

## Article

# Ethical Pro-Environmental Self-Identity Practice: The Case of Second-Hand Products

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**Abstract:** As part of sustainable development, more attention is being placed on consumer behavior. Revised economic models have resulted in an understanding of the need for a circular economy. In this perspective, the consumer is not merely the buyer of the product but also a seller in consumer-to-consumer (C2C) activities, here referred to as re-commerce. In this qualitative study, researchers conducted in-depth interviews of 32 respondents from two countries who had second-hand product trading experience on Facebook. The study uses thematic content analysis to analyze the themes of ethical pro-environmental self-identity (PESI) practices in the respondents' everyday lives. In this study, challenges relating to understanding conditions for fruitful re-commerce are framed in a social practice theory. Focus is placed on ethical pro-environmental self-identity in the context of selling or buying products in Bangladesh and Sweden. The contributions of this study relate to consumer perspectives on what enables re-commerce for six selected product categories. The study also points to the importance of social media and context-bound differences between product groups as well as individuals in two national contexts.

**Keywords:** circular economy; consumer behavior; ethical consumption; emerging economy; ethical PESI practice; pro-environmental self-identity (PESI); re-commerce; responsible consumption



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## 1. Introduction

Environmental protection is now considered the most impactful activity in the current vulnerable world where planetary boundaries are at stake. Countries, not limited to developed or emerging economies, are formulating different sustainable strategies according to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to prevent the upcoming sixth mass extinction. However, the successful implementation of these sustainable strategies entirely depends on how individual people act and contribute to the SDGs, in particular SDG 12, which focuses on consumption.

Pro-environmental self-identity (PESI) refers to an individual's tendency to see him- or herself as an individual who has a pro-environmental perspective and partakes in related action [1]. It is an environmentally friendly self-concept that is symbolically expressive and shaped by mainstream socio-cultural forces [2]. PESI, or green self-identity, is situationally cued, meaning consumers' ecological behaviors are context-bound [3]. PESI denotes people who are likely to be intrinsically motivated to act in an environmentally friendly manner. Their motivation comes from within themselves, rather than from external rewards [4]. They suggest two types of drivers for PESI, the first of which is enjoyment-based intrinsic motivation, which reflects desirable consequences and suggest that the behavior itself is enjoyable to engage in. The second driver relates to obligation-based intrinsic motivation and reflects perceived duties—when a person feels obliged to follow a particular rule, norm, or principle. Both of these drivers for PESI can influence the concept of the circular economy by promoting responsible consumption [5]. PESI promotes SDG12 by promoting

consumption reduction, curtailment, and anti-consumption practices for ethically minded consumption behavior [6].

A change in consumer behavior to extend product life cycles would lower the dependency on raw virgin materials to produce products. These products could be designed with redesign in mind, or simply be produced with an understanding of the enabling conditions for consumer second-hand use [7]. Promoting this behavior for the purpose of assuring responsible consumption and production from a consumer perspective would force the producers to reduce the usage of virgin materials in their production processes, which could eventually lead to corporate processes of rethinking their business models, shifting to a regenerative business model. Starting with environmental consciousness at the consumer level is a way to identify conditions for a behavioral shift, and using second-hand products can simultaneously promote consumption reduction (e.g., avoiding the purchase of unnecessary products), curtailment (e.g., decluttering unused items), and anti-consumption practices (e.g., self-refrainment from purchasing new products).

Ethical consumption practices ensure a waste-free society to achieve a circular economy, a dual-loop regenerative system with extensive applications of reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling, and recovering materials in production/distribution and consumption processes at the microlevel (consumers) [8,9]. Exchanging second-hand products at the consumer level is referred to as the customer-to-customer (C2C) business model where customers are the partners and suppliers [10]. Second-hand product exchange is a way to achieve a circular economy through reuse with the views of extending product life, reducing waste, slowing down production processes, reducing the carbon footprint associated with reproduction, and enhancing product utility [8]. The activity of exchanging second-hand products at the consumer level in the physical and web-based marketplace is called re-commerce [7].

Social media plays an enabling role in establishing ethical consumption practices through their user-generated platforms for exchanging information about product offers, ethical views, choices, and ideologies regarding ethical pro-environmental self-identity behavior in buyer's daily consumption practices [11] (p. 451). It was further noted that ethical consumption practices are conducted by people, both online and offline, and these social environments stem from microlevel linkages with family members and friends to the meta-levels of the country and the global market (ibid.). Of these platforms, Facebook is the most popular social media site. It connects people with similar ideological viewpoints for conversations, shared offers, and promotion of PESI practices in different social groups [12] (pp. 778–780). Increasing social-media-based thrift shops, groups, and communities enhance second-hand product consumption behavior at the consumer level [10], and these virtual establishments are quite popular in all social classes of society [13]. Social media has had a positive impact on assuring sustainable development by promoting ethical consumption behavioral practices through encouraging PESI [14]. Facebook is a popular place for re-commerce for a large number of users from all over the world, and the Facebook marketplace, specific re-commerce groups, and pages are engaging in the exchange processes [8]. These re-commerce Facebook platforms are quite popular in developed countries and emerging economy countries for exchanging different kinds of products.

This behavioral shift, from using new products to second-hand products, attracts researchers from all over the world. Previous research on PESI behavior has been carried out by Dermody et al. [2,6], comparing conditions in the US and China, a developed country and an emerging economy country. According to Hoskisson et al. [15] consumption practices are determined by context-bound cultural and societal movements. This study focuses on consumer views on being part of second-hand exchanges in Sweden, a developed country, and Bangladesh, an emerging market.

