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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Consumers' textile disposal practices and their perceived value in the circular economy: A platform focused ethnography approach

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Abstract

This study builds on the Circular Economy paradigm which recognises consumers as key stakeholders in extending textiles' lifespan. The paper unfolds how consumers engage in the textile disposal practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell. In doing so, consumers create a *value-in-disposition*, here conceptualised as the enhanced value that consumers generate through the process of transforming depleted textiles into new meaningful ones. This research adopts a multimethod platform focused ethnography that combines textual, visual and audio data, generated in the domestic environment, which facilitates contextual and situational insights. The findings highlight that *value-in-disposition* goes far beyond the utilitarian aspects (e.g. economic or functional) and includes social, aesthetic, emotional and moral value dimensions, which contribute in building an overarching environmental value. The study shows that consumer disposal practices not only reduce waste but also favour consumer empowerment through the transformation of unused/depleted resources into new value. Finally, the article provides specific managerial insights on the design of textile products and services to encourage consumer engagement in reuse, repair, donation, and resell practices, supporting companies in the Circular Economy uptake.

KEYWORDS
circular economy, consumer empowerment, platform focused ethnography, textile disposal practices, value-in-disposition

1 | INTRODUCTION

To keep or not to keep is a life-or-death matter when we address textiles' lifespan, and this is a question that presents a serious environmental challenge. Currently, across Europe, it is estimated that consumers dispose between 80% and 85% of their unwanted textiles between regular household waste, resulting in incineration or landfilling (EPRS, 2019). Overall, the Textile & Clothing industry, which includes both home and fashion textiles, is the fourth worst-ranked category for the use of primary raw materials and water—after food, housing and transport—and fifth for GHG emissions (Vercalsteren et al., 2019). To tackle these challenges, the European Union (EU) has included textiles as one of the priority sectors of the 'Circular Economy Action Plan', a roadmap of actions aiming to 'close the loop' of products' life cycles through resource-efficient processes, recycling and reuse practices. Within this strategic plan, the EU

Abbreviations: EU, European Union; CE, Circular Economy; GHG, greenhouse gases.

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recognises consumers as key actors (European Commission, 2020) as they can support or hinder the Circular Economy (CE) uptake through their purchasing, use and disposal choices (Lehner et al., 2020).

Despite consumers determine textiles' lifespan by deciding when, where, and how they dispose of them, most of the academic research on textiles predominantly focuses on the company's perspective, exploring drivers, barriers or enablers of circular practices' adoption (Ki et al., 2020; Stewart & Niero, 2018; Testa et al., 2020). Conversely, the marketing and consumer literature regarding the end stages of consumption are notably undertheorized (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2019; De Coverly et al., 2008; Parsons & Maclaran, 2009; Sarigöllü et al., 2021). Since the limited understanding of consumers' perspective is a pivotal reason for the failure to actually close the loop and to scale institutional strategies (Elf et al., 2022; Sarigöllü et al., 2021; Testa et al., 2020), this study explores the consumers' textile disposal practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell which have recently been suggested to be particularly beneficial in tackling the textile waste challenge (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). Such behaviours positively affect the lifespan of textiles, keeping their value in cycle and getting the most out of textile waste (Elf et al., 2022; Niinimäki et al., 2020).

To comprehend the sensemaking process consumers produce in relation to textile disposal practices, this paper adopts and unpacks the construct of *value-in-disposition* (Türe, 2014), which is the reflective way consumers use disposition processes to enhance the value obtained from their possessions. Following Gummerus (2013), this study explains whether consumer textile disposal practices are interpreted as valuable, and if so, in which terms.

In order to explore these overlooked aspects of consumer behavior that occur in domestic contexts, we conducted a platform focused ethnography that allows access to participants' private environments producing contextual and situational insights. The study reveals that participants entrust a relevant role to the textile disposal practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell going beyond their utilitarian benefits, which are typically associated with perceived usefulness and convenience.

This paper makes two main contributions to the theoretical conversation regarding consumers' role in textile disposal processes.

1. On the one hand, the findings advance knowledge of the CE through the lens of consumers (Niinimäki et al., 2020), uncovering that consumers' enactment of textile disposal practices results in consumer empowerment. Instead of investigating consumers in reaction to companies' circular initiatives (Elf et al., 2022; Ki et al., 2021; Sarigöllü et al., 2021), this study conceptualizes that consumers are empowered stakeholders who are able to independently orchestrate the practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell, thereby taking agency over textiles' lifespan and, for this reason, their role is crucial to fully adopt a CE paradigm. The study explains how consumer empowerment manifests uniquely across the four investigated practices delineated in the paper. Moreover, the paper unveils a number of conflicting issues that hinder consumers' engagement in textile disposal practices: (a) consumer's lack of time, patience and energy; (b) consumer's lack of skills (imagination, know-how); (c) consumer's lack of information; and (d) consumer's idleness eased by the fast-fashion logic.
2. On the other hand, the study contributes to consumer value theory (Gordon et al., 2018; Gummerus, 2013), by empirically developing the concept of *value-in-disposition* initially formalised by Türe (2014) and applying it to the Textile & Clothing industry. Within the CE paradigm, we introduce an innovative value taxonomy encompassing the interactive dimensions of *value-in-disposition*. The study explains the interplay between functional, social, emotional, aesthetic and moral values, which collectively contribute to the establishment of an overarching consumer 'environmental' value. As a result, this paper deviates from the well-established technical interpretation offered by the CE paradigm (e.g. Kirchherr et al., 2017) by conceptualizing *value-in-disposition* as the enhanced value that consumers generate through the process of transforming depleted resources into new meaningful ones.

The article is structured as follows: first, a CE framework is outlined and consumer textile disposal practices in this context are canvassed. Next, we explain why a platform focused ethnography is a suitable and effective method for this research. Subsequently, we discuss the sensemaking processes participants attribute to the textile disposal practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell in terms of their value attribution. Finally, we provide a set of marketing actions that facilitate the practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell. These actions offer support to both companies in devising new products and services (e.g. designing products easy to disassemble or providing online courses that enhance consumers' repair skills) and policymakers in regulating both corporate and consumer disposal behaviours (e.g. increasing textiles' traceability or mapping out the location of textiles charity bins).

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Consumers' textile disposal practices in the CE

The CE is gaining momentum worldwide as a way to shift from a linear 'take-make-dispose' productive model, towards a regenerative and restorative one by (a) designing out waste and pollution, (b) keeping products and materials in use and (c) regenerating natural systems (MacArthur et al., 2015).

By embracing this direction, the current study addresses the overarching proposition of Niinimäki et al. (2020), who advocate for the necessity of altering consumer behavior through a reduction in textile purchases and an increase in the longevity of garments. Indeed, to effectively engage with the CE principles and ensure that products and materials are kept in use, a greater effort to consider behavioural aspects is imperative. Disregarding these aspects limits circular strategies' effective implementation (Elf et al., 2022; Sarigöllü et al., 2021). In addition to an effective CE implementation, Elf et al. (2022) support the critical importance of an active and extended engagement with consumers, in the form of communication and joint activities, for small

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fashion companies striving to find effective CE solutions that transcend conventional technology-focused approaches.

Nevertheless, despite the recognition of consumers' behavioural significance in the CE domain, the prevailing literature predominantly frames consumers as subjects who are examined in reaction to corporates' CE initiatives. Academic investigations primarily concentrate on consumer's perceptions, expectations and attitudes agreeing on the general idea that consumers' interest and appreciation of CE offerings is growing (e.g. Vehmas et al., 2018). Taking a step beyond consumers' perceptions and attitudes, Ki et al. (2021), for instance, demonstrate that corporate moral responsibility influences consumers' attitudes and intentions to engage with corporations' circular fashion offerings, showing that consumers themselves feel a moral responsibility in creating a circular fashion.

Closer to the scope of this study which centres on consumer disposal practices, Sarigöllü et al. (2021) explore the factors that influence the redistribution of products—namely sunglasses and mobile phones—and investigate the profiles of consumers who engage in disposal behaviours. The authors reveal that when both product quality and product self-image congruence coexist, but consumers are unable to entirely exhaust the product's value through usage, they are more likely to consider redistributing it to others. This allows others to partake in fully exhausting the residual value of the product.

