

THE DYNAMICS OF THRIFT MARKET IN CONTEMPORARY LAGOS

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Abstract

The recent surge of finished and fairly used items from overseas especially from Asian (South Korean, Japan and China), Western Europe and North Americas have created a market for thrift trading in Lagos, this new culture reflects broader dynamics of urban consumption, informal economy, and survival strategies in African cities. This paper examines how thrift market has evolved into a major street trading in Lagos, driven by socioeconomic realities such as unemployment, low purchasing power, and the high cost of new commodities. The paper highlights the role of global trade flow, the importation of “okirika” goods, the trend that shapes consumer behaviour, prudentially, in the downturn economy, the practice sustains livelihoods for traders and buyers alike. The study is delineated to two important thrift markets in Lagos, Tejuosho, Yaba and Arena Oshodi. The research shows how the two markets are markedly linked and sustained rural and urban livelihoods. The research is suited within the theoretical framework of informal market economies, showing how secondhand trading contributes to urban resilience, development of informal street trading and market structure in Lagos, and consumer utilitarianism, using the least available resource for optimum maximization and economic pragmatism especially for downtrodden. Findings reveal that while the markets provide affordable alternatives and employment opportunities, it also raises questions about waste dumping, sustainability, and how what has been recycled as waste turned into commodities Lagos. Ultimately, the paper underscores Tejuosho and Arena market’s significance as a microcosm of Africa’s informal economic networks and its intersections with prudential acts in downward economies.

Key words: Economic pragmatism, Okirika, Optimization, Prudential, Thrift, Utilitarianism

Introduction

The paper examines the dynamics of thrift in Lagos markets with specific focus on Tejuosho market and Arena Market. Lagos is often referred to as a Nigerian mega city, to some extent as a world city, with over 20 million people. Tejuosho Market, established in the 1980s, initially functioned as a wholesale (retail) market primarily dealing in new textiles, clothing, and household items (Akinlade, 2015). However, the market's character began to shift dramatically in the late 1990s and early 2000s, coinciding with Nigeria's economic liberalization policies and the subsequent influx of used goods from Europe and North America. Today, the new Tejuosho, J.S. Reality (2014) reported has improved infrastructures like multi storey lock up shops, parking spaces, connecting escalators, equipped fire station, police station, etc. The NATION 2013 reported that, the Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Mr. Toyin Ayinde, that Tejuosho was built on partnership of FirstBank (private) and Lagos state government (public).

Arena market on the other hand is also a public-private partnership between the Nigerian army and Woobs Resources Ltd. Situated in Oshodi, the heart of Lagos, this market fosters trades especially as it concerns wholesaler second-hand goods. Just like Tejuosho is an outlet for different categories of fairly used items imported overseas. Arena market is furnished with military security, enough gallery for shopping, bank, displayed window shopping, parking spaces, selling imported and locally made items like shoes, clothes. From Arena, thrift in Yaba is consummated. Arena serves as a whole seller's spot for different categories of second-hand goods, Arena is regarded by a trader in Tejuosho, Peter Umuunnakwe as "a place where his importers offload items he sells".

The emergence of these informal markets in Lagos did not come as an isolated issue but interconnected with several factors, Nigeria's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) implemented in the 1980s and 1990s which led to currency devaluation, reduced purchasing power, and increased importation of second-hand goods as alternatives to expensive new items (Brooks & Simon, 2012). Today, Nigerian youth drawing into these markets is caused by teaming poverty, means to survive in the stagnant economy, and easy entry into the market system, a young trader Chibuike narrated, "I came to Tejuosho market, because the country is not sure for me now to start to hustle on time and trading is not hard to learn".

Simultaneously, the rise of charitable donations from Western countries, and private thrift companies like, British Flag, Hottest, DM, Nnenna, West ministers, Precircle, created a steady supply chain of quality used goods that found their ways into Nigerian markets. These goods are sorted, standardized, commercialised in larger quantities and qualities by these thrift companies than charitable organizations, as a prominent importer Mr. Kalu remarked, "we do business not charity"

In Lagos, thrift shopping extends beyond mere economic necessity to encompass cultural practices, social identity formation, and creative expression. The local terminology reflects this complexity: "okrika" derives from Okirika town in Rivers State, historically a major port for imported used clothing, while "bend-down-select" humorously captures the physical act of searching through piles of goods to find desired items (Norris, 2010), "boiskoro", a Yoruba word meaning shift to the corner, the act done by the buyer when trying to pick desired items.