The aim of the study is to explain consumer perspectives on pro-environmental self-identity (PESI) practices in Sweden and Bangladesh. This cross-country study covers

consumer understandings of ethical consumer movements, consumption patterns, and ethical consumption behavior aspects. The research questions are as follows:

**RQ1.** What kind of pro-environmental identity practices are consumers expressing that they use?

**RQ2.** How are these pro-environmental identity practices motivated?

**RQ3.** What are the conditions for conducting these practices?

## 2. Materials and Methods

This project captures a real-life phenomenon [16] of practices relating to consumer-to-consumer sales. It uses a flexible research design, as suggested by Male [17], in order to adapt to the conditions for studying the phenomenon. The approach is motivated by the nature of empirical research and the use of the social practice theory to explain the PESI behavior of consumers in ethical consumption practice [18]. A literature review of ethical consumption practice at the consumer level led to a theoretical understanding of the concept of PESI practice for ethical consumption in a social context. Facebook was the enabling platform, and Facebook users in Sweden and Bangladesh were units of analysis for determining how PESI behavior influences ethical consumption patterns [19]. The study had two parts: a literature review that provides theoretical and empirical orientation, and a second part, an empirical study based on Swedish and Bangladeshi consumer perspectives.

According to Cobo et al. [20], scholars of different fields of study use literature reviews to uncover emerging trends in article and journal performance, collaboration patterns, and research constituents, and to explore the intellectual structure of a specific domain in the extant literature. The researchers conducted a simple literature review [21] (pp. 2–5) to collect and synthesize previous research on the research topics, identify and critically appraise relevant business research in the concepts of PESI practices of Swedish and Bangladeshi consumers and their ethical consumption behavior, and develop a research theory.

Prior to conducting in-depth interviews regarding PESI behavior, the study followed a naturalistic observation method [22] in seeing user behavior in dealing with second-hand items by observing different second-hand exchange places on Facebook (Marketplace, Groups, and Pages) virtually located in Sweden and Bangladesh. This observation helped locate suitable candidates for conducting in-depth interviews and product exchange in those groups. The purpose of in-depth interviews lay in the intention of the interviewer to uncover details about the interviewee's experience that would be undisclosed in the survey [23] (p. 48).

In-depth interviews were conducted from 10 February 2021 to 7 March 2021 with users who have experience using Facebook for exchanging second-hand products and were willing to share their views about factors influencing their PESI behavior on Facebook. A selection of interviewees for conducting the in-depth interviews was carried out with the objective of identifying 32 Facebook users (16 in Sweden and 16 in Bangladesh) who had exchanged second-hand products, either as a buyer or a seller, at least 5 times. The researchers chose their native countries, for convenience reasons, to observe ethical PESI practices on Facebook. Moreover, the first author has experience living in both countries and has hands-on experience in trading second-hand products in both countries. Each interviewee was tagged with another interviewee to form a pair (buyer and seller) based on the chosen product categories [23] (p. 48). The interviewers observed that many of the participants exchanged more than one product, so they asked for their preference lists. Additionally, many of them purchased and sold second-hand products, so they were also asked to choose either a buyer or seller role. After obtaining their product preference lists and preferred roles, the interviewers allocated them to the chosen product categories. After their approval, the interviewers finalized the product categories and the pair. Interviewees were divided into 16 pairs under 6 product categories. Each participant of the pair was denoted as the country name's first word, the product category's first word, and the number (e.g., SC1 or BF1). The first member of the pair was a buyer, and the second member was a seller of that product. The allocation of the pairs is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** In-depth interview pairs of each product category.

Product Category	Contents of Product Category	In-Depth Interview Pairs
Cellphone	All kind of cellphones.	SP1 + SP2 BP1 + BP2
Furniture	Chair, table, bed, etc.	SF1 + SF2 BF1 + BF2
Jewelry	Bangles, necklace, earrings, Bangladeshi ethnic jewelries	SJ1 + SJ2 BJ1 + BJ2; BJ3 + BJ4
Attires	Male and female outfits, e.g., shirts, pants, jackets, Bangladeshi ethnic female dresses (saree, salwar kameez).	SA1 + SA2; SA3 + SA4 BA1 + BA2; BA3 + BA4
Bicycle	All kinds of bicycles, e.g., electric, mountain.	SC1 + SC2; SC3 + SC4 BC1 + BC2
Books	Textbooks, novels, poetry	SB1 + SB2 BB1 + BB2
		<i>n</i> = 32

Table 1 shows the product category distribution of 16 in-depth interviewee pairs. There were 2 pairs in the jewelry product category among Bangladeshi interviewees; one was for common jewelry users and the other was for ethnic jewelry users. There were two pairs in the “Attire” category based on gender. However, as per the data protection rule, the study did not indicate which pair belonged to which gender. Two pairs were in the “Bicycle” category due to the popularity of bicycle trading in Sweden.

The age range of the interviewees was 20–35, all of which had at least completed a bachelor’s degree. All the interviewees in both countries were natives of Sweden and Bangladesh respectively. There were 18 females and 14 male participants, and the pairs were gender-neutral in the four categories: Cellphone, Furniture, Bicycle, and Books.

The study conducted in-depth interviews through Zoom. The interview was conducted between 10 February 2021 and 7 March 2021. Due to COVID-19, the preferred face-to-face interview was not possible. Each interview lasted between 40 min and 60 min. The Swedish and Bangladeshi participants answered questions in English. Sometimes, they used their native languages (Swedish and Bengali), but the researchers translated them into English with ease because one of them was Swedish and another one was Bangladeshi. The full transcripts were written in English in Microsoft Word files. Each pair had one Microsoft Word file.