To grasp how value can be effectively maintained or even enhanced within the system, achieved by either retaining it or by redistributing it to others, we turn to a set of practices delineated by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2021). Their overview sheds light on the potential exhibited by alternative business models that have significantly grown in recent years. Among the various business models taken into account, this study specifically focuses on four primary textile disposal practices that are prevalent within domestic environments: reuse, repair, donate and resell. While repair and reuse exhaust the value of the textile within the inner person's cycle, the practices of donation and reselling involve redistributing the textile to others and occur within the consumers' outer cycle.

Focusing on the most significant academic contributions concerning consumer behaviours in textiles disposal through the lens of consumer research, Jacoby et al. (1977) associate disposition behaviour with consumers' actions once they decide to cease using a still-usable product. Building upon this seminal definition, Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2019) extend its application to the domain of clothing, Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2019) apply this seminal definition, to the context of clothing, identifying various clothing disposal behaviours, including giving it away, donating it, reusing it, selling it, storing it, lending it or discarding it. The limited studies on the main values that underlie textile disposal behaviours mainly refer to clothing and do not include home textiles (Lehner et al., 2020) and generally focus on a single practice. Finally, research is heavily skewed toward survey methods, indicating a need for other research designs, including multimethod research and triangulation (Laitala, 2014).

This study intends to give an overarching account of common disposal practices consumers daily engage with, focusing on the four practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell. Each of the examined practices represents compelling cases against the always more common behaviour of discarding a textile product.

Addressing the practice of reuse, which involves reorienting a product from the originally intended purpose, Cruz-Cárdenas et al. (2019) identify personal, psychological and physical environmental factors as significant predictors of consumers' tendency to reuse clothing. Taking a more granular approach, Robson et al. (2019) suggest that reuse can be driven by consumers' motivation to solve specific problems or for the sake of creative exploration.

Shifting the focus to the domain of repair practices, Scott and Weaver (2018) reveal that replacement costs, attachment to a product, stewardship and innovativeness play a significant role in consumers' repair propensity. According to Niinimäki and Hassi (2011), repairing or product modification services provided by sellers can delay the psychological obsolescence perceived by customers, while Hirscher et al. (2018) supported consumers' active participation in redesign or repair garments to increase clothes' emotional value perceptions. Conversely, consumers seem to be unmotivated to repair clothes due to a lack of skill or time and are attracted by low-cost replacements (Chris & Elyse, 2013). Finally, clear trends related to age were observed for all forms of clothing repair. Older consumers are more inclined to engage in self-repair and opt for professional repair services for their garments (Armstrong et al., 2015), while the youngest consumers (18–24 years) tend to rely on friends or family members to repair their clothing (McQueen et al., 2023).

Regarding donation practices, giving clothing to charities and to family and friends is widely acknowledged by consumer studies (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Norum, 2015; Paço et al., 2021) as the most commonly practised method of sustainable clothing disposal. Consumers engage in clothing donation not solely driven by the relational benefits of strengthening the ties with the receivers of disposed clothing (Cruz-Cárdenas & del Val Núñez, 2016) or by altruistic motivations, such as a reluctance to waste usable garments, a desire to assist those in need and, to a lesser extent, environmental concerns (Laitala, 2014), allowing the feeling of doing something morally right. Limited closet space and a desire for novelty also prompt textile donations (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009).

Concluding with respect to the selling practice, it was predominantly motivated by economic considerations, along with the desire to avoid the wastage of usable items (Joung & Park-Poaps, 2013; Shim, 1995). According to a study by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2021), virtual marketplaces such as Depop or Vinted are likely to grow from 3.5% to 23% of the global fashion market share by 2030. Nevertheless, Paço et al. (2021) assert that, despite this trend, consumers still prefer to give/donate old/not-used clothes rather than sell them.

Aside from the motivations behind the specific practices, an understanding of the meanings and values members bring into the practices is undertheorized.

2.2 | Value and disposal practices

While an extensive review of the value literature is beyond the scope of this article, the following synthesis elucidates the notion of value in

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marketing research and underscores the reasons why the value construct is relevant for this study.

In alignment with the interpretative approach of this paper, it is crucial to understand that the notion that value, rather than being intrinsic to goods, is shaped by how consumers perceive and use objects (Parsons, 2008). This perspective emphasises that consumer value is a relative rather than an absolute concept, diverging from the well-established technical interpretation offered by the CE paradigm (e.g. Kirchherr et al., 2017) wherein consumer value primarily arises from the responsible and efficient use of resources, reducing wastes and therefore fostering a more cyclical and less linear approach to consumption. Conversely, the Service-Dominant logic states that value is uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (Vargo et al., 2008).

Marketing researchers have identified two main processes through which consumers derive value from their possessions. *Value-in-exchange* frames value as embedded in objects and realised during acquisition (Bagozzi, 1975). Extending the notion of *value-in-exchange* to the disposition phase of consumption, consumers might, for instance, assess the value of purchasing a new garment by performing a cost–benefit evaluation, comparing the purchase cost with the repair savings of an old one. *Value-in-use* portrays value as interactively created through consumers' usage (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), focusing on the actual consumption experience. This encompasses the experiential value that consumers not only perceive but also actively generate. For instance, within the context of disposition, they may experience the value of wearing a garment they personally repaired.

Taking a step forward toward the purpose and context of this research, the notion of *value-in-behaviour* appears relevant. According to Gordon et al. (2018), while *value-in-exchange* and *value-in-use* perspectives can help to understand the perceived value about exchanging and using goods and services, they fall short in capturing the perceived value that is realised through these behaviours, which is the focus of this study. As such *value-in-behaviour* has been defined as the value consumers associate with the performance of behaviours (Gordon et al., 2018), which could be interpreted within the context of disposition as the value, in terms of performance, consumers attribute to the act that involves the transformation of a specific textile.

Finally, this study incorporates the notion of *value-in-disposition*, which, according to Türe (2014, p. 57), is created well beyond objects' initial acquisition, or during use, and is defined as: 'the reflective ways consumers use disposition processes and prospects to enhance the value obtained from their possessions'. As such, the central tenet of this research is that consumers may perceive value not only in exchanging for (*value-in-exchange*) or using and experiencing (*value-in-use*) textiles but also in performing disposal behaviours as elaborated by Gordon et al. (2018) and Türe (2014). Türe's study (2014) elucidates the ways consumers transfer and create value through disposition by forming new relations and maintaining and strengthening their social connections around discarded objects. The study shows how, through disposition, consumers move the object into new contexts, transferring the object's perceived value into its next life, even fostering object attachment. This form of value becomes especially pertinent when advocating for behaviours that prolong the lifespan of textiles. Embracing the CE paradigm within the Textile & Clothing sector entails recognizing that objects considered for disposal still encapsulate transferable value. Applying Türe's study (2014) to this specific sector, value is not only accumulated or residual; it is also potential and imagined. Within the context of consumer textile disposition, *value-in-disposition* can be exemplified by how consumers create new value by donating a textile to someone who might not have access to it otherwise.

In addition to considering different value theory perspectives, to understand how consumers assess *value-in-disposition* and how consumers determine *value-in-disposition* (Gummerus, 2013), the dimensions of value come into our help. The research stream of value as an experience outcome reflects the versatility of the value experiences in consumptions and it can support this study by acknowledging that value is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual and meaning-laden. Holbrook (1999) defines, in fact, consumer value as the interactive, experiential and subjective relation with goods and identifies its dimensions in efficiency, spirituality or aesthetics. In the fashion industry context, perceived consumer value is defined as the consumer's general assessment of a product's benefit (Şener et al., 2019), evaluated through the four dimensions of quality value, price value, emotional value and social value. Central to the focus of this study is the dimension of ecological value, which, despite not being explicitly adopted in the fashion industry, refers to the utility for the environment and ecological issues that the consumer perceives from consumption (Zauner et al., 2015).

In sum, textiles reuse, repair, donate and resell are practices whereby most commonly consumers create value independently from companies and often occur in a private/domestic context where consumers perform a series of practices to create added value that is retained by them. Following the discussion above, we argue that consumers' textile disposal practices are potentially a central phenomenon for consumers with important implications not only for the environment but also for consumers themselves.

