unfairly hoarding garments.

There was some variation in the perception of fairness between participants. One participant; observed that “there was a good variety of sizes and styles”. The exchange may have been considered unfair by a few participants as there was dominance of smaller-sized participants. As one of the larger sized participants commented; “I would have liked more garments in my size as there were only two others that were of a similar size so there was not as much choice”. It was speculated that this bias was a random occurrence and future exchanges may have a different bias but that the issue potentially warranted further consideration for successive exchanges.

6. **Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?**

```
1 2 3 4 5
I I I I X I

not at all most of the time always
```
According to the data responding to questions 6, participants felt very comfortable throughout the duration of the event. This may be because the event was restricted to female participants or because the nature of the event attracted uninhibited participants. The clothing racks and screens had also been arranged to create modesty panels between participants, so this may have been adequate privacy to ensure participants comfort. The friendliness of the event may have also eased any potential discomfort associated with communal changing rooms.

Assessing participant’s satisfaction

7. How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?

1 2 3 4 5
| _____ | _____ | X | _____ |
low quality | high quality

8. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?

1 2 3 4 5
| _____ | _____ | X | _____ |
low quality | high quality

9. How satisfied were you with the variety and quality of all the available garments contributed?

1 2 3 4 5
| _____ | _____ | _____ | X | _____ |
Not satisfied | Content | Very satisfied

Questions 7 to 9 (see above) were designed to gauge the participant’s perceptions of the garment quality contributed and obtained during the event. According to the results the participants rated the garments which they gained to be of slightly higher quality than the garments they contributed. The fact that the garments contributed and received had a similar rating indicates that there was a perceived equality of garment quality. Participants felt satisfied with items gained, but they felt that their own contribution was generous. This equality is affirmed by the results of question 9 which indicated that the satisfaction with the variety and quality of all available garments was very high.

10. Please indicate your willingness to participate again in this clothes exchange

1 2 3 4 5
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | X |
not willing | very willing
Participants indicated that they were highly willing to participate in another clothing exchange. Twenty-six out of a total twenty-seven participants (96%) demonstrated their high level of willingness to repeat the exchange experience by selecting the maximum score of five on the questionnaire rating scale. The remaining participant indicated “4” which represented that they were still highly willing to repeat their experience in the clothing exchange. The high return rate can be attributed to the high levels of enjoyment but may have been influenced by the proportion of participants who were also friends of the researcher, who may have given feedback that was supportive and somewhat biased. Participants enjoyed the social nature of the event, the attractiveness of the venue and the friendliness of fellow participants. One participant described the event as “a great environment for people to meet and chat” and many informally cited the event as enjoyable and good-value.

The clothing exchange also had clear benefits for the participants in the form of ‘free’ clothing. One participant articulated that “it was so much fun! You look at the ‘new’ clothes with a fresh eye and they seem exciting. When you are thinking about the stuff you donated as ‘old’ and uninteresting- it’s magic!”

11. **Would you consider using this method of acquiring clothing as:**
   (Please circle the appropriate answer)

   a) Your primary method
   b) In conjunction with other methods
   c) Not at all

Question 11 asked participants to contextualise the clothing exchange within existing consumption practices. The clear majority of participants (88%) indicated that they would consider using the clothing exchange as a consumption method in conjunction with other methods such as new clothing consumption. This result is to be expected as the idea of forgoing new clothing consumption entirely may be seen as too restrictive to people who value choice. There were three participants (constituting the remaining 12%) who indicated that they would consider using the clothes exchange method as their primary method of acquiring clothing.

5.3 **My Sister’s Wardrobe; The second exchange**

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**Observational study**

The second exchange attracted a smaller audience (a total of ten participants including the researcher) because it was held during the peak work period for university students, when many of the potential participants had exams and deadlines. There were four participants from the previous MSW event who wanted to attend but did not have any unwanted garments left to bring. Instead of rescheduling the event due to the smaller sample group, it was hypothesised that by
comparing the relative success of the different sized exchanges, informed assumptions could be made about the ideal exchange event size. This group of participants included seven participants from the pilot exchange and three new participants.

This time, an alternative, smaller room at the Windsor Castle was used, as it was better suited to the proportionately small group of participants. After the clothing racks, mirrors and modesty screens were installed, the room looked appealingly cluttered and similar to the set-up of the first exchange. This event commenced approximately twenty minutes later than planned because one participant was late. This participant had confirmed her attendance and so to start before her arrival would put her at a disadvantage. Had she been any later, the researcher would have had to reconsider this approach.

**Check-in**
As only ten participants were attending, the process of checking-in the garments was comparatively brief. The assistant responsible for checking-in the garments had clearly benefited from the experiencing this role for the pilot exchange and had increased the efficiency and professionalism of the process.

**The exchange**
The search and exchanging of garments appeared to be more relaxed than the previous exchange. The intimacy of this event meant that people were less likely to be overwhelmed by the large volume of clothing and there were fewer participants to compete with. Through conversation with some of the returning participants, it was revealed that most could not choose which exchange they preferred but that they were both significantly different in terms of atmosphere and were enjoyable in different ways.
After approximately twenty minutes, the first participant had found two garments she liked and was ready to check-out. The whole exchange event concluded within the hour. As this exchange was one third of the size of the initial exchange, it was no surprise that its duration was proportionately timed.

**Comparing the first and second MSW exchange events**  
(Refer to questionnaire 2A)

**Gauging pre-existing attitudes**

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second hand clothing after the first exchange?

   
   1 2 3 4 5
   | | | | X |
   less willing  same as before  more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to purchase new clothing after the first exchange?

   
   1 2 3 4 5
   | | | X | |
   less willing  same as before  more willing

In response to the first questionnaire, participants indicated a moderate to high interest in second-hand clothing (selecting 4 out of a 5 point rating scale). The new data indicated that the second group of participants were slightly more willing to consumer second-hand clothes than the first group of participants. The second exchange group included both returning participants who were considered experienced and new participants.

Question 2 identified that the second group of participants acquire new clothing with moderate frequency. The average participant surveyed at the pilot exchange purchases new clothing approximately every seven weeks. The results of the second questionnaire are the same. Which is unsurprising as this sample group only included three new participants. The results confirm that the exchange event appeals to females with a pre-existing interest in second-hand clothes and a relatively high propensity to consume new clothing.
3. When shopping for new and/or second-hand clothing, are you now considering
   a) the environmental impact of the clothing
   
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   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture
   
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Question 3 investigated the strength of the participant’s awareness of the ethical and environmental issues within the fashion industry. The results of the second questionnaire indicated that consideration of the environmental impact of consumption was relatively low and consistent with the results from the first exchange. The returning participant’s awareness had marginally increased for some participants.

The questionnaire data for the second sample group showed that participants had a greater awareness of the ethical rather than the environmental issues within the fashion industry which was in-keeping with the results of the first sample group.

Assessing the event design

4. Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?

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5. Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?

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<td>not at all</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
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The exchange participants from the second MSW event rated the clothing exchange system to be very easy to understand and believed it to be fair to all participants. There was a slight difference between the results of the second survey and the first, which could be attributed to natural variance rather than considered to be significant. The participants from the second exchange were more at ease within the exchange context, as the results of question 5 showed
them to be slightly more comfortable during the clothing exchange than experienced participants from the first exchange.

Assessing participant’s satisfaction

6. How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?

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7. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?

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Participants rated the garments contributed to be of lower quality than the garments donated to the pilot exchange. There were two participants who mentioned that they had donated their highest quality fashion waste to the first exchange. At the second exchange, returning participants donated their second-round offerings. Despite this, the participants’ collective satisfaction with garments obtained was still very high. The satisfaction was exactly the same numerical rating as for the first MSW exchange, which has a higher quality rating for garments contributed. This indicated that participants were still excited by the fashion waste of others, even if the original owners failed to recognise its value.

The MSW follow-up questionnaire
(Refer to Questionnaire 3A)

The sample group of returning participants was limited to the attendees of the second MSW event and so the researcher prepared a shortened questionnaire to be completed by participants from the first MSW event. This questionnaire sought information about the value and usefulness of the garments obtained from the first event.