The full transcript was used for the thematic analysis [24] in accordance with recommendations for research procedures. The theoretical thematic analysis was aimed at identifying PESI practices as part of ethical consumption behavior. A thematic analysis, using NVIVO 12, resulted in 14 codes with explanatory value. The digital platform Facebook was selected, and the theoretical perspective of social practice theory was applied (SPT) [25]. According to Gram-Hanssen [26] (pp. 433–434), SPT is a suitable theory for discussing daily consumption. The thematic analysis focused on the routine PESI practice by generating codes from the transcripts and categorized them under three themes of SPT, i.e., meaning, materials, and competences [27].

### 3. Literature Review

The literature review offers an overview of interpretations of key concepts related to pro-environmental consumer behavior, starting with ethical consumption, pro-environmental self-identity, and social practices.

#### 3.1. Ethical Consumption Behavior

Due to the increasing awareness of inequality and environmental degradation, the ethical consumption movement has been gaining momentum in developed and emerging

economic countries where consumers prioritize their own ethical and environmental concerns in product choice, including human rights, social justice, and environmental protection [28]. According to Jung et al. [29] (p. 485), ethical consumption has been discussed as a behavioral pattern governed by some ideals, such as voluntary simplicity in life; ethical simplifier adoption in consumption practice; the formation of anti-consumption groups in society (e.g., Facebook groups promoting anti-consumerism); slow living by giving more time to the family and self; positive buying in environmental and ethical products, and moral boycott.

Works of literature on ethical consumption behavior have denoted circumstances when consumers apply their very own ethical consciousness to consumption value. It could refer to maximizing long-term social benefits for other people, reflecting selflessness and a desire for equality, or moral issues about product production and the rejection of unethical trade practices [30] (pp. 637–638). Ethical consumption behavior can be synonymous with the concepts shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Key concepts used in ethical consumption behavior research.

Key Concepts	Explanations	Authors
Altruistic consumption	Customers opt for environmentally harmful consumption patterns.	Smith and Paladino (2010) [31]; Yadav (2016) [32] (p. 93)
Exchanging behavior	Using moral values of exchanging products.	Husser et al. (2019) [33]; Van Quaquebeke et al. (2019) [34]
Fair trade (FT) practice	Includes (i) willingness to pay more, (ii) guidance by universalism, benevolence, self-direction, and stimulation, (iii) self-identification, (iv) emphasis on FT labels on products, and (v) cultural influence.	Gram-Hanssen (2021) [26]; Gregory-Smith et al. (2017) [35]
Frugal consumption	Customer prefers less materialistic purchases, repairs and reuses products, extending product life	Gatersleben et al. (2019) [36]; Goldsmith et al. (2014) [37]
Green consumption	Customers motivate community- and the country-level practices, which enforces producers to comply with environmentally friendly products.	Gregory-Smith et al. (2017) [35]; Stern et al. (1995) [38]
Socially conscious consumption behavior	Equal consideration of environmental issues (e.g., using second-hand products), health (e.g., building a waste-less community), and social issues (e.g., donating unused products).	Pepper et al. (2009) [39]; Romani et al. (2016) [40]
Socially responsible consumption behavior	Comprises purchase behavior (e.g., buying second-hand products), non-purchasing behavior (e.g., preventing purchase of products which use raw virgin materials) and post-purchase behavior (e.g., selling fully functioning used products at a lower market price).	Johnson and Chattaraman (2019) [41]; Lee (2019) [30]
Spiritual and moral consumption	Consumers' spiritual practice motivates moral consumption.	Orellano et al. (2020) [42]; Vitell et al. (2016) [43]

Gummerus et al. [12] (pp. 450–452) noted that social media creates virtual communities that encourage ethical consumption practices among members, and members obtain participatory opportunities by availing themselves of information benefits regarding the positivity of ethical consumption (social support benefits from like-minded people, and community engagement benefits through sharing their joyous moments of being an ethical consumer). Gummerus et al. [44] (p. 4) mentioned that social media community participation for the purpose of ethical consumption creates emotional attachment and bondage among the members. Doyle [45] (pp. 779–781) noted that social media celebrities and influencers are creating buzz to promote ethical consumption through changing lifestyle behaviors, including those involved in food, clothing, and furniture [46]. Social media can create *mediatization*, which acknowledges the role of the media, industries, and processes in the circulation of ethical consumption; *personalization*, with an increasing focus

upon individualization within neo-liberal ideology at the expense of collective ethical consumption; and *commodification*, with the commodity of alternative environmentally friendly product consumption [47] (p. 652). Hoelscher and Chatzidakis [48] mentioned the equal importance of the digital community with the physical community in encouraging, developing, and maintaining ethical consumption practices on Facebook. Fuentes and Sörum (2019) [49] and Humphery and Jordan (2018) [50] supported the rise of Facebook communities promoting ethical consumption through the use of digital devices that can motivate more than physical interaction.

### 3.2. Pro-Environmental Self-Identity Practice

Pro-environmental behavior (PEB, Table 3), which has been the focus of early researchers in the field of environmental psychology, is defined as behavior that proactively seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world [51] (pp. 239–240).