Thus, the primary objective of this study is to investigate whether consumers perceive value in disposal practices within the textile context and if so, how value is determined across the practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell. This leads the formulation of the following research question:

Do consumers perceive value in textile disposal practices?

If so, considering the unique characteristics of reuse, repair, donate and resell practices in terms of consumer motivation and expected benefits, we anticipate that consumers will attribute varied meanings and values to each. This anticipation probes the following research question:

Which forms of value do consumers discern within textile disposal practices, and how do these distinctions manifest across the practices of reuse, repair, donate, and resell?

3 | THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHOD

Owing to the paucity of previous research probing consumer textile disposal's attitudes and practices and the acknowledged complexity

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of researching such a topic, this study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach. A theoretical orientation towards practice necessitates a focus on 'doings' as well as 'sayings' (Schatzki, 1996). This commands, although it seldom receives, a methodological approach that locates talk within ongoing and situated action. Therefore, a platform focused ethnography allows access to participants' private environments producing contextual and situational insights (Murthy, 2008). This is key in investigating how consumers perceive value, which is a context-specific construct (Holbrook, 1999) within the practices under investigation. Furthermore, in alignment with Sarigöllü et al. (2021), caution is imperative when interpreting results derived from consumer's subjective verbal opinions.

To obtain rich and relevant data on this underexplored phenomenon, we employed purposive sampling which allows the use of selection criteria (Yin, 2013). As such, we deliberately selected environmentally conscious participants who possessed some form of prior experience in the practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell, to uncover the sense-making participants associated with them. Participants were initially recruited through the internal university platform and then through the snowballing technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) and comprised both men and women aged between 18 and 35 years old, living in both rural and urban areas, who were responsible for managing everyday domestic waste (see table in appendix).

The digital fieldwork was conducted in Italy for 2 months, employing a dedicated platform called *Sicché* (www.sicche.com). This platform enabled participants to collectively generate diverse data in various formats, including digital diaries, sentence completion, photo-voice (where participants record their impressions over a photograph), photographs, video recordings, storytelling exercises and projective visual and verbal methods. It is worth noting that only a portion of the amassed data is presented within this paper.

The multimethod nature of this study (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 273), by incorporating different sources of visual/textual/audio data, fostered novel insights into consumers' disposal behaviours and supported the validation of the most recurrent themes (i.d. data triangulation), enhancing the reliability of results (Stavros & Westberg, 2009) and the attainment of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Following Pera et al. (2022), this research heavily relied on visual methods renowned for their capacity to move beyond the representational and offer a transformative capability for participants in making abstract constructs more concrete. Specifically, this study reports on data generated through projective techniques that encourage consumers to reveal their inner thoughts and feelings in a more spontaneous and less rationally bounded way.

Projective techniques are well-established consumer and marketing research techniques (e.g. Haire, 1950; McGrath et al., 1993, and more recently Holder et al., 2023) that involve the use of vague, ambiguous, unstructured stimuli. This research adopted three distinct types of projective techniques to uncover consumer attitudes, thoughts and feelings that would not be necessarily detected by more straightforward questioning:

1. Art-based stimuli: Participants were presented with a collection of artworks and asked to select one that resonated with their emotions when enacting each practice under study.
2. Visual-ambiguous stimuli: Participants were provided with a series of ambiguous and unstructured images and asked to select one that inspired them to share their perceptions and beliefs related to each practice being studied.
3. Associative stimuli: Participants were presented with prompts such as, '*If the practice of reuse/repair/donate/resell were a famous person, who would it be? Why?*'. This approach was intended to prompt discussions by connecting the practices with distant yet recognizable personalities, whose attributes are subsequently transferred to the original stimuli.

These three categories of visual stimuli facilitated conversations that delved into participants' personal experiences and recollections, enriching the depth of the qualitative data generation process.

The platform focused ethnography comprised two phases. The initial phase involved individual interactions, wherein moderators engaged in one-to-one sessions with participants concentrating on participants' attitudes, particularly their awareness and concerns regarding textile disposal. During the first phase, we prompted participants to elucidate the characteristics of a textile (e.g. age, value and utility) that influenced their decision to retain it or not. The second phase stimulated a collective concept exploration of the value participants attached to consumer textiles disposal practices. By inviting participants to capture pictures/videos of a textile they reused, repaired, donated or resold, we facilitated an open dialogue. Within this discussion, participants were encouraged to freely articulate their decision-making process, to express how they felt and the kinds of value associated with each practice.

Figure 1 below offers a visual description of the data generation process.

4 | DATA ANALYSIS

Our focus was on phenomenographic conceptions, in terms of consumers' interpretation of textile disposal practices. The study adopted an interpretive methodology to identify the recurrent themes emerging from the analysis of the data. Following Yin (2013), the analytic framework comprised three stages: (a) analysis of individual data, (b) identification of common recurrent themes and (c) analysis of shared themes.

The qualitative data analysis involved organising, accounting for and explaining the textual and visual data, in short, making sense of the data in terms of the participants' representations of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. To conduct the analysis, participants' responses were grouped into concepts and semantic areas according to the activities undertaken and the research objectives. Manual coding was employed to code participants' material, such as the videos and photos

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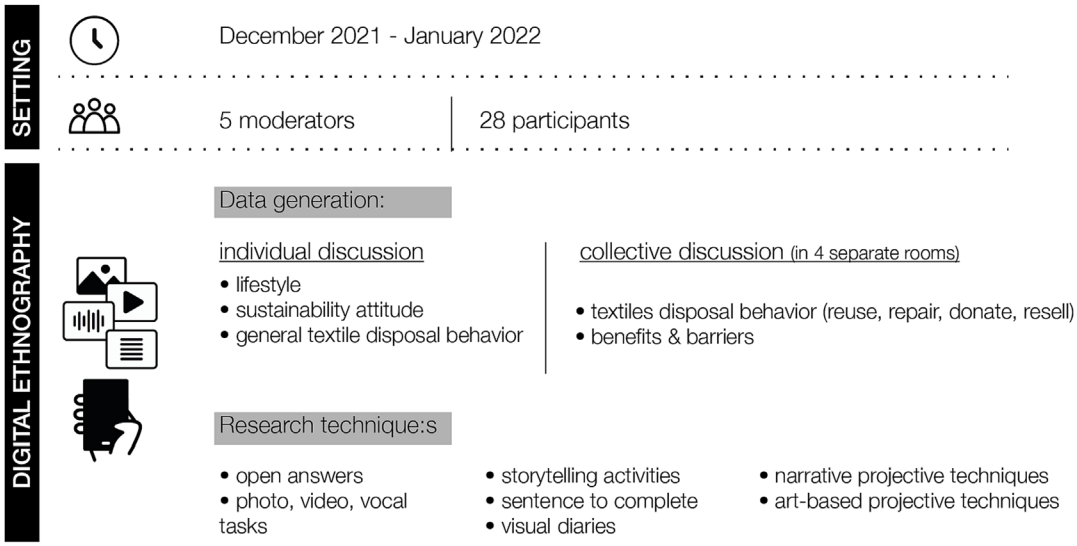

FIGURE 1 Data generation process description.

(Saldaña, 2021). These categories coalesced around consumer behaviours in relation to textiles disposal with patterns and consistency shaping the search for meaning. Consequently, this enabled the researchers to build an overarching overview of how participants experience textile disposal practices in terms of the value that was created.

5 | RESULTS

The first section of the results describes the overall sensemaking participants share regarding the practices under investigation, in terms of the motivations to engage in them. Consumers engage in reuse, repair, donate and resell practices as a response to damaged textiles but also to a sense of psychological obsolescence. By enacting these practices, participants avoid unnecessary waste, representing a compelling case against rapid purchase and disposal trends. Our data confirm that extending the lifespan of textiles is deemed urgent and crucial in combating textile waste. By providing a consumer perspective, our findings serve as a valuable complement to the existing firm-focused literature (Niinimäki et al., 2020; Sarigöllü et al., 2021; Stanescu, 2021). Participants perceive textiles' terminal disposal as wasteful and unethical, uncovering the belief of individual duty and moral responsibility related to textiles disposal management. Discarding textiles equates to a failed moral duty that raises in participants feelings of guilt, disturbance and shame, reflecting a direct moral obligation to respect environmental and social issues. In the following quote, a participant describes how she perceives the disposal of textiles as a sin to be ashamed of:

> '*Climate change and a general concern for the environment are leading us to conceive textile disposal almost as a crime, as a sin*'
>
> (Elisabetta, 27, Architect).