14. What proportion of the clothing obtained from the previous exchange have you been wearing?

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<td>none</td>
<td>half</td>
<td>all</td>
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</table>
15. How highly do you value the clothing obtained from the previous exchange within the context of your existing wardrobe?

1  2  3  4  5

I X I I

Not valuable  moderately  highly valuable

The MSW follow-up questionnaire data confirmed that participants had been wearing just below half of the clothing they obtained from the first MSW exchange. This may be a reflection of the fact that the appropriate climate or occasion is yet to arise for certain clothes to be worn. Alternatively, the results indicate that participants took some garments which they will not wear. It was noted by the researcher that approximately ten items of clothing obtained from the pilot exchange re-entered the system of exchange at the second event.

The follow-up study clarified that the garments taken from the pilot exchange were moderately valued by the MSW participants, when compared to their existing wardrobe. It is not surprising that some of the garments taken fail to hold their value. They may have been an impulsive ‘acquisition’ rather than a thoroughly considered choice. The excitement and pace of the event may have encouraged participants to rush their decisions. While some garments may be highly valued and have an active role in the participant’s wardrobe, the others have potentially become fashion waste.

16. Have you discussed the clothing exchange with anyone else? If so, please describe some of the comments and feedback you have received from other people.

There was one participant who enjoyed telling others about the clothing exchange event when prompted, often through receiving a complement for an exchanged garment. Other participants referred more generally to the enjoyment experienced when speaking about the clothing exchange with peers on the basis that it is a new and interesting concept that sparks the curiosity and interest of others.
5.4 Walk-in-Wardrobe; The first exchange for males and female participants

Observational study
This event was to cater for thirty female and male participants with the view to create a relatively even gender balance. The WIW exchange had attracted a significant attention from both male and female participants. The researcher had to refuse participants after thirty-two people had confirmed their attendance. A proportion of those who had confirmed their attendance did not show on the night, and there were a total of nineteen participants exchanging. There was a slight gender imbalance (58%) in the favour of the male participants.

Check-in
The male and female participants arrived over the first half and hour. They had a more casual approach to the clothing exchange and were not so worried about running late. There appeared to be fewer clothes at this exchange and there was more space to move as this event was hosted in the larger upstairs function room of the Windsor Castle (as for the first MSW event). The check-in process ran smoothly and efficiently as there were fewer garments contributed (an average of 7.8 garments per person).

The exchange
While the females initially appeared to be more focused on the garments at hand, the males were vaguely perusing the garments but appeared more interested in socialising. Some male participants were more interested in parading peculiar outfits to entertain each other. As one male participant pointed out, men do not usually have the opportunity or reason to try garments
on in a communal setting. This experience was considered to be quite novel and the source of humour for them that may have masked any related embarrassment.

Through speaking informally with some of the male participants, the researcher gathered that their disinterest in the clothes was in part due to the perceived low quality of the male contributions. It also became apparent that the majority of all the clothes were to fit medium-sized people and so those of either extremity were finding the search for clothes more difficult and less satisfying. As some male participants could not find clothes for themselves due to the low garment quality and size limitations, they used their buttons to ‘buy’ clothes for their girlfriends and sisters rather than forfeiting their value altogether.
Check-out
After just fifteen minutes, the first participants were ready to check-out with their ‘new’ garments. The two female participants checking-out first were rushing through the exchange in order to attend another social event later in the night. The check-out process for the WIW exchange went for over an hour and so the check-out desk required an assistant for the entire duration of the event.

Feedback
There were two male participants who left the exchange empty-handed. Through speaking with these participants, the researcher was surprised to find that neither participant was disappointed by their exchange experience. While one participant had enjoyed the social aspects of the event, the other had intended to clear out his wardrobe so both were happy with the outcome.

WIW questionnaire data analysis
(Refer to Questionnaire 1B in Appendix)
This sample group included male and female participants who were exchanging for the first time, as well as female MSW participants who may have attended up to three exchange events. There were two types of questionnaires distributed on the night, the first for the first time participants and the second for the returning participants. The data from these two surveys is analysed and compared below.
Gauging attitudes of participants attending for the first time

1. **Usually, how willing are you to acquire second-hand clothing?**

   1  2  3  4  5
   
   I______I______I______I_X____I
   never willing  moderately willing  always willing

2. **How frequently do you acquire new clothing?**

   1  2  3  4  5
   
   I______I______I_X____I______I
   Once a year  Every 2 months  Every 2 weeks

The questionnaire data showed that the WIW participants were similar to the MSW participants as they indicated that they were highly willing to acquire second-hand clothing. In addition, the data revealed that the average WIW participant consumed a new item of clothing every seven weeks. This result is identical to that of the MSW clothing exchange participants. Based on the similarity of the data collected across each exchange, it can be concluded that the clothing exchanges will continue to appeal to individuals who are interested in fashion and acquiring new clothing, whether it is from a new clothing retailer or through second-hand stores.

3. **When shopping for new and/or second-hand clothing, do you consider…**

   a) the environmental impact of the clothing

   1  2  3  4  5
   
   I______I_X______I______I______I
   Not at all  Very much

   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture

   1  2  3  4  5
   
   I______I_X______I______I______I
   Not at all  Very much

The WIW participants had a minor awareness about the environmental ramifications of clothing manufacture and were slightly more aware of the ethical ramifications. This result is consistent with that of the MSW results. This result reflects the discourse about fashion consumption which is more often ethically oriented than environmentally concerned.

Assessing the event design (according to first-time participants)

4. **Was the clothing exchange system easy to understand?**

   1  2  3  4  5
   
   I______I______I______I_X____I
   difficult  very easy
5. **Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?**

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I______I______I______I___ X__I

6. **Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?**

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I______I______I______I____ XI

The results showed that the WIW participants found the exchange was very easy to understand and had no difficulties participating. Even with a mix-gendered changing room, the WIW participants felt very comfortable during the event. According to the questionnaire data, the WIW participants were slightly less comfortable than the MSW participants. The research had anticipated that the increasing discomfort or embarrassment would be more significant as a mix-gendered change room challenges the social norm of separate gender change rooms. The difference in levels of comfort between exchange groups detected in the data analysis is arguably negligible and could be attributed to natural variance.

The event was unanimously considered to be fair to all participants. From comparative observation and informal conversations with participants, it can be said that for middle-sized participants (for females approximately size 12 and for males approximately size 32), the event appeared to be very fair, but some larger and smaller participants mentioned that they felt disadvantaged. The researcher believes the result may have been misleading as participants may have diluted some more negative feelings out of respect for the intentions behind the event or so as not to disrupt the friendliness of proceedings. However, based on some of the views expressed within informal conversations with two particular participants days following the event, the researcher speculated that the questionnaire data may be slightly more favourable than the participants true feelings. When consulting with PhD psychology candidate Warwick Hosking (the consultant for the data analysis), he explained that results can be altered in the minds of participants when motivated by the need to do what they perceive to be more socially desirable. That is to provide a more favourable rating than the one reflecting the true attitude. The questionnaires were anonymous, but that may not have been enough to comfort participants.

**Assessing the satisfaction of first time participants**

7. **How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?**

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I______I______I______I___ X____I
8. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?

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low quality       high quality

9. How satisfied were you with the variety and quality of all the available garments contributed?

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Not satisfied   Content   Very satisfied

The WIW participants rated the garments that they gave to be of higher quality than the garments they obtained. This is the first time that an exchange received a negative response to the quality of clothing contributed. Throughout the exchange, dissatisfaction with the WIW garments, especially the men’s clothes, was expressed. From observation, the men’s clothing quality seemed to somewhat polarised. While some participants had contributed high quality dress shirts, trousers and knits, others had provided old t-shirts and low quality novelty garments. Whether the problem was size, style or a combination of the two, there were many male participants who took significantly fewer garments than they contributed because there were not enough desirable selections. There was not a significant difference in the numerical rating of garments contributed and those obtained. A small increase in the satisfaction levels for garments obtained for a few participants could see the balance shift back in keeping with the MSW results.

