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Old Clothes, New Corridor: The Business of Second-Hand and Up-Cycled Apparel in Pakistan and China, Read Through CPEC and the Views of Young Designers in Pakistan

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***Keywords*— China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Young Designers, Second-hand, up-cycled clothing, Qualitative.**

***Abstract*— *The global trade in second-hand and up-cycled apparel has grown from an informal survival market into a recognised commercial category, and Pakistan sits at an unusual intersection of that trend: a long-established informal resale sector, a fast-growing textile-manufacturing base tied to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and a young generation of fashion and textile-design graduates entering the industry with direct opinions about where it should go next. This paper reports a qualitative study of sixteen semi-structured interviews with Pakistani respondents (aged 20-32, twelve with a background in fashion or textile design) on the business realities of buying, wearing, and designing with second-hand and up-cycled clothing, set against a comparative reading of young Chinese designers' and consumers' views on the same trade, drawn from prior published interview research. Respondents describe a viable but underdeveloped commercial category: strong latent demand, a workable price anchor of roughly a 50% discount against comparable new fast-fashion items, and two concrete business obstacles unresolved hygiene trust and a lingering association between second-hand clothing and poverty that current informal retailers largely do not address. Young designers in the sample were the most commercially optimistic group, treating up-cycling as a design discipline and a brand opportunity rather than a compromise, a stance that closely tracks how young designers in the Chinese comparator research talk about the same trade. Views on CPEC were split: roughly half of respondents expect CPEC-linked textile investment to undercut second-hand and up-cycled apparel on price, while the rest see it as a route to better machinery, recycling infrastructure, and Chinese-style resale platforms entering Pakistan. The paper closes with concrete recommendations for up-cycling entrepreneurs, brand marketers, and CPEC-linked industrial policy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Second-hand and up-cycled clothing has moved from the margins of the fashion economy toward its centre. Resale platforms, thrift-focused brands, and up-cycling studios now operate as genuine businesses in many markets, not just as informal coping mechanisms for low-income buyers(Niinimäki et al., 2020). Much of the commercial and academic attention to this shift, however, has concentrated on wealthier or more retail-mature markets(Ratcliffe, 2017). China offers one of the most closely studied cases: dedicated resale apps such as Xianyu and Zhuanzhuan, growing interest among young designers in up-cycled and reworked garments, and a formal government push including China's 2022 Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Recycling of Waste Textiles to build textile recycling into industrial policy rather than leave it informal(Zhang, 2025).

Pakistan's second-hand clothing trade looks very different on the surface but shares the same underlying commercial question: can informal, price-driven resale be turned into a designed, branded, scalable business? Markets such as Landa Bazaar have moved large volumes of used clothing for decades on pure affordability, with almost no design intervention, branding, or quality assurance layered on top. At the same time, Pakistan is in the middle of a large bilateral industrial programme, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with direct textile-sector components, and is producing a growing cohort of fashion and textile-design graduates who are old enough to have opinions about both the informal resale trade they grew up around and the new industrial capacity CPEC is bringing online(Ismail et al., n.d.).

This paper asks three business-facing questions. First, what would it actually take commercially, not just attitudinally to convert Pakistani consumers' stated openness to second-hand and up-cycled clothing into a repeat-purchase business? Second, how do young designers in Pakistan think about up-cycling as a design and business practice, and how does that compare with what has been reported among young designers and consumers in China? Third, do Pakistani stakeholders see CPEC-linked textile investment as a threat to this emerging trade or as an infrastructure opportunity for it? The paper draws on sixteen semi-structured interviews collected by the author, read here through a straightforward commercial lens demand, price, trust, positioning, and industrial context rather than through a formal psychological model of individual decision-making(Ismail et al., n.d.; Masood & Bilal, 2024).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 From informal resale to a designed business category

Fast fashion's environmental and labour costs are well documented water- and pesticide-intensive cotton cultivation, polluting dyeing and finishing processes, and a sharp rise in discarded textile volume (Niinimäki et al., 2020)and these costs have pushed resale and up-cycling from a niche interest into a mainstream commercial response. Up-cycling, specifically, means redesigning discarded garments into new, higher-value pieces, distinct from recycling (breaking material down to raw fibre) or plain resale of used clothing without design intervention(McQuillan, 2021). This distinction is commercially important: plain resale competes almost entirely on price, whereas up-cycling can compete on design and brand as well, which is a materially different business model with different margins and different customers(Zavagno, 2021).