Along these lines, our findings investigate the perceived value related to each practice, and offer a value taxonomy to support the understanding and meaning participants associate with the practice. The following paragraphs analyse each textile disposal practice, by elucidating the significance each practice has from the participants' perspective, and its related values, all enriched by illustrative quotes.

5.1 | Consumer reuse practice

5.1.1 | Sensemaking

The study explores the practice of reuse, also defined by participants as *repurpose*, interpreting it as the use consumers make of textiles for a purpose other than that for which they were originally intended. The results show how the majority of reuse practices involve downsizing activities where participants transform old and/or damaged materials (e.g. t-shirts and sheets) into functional daily-use products, such as cleaning clothes. As such, the value of the materials of the original item is, in some way, broken down but it still avoids part of the original textile to finish in the garbage.

Conversely, participants also shared personal accounts of creative transformations that can be interpreted as instances of upsizing practices involving the repurposing of textiles at the end of their life. These transformations result in new, meaningful and valuable artefacts, enriched by the creative conversion process. In certain instances, the transformation occurs within the same thematic realm (e.g. a stained tablecloth evolving into table napkins): '*I took a stained tablecloth that was no longer used and painted it using it as a 'cover' of a red cabinet which certainly didn't match the colours of my room but the result was unique*' (Valentina, 25, Student). In others, the creative transformation integrates different semantic areas

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(e.g. an old garment becomes animal's furniture), as the following extract uncovers: *'An old jacket has become my dog's bed. I like the idea of changing a garment's life by making it something different from its previous life. Like humans … it's good to change the purpose'* (Davide, 26, Gardener).

The concept of empowerment emerges in terms of the satisfaction of being a creator, capable of transforming depleted resources into something of value. Although the new artefact may incorporate traces of wear of the original purpose, it is the uniqueness afforded by participants' creative resources that provides specialness to the new product. Participants engage in conversations about how repurposing textiles grants them a sense of genuine creativity, akin to becoming designers of their own style, rather than mere consumers. This sentiment is articulated by Franci (26, Ph.D. student), who expresses: '*When I can reuse something by doing it with my hands, I feel super proud of myself as if I had done something impossible*'. This is an enriching and empowering process that helps participants self-express and give their identity personality and uniqueness. The results unveil how the 'unperfect' outcome of a reuse process is able to overturn aesthetic canons imposing a novelty in a panorama in which mass production becomes more and more anonymous. Creative transformation, in terms of novelty and effectiveness, is at the core of the reuse practice, as Figure 2 displays.

However, participants who lack creative and handicraft competencies mostly describe the reuse practice as time-consuming and exhausting, effectively denying any value that used textiles could provide: '*I haven't done anything so creative because I don't have creative skills*' (Bea, 30, Post-doc), is an example of the lack of creativity as a hindering obstacle. In addition, such creativity is often hindered by a lack of imagination, which becomes the main constraint to textiles' repurposing: '*I have too few ideas for a reuse of textile material*' (Andrea, 27, Nurse).

Results show that the contextual disposal experiences involve the simultaneous perception and the creation of more than one type of value. Table 1 displays the most recurrent dimensions of value within the reuse practice.

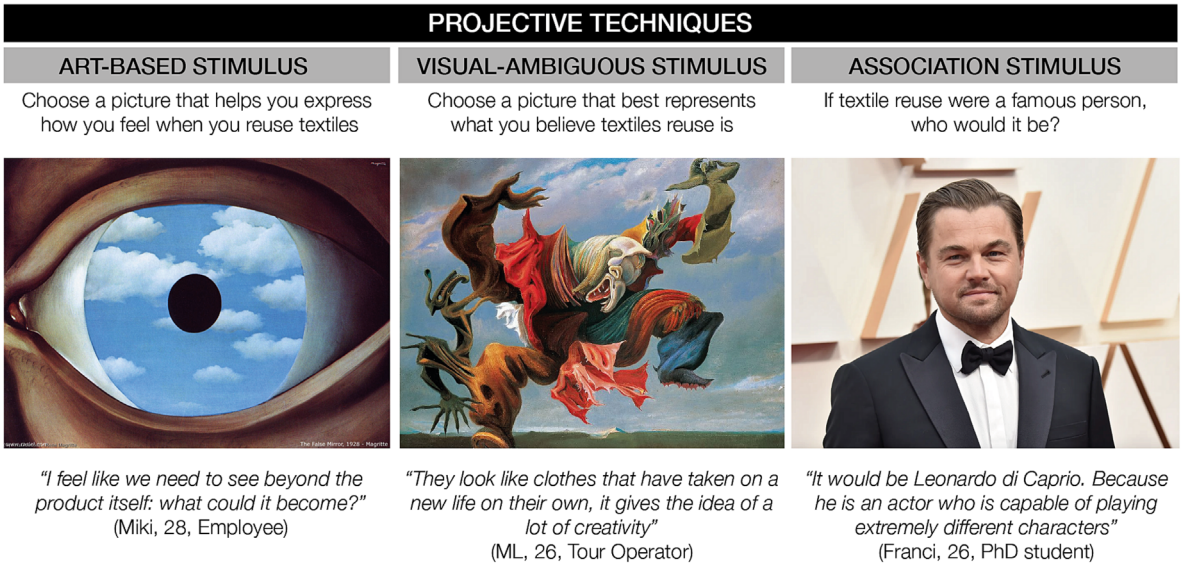

FIGURE 2 Illustrative examples of data generated through projective techniques for the reuse practice.

TABLE 1 Consumer reuse practice and disposal value.

Practice	Value taxonomy	Illustrative quotes
Reuse	Functional (utility)	'*I converted old sheets into rags, the most beautiful rags ever!*' (Salvasaro, 34, Public Servant)
	Emotional (fun, joy, challenge)	'*When I start adapting or transforming a fabric I just get hooked on it*' (Chiara, 27, Designer)
	Aesthetic (visual appreciation)	'*I used old curtains that have become beautiful cushions*' (Chantal, 32, Housewife)
	Moral (doing the right thing, being ethical)	'*I've been educated not to waste. Things shouldn't be thrown away unnecessarily until they have life*' (Valentina, 25, Student)
	Social (linking, bonding, connecting to others, self-expression)	'*My aunt had found an old fabric in the wardrobe and we decided to create a pair of pants. Every time I put them on I feel a wow moment, I feel special because they are special compared to the other items I have, for an emotional matter and also for the uniqueness of the product*' (Francesca, 27, Lawer)

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5.2 | Consumer repair practice

5.2.1 | Sensemaking

Repair is a priority avenue frequently mentioned by participants to lengthen product lifespans and it includes the repairing of textile items by oneself or by a professional. Participants shared their experiences of when and how they decided to repair their garments to keep them in use, reporting that while not so long ago repaired textiles were stigmatised with poverty and privation, this is no longer the case and it is not the reason that prevents consumers from fixing damaged textiles.

In this study repair propensity by the participants can be explained through the experience offered by Emilio (35, Designer): '*Instead of buying something new, when I am fond of a textile, I repair it: it's such a regret when I throw something away. However, when I think of how much stuff I throw away that comes from Zara, for example, I feel quite awful*'. While this is perceived as a worthy practice, it is enacted in a limited way because of the poor quality of products sold in fast fashion shops. Such underpinning fast fashion philosophy has led to a sense of detachment from textiles that offer little emotional connection. This aspect, in addition to low cost, could explain why they are not considered worthy of repair and raise a concern of wasting a lot and repairing too little. Besides moral reasons, participants give meaning to the repair practice for financial and environmental advantages and also with more emotional ones in terms of attachment to the product: The theme of taking care is enriched by the use of the intriguing metaphor of Kintsugi, the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold. Participants use this as a metaphor to express how the act of repair goes beyond the simple life extension of a textile, including instead deeper meanings. The breakage or simple wearing out of a textile can become valuable; participants suggest that by repairing things, we obtain more valuable objects because they hold memories, adventures, stories and experiences that make the artifact special and, as an extension, make each person unique and precious. '*Expressive embroidery stitches'* are what participants define as the repair practice to enable personalisation. By embracing flaws and imperfections, participants can create an even stronger, more beautiful piece of garment. Visible mending of something 'broken' becomes a proud display of uniqueness and personality that are signaled to the self and to others.