The overall clothing quality ratings were still quite high although they were notably lower than for the MSW exchanges. Despite this result, it can be assumed that the garments that participants obtained are garments that they desire more than the garments they contributed, even if they are not considered to be of higher quality. There was only a marginal difference between the quality rating of garments obtained and garments donated so there was a general sense of garment equality.

The average participant rated the quality of garments obtained to be one point on the rating scale lower or higher than the quality of the garments contributed. There were two participants who rated the garments obtained to be of significantly lower value than those of the garments contributed. One of these participants rated the garments contributed as the maximum of the high quality rating and the garments obtained to be worth the lowest value on the rating scale. The dissatisfied participants were the minority. However, the severity of their responses significantly reduced the collective quality rating for the garments obtained.

10. Please indicate your willingness to participate again in this clothes exchange

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not willing   very willing
Despite the drop in perceived garment quality, participants were definitely very willing to return to the next clothing exchange event. Their enjoyment of the event as a social activity validated the attendance of many, even if the primary objective of obtaining a new wardrobe was not realised. This was illustrated most clearly by the two participants who left the event empty-handed, but felt their independent expectations were met and were not disappointed. These participants attended with the intention of clearing out their wardrobes and did not have any set expectations or desires about what they may find in return.

11. **Would you consider using this method of acquiring clothing as:**
   (Please circle the appropriate answer)
   
   d) Your primary method  
   e) In conjunction with other methods  
   f) Not at all

The majority of participants were willing to use the clothing exchange in conjunction with other methods of consumption. Three participants responded by saying they would consider using it as their sole method of acquiring garments. This is consistent with the MSW findings. It is possible that these participants are influenced into giving the questionnaire response that is what they perceive to be the most socially desirable. It is also possible that some of the participants are ready for significant transformations in their consumption habits. The data collected thus far supports this speculation, but needs to be substantiated by further research.

12. **How many garments did you contribute to the clothing exchange?**  
   (Please circle the appropriate answer)

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   The average number of garments contributed was 7.8 garments. Although the average contribution was within the limits specified on the invitation, there were significantly less garments than at both MSW events. While most participants did not have difficulties finding garments to contribute there were a couple of male participants who struggled. As one participant explained, males “don’t tend to own any where near the quantity of the garments owned by females”. Male garments tend to be more expensive, the range of styles is somewhat limited and their interest is lower as a result. There are not the same motivations and temptations that exist for male fashion consumers as there are for female fashion consumers so they do not acquire as many garments. As another male participant suggested, “most guys wear their garments until they are worn or damaged beyond repair” so most garments do not reach the classification of fashion waste or is fit for exchange.
Interpreting questionnaire data from returning MSW participants about the WIW event
(Refer to Questionnaire 2B)

Gauging the attitudes of returning participants

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second-hand clothing after participating in the clothing exchange?

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   | less willing | same as before | more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to acquire new clothing after participating in the clothing exchange?

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</table>
   | less willing | same as before | more willing

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, do you consider...
   a) the environmental impact of the clothing

      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
      |---|---|---|---|---|
      |   |   |   | X |   |
      | Not at all | Very much

   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture

      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
      |---|---|---|---|---|
      |   |   |   | X |   |
      | Not at all | Very much

Assessing attitudinal shifts
Participants’ willingness to acquire second-hand garments had increased slightly. However, their willingness to consume new clothing had not changed. They are considering the ethical and environmental ramifications of the clothing exchanges slightly more. This questionnaire does not detect whether their consumption habits are shifting proportionately, the data simply indicates that their awareness about the ethical and environmental tensions within the fashion industry has been raised slightly.

Assessing the satisfaction of the returning participants
The returning participants rated the garments obtained as being higher than the garments contributed. This indicated that returning participants have become accustomed to the quality expectations of this event and know how to benefit. Alternatively, their experience may lead them to find higher quality items more quickly than that of the new participants. The returning
participants were 100% willing to repeat the exchange experience. Their loyalty to the event has been secured.

Interpreting the data from the WIW follow-up questionnaire
(Refer to questionnaire 3B in Appendix)
The intention of this questionnaire was to assess the value of the clothing exchange and the garments obtained eight weeks following the WIW event

Assessing attitudinal changes

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second-hand clothing after the first exchange?

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less willing same as before more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to purchase new clothing after the first exchange?

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less willing same as before more willing

Participants indicated a slight increase in their willingness to consume second-hand clothes. The data indicated that their willingness to consume new clothing has decreased slightly. As these changes are insignificant considering the size of the sample group, they represent the potential for the clothing exchange to shape people’s attitudes towards new and second-hand clothing consumption. These results confirm that the clothing exchange appeals to individuals who have a reasonably high propensity to consume new clothing and a pre-existing willingness to consume second-hand clothing.

3. When shopping for new and/or second-hand clothing, are you now considering...

a) the environmental impact of the clothing

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Not at all Very much

b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture

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Not at all Very much
Collectively, the results of the questionnaire show that participants are becoming slightly more aware of the environmental and ethical tensions associated with clothing production. The majority of the participants surveyed about their environmental awareness responded by suggesting their awareness has increased by one point on the five point rating scale above. There was one participant who believed their awareness had been raised significantly. The clothing exchange as an environmental initiative may therefore impact some participants more than others. There were three participants whose attitude towards the ethical issues within the fashion industry had developed significantly. The remaining participants had all increased their awareness slightly over time, except for one whose awareness had decreased by two points on the rating scale. It is also possible that if the clothing exchanges were regular events, that the environmental and ethical awareness could be built and maintained over the long term.

14. What proportion of the clothing obtained from the previous exchange have you been wearing?

1 2 3 4 5
I______I______I X____I______I
none half all

15. How highly do you value the clothing obtained from the previous exchange within the context of your existing wardrobe?

1 2 3 4 5
I______I______I X____I______I
Not valuable moderately highly valuable

Although the quality of garments contributed was lower for WIW participants (compared with MSW participants) and there was significantly less choice for participants who fell outside the medium size bias, they are wearing more of the garments that they took from the clothing exchange, when compared to MSW participants alone. Participants have been wearing just over half of the garments obtained from previous events. They find these clothes to be of moderate value within the context of their wardrobes. The WIW participants took fewer garments but are wearing a larger proportion of them. This may, in part, be due to the fact that experienced participants have learnt to make more discerning selections. As some of the male participants chose to take garments for female friends and family instead of for themselves, it is possible that this result understates the proportion of garments that have been activated.
5.5 Assessing how effectively the objectives of the clothing exchange were realised by the case studies

Waste Activation; The Rotating Wardrobe

After finding that participants from the first MSW clothing exchange had been wearing just under half the total garments taken from the exchange, it became a concern that the event was encouraging the transferral of fashion waste, rather than activating it. The questionnaire results indicated that more clothing is being transferred rather than worn. This could be because the appropriate situation was yet to arise where wearing a particular garment is appropriate. For instance, the right weather, occasion or formality may not yet have occurred - so the garment is yet to be worn. Alternatively, the transferral of fashion waste may be due to the fact that many participants felt compelled to ‘spend’ all their buttons. There is, seemingly, an unspoken compulsion to spend the buttons attained because wasting ‘money’ or currency is far greater crime than potentially wasting garments. The philosophy of ‘more being better’ - that is exemplified by consumerism may be applied at the clothing exchange. Some participants are either making ill-conceived judgements or prefer to take additional garments that they may wear, rather than being contented with fewer garments that they will wear. As the exchange system mirrors the retail construct, it is unsurprising that some of the same rationalisations are made.

This waste transferral was potentially detrimental to the credibility of the clothing exchange as a waste-activation project. However, at the second MSW event, the researcher observed that ten garments taken from the first exchange had re-entered the system of exchange at the second event. Without encouragement, some participants had decided some of their first acquisitions were inappropriate and had returned them to the second exchange. This observation highlighted the potential for the clothing exchange to become a host for a rotating wardrobe, a system where clothes are borrowed and returned. In this situation, participants are not necessarily electing to keep all garments taken from the exchange. They are taken on extended loan, where the security of ownership is still on offer. If a garment taken does not integrate the active wardrobe, it is returned and becomes currency for ‘new’ garments.