2.2 CPEC and Pakistan's textile-industrial context

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a large bilateral programme of infrastructure, energy, and industrial investment that includes textile-sector components(McCartney, 2021). The existing literature on sustainable and second-hand fashion consumption does not address how a bilateral industrial investment programme of this scale interacts with a grassroots resale and up-cycling trade whether new industrial capacity for cheap, new garments crowds out the price advantage that currently drives second-hand purchasing, or whether the same investment could instead fund the machinery, recycling infrastructure, and logistics that an up-cycling business needs to scale(Minney, 2011). This is a live commercial question for Pakistani textile entrepreneurs and policymakers alike, and it has not, to the author's knowledge, been studied directly through consumer- and designer-facing interviews(Aslam, 2022).

2.3 Young designers as a market signal: China and Pakistan

Young designers are a useful lens on this trade because they sit on both sides of it as consumers who form opinions about second-hand clothing, and as potential future suppliers who could design and brand it(Sihvonen & Turunen, 2016). Prior qualitative interview research with thirty young Chinese women, split into 18-25 and 26-39 age cohorts, found broadly positive engagement with sustainable and reworked fashion, with younger respondents especially attentive to product information, styling, and hygiene, and design-literate respondents in particular treating up-cycled pieces as an aesthetic and brand opportunity rather than a fallback purchase(FA, n.d.). Named Chinese resale platforms Xianyu and Zhuanzhuan came up repeatedly in that research as the retail infrastructure young Chinese designers and consumers already use(Zhang, 2025). Pakistan's equivalent designer cohort has no comparable branded platform to work with; its raw material comes largely through informal markets such as Landa Bazaar and second-hand-focused Instagram pages, which is itself a business gap this paper investigates directly(Ismail et al., n.d.).

2.4 Practical barriers to converting interest into sales

Across the wider commercial literature on sustainable and second-hand fashion, five recurring barriers to purchase have been identified: low product awareness, a perception of premium pricing, a sense that designs do not meet mainstream aesthetic standards, poor access to purchasing channels, and distrust of sustainability claims made by sellers(Barroso et al., 2021). Green-purchase research more broadly finds that price, convenience of purchasing channel, and uncertainty about product quality jointly determine whether positive attitudes convert into an actual sale(Sharma et al., 2022). A barrier specific to second-hand and up-cycled clothing, distinct from these general ones, is hygiene concern and the social risk of being seen in visibly pre-owned clothing a barrier that, this paper finds, current Pakistani resellers do almost nothing to actively address, despite it being commercially fixable(Adnan et al., 2026). A well-documented gap between stated purchase intention and completed purchase, driven by exactly this kind of unaddressed friction, is a standard finding in this literature and is treated here as a business problem to be solved rather than a fixed feature of consumer psychology(Pandit et al., 2019).

2.5 Research gap

Existing research establishes the environmental case for second-hand and up-cycled apparel, documents general purchase barriers, and in the Chinese case shows what a comparatively mature, platform-based resale trade looks like from the perspective of young designers and consumers. What is missing is a business-facing account of Pakistan's second-hand apparel trade: whether current informal retail can be turned into a designed, branded, trusted commercial category; how young Pakistani designers, specifically, think about that opportunity; and how CPEC-linked industrial investment is expected to help or hurt that trajectory. This paper addresses that gap directly(Ismail et al., n.d.; Masood & Bilal, 2024).

III. METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory qualitative study using a semi-structured, self-administered written questionnaire covering six areas: demographics, buying habits, awareness of the resale and up-cycling trade, willingness to buy, perceptions of how the trade is viewed socially, and expectations about CPEC. Sixteen respondents completed the questionnaire between November and December 2025. The sample is a convenience sample drawn substantially from fashion- and textile-design students and young professionals in Punjab and Sindh, which should be borne in mind when interpreting how far these findings generalise.

Ten of the sixteen respondents were male and six were female; ages ranged from 20 to 32, with the majority clustered between 24 and 26. Twelve of the sixteen respondents reported a background in fashion or textile design, as students, designers, or related professionals positioning this sample as commercially engaged early adopters and prospective suppliers rather than a representative cross-section of the general Pakistani consumer market.