The Nigerian thrift culture differs significantly from Western conceptualizations of second-hand shopping. While Western thrift culture often emphasizes environmental consciousness, vintage aesthetics, or countercultural resistance to consumerism, Nigerian thrift culture primarily emerged from economic pragmatism but has evolved to incorporate elements of creativity, resourcefulness, and social mobility aspiration (Jennings, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing significance of second-hand markets in Nigeria's urban economy, academic research on specific market ecosystems like Tejuosho and Arena market remained unharnessed. Existing studies on Nigerian informal markets have primarily focused on traditional commodities, agricultural products, etc with insufficient attention to the specialized phenomenon of thrift markets (Ajakaiye & Jerome, 2006). The lack of comprehensive research on Tejuosho and Arena thrift economy creates several knowledge gaps that this research is aimed to unravel. First, there is insufficient understanding of the market's operational mechanisms, including supply chain dynamics, pricing strategies, quality control measures, and customer acquisition methods. Second, the socioeconomic profiles of vendors and consumers, their motivations, challenges, and success factors remain largely undocumented.

Third, the environmental and social impacts of the market's activities have not been systematically assessed.

These knowledge gaps have practical implications for policy development, urban planning, and economic development strategies. Similarly, development organizations seeking to support informal market operators lack evidence-based insights to guide their interventions. The timing of this research is particularly significant given several contemporary developments. The COVID-19 pandemic's economic impact has increased unemployment and reduced disposable income for many Nigerians, potentially driving greater demand for affordable secondhand goods (Ozili, 2020). Additionally, environmental awareness among Nigerian youths, influenced by global climate change discourse and local environmental challenges, made purchase of thrift beyond economic necessity (Adebisi et al., 2023). The rise of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, has also transformed how thrift goods are marketed and sold, creating new business models and expanding market reach beyond physical boundaries.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is the second phase of this research. This research employs an integrated theoretical framework that combines insights from multiple disciplines to comprehensively understand thrift business in contemporary Lagos. The framework recognises that thrift culture operates at the intersection of economic necessity, and the structure of Nigerian market system. The paper adopts the theory of informal market economy and Consumer Utilitarianism.

Evolution and Contemporary Developments in Informal Economy Theory

Informal economy theory is associated with British Anthropologist, Keith Hart *in 1973*, in breaking ethnographic work in Ghana, where he observed urban dwellers creating income-generating opportunities outside formal employment structures. Hart notes that many Urban dwellers survived through self-employment and small scaled entrepreneurial activities such as shoe shining, street vending, tailoring, food hawking, carpentry and petty trading. These activities operate outside of government's control and many a time they are not taxed.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) expanded Hart's framework in the 1970s, emphasizing the survival strategies of urban poor populations in informal activities characterized by low productivity, limited capital, and the absence of formal regulation (ILO, 1972). However, this perspective underestimated the innovative capacity and economic significance of informal enterprises. Hernando de Soto's (1989) influential work "The Other Path" also fundamentally challenged negative perceptions of informal economies arguing that informal activities represent entrepreneurial responses to excessive state regulation and bureaucratic obstacles.

Contemporary scholars, Chen's (2012) gives comprehensive theoretical framework conceptualizes informal economies with four adaptive mechanisms:

- i. Institutional flexibility: Informal markets develop flexible institutional arrangements that can adapt quickly to changing conditions without formal regulatory approval.
- ii. Social embeddedness: Economic transactions in informal markets are deeply embedded in social relationships. Trust, reputation, and personal networks become crucial for market functioning.

- iii. Resource optimization: Informal entrepreneurs develop innovative strategies for maximizing limited resources. This includes creative use of space, flexible labor arrangements, and efficient supply chain management that minimizes transaction costs.
- iv. Innovation under Constraints: Limited access to formal credit, technology, and regulatory support stimulates innovation as entrepreneurs develop creative solutions to operational challenges. This constraint-induced innovation often produces more efficient and sustainable business models than formal enterprises.