This rotation of garments can potentially satisfy the consumer’s desires for constant novelty and ‘newness’ (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000). It is likely that regular participants will use the exchange in this way. This is ideal because irregular participation in this rotation will result in extended periods where fashion waste is hoarded. It is more likely that regular participants will transfer fashion waste as they feel that it is a low-risk exercise, as they know they can bring it back upon their return. Figure 1 illustrates how the rotating wardrobe could operate. Participants purchase new garments and wear them for a period of time. When that garment becomes inactive, the exchange stimulates the individual to review their wardrobe and that garment is extracted and contributed to the exchange. At the exchanges, the participant adopts a new, preferable garment and it is worn until they tire of it and bring it to the next exchange.
In order to support the function of the rotating wardrobe, it is essential that the clothing exchange becomes a regular event that participants can rely upon. Participants need to feel like they can rely on there being another event within the near future, so they feel comfortable donating and borrowing garments. The dependability of the event will contribute to its success when facilitating a rotating wardrobe.

Figure 1 demonstrates how the clothing exchange has created a closed-loop cycle of consumption (McDonough & Braungart, 2003). However, after a garment is exchanged and worn several times it may reach the end of its physical life. The time taken will vary greatly depending on the quality of the garment. It may then be recycled, reused as a rag or potentially end up in landfill. This stage is yet to be addressed as part of the clothing exchange system, but there is potential to develop a partnership with a group or organisation that will reuse or recycle the degraded garments. Figure 2 shows how after a certain amount of wear and tear, the garments exit the system.
Clearing out the wardrobe

There are participants that use the exchange event as an opportunity to clear their wardrobes. They contribute inactive garments and only take a couple of new garments that are discerningly selected. Participants that use the clothing exchange in this way are the irregular participants, but this depends on the speed with which the new clothing enters their wardrobe. Many participants informally reflected that they do not consume enough garments in order to participate in regular exchange events.

The surplus garments from the exchange event are donated to the St Vincent's opportunity shop in St Kilda. There, they have the chance to be activated by public consumers. The exchange was a method for successfully activating the majority of the total fashion waste contributed, and the remaining garments may, or may not be adopted from the opportunity shop and given a second use life, but this goes beyond the scope of this investigation.

Irregular exchange participants are likely to use the exchange as an opportunity to clear out their wardrobe. The clothing exchange provides the incentive for them to view their wardrobes with a critical eye. They extract the garments that have become inactive fashion waste and contribute them to the exchange in the form of a donation. In this situation, the participant does not perceive their fashion waste as currency for ‘new’ garments. Rather, they see the exchange as an opportunity to eliminate those inactive garments from their own wardrobe. They may wish to take a couple of very discerningly selected garments from the exchange, but this is not the primary intention. Participants using the exchange to facilitate the clearing of their wardrobes will only attend the exchange irregularly, perhaps only once or twice a year. Their attendance will most likely be proportional to their consumption of new garments. Some MSW participants from the first exchange were keen to participate in the second, but could not do so on the basis that they had no garments to contribute.

Figure 3 illustrates how the new garments are purchased, worn, rejected and then brought to the exchange in the form of a donation. The garments are adopted by new users and the participant leaves empty-handed. The new owners of the garment may transfer them into the rotating wardrobe cycle.
While the clothing exchange events facilitate the two primary functions of the rotating wardrobe and the wardrobe clean-out, participants may combine these functions to varying degrees. For example, a participant wishing to clear out their wardrobe may carefully select a couple of garments to take home with them, but they are very unlikely to spend all their buttons.

*Raising Awareness*

The data from the three sample groups demonstrates a slight increase in participants’ ethical and environmental awareness towards fashion consumption. The questionnaire does not detect whether this awareness was raised through participants’ engagement with the literature within the show-bags, through conversations with fellow participants or through the researcher’s commencing address. The questionnaires may be extended to facilitate this inquiry for future exchanges.

This inquiry is also limited because it only gauges shifts in consumer attitudes and not behaviours. Attitudes are often predictors of behaviour, but this is not always so. A pivotal argument within this thesis is that most people hold pro-sustainability attitudes but that these rarely translate into sustainable actions (chapter three). While the data collected does not contest this, it must be concluded that detecting consumers’ behavioural changes is beyond the scope of this thesis, but that it may form the basis for future research.

As the system of exchange replicated a traditional retail exchange, it was easy for participants to understand and participate. However, this system does not critique the need for a currency-based exchange where the user ‘pays’ in a significant or provocative way. Indeed, it reinforces it. The exchange appeals to people’s existing values by supplementing their desire for new garments with those that are second-hand. This system promotes the need for sustainable
development strategies to be transitional and gentle with regard to challenging peoples’ existing values, with the view to ready them for more radical developments in the future.

Creating an enjoyable event that empowers participants
It was hypothesised that the event would be considered enjoyable if it appeared to be fair, beneficial and socially appealing. While the system of exchange was considered to be fair by most participants, it was apparent that each of the clothing exchanges had a different size bias. The MSW exchanges attracted smaller sized participants (sized 8-12). There was greater variety provided for these smaller participants whilst larger participants (size 14 plus) had decidedly less to choose from. The WIW exchange served the middle-sized people most effectively. This was due, in part, to the fact that larger people brought clothing they had outgrown and because middle-sized people were the greater majority. It was suggested by some participants that size-specific exchanges may be preferable for future exchanges in order to eliminate size-biases. It is also possible that increasing the number of participants may decrease the significance of the size biases.

While the fairness of the event was challenged by some participants, it was universally agreed upon that the social aspects of each of the events were highly regarded. The clothing exchange successfully fitted within participants existing life-styles, and was a source of amusement and entertainment. This engagement and enthusiasm can potentially form the basis for future awareness-raising endeavours relating to sustainable development.

5.6 Exploring the potential applications of the clothing exchange

The clothing exchange has been trialled in two different formats; as an event for female participants (MSW) and as an event for both male and female participants (WIW). The MSW clothing exchange has been a successful fashion-waste activation project. At the conclusions of these events, what was once a roomful of clothes has become a small pile on the floor. The WIW exchange had a significant reduction in the quality of garments contributed, which in turn decreased participants’ satisfaction. Both exchange events (MSW & WIW) have proven to be equally valuable as an awareness-raising exercise, and as an enjoyable social experience which participants are highly willing to repeat.

This system of exchange can be applied to new audiences. The MSW and WIW exchanges were trialled on young participants who have a well-documented interest in second-hand clothing, so it was a low-risk experiment. Taking the exchange to new audiences will be highly experimental, but it will inevitably test the applicability of the exchange and increase the numbers
of adoption. To trial the exchange event on different audiences will involve tailoring the venue, system and atmosphere to suit their needs.

From the WIW and MSW results, there are motivations to vary numbers of participants. The case studies have shown that the exchange works effectively for a minimum of ten participants, but it has also shown that the more participants, the more clothes, the more choice which all attribute to higher levels of satisfaction. Increasing the numbers of participants may also dilute the size biases that have occurred repeatedly throughout the events. Lastly, it is possible that the system of exchange can be translated to other areas of consumption. In this situation, the clothing exchange can be considered a model that can be adapted to new contexts. This chapter explores some of these possibilities in greater depth based on the results of the MSW and WIW clothing exchange case studies.

*Describing potential audiences for the clothing exchange*

At this stage, the clothing exchange has been trialled on a group of young women (18 – 35 years) and young men. Young women in particular have a well-documented interest in fashion and attaining new clothes. Young people in general often have limited incomes and favour op-shopping and second-hand retailers. It is also the case that young people are interested in pursuing authentic experiences (Davis & Bridger, 2000) and were likely to be receptive to an event such as the clothing exchange. The applicability of the exchange event can be tested on different audiences with the view to maximise the adoption of this sustainable consumption practice.