**Table 3.** Conceptual development in the field of environmental consumer behavior.

Key Concept	Explanation	Authors
Pro-environmental behavior (PEB)	Concerns individuals' behavior that minimizes the negative impacts of actions on the natural and built world.	Kollmus and Agyeman (2002) [51]
Environmental or ecological behavior	Environmental impact from human actions.	Cheung et al. (2010) [52]; Tian and Robertson (2019) [53]
Environmental responsible behavior	Service context of the importance of perceived value, environmental and education.	Chiu et al. (2014) [54]; Hwang (2000) [55]
Environmentally friendly behavior	Energy consumption of household influencing consumer behavior in a food retail setting through information on green energy.	Gatersleben et al. (2002) [56]; Kristensson (2017) [57]

Table 3 offers an overview of environmental consumer behavior. Fransson and Gärling [58] (pp. 371–374) considered several environmentally concerned determinants (age, social class, residence, political-ideology, and gender) and their impact (attitudes, knowledge, and norms, income, nucleus family, personality, environmental obligation, verbal commitment, and perceived personal threat) for PEB citizens. These research works depict that the individual practices of these PEB regarding environmental causes are crucial and impactful in the society and community and such practices ensure a better environment for all the livings. Truelove et al. [59] (pp. 130–131) showed pro-environmental behavior as positive spillovers and practices such as the avoidance of excess packaging on the product the use of reusable bags for energy conservation, water conservation, composting policy support regarding environmental obligations and practices, meat consumption reduction, and the use of energy-saving home appliances. From the literature discussed, it can be said that PEB are crucial for motivating ethical consumption behavior in consumers' daily lives, which leads to possessing the environmental self-identity of PESI practices in everyday life.

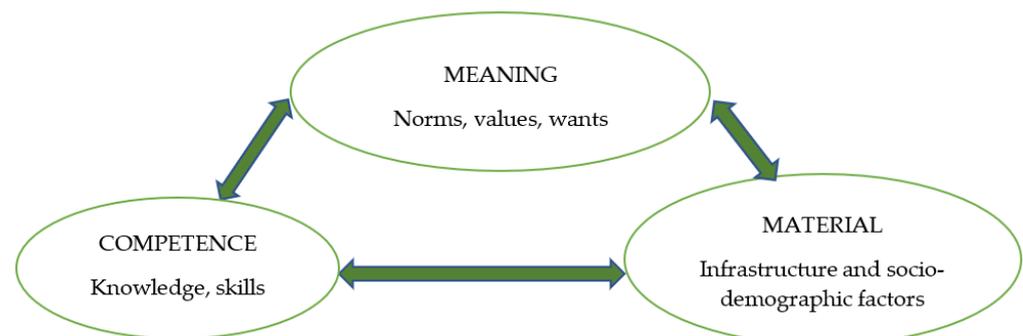
Self-identity in the context of the environment is the extent to which one sees him- or herself as a type of person who acts environmentally friendly in each aspect of his/her life [60] (p. 627). Self-identity can also be discussed as green self-identity that is driven by internal motives of ethical individuals to confirm and reconfirm their beliefs, values, and personality from time to time to portray their green lifestyle and self-identity [61]. Other self-identity practices explained by van der Werff et al. [62] (p. 56) and Whitmarsh and O'Neil [63] were recycling self-identity, environmental activism, preference for eco-shopping, saving domestic energy conservation, thriftiness in using water, personal, family, and professional-level waste reduction, and the intention to purchase genetically modified food. Biosphere values and pro-environmental actions are the main influential domains for environmental self-identity [4].

Steg and Vlek [64] (p. 310) argued that some behavioral changes are necessary to improve the quality of PESI practices, including (i) identifying negative impactful behaviors, (ii) determining the extent of the feasibility of changing the negative behavior, (iii) regulating the baseline levels of target behavior, and (iv) assessing the targeted groups. As per Truelove et al. [59] (pp. 131–132) the importance of consistency effects in maintaining pro-environmental practices and social identity results in the success of achieving PESI behavior. Dermody et al. [2] (pp. 335–336) noted that biospheric/altruistic value, social consumption motivation, and perceived consumer effectiveness have positive impacts on the PESI practices of individuals, whereas egoistic values and a perceived lack of climate change knowledge have negative impacts on PESI practices.

Han and Xu [65] pointed out that social media influences PESI practices by strengthening the effects of interpersonal communication by changing perception, text sharing on circular economy activities (reducing, recycling, and reusing) [7] and risk mitigation against environmental degradation [66]. Different user-generated content (UGC) related to ethical consumption includes pro-environmental behavior on Facebook motivating PESI practices through expanding knowledge on PESI, raising awareness regarding environmental issues, activating PESI norms, creating PESI online communities, and enhancing engagement in the online community [67].

#### 4. Social Practice Theory

The Social Practice Theory (SPT) is a widely accepted theory of assessing behavioral aspects in a societal framework that considers the everyday and routine performance of social practices of mankind, such as cooking meals, driving a car, shopping behavior in an online marketplace, or playing cricket [68]. The practice itself, rather than the individuals who perform them or the social structures that surround them, thus becomes the core unit of analysis (Figure 1). According to Shove et al. [25], various social practices are seen as part of “the routine accomplishment of what people take to be ‘normal ways of life’”. This theory connotes that, through these engagements with practices, individuals come to understand the world around them and develop a more or less coherent sense of self [68] (p. 82). According to Warde [69], the source of a change in behavior lies in the development of the practice itself. Sustainable consumption of fully functioning second-hand products over new products does not depend on educating people to make different decisions; rather, transforming practices is crucial in this aspect [25,68,69]. The model of Social Practice Theory [25] is mentioned in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Social Practice Theory by Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012; p. 14).

Previous pieces of literature on SPT focused on historical narratives and technological developments [70], social relations [71], consumption behavior [27], green practice [72], and individual circumstances. This study adopted this theory in analyzing the ethical PESI practices of Facebook users of Sweden and Bangladesh in achieving a circular economy. A detailed discussion on SPT elements is provided below.