Theory of Consumer's Utilitarianism

We developed "Consumer Utilitarianism" to reflect the complex motivations identified in consumer behavior theory, including economic benefits, cultural expression, and increasingly high level of satisfaction derived from goods. Utilitarianism as an ethical principle is developed by Jeremy Bentham, a consequentialist ethical theory which argues that 'people choose actions that provide happiness for greater number,' even with a little effort to optimize a greater result. Applying this to the socioeconomic situation in a developing economy, it means that a developing economy will choose production that will optimise greater happiness with little resources. Bringing it home, approximately 80% of Nigerians, according to Aljazeera.com by Mohammed Adow and Chris Arsenault that use secondhand materials do so as a rational consumer's decision that is based on the satisfaction (utility) within their meagre budget. This consequentialist theory is also guided by consumer behavior by understanding why individuals choose to purchase secondhand goods that is durable, quality, satisfying over new materials imported from China that is not durable, like Chiamaka, a Unilag testify, "I choose Ok, because it is lasting more than Chinese tailored clothes", "Ok", here, is abbreviation for okirika or second handed materials imported overseas.

However, Consumer's Utilitarianism is criticized for accounting pleasure over value, the consumer's pursuit for happiness may be detrimental to the real value of the product, economic fairness or cultural identity. For instance, when a consumer picks a fairly used cloth with a meagre amount, the buyer derived a satisfaction of getting a cloth cheaper, but does not look at the value added to make a unit to make that cloth, the amount of labour the factory worker imputed, material worth of production is not considered. Also, the idea of obtaining immediate satisfactions from foreign used cloth can be a deprivation in creating a viable fashion industry in the country that is culturally embedded, also downplaying industrialization.

In all, consumer unitarianism applies to economic experience of working-class Nigerians, who make meagre salary yet want to satisfy their yearning in the fashion world.

Literature Review

Nigerian Market Studies, Arena and Tejuosho Market

Scholarship on Nigerian markets has a rich history dating back to colonial anthropological studies and early post-independence economic research. Hodder and Ukwu's (1969) comprehensive analysis of periodic markets among the Yoruba and Ibo peoples provided foundational insights into indigenous market systems, including their spatial organization, temporal patterns, and cultural significance. These early studies revealed sophisticated market networks that connected rural producers with urban consumers through complex systems of periodic markets, itinerant traders, and seasonal cycles. The research documented how traditional markets served not only economic functions but also social and cultural roles, providing spaces for information exchange, social interaction, and cultural performance. The colonial period introduced new market dynamics through the establishment of permanent

market structures, the introduction of currency, and the integration of Nigerian markets into global trade networks. However, many traditional practices persisted, creating hybrid market systems that combined indigenous and colonial elements.

On Tejuosho market, the article “The Poor Also Must Live! Market Demolition, Gentrification and the Quest for Survival in Lagos State” by Gbenga Komolafe (2006) asserts that Tejuosho market was completely rebuilt by Alhaji Lateef Jakande in the early 1980s. The market was, however, gutted by mysterious fire twice in 2004 and 2007, causing traders to lose their goods and property. The Lagos state government subsequently embarked on a reconstruction, the new Tejuosho market, commissioned on 26 August 2014 by the then governor of Lagos state, Governor Raji Fashola. The market has sprawling five-storey building, comprising no fewer than 4,000 shops, a police post, a fire station, and a parking space that can accommodate 800 vehicles at a time.

On Arena market, Gbenga (2016) the edifice is under a leased arrangement between the Nigerian Army, the owner of the market site, and the Woobs Resources limited which granted a concession right to construct, manage and operate the market for the period of 25 years on a build, operate, and transfer basis. Located on the part of the market was a mammy belonging to the Army, the mammy market was vacated after the bombing incident in Ikeja Cantonment Armoury that claimed lives and massive destruction of physical structure. The market has modern facilities including, banks, restaurants, parking spaces, facility management offices, neat public toilets, and bathrooms, abattoirs, incinerator, electricity transformer, modern refuse system, boreholes and water storage facilities. Despite all, Gbenga posited that the reason for low occupation was due to high rental costs ranging from #300,000 per annum, while the lease for five years goes about #1.25 million.

The study of women's participation in informal trade revealed how market activities provide crucial income-generating opportunities for women excluded from formal employment. Olukoju's (2004) research on Lagos market development documented the transformation of traditional markets into modern commercial centers, examining how spatial constraints, population growth, and changing consumption patterns have reshaped market organization. Much recent studies have examined how Nigerian markets have incorporated new technologies, including mobile phone, electronic payment systems, and social media marketing. These technological adaptations demonstrate the innovative capacity of informal market systems.