By repairing items, participants experience a sense of agency, autonomy and empowerment thanks to which they take back control of their material worlds, as expressed by the following quote: '*Knitting could easily become my favourite day activity, it makes me feel complete and in tune with the world, having also control over it*' (Franci, 26, Ph.D. student).

Figure 3 expresses the profound satisfaction derived from not only salvaging a depleted textile but also enhancing its value. While the act of repair should come naturally on the one hand, the skills essential for this practice are rather uncommon on the other.

However, the ease of replacing textiles with cheap new ones is recognized by participants as an overall disabling effect; as we no longer need the skills to repair or reuse textiles, we have become incapable of doing so. A lack of proper knowledge ('how to') calls participants to outsource the activity or search for help, usually to grandmothers, who are still seen as keepers of ancient and important skills, as Andrea (27, Nurse) pointed out: '*my dear grandmother is the salvation of every broken/frayed garment. Nowadays, sewing is an art less and less appreciated, but so useful …*'.

Table 2 displays the most recurrent dimensions of value within the repair practice.



FIGURE 3 Illustrative examples of data generated through projective techniques for the repair practice.

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TABLE 2 Consumer repair practice and disposal value.

Practice	Value taxonomy	Illustrative quote
Repair	Functional (utility, economic)	'*Repairing is certainly a money saver, first of all it would be a waste to throw something away that could be repaired instead*' (Marty, 28, Consultant)
	Emotional (taking care, self-efficiency)	'*I like to repair the clothes I love and have value to me and, as everything that is valuable, taking care of them is a demonstration of how important they are to me*' (Valentina, 25, Student)
	Social (support from others, cultural heritage)	'*It reminds me of my grandmother, but also my mom and aunt. When I need to sew up something, I turn to them!*' (Salvasaro, 34, Public Servant)
	Moral (doing the right thing, being ethical)	'*If a garment can be fixed, I feel obligated to repair it instead of replacing it with some Zara item and when I get at it I feel great!*' (Laura, 29, Designer)
	Aesthetic (visual pleasure out of a symbolic uniqueness)	'*I repaired some pants that had a hole in the back. I used another fabric to make a pocket: the result was 100 times more beautiful*' (Franci, 26, PhD student)

5.3 | Consumer donation practice

5.3.1 | Sensemaking

The results disentangle the different types of the overarching donation practice which participants describe as giving away a textile because they no longer want it, including in this practice textiles that are given to an organisation and textiles that are handed down to friends, family, neighbours or other acquaintances. Participants have a positive attitude in regard to this practice and are driven to donate because they feel that throwing away a textile still in good shape would be a waste, especially thinking that other people could benefit from the act. Ideas such as '*I would feel really bad to throw away something that could still be used*' are recurrent in the study. Regardless of whether the textiles are brand new and participants are simply bored of the style, or because they were a purchase mistake, or whether they have been worn to pieces, the donation is perceived as a win-win act of goodwill. Since participants feel at fault for overconsuming textiles, donation becomes a counter-goodwill practice, able to cleanse one's consciousness, compensating for the initial 'sin'. Donation represents among participants an overall and recurrent desire to wipe one's conscience clean, a sort of 'fashion detox'. Textile overconsumption threatens participants' moral integrity: the unethical deed generates feelings of immorality which activate a desire to cleanse, and donation becomes the means of it.

Intracommunity donation occurs when participants donate a textile within their close community, specifically to friends and family. For participants, intracommunity donation is a culturally automated and ordinary act; all participants have, in fact, donated to family and friends. In addition, participants also express a desire to give their special garments to special people, rather than dispose of them. The passing on of the textiles may establish and/or reinforce relationships with significant others, representing a sort of legacy. As such, while on one side intracommunity donation is a culturally interiorized common practice, on the other, it acquires a meaning of embodiment of the relationship marking the importance of it. Along these lines, the intracommunity donation is able to generate feelings of warmth, connection and bonding.

The second donation practice, less common than the first but still highly enacted, is *extracommunity donation* which occurs when participants donate a textile to an entity outside their close community which can be a charity association, such as Caritas, Red Cross or Humana or to local churches. The act of donation is explained by participants as an expression of altruism and an overall *faith in humanity* benefiting society at a larger scale and having a positive environmental impact. This practice conveys a fundamental goodness of oneself through a nonreciprocal act in a nondyadic setting. Such feelings of moral collective altruism prompt participants with faith in humanity to behave in ways that are generated by empathy and good feelings. Participants describe extracommunity donation as a practice characterised by moral care and moral altruism, without any particular cost or loss for the donator. Such deep interaction is elaborated through the metaphor of a window by Chiara (24, Babysitter): '*For me, textile donation is like an open window. An open window for me, who wants to change the air in the room, open myself to new things and maybe change something that no longer suits me or no longer suits the new me in constant evolution. But it is also an open window for those who receive, open to opportunities, a new possibility! The window, if we think about it, also represents the idea of exchange: something that goes out and something that enters, a continuous bridge of connection between the inside and the outside*'.

Participants express positive feelings of moral collective altruism when donating to an unknown community: '*Solidarity and equal dignity among human beings. Donation is something genuine and simple, without having something in return.*' (Sabrina, 28, GDO saleswoman).

The positive feelings of goodness and connection are at the base of the perception of donation as a social and moral practice, as Figure 4 displays.

However, at the same time, a certain distrust and scepticism towards what happens to the items that are donated to unknown people through association emerges, as Lindi (24, Student) clearly expresses: '*People often don't trust charities. It's very difficult to understand what is going on. The fact that there is no confirmation, no traceability of the donation, you will never know if it arrived effectively to*

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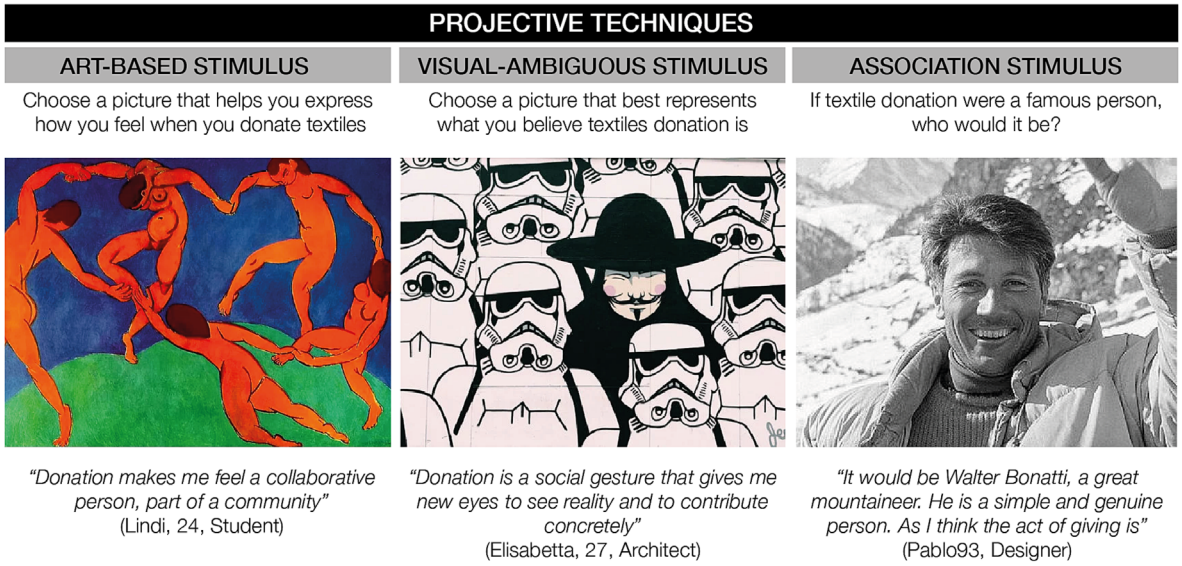

FIGURE 4 Illustrative examples of data generated through projective techniques for the donation practice.