#### 4.1. Meaning

The first block is meaning, which consists of norms, values, and wants [27]. According to Shove et al. [25,70], meaning represents the social and symbolic significance of participation at any given moment. Meaning refers to the concept of habit, which considers that an understanding about significance is shared amongst a group and thus brings the group together. Meanings are specifically directed towards behavior or things [73]. As Shove et al. [25] explains, “theories of practice emphasize tacit and unconscious forms of knowledge and experience through which shared ways of understanding and being in the world are established” (p. 12). This explanatory meaning takes the form of an in-built and unreflective sense of what behaviors are “right” or “fitting” towards a particular social practice, i.e., ethical PESI practices in Sweden and Bangladesh. A significantly strong concept related to this sense that a practice can be considered “right” is the significance of the number of practitioners routinely performing the practice. If people do not engage with a practice and do not see others engaging with it, they come to understand the world as a place where the practice does not ‘fit’.

According to Shove et al. [25], social norms are rules of behavior that are informed by group members on how to construe a given situation, how to feel about it, and how to behave in it. Users of Facebook do re-commerce activities in different Facebook groups, and the admin panels of those groups set regulations on how to provide a selling post. The social norms of those Facebook second-hand product exchange groups are the product name, product description, reasons for selling, pictures of products, information about damage (if any), price, and mode of delivery (cash on delivery). Potential buyers have an idea about the product that a seller intends to sell in a group and approach it accordingly.

Values are guiding principles in a person’s life and influence a range of beliefs, attitudes, and actions [74]. Based on the social norms discussed by Stella et al. [74], users of Facebook believe in the authenticity of posts. That means members of a second-hand product exchange group who give the information as per the rules set by the admins, generally gain positive beliefs among potential customers, and they attract more customers than those who do not give the proper information on the selling post. These guiding principles also emphasize the product brand value of choosing products while exchanging them [75].

Wants, desires, and intentions, as defined by Hess et al. [27], are practice-specific on the degree to which certain materials, outcomes, and processes are important to a person and thus can explain individual variations in practice performance.

#### 4.2. Material

In the Social Practice Theory, “material” is not just a communicator of symbolic meaning, status, or identity [70], but is often “directly implicated in the conduct and reproduction of daily life” [70] (p. 44). However, “products alone have no value. They do so only when integrated into practice and allied to requisite forms of competence and meaning” [70] (p. 57). All three elements must exist for the performance of the practice. Materials are objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware, and the body itself [27]. Devices of social media (e.g., PC or cellphone), internet connection, availability of courier service, and convenient payment service are important materials for operating re-commerce activities. Additionally, the socio-demographic factor plays a role in this aspect. For example, a particular buyer, whose income is low, who wants to purchase a second-hand product because s/he cannot afford a new product due to financial constraint.

#### 4.3. Competence

Shove et al. [25] described competence as “multiple forms of understanding and knowledgeableability” and used the shorthand of “skills” to denote that this type of knowledge is required for the carrier to “succeed” at the performance of the practice.

According to Hess et al. [27] and Tobler et al. [76], knowledge about a particular issue, e.g., the circular economy and how it contributes to the betterment of all living things in the

world, may influence the users to engage more in conducting the behavior (that is, ethical PESI practices).

Correa [77] has developed an understanding of competence, suggesting four types of skills required to perform effective social media operations: an operational skill, which denotes the ability to operate hardware and software; information skills, which refers to the capacity to search, select, and process information on a computer; strategic skills, which include the ability to use the computer and the Internet to attain particular goals; and formal skills, which refer to the capacity to navigate in a hypermedia context, e.g., Facebook [77] (p. 1097).

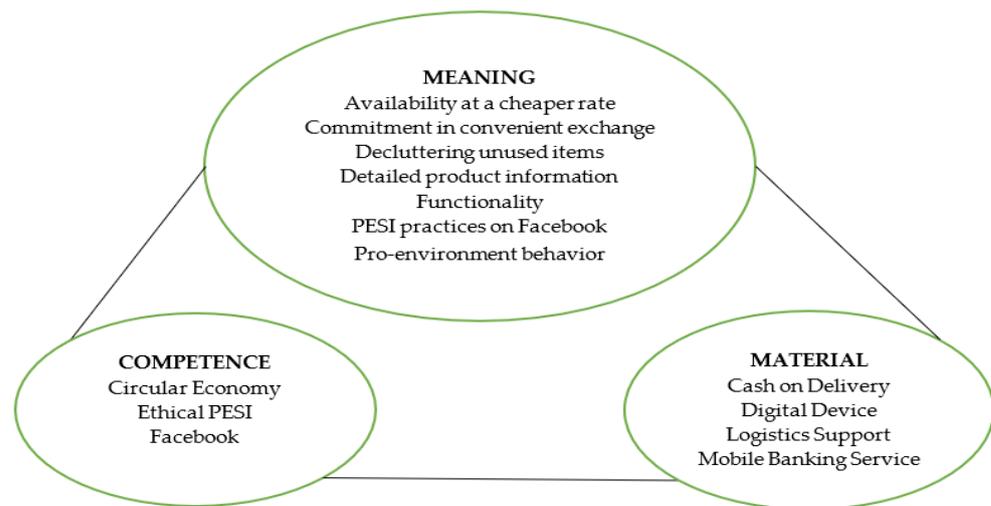
## 5. Results

From the transcripts, the following 14 codes have been derived based on respondents' answers, and the study labeled codes in the ways mentioned in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Codes for thematic analysis.