Table 1: Demographic information

#	Name	Age	Gender	Education / Occupation	Monthly Income	Design Background
1	Hussain	26	Male	BS Environmental Science, Student	15–25k PKR	No
2	Saad	25	Male	Marketing	35–40k PKR	Yes
3	Umair	25	Male	Fashion student	30–40k PKR	Yes
4	Ali	25	Male	Fashion student	20–25k PKR	Yes
5	Hammad	25	Male	Fashion Designer	100k PKR	Yes
6	Uzair	25	Male	Fashion Designer	15–20k PKR	Yes
7	Taimoor	25	Male	Fashion & Design student	20–25k PKR	Yes
8	Fiza Shahid	24	Female	B.Des Textile & Fashion	15–20k PKR	Yes
9	Iqra	25	Female	Textile Designer	15–20k PKR	Yes
10	Mahnoor	25	Female	Bachelor's, Homemaker	15–20k PKR	Not specified
11	Mughees	25	Male	Textile Designer	30k PKR	Yes
12	Nida A	24	Female	B.Des Fashion Designer	90k PKR	Yes
13	Nida B	32	Female	Fashion Blogger, Retail Consultant	120k PKR	No

14	Imran	20	Male	Fashion & Textile designer	120k PKR	Yes
15	Arhum	20	Male	Designer and Makeup Artist	120k PKR	Yes
16	Warda	25	Female	Apparel Designer	20–25k PKR	Not specified

Responses were read in full and organised thematically around five business-relevant categories: market perception and demand, price and value, trust and quality (chiefly hygiene), social and brand positioning, and CPEC-linked industrial context, with a further comparative thread pulled out specifically for the twelve design-background respondents. Given the small sample, findings are reported thematically with illustrative quotations rather than through formal statistical analysis; numeric self-ratings (awareness 1-10, likelihood-to-buy 1-10, price-discount threshold) are summarised descriptively.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Market perception: a real but underdeveloped category

Fourteen of the sixteen respondents described second-hand and up-cycled clothing as a legitimate, sensible thing to buy, most often citing reduced waste and lower cost together rather than as separate reasons. Iqra summarised the majority view directly: "Second hand clothes are obviously environmentally friendly and it is responsible." Affordability was the second most cited advantage, particularly among student respondents with limited disposable income (Hussain, Taimoor, Umair). A distinctly commercial, brand-facing theme also recurred: several respondents talked about up-cycled pieces as a source of individual style rather than a compromise purchase. Ali, a 25-year-old fashion student, rated his likelihood of buying up-cycled fashion 10 out of 10 and described the aesthetic as carrying an "Instagram/TikTok aesthetic, unique style" language that describes a brand position, not just a personal habit.

4.2 Awareness and the shape of the current trade

Self-rated awareness of fast fashion's environmental impact ranged from 3/10 (Hammad) to 10/10 (Nida-A), with a sample mean of approximately 6.8/10. Several design-background respondents could clearly separate up-cycling from plain resale "up-cycling means taking old clothes and making them new and stylish again," in Fiza's words while non-design respondents used the two terms more or less interchangeably, which itself is a useful business finding: the market has not yet taught general consumers that up-cycled and secondhand are different products worth different prices.

Named channels for buying secondhand or up-cycled clothing clustered around a small, repeated set: Landa Bazaar and Sunday/Friday markets, OLX, and Instagram thrift pages in Pakistan; Xianyu and Zhuanzhuan were the Chinese platforms most frequently named, cited by respondents who had looked into the Chinese market while completing the questionnaire. None of the Pakistani channels named offer anything resembling the seller ratings, condition grading, or return policies that make Xianyu and Zhuanzhuan function as trusted platforms rather than just listings a concrete, fixable gap between the two markets.

4.3 Price: a workable discount anchor

Self-rated likelihood of deliberately buying up-cycled or second-hand clothing in the next twelve months ranged widely, from 1-2/10 (Nida-A, despite strong environmental awareness) to 10/10 (Ali, Uzair), with a mean of roughly 7/10 among respondents who gave a numeric answer. The discount needed to convert interest into an actual purchase clustered strongly around 50% cheaper than a comparable new fast-fashion item, with a minority requiring 70% (Hammad, Umair) and a smaller minority willing to pay close to full price for strong design (Uzair: "Price discount: not necessary; I'd pay full price"). A near-unanimous finding was that a well-designed up-cycled brand replicating the look of a respondent's favourite fast-fashion label would be bought "regularly" or "definitely" suggesting that, commercially, design parity with mainstream fast fashion is at least as strong a lever as price alone.