TABLE 3 Consumer donation practice and disposal value.

Practice	Value taxonomy	Illustrative quote
Donation	Functional (utility, ease, automatism)	*'I have three older sisters, so I wore a lot of hand-me-downs, that's how I grew up and how now giving away stuff I no longer use is just normal'* (Valentina, 25, Student)
	Social (linking to others, relational meaning, connecting to special others)	*'I know my friend understood the meaning of the coat I gave her. Despite it really didn't suit me anymore, it was my grandmother's and I loved it. I hope that that special never-aging garment will be a reminder of our friendship'* (Bea, 30, Post-doc)
	Moral (goodness, altruism, caring for others)	*'We're the ones that are buying too much stuff and then we want our unwanted things to somehow be good for the world. I donate to feel good about my conscience knowing that I am doing the right thing'* (Andrea, 27, Nurse)

someone or if it was in vain. Often countries who receive the stuff don't have any say in what they actually do receive, causing them to shoulder our fast fashion overconsumption problem, which they did not create'. Participants express the concern that donation could actually foster a second-hand clothing economy for profit, creating more problems than solving them. Moreover, other witnessed barriers are the lack of textile bins in the municipalities and wide misinformation towards collection services, which certainly limit the donation toward outer cycles.

Table 3 displays the most recurrent dimensions of value within the donation practice.

5.4 | Consumer reselling practice

5.4.1 | Sensemaking

The results pinpoint reselling practices as the selling of used yet valuable textiles via physical avenues (e.g. Vintage shops, local markets) and digital platforms (e.g. Facebook Market, Vinted and Depop). Participants report that reselling second-hand items primarily fulfils the practical and functional needs of decluttering unused yet fully functioning and sometimes valuable textiles, while also providing an economic reward for the effort invested in the practice.

In addition to online purchase mistakes, participants share that changing sizes or tastes are key drivers to reselling items: Since throwing something away seems wasteful and wrong, reselling them to someone who will use them relieves that guilt and makes them feel clever about it. While participants still resell their unwanted textiles in flea markets and second-hand shops, social media is the more commonly adopted channel, and although reselling becomes easier thanks to social media and digital apps, reselling is perceived as a high-effort activity in terms of expertise and time required. Indeed, participants prefer to donate their textiles instead of reselling them mainly because of its ease.

The results unveil that reselling is perceived as an ethical practice rich in moral value that transcends its environmental and economic utility. Reselling is viewed as a key compromise between the altruism of donation and the selfishness of throwing away. However, in contrast to reuse and donation, this practice is seen as a more efficient and 'cold' action. Participants represent an efficient market wherein

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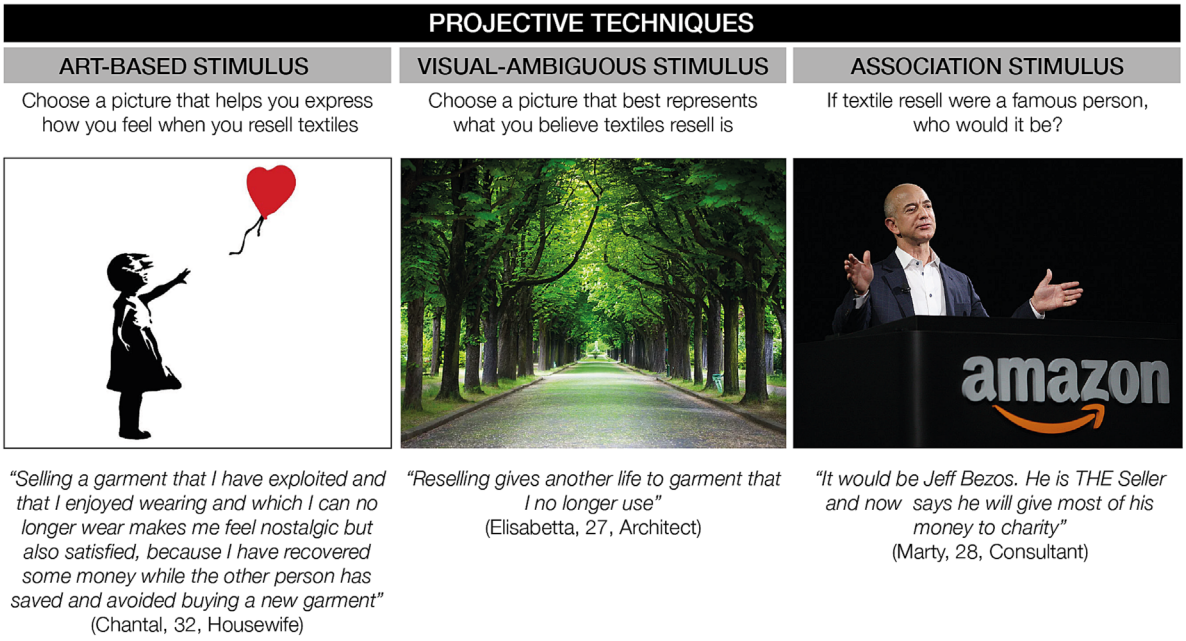

FIGURE 5 Illustrative examples of data generated through projective techniques for the resell practice.

TABLE 4 Consumer reselling practice and disposal value.

Practice	Value taxonomy	Illustrative quote
Resell	Functional (efficient, utilitarian, convenience, monetary)	'*It is a very simple and pragmatic experience; I take the clothes to be evaluated at the flea market in the hope that they have potential value for resale*' (Emilio, 35, Designer)
	Moral (efficient partnership)	'*Selling my used stuff seems to me to join forces with the buyer. I sell something I no longer use and the other person finds something they are looking for*' (Franci, 26, Ph.D. Student)
	Social (network; collectivism)	'*The spiderweb reminds me of a network. Because the sale and consequently the purchase of textile products can generate a network, a network of people, with connections, stories behind them, friendships* etc. *And this practice can unite everyone, unite multiple realities through a simple product*' (Chiara, 24, Babysitter)

sellers and buyers co-create value. A used textile, which may have lost value for the seller, undergoes a transformation to become valuable for the buyer, engendering reciprocal gains. This alternative efficient market is further enriched by positive social meanings, including a network of relations triggered by a single product. The '*I earn and you save*' motto offered by Chantal (32, Housewife) who describes how the reselling practice highlights its moral efficiency: '*I sell stuff at every change of season because maybe I've used those garments very little …. what I no longer use may be interesting to someone else. I earn money and he or she spends less than buying something new*' (Miki, 28, Employee).

Figure 5 provides evidence of how the reselling practice is perceived as an efficient practice able to blend personal utilitarian gains with collectivistic benefits.

Selling an item is certainly a skill that does not go without obstacles, as expressed by Elisabetta (27, Architect): "*To become a 'seller' you need to know how to take good pictures, know how to describe a product, and know which platforms are more appropriate. Knowing all this is far from obvious*". The lack of these resources leads participants to prefer other lower-effort practices, such as donation: '*The time devoted to shipping and all the rest that is required to manage the app holds me back. I prefer to donate them*' (Elisabetta, 27, Architect). The frustration arising from managing the conversations with potential buyers is compared with proper selling activities, making the practice time-consuming and demanding, potentially hindering its performance.

Furthermore, participants not only emphasise the technical and practical facets of this skill but also underscore the necessity to cultivate a comprehensive entrepreneurial mindset. This mindset, as described by participants, entails a mental inclination to embrace intricate and occasionally precarious situations. Participants acknowledge that making decisions in such contexts is not always straightforward.

Table 4 displays the most recurrent dimensions of value within the resell practice.

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TABLE 5 Value taxonomy across practices.