Code Labels	Wordings from the Respondents
Availability at a cheaper rate	"I can purchase a cellphone 40% lower than the market price".
Cash on Delivery	"I paid after receiving the product".
Circular Economy	"It's a zero-waste system."
Commitment in exchanging	"I post unedited pictures and videos in selling posts."
Decluttering unused items	"Through re-commerce, I am able to declutter redundant products."
Detailed product information	"I asked seller the brand name, buying price, expected selling price, seller location, mode of delivery and payment method. I also ask product raw pictures and video."
Digital device	"I avail smartphone for the re-commerce process."
Ethical PESI	"I post the awareness of reducing the virgin materials dependency on Facebook by promoting the virtue of second-hand products."
Facebook	"Facebook is a social media."
Fully Functioned Products	"I always seek usable second-hand products."
Logistics support	"I avail courier service for exchanging products."
Mobile banking service	"I prefer to use mobile banking service for paying and receiving payments."
PESI practices on Facebook	"I post pictures wearing myself newly purchased second-hand products on Facebook."
Pro-environmental behavior	"I encourage my family and friends to use second-hand products which would break the associated social taboo."

The study used the abovementioned codes under three themes, followed by the Social Practice Theory [30]. According to Braun and Clarke [24] (p. 84), a "theoretical" thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven. With reference to the Social Practice Theory [30], the study has categorized the 14 research codes under three themes entitled "meaning", "material", and "competence" (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Incorporation of codes in the themes of Social Practice Theory.

The thematic analysis used the SPT dimensions when coding the interview results. These results are presented in Tables 5–7 with some explanations.

**Table 5.** Thematic analysis of re-commerce meanings in social practice theory.

Code	Explanation
Availability at a cheaper rate	A respondent cannot afford the new product, so second-hand is the best option. The exchange of a second-hand product is a benevolent system. It helps individuals satisfy their demand at a lower price.
Commitment in the exchange	In their interviews, all respondents stated that they made a predetermined commitment and expected their counterpart to keep his/her commitment. Commitment depends on branding, especially in the case of electronics.
Decluttering	Respondents want to upgrade their products, so they often go to purchase a new one. Instead of leaving it idle, they prefer to sell it.
Detailed product information	Respondents agree on the need for detailed product information as a requirement for re-commerce.
Functionality	Our nine respondents who played the role of sellers stated that they intend to provide product description, information about any defect(s), reason for selling used item, product raw picture(s), product video, buying price, expected selling price, seller location, payment method, and mode of delivery while listing sell posts.
PESI practices(Communication)	Posting happy-faced photos of the buyers wearing second-hand products on Facebook, making status updates in support of exchanging and using second-hand products, and encouraging family and friends to join second-hand product exchange groups.
Promoting pro-environmental behavior	All respondents identified that social media (not limited to Facebook) helps to communicate the benefits of using second-hand items. Many respondents repost past stories related to second-hand exchange to preserve their own Facebook wall and often share them with connections to recall these benevolent ethical practices, which is also an important characteristic of PESI.

**Table 6.** Thematic analysis of re-commerce materials in social practice theory.

Code	Explanation
Cash on delivery	Payment upon delivery of the product is preferable. The buyer receives the goods from the courier service agent and pays him/her upon receiving the order. The courier service provider then sends money to the seller's mobile banking account.
Digital device	All respondents used smart phones, which support the use of Facebook, mobile banking apps, and courier service apps, all of which are crucial in re-commerce activities.
Logistics support	It can be either face to face product delivery at a predetermined place or through a courier service, which is the most popular system of product delivery all over the world, and the re-commerce process is not an exception. Some respondents report that buyers use their own vehicles to carry products or rent vans for carrying purposes.
Mobile banking service	Mobile banking services such as Swish has made the re-commerce process easy for both sellers and buyers. Both sellers and buyers prefer product delivery through a courier service.

**Table 7.** Thematic analysis of re-commerce competence in social practice theory.

Code	Explanation
Circular economy	Respondents report on understandings of a philosophy of turning waste to zero for promoting reusing products. Respondents also refer the circular economy as a cradle-to-cradle system, which fosters regenerative philosophy, a waste-less economy, zero-waste philosophy, waste reduction, extending product life, promoting upcycling, and environmental protection system.
Ethical PESI	In practicing ethical PESI, the market price of second-hand products should be considerably lower than the purchase price, which also ensures purchases for those who cannot afford new products. Many respondents considered ethical PESI an integral part of a circular economy, and they discussed ethical PESI and circular economy together.
Facebook	Synonymous terms such as "social media", "social networking site", "social community site", "e-commerce tool", "social network community system", "technological community", "social networking site", and "virtual community". Facebook facilitates the formation of personal and professional communities, which is critical for spreading the concept of a circular economy and ethical PESI practices.

Tables 5–7 present the key findings in the content analysis from the interviews with respondents concerning their views of re-commerce practices. Based on the interviewees' responses, some differences in answers from the interviewees from Sweden and Bangladesh were identified. In terms of pro-environment behavior, Swedish respondents were more concerned about the environmental impacts of using virgin materials in making a product than Bangladeshis. The reason was the differences between the countries in terms of environmental education and practices. Environmental education is quite well developed in the Swedish curriculum, which is imposed at all levels of education. In Bangladesh, there is no such intervention at the education level, and people obtain knowledge regarding environmental aspects only from various social campaigns.

Swedish respondents did not object to using the enlisted second-hand products, whereas Bangladeshi interviewees said that many people in Bangladesh considered exchanging second-hand products a *taboo*. This taboo often creates barriers in exchanging second-hand products in Bangladesh, which was unfamiliar in Sweden, for example, bullying second-hand product users on Facebook, family restrictions on using second-hand items imposed by parents or partners, a negative portrayal of society, and labeling second-hand

product users and sellers as “miser”. The conceptual knowledge of a circular economy and ethical PESI was quite common among Swedish interviewees, whereas Bangladeshi interviewees were not as familiar with these terminologies; however, they had heard synonymous terms on Facebook and in newspapers. Fraud was found quite usual in Bangladesh in terms of payment systems, and that is why Bangladeshi people preferred *cash on delivery* over sending money prior to receiving products. Swedish respondents preferred the mobile banking service, Swish, to pay the price than cash. In Bangladesh, *mobile banking services are very costly* (the charge is 1.85%), whereas this service is free of cost in Sweden, and that is another reason for preferring the cash on delivery option. Swedish interviewees preferred to exchange second-hand products *within their own city* or province (e.g., Uppsala), and Bangladeshi interviewees did not have such limitations, except for furniture and bicycles. While obtaining detailed product information, both countries’ interviewees preferred and emphasized brand names. Swedish interviewees preferred local brands when exchanging furniture and bicycles. They strongly preferred internationally reputed cellphone brands, (e.g., iPhone) and book publishers (e.g., Springer Nature). Bangladeshi users preferred local brands for furniture, attire (ethnic clothing), and jewelry (ethnic jewelry).