One example is a proposed ‘Mothers and Daughters’ exchange that would bring greater size and age diversity to the event. As Mothers life tends to have spanned many different phases, fashions, stages and sizes it is anticipated that they may have larger volumes of fashion waste. Because their wardrobes have spanned several decades it is likely that they will have many varieties of style. As fashion is often considered to be cyclic (Stone, 1976), these different styles may be appealing to the daughters, if not the mothers if they a re-popularised by current fashions. It is often the case that mothers have already passed their clothes that transcend the generation gap down to their daughters. However, it they are not the same size, this natural transference will not take place. This clothing exchange may also appeal to mothers who would shy away from such event without the inclusion and support of their daughters. The MSW event has captured the attention of the daughters, is now possible to lure their mothers.

New exchange events can also be defined by diversifying gender. An informal inquiry of a male sample indicated that the exchange event holds mixed appeal. Some males were less sure, while others were more enthusiastic about participating in an exchange. Some males claimed to own only the minimum clothing required for survival which they wear until they are threadbare. A male colleague of the researcher explained how he had ‘repaired’ a hole in the seat of his jeans.
by fastening plastic ties through the denim when interviewed. Although this is surely an extreme example, it supports this argument. It is also the case that some degradation to their clothing can improve the look and appeal of the garment for the owner. It is likely that males are inherently more sustainable consumers and need no such clothing exchange! Because their wardrobes are often smaller than that of their female counterparts, males were finding it more difficult to find garments to part with. As one participant explained, the main reason people refused the exchange invitation was because they did not believe they could find unworn clothing to bring.

The exchange is arguably more suited to the current values and practices of a female audience. While females will test and try on clothes in many different ways and interpret the garment for themselves, males tend to favour a specific way of wearing clothing. As one WIW participant mentioned- “a t-shirt has to fit the way I want it to, if it is a little too small or too big it’s no good”. It is also a greater conceptual leap for males to try on and swap clothes in a communal environment. For females, this can be an extension of existing practices that they are used to. It is common for young females to shop for clothes in groups as a leisure activity, so communal changing rooms and parading around for each other is not unfamiliar. The fact that it is out of the ordinary for males to try on clothes together makes the event unique and appealing. In the case of the WIW exchange, the males were very amused and tended to play with the clothes, parading around in absurdly combined garments for the entertainment of each other.

Males have only recently amplified their interest in clothes according to popular media. Historically, clothing and fashion has always been the females’ domain (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000), and that of the homosexual male. Now some males (metro-sexuals and the like) are actively pursuing new clothes and developing their appearance. It would be reasonable to hypothesise that this growing interest in clothing could make an event such as the clothing exchange increasingly more appealing to a male audience.

When males were included with females for the WIW clothing exchange, the questionnaire data showed a significant drop in the quality of garments contributed. According to the questionnaire feedback, the male clothing was also considered to be quite boring. There were two male participants who left the clothing exchange empty-handed. This quality reduction could be due to the fact that male participants’ found they had less fashion waste to contribute or because they are not as discerning or generous as their female counterparts. It is important to note that some male participants made very generous contributions to the clothing exchange. These quality levels were somewhat polarised, the garment quality was not equal as it had been for the MSW exchanges.

It is possible that all male exchange events, or those which include male participants should include a system of quality monitoring in order to raise the standards of garments donated.
Alternatively, garment quality could be rated so that those who make more generous contributions are at an advantage. The exchange could include a garment rating system at the point of checking-in. A garment of high quality such as a high quality pair of dress pants could be exchanged for 1 button whereas a set of 3 older t-shirts may receive 1 button collectively. Imposing quality judgements would be disempowering the participants. The current exchange system puts the quality assessment in the control of the participants. The current model may be preferable as to introduce a rating scheme would rely on a consistency of judgement which may be hard to replicate exchange after exchange. As an alternative, the quality of the garment contributions could be influenced by the marketing and presentation of the event. If there were to be an all-male event - it could be called 'A Gentleman’s Wardrobe' to evoke a higher standard of dress for the exchange.

Challenging the system of exchange
A significant concern that arose from the clothing exchanges is the bias towards certain sizes of participants. As one MSW participant commented “I would have liked more garments in my size, there were only two others that were a similar size- so there was not as much choice”. The WIW clothing exchange had a bias towards medium sized people. Those of either extremity were at a disadvantage, with significantly less clothing to choose from. Size biases may shift naturally, however the idea of size-specific events has been raised repeatedly by participants. There are several tenuous issues associated with having size-specific events. First of all, the sizes must be determined in a way that everyone can understand. Currently, there is no standardised sizing that everyone can relate to.

The second problem may be that those attending the event may contribute clothing that is different to their current size. They may contribute clothing they have grown out of or clothes that are too big. To divide the exchange events by size may still mean that the clothing available to swap is inappropriately sized. The problem being that without participants of many sizes at a size specific event- clothes outside that size range become fashion waste. The third disadvantage imposed by the idea of size-specific events is that every participant has to go through the process of self-assessing which exchange to attend. This interferes with the relaxed inclusiveness of the current events. To divide the exchanges into size categories negates the fact that female participants have the nous to interpret garments to suit their own needs. A jumper may be a tight fit for a size 14 and appear svelte and stylish, whilst a size 8 may prefer to wear it in a slouched, casual manner. In the past, participants have exchanged for garments that are made of appealing fabric with the view to customise and create a garment of proper fit.

In order to alleviate the disadvantages of a size bias in an alternative way, participants can be encouraged to bring free-sized items such as hats, shawls, scarves and jewellery. It is also possible that increasing the number of participants may reduce the impact of size biases. It was one research hypothesis that the greater the number of participants, the more garments, the
increased variety, which results in increased satisfaction with garments obtained. The case studies performed thus far have not confirmed or disproved this hypothesis. The second MSW clothing exchange had only 10 participants and the satisfaction levels were equal to that of the larger exchange event- thus disproving my hypothesis. The WIW exchange saw a reduction in satisfaction which may be partially attributed to the significant reduction of the number of garments contributed.

*Exploring different applications for the system of exchange; New commodities*

The clothing exchange can be considered a model of a system of exchange that can be applied to other areas of consumption. The commodity to be exchanged can be altered. For example, there could be an exchange designed to facilitate the exchange of kitchen appliances. Perhaps an exchange where unused, undesirable gifts could be swapped for items participants actually desired. The fact that online second-hand trading such as ‘ebay’ has become highly popular validates the viability of exchanging goods beyond clothing.

*New systems*

The exchange could be held in a continual format- much like that of a conventional retail store. In the 2005 Lorean Fashion Week, there was an exhibition entitles ‘Rags’ held at Craft Victoria in Melbourne. This exhibition was essentially a pile of clothing donated from the Salvation Army. Visitors were encouraged to bring garments to swap for items from the installation. The clothing exchange case studies completed for this research have been staged as an event, but there is potential to develop and ongoing system that facilitates the exchange of garments. The advantage of this approach is that people have the freedom to choose when they wish to exchange. In a more permanent setting, a clothing exchange could be structured like a regular store, where people contribute garments and take those they desire and pay a membership fee for the privilege. The disadvantage of this particular system is that the social nourishment and the joy of participating in a sustainable activity as a group is diluted, or lost.

Another system that has already been implemented is an online clothing exchange. This particular exchange focuses on the trading of expensive, high-end fashion items. Whilst the cost savings are appealing and the online format suits people’s time-poverty, this is not necessarily an appropriate medium for building awareness about the ethical and environmental awareness about the fashion industry. Online consumer mediums also rely heavily on the quality pf photographs and accompanying descriptions. The consumer does not have the opportunity to experience the garment in a tactile manner, and they are putting their faith in the measurements given, as they can not try the garment on for size. Because of this, the online swapping system is not likely to be as successful as a waste-activation project, because the likelihood of a garment being the wrong size or style is high.
5.7 Conclusion

The clothing exchange was moderately successful as a waste-activation project where approximately half of all garments obtained from exchange events were activated by new owners. The potential for the exchange to become a vehicle for fashion waste activation may be realised if it were to become a regular event, facilitating the rotating wardrobe. The exchange events have generated a captive and enthusiastic audience. As they become regular events, people will consider them as a reliable method of fashion consumption and a genuine alternative to the wasteful consumption of new fashion garments.
6.0 Thesis Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter revisits the initial research objectives for the thesis investigation and assesses how they were realised through the literature review and through the development and analysis of the clothing exchange events. The first objective identified (explored within chapter 2) was to establish the tensions between the objectives for sustainability and the problem of wasteful fashion consumption in Australia. The main tensions were identified to be resource and production wastage, compromised labour ethics, and the continual perpetration of global inequities through a system where developing nations produce and the developed nations consume.

