IHCI Project Proposal: The Thrift Store

Problem Statement

As we all know, fashion is a fast-growing and ever-evolving field, constantly shaped by changing trends, consumer preferences, and technological advancements. But do you know how much this industry contributes to excessive waste and pollution due to its rapid production cycles and reliance on cheap materials? Up to 100 billion garments are produced by the fashion industry every year. And each year, as much as 92 million tons of clothing end up in landfills. Only 20% of textiles are collected for reuse or recycling globally. Almost 60% of all clothing material is actually plastic. Nylon, acrylic, and polyester textiles are just a few examples of these synthetic fibers that have become so ubiquitous in our wardrobes. Textile production generates 42 million tons of plastic waste per year, making the textile industry the second-highest industrial sector after packaging. Every time a synthetic garment is washed, it releases tiny plastic microfibers into the water. Up to 500,000 tons of microfibers end up in the ocean every year. Textiles and fashion waste account for 9% of annual microplastic pollution added to our oceans. Additionally, the footwear industry and garment industry combined are responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

This calls for a change. Thus, we have decided to make an app that will help us reuse, reduce, and recycle textile waste. Its stakeholders will range across a wide variety of people as it will be accessible to all wherever pickups and deliveries are possible. Its stakeholders will include mostly teenagers, young adults as they are the ones that engage the most in fast fashion, and poor middle-class families, as they can buy good quality clothes at much cheaper prices. It will also provide jobs to many artisans/ tailors.

Background of the Problem and Motivation

This idea comes from the basic daily life of a teenager. One fine day, as I was getting ready in the morning, thinking of what to wear today, I picked out my favorite shirt. I later realized it is no longer in fashion and looks odd. I had just bought it two weeks ago, and it was also very expensive. I was sad as I realized that I wasted money and this piece of cloth would go to waste, too. Then I thought what if there was an app where I could sell this beautiful shirt and some other person in need could get it? From here I came to the idea of thrifting, and after researching a little, I learned how many other environmental problems it would also solve.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of sustainability and a desire to reduce the environmental impact of fast fashion.

As a result thrift stores have caught the attention of environmentally conscious customers.

Online thrift stores/e-commerce platforms allow consumers to buy and sell second-hand items. These types of platforms promote the reuse of goods, reducing waste. They offer budget-friendly options and allow them to buy items in a fraction of the time. They provide users with a wide variety of products from rare finds to everyday essentials.

But along with this positive trend, thrift stores are facing many challenges.

●In some areas, thrift stores are scarce, leaving consumers with limited access to affordable, second-hand clothing.
●Lack of quality items and variety of items available in thrift stores due to less popularity.
●Online platforms are great competition where people can sell their used items, and consumers can buy items more conveniently as compared to traditional thrift stores. The number of India-based online thrift apps is very few, and none of them are maintained properly for a large user basis.
●There are misconceptions among consumers about the quality of items, hygiene, or the shopping experience at these stores.
● Thrift stores are not easily accessible to all especially rural communities.
●They struggle with maintaining good quality and attractive inventory.
● It's a challenge to determine the fair price of items.

Scope

After looking at all these problems, we have decided to make an app which will be an online thrift store. Its main purpose will be to reuse, reduce, and recycle textile waste. It will somewhat be like a shopping app but with a twist that the clothes would be used. The users can sell us their old clothes or clothes they don't wish to wear anymore and get money in return according to the quality of that piece. Then, we would set a price for the piece after examining and sanitizing it properly. If the cloth is still considered to be of bad quality, we will discard it in an eco-friendly way. Then, the clothes can be bought by other users of the app at a cheaper rate but of the same brand and quality. It would be a relief for all those who cannot afford branded clothes because they are unreasonably overpriced. We would also donate clothes to the poor and the old by tying up with NGOs. We would also have features that would allow people to directly donate their clothes to the poor. All information about the piece of cloth for example size, brand, how old it is, and material, and also the reviews would be put on the app just like any other shopping app. We would also accept raw cloth material and find potential in it to make wearable clothing. This will provide jobs to many artisans/ tailors who have lost their jobs due to the modern means of the fashion industry. The limitations of the app would be that if anyone gives a damaged piece, the customer will be paid according to the weight of the piece or not paid at all. A user would not be allowed to buy more than 10 items in a single purchase. All money transfers will be online.
The motivation behind creating this is that it will inspire users to embrace a more eco-friendly lifestyle and reduce the environmental impact of fast fashion and excessive consumption. Also, it's about saving money. Our app gives people a way to find good things at lower prices. **In the end, someone's trash could be another one's treasure.**

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