	Value taxonomy				
	Functional	**Emotional**	**Aesthetic**	**Moral**	**Social**
Reuse	✓ (utilitarian)	✓ (fun, joy, challenge)	✓ (visual appreciation out of individual creativity)	✓ (doing the right thing, being ethical)	✓ (linking, bonding, connecting to others, self-expression)
Repair	✓ (utilitarian, monetary)	✓ (taking care, self-efficiency, agency)	✓ (visual pleasure out of a symbolic uniqueness)	✓ (doing the right thing, being ethical)	✓ (support from others, cultural heritage)
Donate	✓ (utilitarian, ease, automatism)			✓ (goodness, altruism, caring for others)	✓ (linking to others, connecting to special ones)
Resell	✓ (utilitarian, efficiency, convenience, monetary)			✓ (efficient partnership)	✓ (network; collectivism)

5.5 | Comparing the practices

To provide a comprehensive understanding, Table 5 below offers a comparison of the disposal value attributed to the four practices under investigation. The symbol ✓ indicates the specific type of value associated with each practice, and the brackets clarify the terms in which it is expressed.

6 | DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Consumer textile disposal is a process that begins with a consumer's decision to stop using a textile that no longer satisfies the owner.

The study begins by revealing that discarding textiles equates to a failed moral duty that raises in participants feelings of guilt, disturbance and shame, reflecting a direct moral obligation to respect environmental and social issues. The study confirms that used textiles' lifespan is only partly influenced by garment damage and perceived quality (McNeill et al., 2020), instead participants report typical drivers of disposal such as shopping mistakes, changes in sizes and changes in tastes. However, young responsible consumers believe that fast fashion is the main responsible for throwing a textile away. Conversely, the pivotal factor behind consumers' inclination to delay the disposal of textiles is their profound emotional attachment to these items, an insight that has been substantiated by numerous prior studies (e.g. Dommer & Winterich, 2021).

Drawing from the *value-in-disposition* construct, this research explored the sensemaking consumers experience when enacting the practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell. According to our study, participants attribute relevant value to disposal practices. Such value can be appreciated at different layers of interpretation, with the mechanisms of consumer empowerment at the inner core of the study, the specific *value-in-disposition* dimensions in the middle and the barriers positioned in the outer core (as expressed in Figure 7).

By exploring consumers' sensemaking of textile disposal practices, this paper offers two theoretical contributions to the literature.

First, this study addresses the overarching call for research to include consumers more extensively in the CE paradigm (Niinimäki et al., 2020). However, this research deviates from previous research within this consumer-centric conversation. While prior research has emphasised understanding consumers' perceptions and expectations (Vehmas et al., 2018) to effectively shape their disposal behaviours with the aim of supporting the companies' CE uptake, this study goes further by attributing greater empowerment to consumers. Indeed, the emphasis on prioritising the role of consumers in the CE can be traced in previous studies: Ki et al. (2021) demonstrate, for example, that consumers' positive attitudes and moral stance are predictors of the willingness to engage with corporate circular offerings. Similarly, Sarigöllü et al. (2021), by investigating the profiles of consumers who engage in disposal behaviours, recognize the importance of understanding consumers' redistribution strategies in the CE. Moreover, Elf et al. (2022) have advocated for an extensive consumer engagement approach in order to find the most effective CE solutions. While the aforementioned studies contribute to generating new knowledge around this undertheorized research area, this paper marks a theoretical advancement by considering consumers not merely as receivers or as collaborators of corporate strategies but rather as empowered stakeholders who possess the ability to independently orchestrate the practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell. In doing so, consumers assume control and agency over textiles' lifespan. Thus, the first theoretical contribution resides in elucidating how *value-in-disposition* determines consumer empowerment, unveiling its manifestation across the four investigated practices delineated in the paper. The practice of reuse fosters consumer empowerment by providing a sense of gratification as being a 'creator' who transforms exhausted resources into novel and distinctive entities.

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Similarly, the repair practice stimulates consumer empowerment by instilling a feeling of agency and autonomy, allowing consumers to regain control over their material surroundings. The act of donation induces a form of empowerment rooted in empathy and positive emotions, centering around altruistic care for others. Lastly, empowerment is evident within the resell practice due to consumers' ability to collaboratively establish an effective alternative market. Through reselling, consumers–sellers metamorphose depleted resources with minimal value into commodities that hold new value for buyers, engendering mutual advantages. In sum, all disposal practices allow consumers, in different ways, to regain control of their material worlds, avoiding textiles from becoming waste and thus keeping the value into cycle.

Furthermore, to effectively respond to the proposition put forth by Niinimäki et al. (2020), advocating for the imperative change of consumer behaviour through decreased textile purchases and heightened garment longevity, this study emphasises, for the first time to the best of our knowledge, the disempowering obstacles consumers experience in textile disposal practices.

On the one hand, consumers highlight that such external barriers can be traced back to the overarching philosophy of fast fashion. The convenience of replacing textiles with cheap new ones is recognized by participants as an overall disabling effect; due to the diminishing necessity for textile repair or reuse skills, participants have gradually become incapable of effectively engaging in these practices. Similar reasons apply to the resell practice, where the exerted effort is deemed excessive for the majority of fast fashion products. The donation practice seems to be less affected by the low intrinsic value attached to fast fashion products. Consumers seem willing to donate depleted fast fashion textiles, primarily because the act of donation involves less effort compared to other disposal practices.

On the other hand, the paper reveals that consumer disposal practices encounter internal barriers as well. This study highlights three major categories of obstacles that are synthesised as follows: (a) consumer's lack of time, patience and energy, (b) consumer's lack of skills (imagination, know-how), (c) consumer's lack of information that leads to an overall consumer skepticism and distrust and (d) consumer's idleness eased by the fast-fashion logic. The above points (a), (c) and (d) are consistent with the recent study carried out by Acuti et al. (2023), who demonstrate that the physical proximity to a drop-off point determines sustainable disposal and that when consumers are able to process information easily, such communication drives positive disposal behaviours. More specifically, the paper identifies physical proximity to a bin, a service or a person as strong enabling factors for the practices of repair, donate and resell, that help consumers contrast idleness, lack of time and lack of energy. Moreover, clearer information sharing from companies and municipalities might help consumers understand the complexity of the textile disposal system and improve an acknowledgment of their positive or negative impact within it. These barriers are translated into actionable guidelines in Section 6.1.

Second, thanks to the exploratory nature of the present research, this paper contributes to the conceptualisation of the construct of *value-in-disposition* initially formalised by Türe (2014) and here applied to the Textile & Clothing industry. While Türe's study (2014) elucidates the ways consumers transfer and create value through disposition by forming new relations and maintaining and strengthening their social connections around discarded objects, this study offers an innovative value taxonomy encompassing the interactive dimensions of *value-in-disposition* within the CE paradigm. The study explains the interplay between functional, social, emotional, aesthetic and moral values, which collectively contribute to the establishment of an overarching consumer 'environmental' value. As a result, this paper deviates from the well-established technical interpretation offered by the CE paradigm (e.g. Kirchherr et al., 2017) by conceptualising *value-in-disposition* as the enhanced value that consumers generate through the process of transforming depleted resources into new meaningful ones.

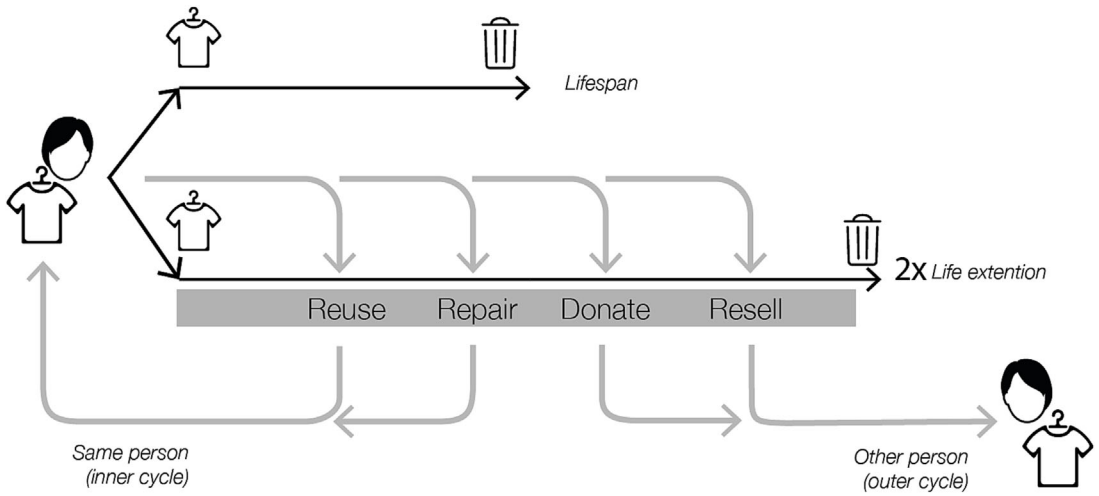

FIGURE 6 'Environmental value' (functional, social, emotional, aesthetic and moral) redistributed within the inner VS the outer person's cycle.