To realise the second objective, the first chapter explored the social, cultural and historical significance of fashion consumption which is often lacking in discussions of sustainable consumption development. This analysis of the social values of fashion consumption provided the integral understanding about the complexity of the challenge of redevelopment to ensure the realisation of the objectives of sustainability. This chapter explored how the practice of fashion consumption has become historically established, habitual, interconnected with all aspects of modern living, and an integral vehicle for social identification in affluent consumer societies.

The findings within the first two chapters were the catalyst for the development of the third research objective; to clarify the key objectives for sustainable consumption development and develop a sustainable consumption practice accordingly. The fourth research objective was to test and evaluate the success of the clothing exchange events in terms of their ability to facilitate fashion waste activation and their capacity to raise awareness about the need for sustainable consumption development. This concluding chapter therefore reflects upon the benefits and limitations of the clothing exchange event and explores avenues for future research and development.

6.2 Confirming the context for sustainable consumption development

The thesis research (chapter 2) detected that at present, within Australia, sustainable development is lead by individuals, NGO’s and community groups, predominantly at the grassroots level. On this basis, this thesis identified key objectives for sustainable consumption practice development for individual participation. This intention of this thesis was to identify the
context and determining factors that could influence and inspire sustainable action based on the understanding that the Australian people are willing to participate, but that they need to raise their awareness about sustainability and require a catalyst for stimulating related action.

Through the literature review, it was identified that while some people readily embrace sustainability and become highly moralised and engaged in action, others find the confusion surrounding the climate change debate alienating and threatening. This thesis research endeavoured to find a balance between the morality of sustainability and hedonistic values of materialism as exemplified by the pursuit of fashion consumption, by seeking to understand both. It is the contention of this thesis that validity of the wasteful fashion consumption practices needed to be challenged in light of the need for sustainability, but the values of the society needed to inform sustainable development rather than be swept aside in order to succeed.

The Australian population has signified their willingness to adopt sustainable practices as demonstrated by the enthusiastic adoption of kerbside recycling practices and water conservation initiatives (Hamilton, 2005). Following this acknowledgement, it became important to examine why sustainable development has stopped short at this point for the Australian population. By identifying some of the possible barriers between individuals and sustainable action, this thesis sought to identify a sympathetic and thus proactive approach to sustainable development. The approach exemplified by this research was to investigate what people could potentially contribute rather than reprimanding people for what they should do, which is the approach favoured by environmentalists through their campaigning. By acknowledging and therefore validating these barriers, the thesis discussion focused on how barriers could be overcome. The identification of the barriers inspired the development of more specific objectives for sustainable development that were later tested by the clothing exchange.

The first barrier identified was that people can feel alienated, overwhelmed or even become frightened by the sustainability debates, particularly where climate change is concerned. Sustainability is often considered to be synonymous with environmentalism and thus assumes the same stereotyping and consequent dismissal. Rather than using scare tactics or patronising campaigning this thesis proposed that a gentler form of sustainability awareness-raising activism may have greater chances of success. The clothing exchange event focused on engaging a willing audience and became the platform for raising awareness about the need to develop sustainable consumption alternatives. To achieve this, the clothing exchange focused on two key issues, the problem of fashion waste and problems with local labour ethics. Relevant information was provided in three different formats so that participants were not overwhelmed, but had the material with which they could self-educate after the event. Initially, participants were addressed as a group by the researcher, they participated in the exchange, a form of education in itself, and they were provided with printed material which they could view at their convenience. The questionnaire data revealed that as a result of these inclusions, there had
been a small increase in ethical and environmental awareness of all participants, but upon closer analysis, found that some participant’s awareness was significantly heightened while others attitudes remained unchanged.

The second barrier identified that people are confused by the mixed portrayal of sustainability in the media. The media often covers disparate and arguably trivial events rather than portraying sustainability as a movement driving social change through challenging all unsustainable aspects of human living. To overcome this barrier of confusion, the focus should be to clarify the issues associated with sustainability and climate change and focus upon awareness-raising with the view to initiating an attitudinal shift towards prioritising a sustainable future. While the clothing exchange data revealed there had been an increase in participant’s awareness, it must be acknowledged that this may not be significant enough to necessarily lead to sustainable consumption, but that it is a step in a sustainable direction. If the exchange were to become a regular event and the awareness-raising capacity was maintained and deepened over a longer period of time, the pro-sustainability attitude may become the dominating attitude and more likely to govern consumers purchasing behaviours.

Another common barrier identified was that the objectives for sustainable development remain relatively unclear. While some areas of development are addressed with clear, tangible strategies (such as the need to replace single-use plastic bags with the multi-use ‘green bags’), in other areas, such as sustainable consumption from the consumption angle, the objectives for sustainability remain unclear and therefore, untouched.

The next objective identified was that sustainable strategies were to be clear, tangible and appear easy to execute in order to engage participation. This entails addressing what people’s capabilities are, identifying what may appeal to their current value system, and what they can physically achieve and afford. It was proposed that the clothing exchange needed to be a transitional strategy that would appeal to the current values and abilities of the participants, while readying them for more radical developments in the future.

The clothing exchange practice was based on the principle of sharing. It was the appropriation of an old idea into a new context for sustainable development. It was hypothesised that adopting a familiar practice in a new context would be more accessible and therefore successfully engaging. This approach embodied the theory of social psychologists Vaughn and Hogg (1998); that the likelihood of a particular behaviour being executed depends on how easy it appears to execute.

The data collected at the MSW events confirmed that participants believed that the clothing exchange event was accessible and enjoyable and that they could easily envisage incorporating it into their existing lifestyles. At the first MSW event, 88% of the participants said they would
use the exchange as a method of consumption in conjunction with other methods, which was unsurprising as they also indicated a high level of interest in consuming new clothing so would not wish to forego new garment consumption entirely. It was surprising, but encouraging to find that the remaining 12% thought they could use the clothing exchange is their sole method of acquiring garments.

The fourth barrier identified was that while people are willing to participate in sustainable development, they have conflicting materialist desires that lead to the wasteful consumption and rejection of fashion. The resulting objective was to respond to the traditional value-system of consumers by supplementing their desire for new garments. Rather than depriving people of their right to consume, the clothing exchange facilitated this in a sustainable way. The exchange successfully replicated the consumer sensation of acquiring ‘newness’ and did so within a socially enjoyable context.

In addition, the clothing exchange operated without the need for conventional money-based exchange. Participants traded unwanted, inactive garments for a ‘new’ desirable wardrobe without the need for monetary transactions. As one participant enthused; “it was a lot of fun and a nice change not to worry about how much each item cost”. As the event was cost-free for participants and they are exchanging garments which they no longer wish to own, it is perceived to be a clearly beneficial activity in contrast to new clothing consumption which requires consumers to make a high monetary investment.

The final barrier identified was that in Australia, people are not necessarily aware of the collective impact of their wasteful consumption habits, nor are they certain that their individual efforts toward sustainable consumption would make a significant contribution. The next objective for sustainable consumption development was therefore defined to be about the need to empower people to participate in sustainable action. The approach exemplified by the clothing exchange was bringing people together so that they can witness their collective impact and receive social recognition for their participation.

The clothing exchange practice development has sought reduce the demand for the wasteful consumption of new fashion garments by embracing and re-activating fashion waste in instead. Rather than hoarding fashion waste, the clothing exchange closed the cycle of production and consumption by facilitating the reactivation of fashion waste. The clothing exchange event does this by necessitating the participants’ assessment of their wardrobes and inactive garments are extracted, and become currency for ‘new’ garments at the exchange.