Section	Theme	Key Finding	Supporting Evidence	Business Implication
4.1	Market perception	14/16 respondents view second-hand/up-cycled clothing as legitimate; waste reduction + affordability are top reasons, but a brand/style motivation also recurs	Iqra: "obviously environmentally friendly and it is responsible"; Ali (10/10 likelihood):	Demand exists beyond a purely value-driven segment room for an aspirational/style-led brand, not just a budget category

			"Instagram/TikTok aesthetic, unique style"	
4.2	Awareness & trade shape	Awareness ranges 3–10/10 (mean ~6.8); design-background respondents distinguish up-cycling from plain resale, others conflate them	Fiza: "up-cycling means taking old clothes and making them new and stylish again"	Market hasn’t taught consumers that up-cycled resale an education/positioning gap a brand can capture by making the distinction explicit
4.3	Price	Purchase likelihood ranges 1–10/10 (mean ~7); ~50% discount is the dominant threshold; some need 70%, a few would pay full price for strong design	Uzair: "Price discount: not necessary; I’d pay full price"; near-unanimous "would buy regularly" for brand-parity design	Design quality can substitute for discount depth pricing strategy shouldn’t rely on discount alone
4.4	Trust & quality (hygiene)	Hygiene and inconsistent sizing/quality are the most-cited barriers; deep cleaning + redesign resolves it for most (not all)	Nida-A: fear "someone who wore it before could be allergenic or unclean"	Barrier is operational, not structural solvable via visible cleaning/QC process rather than new retail infrastructure
4.5	Social/brand positioning	Perception splits between "eco-conscious/trendy" (design-background, women) and "poor/low-status" (general consumers)	Hammad: "Society thinks second-hand means poor"; Mugheez: "no one knows what u are wearing belongs from... it depends on your styling"	Positioning/styling is the lever to shift general consumers from "poor" framing to the "trendy" framing design-background respondents already hold
4.6	Designers: Pakistan vs. China	Design-background respondents are most commercially confident (highest buy-intent, clearest category distinction); Pakistan’s core gap vs. China is infrastructure, not attitude	Ali & Uzair both 10/10 likelihood; cf. Ma, Yang & Ketkaew (2024) on Chinese designers using Xianyu	Pakistani designers build trust "from nothing" via informal channels (Instagram) a platform/infrastructure gap, not a talent or attitude gap
4.7	CPEC outlook	Respondents split: CPEC could erode second-hand’s price advantage (cheaper new garments) or help via tech transfer/recycling infrastructure; ~25% say outcome is policy-dependent	Mahnoor: CPEC "can support sustainable fashion if Pakistan invests in recycling and eco-friendly production"	CPEC’s net effect on this trade is not fixed outcome hinges on whether industrial policy explicitly channels capacity toward recycling/up-cycling rather than only new production

4.4 Trust and quality: hygiene as a solvable operations problem

Hygiene concern "the fear that someone who wore it before could be allergenic or unclean," in Nida-A's words and inconsistent sizing or quality were the two disadvantages that recurred across nearly every transcript. Nearly all respondents agreed that professional deep cleaning and redesign resolves the hygiene concern; a small minority (Hammad, Umair) said they would remain uncomfortable regardless of treatment. Read commercially, this is good news: the dominant purchase barrier in this sample is not structural (as channel access is in more built-out resale markets) but operational, and operational problems are the kind a business can solve with a visible cleaning and quality-control process rather than needing to build new retail infrastructure from scratch.

4.5 Social and brand positioning

Responses on how secondhand and up-cycled clothing is currently viewed in Pakistani society split into two camps: an "eco-conscious trendy" framing, more common among design-background respondents and women in this sample, and a "low-status" framing, more common among general-consumer respondents (Hammad: "Society thinks second-hand means poor"; Umair gave a similar answer). Most respondents nonetheless felt that well-made up-cycled pieces can be worn well beyond casual settings into office, party, and even semi-formal or wedding contexts provided styling is strong, as Mugheez put it: "no one knows what u are wearing belongs from... it depends on your styling." Commercially, this points to positioning as the lever available to move a general-population buyer out of the "poor" framing and into the "trendy" one the framing that design-background respondents already hold spontaneously.

4.6 Young designers: Pakistan and China compared

The twelve design-background respondents in this sample were consistently the most commercially confident group: the highest self-rated likelihood to buy (Ali and Uzair both 10/10), the clearest grasp of up-cycling as a distinct, higher-value product category rather than plain resale (Fiza), and the strongest instinct to treat cleaning and quality control as marketable features rather than hidden costs. This closely mirrors what has been reported among young Chinese designers and design-literate consumers, who likewise treat reworked and up-cycled pieces as a design statement and, increasingly, a viable small-brand opportunity supported by platforms such as Xianyu (Ma, Yang, and Ketkaew, 2024). The clearest difference is infrastructure rather than attitude: young Chinese designers can plug into an existing resale platform with built-in trust signals, while young Pakistani designers in this sample described building trust and reputation from nothing, one buyer at a time, through informal channels such as Instagram thrift pages a materially harder starting position for turning design talent into a scalable business.