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While all four practices are perceived as powerful in extending the textiles' lifespan, reuse and repair are practices that afford value that is retained by the same owner (inner circle), expressing a self-oriented locus of value. Donate and resell are practices that afford value both to the initial owner and to external people (outer circle), expressing an other-oriented locus of value. Consumers, through individual acts, move textiles from one person to another and, as such, can be regarded as a collective resource system able to slow down the production and consumption of textiles thus lowering the negative impact on the environment (as evident in Figure 6). Along these lines, our research confirms Sarigöllü et al.'s (2021) study stating that when consumers are no longer capable of fully exploiting a product's value while owning it, they will be willing to redistribute it to others to allow them to fully exhaust the product's residual value.

Consequently, if in a linear economy paradigm, the value valence can be classified according to a three-layer scale (1. downsizing/depleted value; 2. same value; 3. upsizing/added value), in a CE paradigm, we contend that consumers, by enacting the four disposal practices, prevent the textile from ending up in landfills and therefore generate an added value. This specifically occurs thanks to consumers' disposal behaviours who still recognize a potential value in this textile waste, which is later extended and given a deeper meaning through reuse, repair, donate and resell practices. Along these lines, under the CE paradigm, even when the value is downsized for functional stances (e.g. making wipes out of textiles' scraps, or repairing damages, or wardrobes decluttering), it assumes an environmental connotation that elevates it to an upsizing practice, as it prevents waste to go to the landfill. In essence, the second contribution conceptualises *value-in-disposition* as the enhanced value consumers operate by transforming depleted resources into new meaningful ones.

Figure 7 summarises the conceptual contribution of this study visualising the relationship between consumer empowerment, a *value-in-disposition* taxonomy, and the barriers that hinder textile disposal practices.

6.1 | Managerial implications

The study has focused on the final part of the consumers' textile disposal behaviour journey, providing insightful opportunities for



FIGURE 7 Visual conceptual contribution of the relation between consumer empowerment, value in-disposition taxonomy and barriers.

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TABLE 6 Companies' actionable implications.

Practice	Barriers	Managerial implications
Reuse	Lack of imagination and patience; Lack of know-how and creative skills	• Design the product as it can be easily disassembled • Suggest possible reusing ideas for items and communicate them through a QR code on the label • Design creative contests through social media that reward consumers for successful textiles transformations
Repair	Lack of know-how; Lack of tools; Lack of patience	• Design short online courses to increase repairing skills • Provide nice tools to favour repair (e.g. colour-matched thread, nice patch) • Offer discount for repairing services • Support or partner up with repair cafes • Improve communication channels and campaigns, based on transparent informations
Donate	Lack of dedicated textiles bins; Lack of textiles collection services; Skepticism, Lack of information	• Map out the textiles bins in the city and design an app to show them • Develop agreements with NGOs or specific charity shops and suggest them to consumers through the label • Partnering with textiles' collecting services to increase traceability • Institute more collection points (ecopoint, flea market, charity shops) in public areas, transport chain, sorting Centre • Sponsor swap events
Resell	Lack of time, Lack of expertise in managing apps; Knowing how to manage price, competition, pictures	• Develop app integrations to guide consumers in setting a good selling service • Use AI to match-make consumers' interests and items sold

sustainable organisations and policymakers, with the intent of extending the lifespan of existing products, reducing textiles' landfilling and also reducing future replacement product purchases. When a consumer is faced with a disposal decision, the disposal option practices of reuse, repair, donate and resell must 'compete' with the throwing away option. By understanding how consumers feel empowered thanks to the enactment of disposal practices, policymakers and companies are able to define appropriate strategies to actively engage consumers in the CE paradigm. To achieve this objective, companies can integrate the principles of reuse, repair, donation, and resale into their mindset. By designing products and services that actively support these practices instead of creating items for disposal, companies can align with the goals outlined in the EU strategy for sustainable and circular textiles (European Commission, 2022). Building on Sarigöllü et al. (2021), companies can favour value-increasing actions to leverage consumers' social, emotional and moral values (e.g. self-expression, social reinforcement, altruism and freedom) and thus engage them more in sustainable textile disposal practices. Table 6 integrates the insights derived from this study with pertinent practices identified in existing literature (e.g. Acuti et al., 2023; Vehmas et al., 2018; dos Santos & Campos, 2021), proposing a series of actions that companies can undertake to tackle their environmental impact when engaging consumers as pivotal and empowered stakeholders.

6.2 | Future research and main limitations

We suggest that further research should continue to enrich a general theory of consumer disposal, maximising the environmental, economic, personal and community value of partially depleted resources. First, this paper uncovers how consumers experience empowerment as a result of their transforming depleted or partially depleted resources into something of value. To deepen the knowledge of this research stream, future research should explicitly be concerned with the consumer resources involved in disposal practices. Which skills and competencies do consumers need to develop? How can companies and stakeholders stimulate them?

Second, although all four of the consumer disposal practices described in this paper belong to the overarching 'reduce' philosophy, future studies could explore this consumption behaviour as a standalone practice. The 'buy less, buy better' practice is recognized as a powerful means to embrace sustainability by reducing waste (Sun et al., 2021). It would be interesting to investigate what leads consumers to purchase fewer, higher-end textiles that will last longer, rather than many inexpensive textiles that will be quickly thrown away. This insight would help practitioners and policymakers in nudging them toward concentrating their budget on fewer high-end textiles.

Third, this study has centred on environmentally conscious consumers who possessed some form of prior experience with the investigated practices. Future research should examine consumers with moderate environmental and moral inclinations, in order to gain deeper insights into the obstacles they face when carrying out disposal practices. This approach would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of these findings.

Also, the present research has focused on the domains of textiles. Given the exploratory nature of this research, our findings and insights are not generalizable to different industries and product categories, and it may be a worthwhile pursuit to investigate consumers' practices in other domains (e.g. food, sports equipment).

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APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS A.

Name	Age	Houseld	Occupation	Education
Valentinamonaco	29	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Pedagogue	Master degree + master
Chantal	32	Family	Housewife	Bachelor degree
Salvo	28	Brothers & sisters	Engineer	Master degree
Pablo93	28	Alone	Designer	Master degree
Chiara	27	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Designer	Master degree
Lindi	24	Family	Student	Bachelor degree
Arianna	23	Family	Intern	Bachelor degree
Davide	26	Alone	Gardener	Highschool diploma
Valentina	25	Family	Student	Bachelor degree
BettaZani	23	Family	Student	Bachelor degree
Emilio	35	Flatmates	Designer	Master degree + master
Giulia	28	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Student	Highschool diploma
Sara	26	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Architect	Bachelor degree
Franci	26	Boyfriend/girlfriend	PhD student	Master degree
Danilo	27	Flatmates	Employee	Master degree
Miki	28	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Employee	Highschool diploma
Elisabetta	27	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Architect	Master degree
Chiara	24	Family	Babysitter	Highschool diploma
ML	26	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Tour operator	Highschool diploma
Laura	29	Flatmates	Designer	Bachelor degree
Francesca	27	NA	Lawyer	Master degree
Jessica	26	Family	Employee	Highschool diploma
Salvasaro	34	Flatmates	Public servant	Highschool diploma
Lorenza	24	Flatmates	Student	Bachelor degree
Bea	30	Alone	Post-doc	PhD
Sabrina	28	Boyfriend/girlfriend	GDO saleswoman	NA
Marty	28	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Consultant	NA
Andrea	27	Boyfriend/girlfriend	Nurse	NA

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