The exchange also aims to alter the current perception of waste where it is commonly thought to be rubbish or landfill. Fashion waste in the context of the exchange was redefined to be inactive
garments that have the potential to be reactivated by a new owner. This development about the way people perceive waste may have a much broader application beyond fashion garments.

In order to hone in on the problem, the thesis identified specific instances when a fashion garment becomes inactive ‘fashion waste’. It was found that an inactive garment may either be consciously sentenced to the darkest corner of the wardrobe or may just be subconsciously avoided. In the latter case, the garment may have been replaced by a superior version that fulfils its original function. Garments that have suffered physical deterioration such as pilling, stretching and fading can also be rendered inactive. These garments may be less appealing and therefore less likely to be adopted by new users.

When the owner changes size and the garment no longer fits, the potential use life of the garment is not realised unless the owner returns to their original size. This fashion waste was likely to be the highest quality and therefore ideal currency for exchanging. As garment also becomes fashion waste when it is out of fashion and deemed unwearable, it was fortunate that the exchange attracted a broad range of participants, some fashion savvy, others with more distinctive personal styles. Those who attended the exchange events did have the nous to compose their personal style using the garments available - rather than necessarily being reliant on fashion dictation. So, unfashionable garments potentially get a new lease on life in the context of the exchange.

At the second MSW event, the questionnaire data indicated that participants were on average wearing just below half the garments obtained from the first event. This may have been due to circumstances where the appropriate climate or occasion for the garment may not yet have occurred between the event and the second questionnaire. Alternatively, participants may have become caught up in the excitement of the event and taken some clothes which they will not wear. This could be attributed in part to the use of the buttons as mock currency. It was observed that some participants felt they should spend all their buttons in order to attain the best value from the event. In doing so, they inevitably readopted items of fashion waste.

At the second MSW exchange, approximately ten garments taken from the first event had re-entered the system. This identified the potential role of the exchange as facilitating a rotating wardrobe. In this context, traditional notions of ownership could be broken down, as garments are borrowed and returned, while the security of ownership is always on offer. In order to facilitate the rotating wardrobe, the exchange would need to be staged as a regular, reliable event, taking on the form of a clothing library.

The other main function of the clothing exchange is to provide an opportunity for people to clear out their wardrobes. In this case, they contribute garments in the form of a donation but are unlikely to take many in return. This may be the preferred function of the exchange for irregular
participants who will continue to attend the exchange according to their accumulation of new garments and rejection of old.

The MSW event was more successful as a waste-activation project, but the two exchanges (WIW and MSW) were equally successful as an awareness-building exercise and as an enjoyable social event. At the conclusion of the MSW events, what was formerly a roomful of clothing had been reduced to a small pile on the floor. When the WIW exchange event concluded there was a comparatively large amount of garments left over. The male clothing in particular was criticised for being “boring” and this exchange had a significant bias towards medium-sized participants.

Despite the variation in garment satisfaction levels, the clothing exchange events successfully generated a committed following. In the beginning a large proportion of the exchange group were friends and associates of the researcher, but successive exchanges attracted the friends of these friends, and later, friends of theirs. The MSW exchange participants who attended the WIW event were all 100% willing to attend the next clothing exchange. Some of these participants were exchanging for the third time, and had become loyal supporters of the event.

Given the support it has generated thus far, the clothing exchange is an ideal transitional strategy between wasteful consumption and a sustainable future. It revitalises the familiar practice of sharing with the new values and ideas of the sustainability movement. This form of gentle activism empowers the individual because they test the experience for themselves and make an informed decision about whether to include it in their lives. As they become acquainted with the practice of sharing clothing, it is anticipated that they may apply this to other areas of consumption within their life, thus taking a larger stride towards sustainability.
7.0 Recommendations for future research

While the clothing exchange development, execution and data analysis demonstrated and tested an approach to sustainable fashion consumption, its analysis has lead to the identification of additional avenues for future research. This sub-chapter includes a series of potential research enquiries that were not included within the scope of this particular investigation, but would greatly enhance its value.

The data collected from the three clothing exchange case studies revealed a small increase on participant’s awareness about the ethical and environmental challenges with wasteful fashion consumption. As this event was designed to be a transitionary strategy, the expectation was only that it would instigate and detect a slight shift in participant’s attitudes towards fashion consumption. A future investigation could seek to identify whether attitudinal shifts can be increased and maintained long term, and could specifically clarify how effectively this attitude affects real consumption behaviours. Such an investigation would substantiate the credibility of this particular approach to sustainable consumption development. Given the size of the sample group and the scope of the data collection and analysis, this particular investigation could only lead to informed assumption-making rather than absolute conclusions about the level and implications of the awareness raising aspects.

This study was performed on participants that had a level of familiarity with the researcher, who was present and identifiable at each event. It is therefore possible that some of the participant’s responses were affected by their desire to be supportive of the event and give the most socially desirable responses. Therefore, to validate the findings of the initial study, it would be valuable to test the capabilities of the clothing exchange event with an unfamiliar group.

It was noted that some participants felt the need to ‘spend’ all of their buttons in order to attain the maximum value of the event based on traditional consumer values where more is considered to be better than less. As this exchange was designed to enable the activation of fashion waste, there is scope for developing alternative systems in terms of the currency and participant’s relationship with it. It is possible that if it were to become a regular event, there could be a method of record keeping that allowed participants to maintain the value of unspent buttons between exchanges or there could be a reward for not spending buttons on more fashion waste as this interferes with the intention of the event.

Through testing and analysing the clothing exchange event, it was identified that there was potential for it to become the host for a rotating wardrobe. As there were three events, it was noted by the researcher that a certain proportion of clothes were being taking and later returned to the clothing exchange. If this were to become a regular event, occurring monthly over the
duration of a year, it would be possible to gauge whether this function could be encouraged and magnified. If so, the clothing exchange would be posing a more substantial challenge to traditional notions of ownership, which would further enhance its capacity to assist sustainable development.
Questionnaire 1A

**My Sister’s Wardrobe Clothing Exchange**

Questionnaire

Date:

Please fill in the following details about yourself…

Age:
Gender:
Postcode:

**Section 1: Pre-existing experiences and attitudes**

1. Usually, how willing are you to acquire second hand clothing?
   - [ ] 1 never willing
   - [ ] 2 moderately willing
   - [ ] 3 always willing

2. How frequently do you acquire new clothing?
   - [ ] 1 Once a year
   - [ ] 2 Every 2 months
   - [ ] 3 Every 2 weeks

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, do you consider…
   a) the environmental impact of the clothing
      - [ ] 1 Not at all
      - [ ] 2 Very much
   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture
      - [ ] 1 Not at all
      - [ ] 2 Very much

**Section 2. About the Clothing Exchange**

4. Was the clothing exchange system easy to understand?
   - [ ] 1 difficult
   - [ ] 2 very easy

5. Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?
   - [ ] 1 unfair
   - [ ] 2 reasonable
   - [ ] 3 very fair
6. Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>most of the time</td>
<td>always</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low quality</td>
<td>high quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low quality</td>
<td>high quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. How satisfied were you with the variety and quality of all the available garments contributed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Please indicate your willingness to participate again in this clothes exchange

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not willing</td>
<td>very willing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Would you consider using this method of acquiring clothing as:

- Please circle the appropriate answer
  - g) Your primary method
  - h) In conjunction with other methods
  - c) Not at all

12. Would you be willing to use a clothes library*?

(A clothes library* operates in a similar manner to current book-based libraries. Clothes are borrowed for a specific time period, worn, returned and then cleaned for the next borrower)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not willing</td>
<td>willing</td>
<td>very willing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Do you have any comments, observations or suggestions about the clothing exchange?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
My Sister’s Wardrobe Clothing Exchange
Returning participants Questionnaire

Please fill in the following details about yourself…

Age: 
Gender: 
Postcode: 