When analyzing the transcripts, using the SPT themes, it is clear that competence, material, and meaning, to an extent, are interdependent. The findings also imply that consumers have similar expectations in a re-commerce situation, in both a seller and buyer role. These results are reflected in the continued discussion.

## 6. Discussion

Social practices by Bangladeshi and Swedish Facebook users were related to the ethical PESI practices on Facebook to ensure the circular economy is presented in three elements of Social Practice Theory. From these research findings, it can be said that ethical PESI practice is expressed in day-to-day behavior, which is supported by the research findings of Reckwitz [78] (p. 256) and Warde [69]. This day-to-day behavior represents buying, using, and selling second-hand products, which may benefit many users. Unused products could have the opportunity to be used and loved once again, as a step towards a circular economy.

Consumer involvement in the circular economy process can be recognized through ethical PESI practices. According to Kirchherr et al. [8], microlevel engagement, e.g., the end consumer, is vital to ensure circularity. The second-hand product exchange practiced by consumers is, thus, significant in this aspect. As a consequence, re-commerce practices can lower the dependency on virgin materials by extending product life and reducing waste. The three dimensions of SPT are closely related to context-bound factors that enable a particular practice [25]. For example, the detailed product information shared by the seller of a particular product is important for a buyer to impose their beliefs on him/her. This detailed product information enhance their commitment and their belief in durability due to their positive brand image of a particular product [75]. Their preference of both local and international brands on the basis of the product category is based on a cosmopolitan-ism consumer disposition.

Detailed product information and commitment motivate the purchaser to pay the price by using a mobile banking service. The internet access of different digital devices required for the re-commerce process is considered vital for Sweden and Bangladesh, which ensures smooth ethical PESI practices [79]. This trust issue would enhance ethical PESI practices in Sweden and Bangladesh by engaging more people in exchanging used but functional products. These interconnected positive perceptions from all SPT dimensions ensure sustainable re-commerce practice on Facebook, which is conducive to the establishment of a circular economy.

Re-commerce practices can be seen as an alternative to traditional buying and selling practices of new products. According to Gatersleben et al. [56] and Spotswood et al. [73], an alternative offer to a particular social practice requires a psychological understanding of intention, action, and their antecedent forces. Ethical PESI practice helps buyers to

purchase fully functioning used products at a considerably lower cost than the market price. This helps to satisfy demands through product availability at a cheaper rate of ethical PESI practices from the buyer end. This cost-saving innovation [80] of cheaper-rate second-hand products facilitates the satisfaction of the demand of low-income consumers, and this virtue is not limited to emerging markets (e.g., Bangladesh) as per Arunachalam et al. [81] but is also applicable to a developed country (Sweden). At the same time, it helps to declutter unused items on the seller's end that are fully functional and capable of meeting the demand of others. This cradle-to-cradle system is a desirable way to establish the philosophy of a circular economy.

Lacking pro-environment behavior and PESI practices is considered a barrier to achieving the success of ethical PESI activities on a large scale. According to Shove and Pantzer [70] and Spotswood et al. [73], changing a practice requires breaking or challenging the existing links among its many interrelated elements. For this reason, social media promotion in favor of re-commerce practice is needed. From the analysis discussed in the last section, social media promotion covers the positive experience of using second-hand items, how re-commerce lowers the dependency of using virgin materials, and how re-commerce reduces waste by extending product life. Social media may also need to communicate and embrace negative experiences of re-commerce to ensure its continued development. These practices would probably change the negative mentality of people that are currently not engaged in re-commerce regarding second-hand item exchange. Social media promotion's role in changing social taboos can be considered the "unfreezing" stage in a transition process, as Lewin [82] describes it. Sharing past posts on Facebook provides a reminder of previous PESI behavior, which helps maintain PESI story preservation acts, as suggested by Lange and Dewitte [83] (p. 93).

## 7. Contributions

The contributions of the study have been found in many established studies related to the Social Practice Theory. The study focused on ethical PESI practices with the viewpoint of expected consumption behavior in a social practice framework supporting the works by Hess et al. [27]. Contributions are also made in a cultural-context-bound understanding of differences between an emerging market and a developed market context, mainly relating to individual values and the understanding of environmental values.

PESI practice is not an occasional practice, but rather a day-to-day part of users' lives, which relates to the studies of Reckwitz [78] and Warde [69] regarding the everyday practice of a particular social behavior. Ethical PESI practice is entirely an end-customer practice that influences the overall circular economy practice, which supports the research findings by Kirchherr et al. [8]. This study also reflects on the interconnectedness of three blocks of the SPTs suggested by Shove et al. [25] by discussing how re-commerce practice can be touched on several elements at a time. Re-commerce establishes itself as a complementary commercial system [7,56,73] to a traditional profit-based buying and selling system. This system is not for profit and is a benevolent cradle-to-cradle system. This study establishes the ethical PESI practice model of product availability at a cheaper rate that helps to make products accessible for low-income people in developed and emerging markets, which is an extended contribution of Arunachalam et al. and Shankar and Narang [80,81]. Additionally, the study established ethical PESI practice as a cost-saving innovation and marketing practice for both emerging markets and developed markets.