4.7 CPEC and the future of the trade

Respondents were split on whether CPEC will help or hurt this trade. The dominant concern among the "reduce" camp is straightforward: if CPEC-linked textile investment lowers the price of new, mass-produced garments, the price advantage that currently drives second-hand and up-cycled purchases could shrink. The "increase opportunity" camp instead emphasised technology transfer, access to better machinery, and the possibility that Chinese resale-platform models (Xianyu-style) or recycling infrastructure could be introduced into Pakistan alongside industrial investment. A middle position, held by roughly a quarter of respondents, argued that the outcome depends on whether policy explicitly channels new industrial capacity toward recycling-oriented production -- echoing Mahnoor's assessment that CPEC "can support sustainable fashion if Pakistan invests in recycling and eco-friendly production."

V. DISCUSSION: A COMPARATIVE BUSINESS READING

These findings describe a Pakistani second-hand and up-cycled apparel trade that already has demand and a workable price anchor, but is missing the trust infrastructure and design-forward branding that let China's equivalent trade function as an actual retail category rather than just a discount channel.

5.1 Where Pakistan and China converge

Both samples converge on a similar price signal a discount of roughly 50% relative to comparable new items despite very different absolute price levels in the two economies, suggesting this is closer to a stable "fair value" heuristic for pre-owned goods than a purely income-driven number. Both samples also show young designers acting as the most commercially bullish segment, already treating up-cycled and reworked pieces as a design and brand opportunity rather than a fallback purchase(Latif & Khan, 2025).

5.2 Where they diverge: trust infrastructure

The Chinese comparator research points to purchasing-channel difficulty and product-information trust as the main friction for consumers, addressed in large part by dedicated platforms such as Xianyu and Zhuanzhuan that supply ratings, condition grading, and seller history(Zhang, 2025). In this Pakistani sample, channel access barely came up; hygiene trust in the specific garment did, repeatedly and unprompted. That is a narrower, more solvable problem it does not require building new retail infrastructure, only a visible, communicated cleaning and quality standard but almost no current Pakistani reseller, formal or informal, is doing this yet. That gap is this trade's single clearest near-term business opportunity(Ismail et al., n.d.; Sihvonen & Turunen, 2016).

5.3 Positioning as the second lever

The diffuse "second-hand equals poor" association reported by general-consumer respondents (Hammad, Umair) is not, in this sample, driven by any specific person objecting it is a broad social read that design-background respondents in the same sample simply do not share. That gap between two groups exposed to the same product category, rather than a fixed cultural fact, is what makes positioning a workable business lever: design-literate early adopters already hold the more commercially useful frame, and can plausibly be used, deliberately, to shift how the wider market reads the category.

5.4 CPEC as an unresolved variable

Unlike price and trust, the CPEC question in this sample was genuinely unresolved rather than converging on a shared view a narrow majority expects cheaper new garments to erode second-hand demand, a substantial minority expects industrial investment to bring in exactly the infrastructure (machinery, recycling capacity, platform models) this trade currently lacks. Both outcomes are plausible from the same underlying investment; which one happens depends on decisions specifically, whether recycling and circular-production capacity is deliberately included in CPEC-linked textile planning that have not yet been made(Masood & Bilal, 2024; McCartney, 2021).

VI. BUSINESS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings above translate into concrete, business-facing recommendations for four groups: up-cycling entrepreneurs and designers, marketers, CPEC-linked industrial policymakers, and future researchers.

6.1 For up-cycling entrepreneurs and designers

- Design for aesthetic parity with mainstream fast fashion first, and treat sustainability messaging as a secondary, supporting argument the single strongest lever for conversion in this sample was visual resemblance to a respondent's favourite existing fast-fashion brand, not price or environmental framing alone.
- Build a visible, marketable hygiene and quality-control process a stated deep-cleaning and redesign protocol, communicated at the point of sale since this is the one concrete barrier this sample identified as fully solvable, and no current informal seller is doing it.
- Anchor entry-level pricing around a 50% discount against comparable new items, with a smaller premium tier for design-literate buyers (like Uzair) willing to pay close to full price for strong, original design work.
- Expand sizing and selection depth where feasible; limited sizing was a secondary but recurring complaint (Fiza, Nida-B) that sits alongside the larger trust and positioning barriers.