Section 1: Experiences and attitudes

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second hand clothing after the first exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5 
   |________|________|________| 
   less willing  same as before  more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to purchase new clothing after the first exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5 
   |________|________|________| 
   less willing  same as before  more willing

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, are you now considering…
   a) the environmental impact of the clothing
      1 2 3 4 5 
      |________|________| 
      Not at all  Very much
   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture
      1 2 3 4 5 
      |________|________| 
      Not at all  Very much

Section 2. About the Clothing Exchange

4. Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?
   1 2 3 4 5 
   |________|________|________| 
   unfair  reasonable  very fair

5. Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5 
   |________|________|________| 
   not at all  most of the time  always
6. How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
   low quality  high quality

7. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
   low quality  high quality

8. How satisfied were you with the variety and quality of all the available garments contributed?
   1 2 3 4 5
   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
   Not satisfied  Content  Very satisfied

9. How would you rate the average garment quality across the 2 exchanges?
   1 2 3 4 5
   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
   low quality  high quality

10. Please indicate your willingness to participate again in this clothes exchange
    1 2 3 4 5
    _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
    not willing  very willing

11. Would you consider using this method of acquiring clothing as:
    (Please circle the appropriate answer)
    i) Your primary method
    j) In conjunction with other methods
    c) Not at all

13. Do you have any comments, observations or suggestions about the clothing exchange?

Section 3: Between exchanges

14. What proportion of the clothing obtained from the previous exchange have you been wearing?
    1 2 3 4 5
    _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
    none  half  all

15. How highly do you value the clothing obtained from the previous exchange within the context of your existing wardrobe?
    1 2 3 4 5
    _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
    Not valuable  moderately  highly valuable
16. Have you discussed the clothing exchange with anyone else? If so, please describe some of the comments and feedback you have received from other people about this.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Questionnaire 3A

My Sister’s Wardrobe Clothing Exchange
Returning participants Questionnaire Date:

Please fill in the following details about yourself…
Age: Gender: Postcode:

Section 1: Experiences and attitudes

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second hand clothing after the first exchange?

1 2 3 4 5

| I | I | I | I | I |

less willing same as before more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to purchase new clothing after the first exchange?

1 2 3 4 5

| I | I | I | I | I |

less willing same as before more willing

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, are you now considering…

a) the environmental impact of the clothing

1 2 3 4 5

| I | I | I | I | I |

Not at all Very much

b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture

1 2 3 4 5

| I | I | I | I | I |

Not at all Very much

Section 2: Between exchanges

14. What proportion of the clothing obtained from the previous exchange have you been wearing?

1 2 3 4 5

| I | I | I | I | I |

none half all
15. How highly do you value the clothing obtained from the previous exchange within the context of your existing wardrobe?

1 2 3 4 5
Not valuable moderately highly valuable

16. Have you discussed the clothing exchange with anyone else? If so, please describe some of the comments and feedback you have received from other people about this.

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Walk in Wardrobe Clothing Exchange Questionnaire

Walk in Wardrobe Clothing Exchange Questionnaire

Please fill in the following details about yourself...

Age:
Gender:
Postcode:

Section 1: Pre-existing experiences and attitudes

1. Usually, how willing are you to acquire second hand clothing?

1 2 3 4 5
never willing moderately willing always willing

2. How frequently do you acquire new clothing?

1 2 3 4 5
Once a year Every 2 months Every 2 weeks

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, do you consider...

a) the environmental impact of the clothing

1 2 3 4 5
Not at all Very much

b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture

1 2 3 4 5
Not at all Very much

Section 2. About the Clothing Exchange

4. Was the clothing exchange system easy to understand?

1 2 3 4 5
difficult very easy
5. Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?

I______I______I______I______I

unfair         reasonable         very fair

6. Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?

I______I______I______I______I

not at all        most of the time            always

7. How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?

I______I______I______I______I

low quality          high quality

8. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?

I______I______I______I______I

low quality            high quality

9. How satisfied were you with the variety and quality of all the available garments contributed?

I______I______I______I______I

Not satisfied          Content   Very satisfied

10. Please indicate your willingness to participate again in this clothes exchange

I______I______I______I______I

not willing         very willing

*don’t forget to add your details to the mailing list so you can be updated about upcoming events!

11. Would you consider using this method of acquiring clothing as:

(Please circle the appropriate answer)

k) Your primary method
l) In conjunction with other methods
m) Not at all

12. How many garments did you contribute to the clothing exchange____? How difficult was it to find garments to contribute to the exchange?

I______I______I______I______I

very difficult         not difficult              easy

13. Do you have any comments, observations or suggestions about the clothing exchange?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Walk in Wardrobe Clothing Exchange
Returning Participants Questionnaire

Date:

Please fill in the following details about yourself…

Age:
Gender:
Postcode:

Section 1: Pre-existing experiences and attitudes

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second hand clothing after participating in the clothing exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   less willing   same as before   more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to acquire new clothing after participating in the clothing exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   less willing   same as before   more willing

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, do you consider…
   a) the environmental impact of the clothing
      1 2 3 4 5
      Not at all   Very much
   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture
      1 2 3 4 5
      Not at all   Very much

Section 2. About the Clothing Exchange

4. Was the clothing exchange system easy to understand?
   1 2 3 4 5
   difficult    very easy

5. Was the clothing exchange fair to all participants?
   1 2 3 4 5
   unfair      reasonable   very fair

6. Did you feel comfortable during the clothing exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   not at all  most of the time  always

7. How would you rate the garments that you contributed to the exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   low quality    high quality
8. How would you rate the garments that you obtained from the exchange?

I______I______I______I______I
low quality            high quality

9. How satisfied were you with the variety and quality of all the available garments contributed?

I______I______I______I______I
Not satisfied        Content          Very satisfied

10. Please indicate your willingness to participate again in this clothes exchange

I______I______I______I______I
not willing           very willing

11. Would you consider using this method of acquiring clothing as:
(Please circle the appropriate answer)

n) Your primary method
o) In conjunction with other methods
p) Not at all

12. How many garments did you contribute to the clothing exchange_____? How difficult was it to find garments to contribute to the exchange?

I______I______I______I______I
very difficult     not difficult          easy

13. Do you have any comments, observations or suggestions about the clothing exchange?

Section 3: Between exchanges

14. What proportion of the clothing obtained from the previous ‘My Sister’s Wardrobe’ exchange have you been wearing?

I______I______I______I______I
none            half            all

15. How highly do you value the clothing obtained from the previous ‘My Sister’s Wardrobe’ exchange within the context of your existing wardrobe?

I______I______I______I______I
not valuable     moderately     highly valuable

16. Have you discussed the clothing exchanges with anyone else? If so, please describe some of the comments and feedback you have received from other people about this.

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Walk-in-Wardrobe Follow-up Questionnaire

Date:

Please fill in the following details about yourself…
Age:   Gender:  Postcode:

Section 1: Experiences and attitudes

1. Are you more or less willing to acquire second hand clothing after the first exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   less willing  same as before  more willing

2. Are you more or less willing to purchase new clothing after the first exchange?
   1 2 3 4 5
   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
   less willing  same as before  more willing

3. When shopping for new and/or 2nd hand clothing, are you now considering…
   a) the environmental impact of the clothing
      1 2 3 4 5
      [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
      Not at all  Very much
   b) the ethical ramifications of the clothing manufacture
      1 2 3 4 5
      [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
      Not at all  Very much

Section 2: Between exchanges

14. What proportion of the clothing obtained from the previous exchange have you been wearing?
    1 2 3 4 5
    [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
    none  half  all

15. How highly do you value the clothing obtained from the previous exchange within the context of your existing wardrobe?
    1 2 3 4 5
    [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
    Not valuable  moderately  highly valuable

16. Have you discussed the clothing exchange with anyone else? If so, please describe some of the comments and feedback you have received from other people about this.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
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10.0 Acknowledgements

Sue Thomas (Supervisor), Anthea van Kopplen (Second-supervisor), Dr Soumitri Varadarajan, Prof John Fien, Tim Dawson, Warwick Hosking and Soren Luckins

Partial editorial assistance; Alan Pears and Judy Flower