The study identified the brand preferences of Swedes and Bangladeshis while exchanging products and, based on their responses, the study noted that users' brand preferences depended on what kind of products they exchanged [75], and their product-wise brand preference was also considered part of this kind of behavior. This study also contributes to the existing literature by revealing the importance of social media promotion by demonstrating the importance of social identity as established by pro-environmental behavior in changing negative behavior, i.e., social taboo towards re-commerce by emphasizing behavioral change [70,73,82]. By considering the circular economy, Facebook, and ethical

PESI practice philosophy under the same research umbrella, this study contributes to the interdisciplinary nature of SPT theory mentioned by Spotswood et al. [73]. Empowering consumers to promote PESI practice is essential for assuring ethical consumption behavior in the community, and Facebook plays a diversified role in this aspect [83] with its digital devices [79].

## 8. Conclusions

### 8.1. Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The implications of the indicative results of this project can be discussed in terms of the design of policies to support transition processes, which requires interdisciplinary competence to initiate and implement change [73]. Competences in a circular economy relate to technical aspects (Facebook and re-commerce concepts), an understanding of characteristics of products (materials), and a psychological understanding of consumer behavior (meanings and competence).

This empirical study supports the study by Hess et al. [27] (p. 186) in their presentation of the importance of expected consumer behavior of a consumption practice of a selected territory. The expectation of sustainable re-commerce practice is entirely dependent on the interconnectedness of meaning, material, and competence. The positive practices of Facebook users are essential to ensure the development of a circular economy in societies.

The implications of the study build on the understandings that the future is circular [84] and PESI practice is a torchbearer of this philosophy to ensure sustainable development. Re-commerce practice is dependent on the meaning, material, and competence, and the sustainable outcome of this practice would ensure a better PESI process as part of a circular economy. Changing behavioral patterns of using second-hand products in everyday life is desirable to satisfy sustainable consumption ranging from individual life to societal life at large in Sweden and Bangladesh communities. This ethical PESI practice also provides a sustainable model for low-income consumers in Sweden and Bangladesh.

Facebook plays a vital role in designing and changing this behavioral pattern by promoting the advantages of using second-hand products in light of a circular economy and re-commerce. However, social media is currently not the norm for all consumers. Barriers to social media also serve as barriers to re-commerce in this regard.

### 8.2. Practical Implications

The phenomenon in focus in this project, re-commerce, has implications for several practices in society and stakeholders above and beyond the consumer level. Expressed in terms of SDGs, ethical PESI practice in Sweden and Bangladeshi society accelerates the responsible consumption pattern of people (SDG 12). These products need to be built to last and branded as such. Additionally, regarding production, lowering the dependency on virgin materials and extending product life would have a positive impact on reducing environmental degradation, which would aid in the fight against climate change (SDG 13). It is worth keeping in mind that this study does not include the impact of logistics and environmental effects of transport. That needs to be considered as well.

PESI practices directly influence the circular economy, which reduces waste to a great extent. This waste reduction contributes to the protection of land-based and aquatic life (SDGs 15 and 14). These implications require a more interdisciplinary nature of research, which would consider multiple fields of study under the same research umbrella.

### 8.3. Limitations

This study does not generate enough understanding to enable an empirical generalization. Choices related to approach as well as the execution of research set boundaries. Apart from Facebook, there are other social media, e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, which were not considered. The study considered only one theory, i.e., the "Social Practice Theory". A combined theoretical approach would have added nuances to the picture. The study considered only six product categories, all of which are of the lasting type. Including living

products (for example, house plants) would have added additional nuances to conditions for re-commerce practices to take place. This study asked for the brand preference of interviewees while exchanging the considered product categories. An in-depth study regarding their motive for choosing a particular brand would be a contributory study in the pursuit of a greater understanding of the ethical PESI practice of individual consumers.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, researchers had to conduct all interviews online. No personal interaction, no face-to-face dialogues, or observations were possible. Virtual connections limit the data collection dimensions to capture practices. From a practical point of view, finding a convenient time to meet via Zoom was very difficult, which also made the interview process slower. The pandemic also forced the study to limit its number of respondents to 32, as it was not possible to conduct interviews at convenient places for the interviewees. Many interviewees were not comfortable on video calls or forming a pair with an unknown person. Thus, the research conducted in this study was based on 32 respondents within a limited timeframe.

The study did not consider the two countries' cultural, social, political, demographic, and other external environmental factors influencing the engagement of ethical PESI practices to ensure the circular economy. The study agreed to the fact that these factors could be considered to obtain a bigger picture of the ethical PESI practices in Bangladesh and Sweden.

This study was based on interviews with young people who are familiar with the use of social media. If re-commerce is seen as an integrated part of the circular economy worth developing, institutional contexts for consumer groups with fewer social media skills and attitudes need to be investigated.

#### *8.4. Future Research Directions*

There is no doubt that the area of consumer behavior needs further investigations considering a contemporary ontological understanding of the circular economy. The environmental awareness in populations that supports emerging market growth calls for research that investigates resource-efficient and transparent systems to extend product use. The authors would like to suggest further research on this topic with a bigger sample size and cross-country studies with more than two countries. The study would also indicate future research on how the countries' external environmental factors can influence ethical PESI practices in striving for a circular economy. Future research might be based on how place-related consumer dispositions might influence ethical PESI practices. We suggest continued research concerning the role of social media in ethical consumerism, big data analysis, blockchain technology, and artificial intelligence as enabling factors for re-commerce practices and technologies for the circular economy.

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