6.2 For marketing and brand positioning

- Reframe status stigma directly rather than avoiding it because the "second-hand equals poor" read operates diffusely across society rather than through people a buyer knows personally, reassuring an individual buyer's immediate circle will not be enough; the messaging needs to shift the wider social script.
- Recruit young designers as visible commercial advocates, since this group already holds the more favourable, design-forward framing spontaneously and can plausibly transfer that framing to less design-literate buyers.
- Lead marketing with combined affordability-and-design messaging rather than environmental messaging alone, since Pakistani respondents' positive views already fuse these motives together rather than treating them separately.

6.3 For CPEC-linked industrial and trade policy

- Treat the CPEC trade-off identified here as a deliberate policy choice, not an automatic outcome new textile-manufacturing capacity could either undercut second-hand and up-cycled apparel on price, or supply the machinery and recycling infrastructure this trade currently lacks.
- Earmark a defined share of CPEC-linked textile investment for recycling and circular-production infrastructure specifically, following the logic several respondents (notably Mahnoor) articulated themselves.
- Support formalisation of existing informal resale markets (Landa Bazaar and similar) quality and hygiene standards layered onto markets that already have strong reach and accessibility is a lower-cost path than building new retail infrastructure from scratch, and mirrors the platform-based trust layer that already exists in China's resale trade.

6.4 For future researchers

- Test the roughly 50% discount threshold and the status-stigma finding on a larger, demographically balanced sample to establish whether they hold beyond this design-literate convenience sample.
- Study the young-designer segment in Pakistan and China directly and comparatively as both consumers and prospective suppliers since this paper's clearest finding is that attitude gaps between the two countries are smaller than infrastructure gaps.

VII. LIMITATIONS

- **Sample size and generalizability**: The small respondent pool limits statistical generalisability; future work could involve a larger, more diverse sample to validate patterns and reduce the influence of individual outlier responses.

- **Data-collection method:** The self-administered, written format prevented real-time clarification of ambiguous answers and did not capture tone or hesitation, and allowed respondents time to edit responses before submission. Future studies could use interviews or moderated sessions to address this.
- **Coding and analytic rigor**: Coding was done manually by a single researcher without independent verification. Future studies could incorporate multiple coders and inter-rater reliability checks to strengthen analytic robustness.
- **Nature of the quantitative data**: Numeric ratings were used descriptively rather than being subjected to formal statistical testing, given the qualitative design and small sample. A larger-scale follow-up could support more rigorous quantitative analysis.
- **Stated vs. actual behavior**: The study captures stated expectations and intentions rather than observed outcomes or actual purchasing behaviour. Longitudinal or behavioural tracking in future research could help validate whether stated intentions translate into real-world outcomes.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to answer three business-facing questions: what it would take to convert Pakistani consumers' stated openness into repeat purchases of second-hand and up-cycled apparel, how young designers in Pakistan think about that trade compared with their counterparts in China, and how CPEC is expected to shape its future. On the first question, the evidence points to a trade with real demand and a workable price anchor roughly a 50% discount against comparable new items that is currently held back less by lack of interest than by two solvable gaps: unresolved hygiene trust and a social positioning problem that current sellers do little to address.

On the second question, young designers in this sample were consistently the most commercially confident group, already treating up-cycled clothing as a design and brand opportunity in a way that closely mirrors how young designers in China have been found to approach the same category. The clearest difference between the two countries is not attitude but infrastructure: Chinese designers can build on existing resale platforms with built-in trust signals, while Pakistani designers described building trust from nothing, one buyer at a time.

On the third question, CPEC remains a genuinely unresolved variable rather than a settled threat or opportunity. Whether CPEC-linked textile investment ultimately undercuts this trade on price or supplies it with the machinery, recycling capacity, and platform models it currently lacks depends on deliberate policy choices that, as of this study, have not yet been made. For entrepreneurs, marketers, and policymakers looking to grow Pakistan's second-hand and up-cycled apparel sector, the path forward suggested by this data is not to copy China's model directly, but to build the two things Pakistan's trade is missing that China's already has visible trust infrastructure and design-forward positioning while pushing CPEC-linked industrial planning to treat recycling and circular textile production as a deliberate inclusion rather than an afterthought.

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