Informal Economies and Urban Developmental Studies

Urban development theory has evolved significantly in its understanding of informal economies, moving from marginalization and eradication approaches to recognition and integration strategies. Early modernization theory viewed informal activities as temporary phenomena that would disappear with economic development and urbanization. This perspective influenced urban planning policies that sought to formalize or eliminate informal economic activities.

The failure of formalization policies and the persistent growth of informal economies led to new theoretical approaches that recognize informal activities as permanent features of urban economic systems. Roy's (2005) concept of "urban informality" argues that informality is not a separate sector but a mode of urbanization that exists in dynamic relationship with formal planning and governance systems. This perspective emphasizes that informal economies are not simply responses to formal sector failures but represent alternative organization that may

be more appropriate for specific economic needs. In rapidly growing cities like Lagos, informal markets often provide more flexible and responsive economic systems than formal institutions.

Laden in urban developmental studies is spatial economic theory provides insights into why thrift markets emerge in particular locations and how spatial proximity creates agglomeration benefits. Marshall's (1890) original formulation of agglomeration economics identified three sources of benefits: labor market pooling, input sharing, and knowledge spillovers. In the context of thrift markets, agglomeration benefits manifest differently than in manufacturing industries. Agglomeration effect in thrift business poll vendors, skilled tailors, etc. Input sharing includes shared infrastructure, storage facilities, and transportation networks. Knowledge spillovers involve information about fashion trends, pricing strategies, and customer preferences. The spatial organization of thrift markets also creates benefits for consumers for easy comparison of goods in different shops. When multiple vendors selling similar goods are located in close proximity, consumers can efficiently compare prices, quality, and selection.

Secondhand Markets: Global and Developing Countries Perspectives

Secondhand materials are valued different in the developed economies than the developing economies. While in the developed economies secondhand is seen as a vintage aestheticism, a restoration of waste and environmental friendliness, in the developing countries in Africa, it is seen as a stigma, coping mechanism for deficit budget or economic pragmatism, and assurance for quality goods from the developed countries, instead of Chinese poorly manufactured mass production.

Studies on secondhand markets has expanded significantly since the 1990s, driven by growing interest in sustainable consumption, circular economy principles, and alternative economic practices. Gregson and Crewe's (2003) ethnographic study of car boot sales in England provided foundational insights into the social and cultural dimensions of secondhand exchange. Research in developed countries has identified multiple motivations for secondhand shopping, including economic benefits, environmental consciousness, resistance to mainstream consumerism, and the pleasure of finding unique items (Guiot & Roux, 2010). This research represents a lifestyle choice rather than an economic necessity. The European context has produced extensive research on vintage and antique markets, emphasizing the cultural construction of value and the role of taste in determining desirability (Crewe & Gregson, 1998).

Again, secondhand is conceptualized as a circular economy, popularized by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013), provides environmental implications of secondhand markets. Secondhand markets contribute to circularity through several mechanisms:

- i. **Product Lifecycle Extension:** Secondhand markets extend product lifecycles beyond the first user, reducing the need for new production and associated environmental impacts.
- ii. **Value Recovery:** Secondhand markets recover residual value from products that would otherwise be discarded, creating economic incentives for waste reduction and resource conservation.
- iii. **Demand Substitution:** By providing affordable alternatives to new goods, secondhand markets reduce demand for new production, thereby reducing environmental impacts associated with manufacturing, packaging, and transportation.

- iv. **Material Flow Optimization:** Secondhand markets create efficient systems for redistributing goods based on changing consumer needs and preferences, optimizing material flows within the economy.

The environmental impact of secondhand markets also depends on disposal practices for unsold goods. If significant quantities of secondhand goods end up in landfills, the environmental benefits may be reduced. Research on textile waste management in developing countries has revealed inadequate disposal systems that limit the environmental benefits of secondhand markets (Norum, 2017).

Social Meanings and Stigma

Works on secondhand consumption has also examined the social meanings and potential stigma associated with purchasing used goods. In many cultures, newness is associated with status and success, while used goods may carry negative connotations of poverty or contamination. However, research has revealed that these meanings are culturally constructed and can change over time. In the Nigerian context, research on secondhand clothing markets has revealed complex and evolving social meanings. While "okrika" clothing was initially associated with poverty and desperation, changing economic conditions and cultural attitudes have made secondhand shopping more socially acceptable across different income levels.

The role of social media in reshaping attitudes toward secondhand consumption has become increasingly important. Research on fashion blogging and social media marketing has documented how influencers and style enthusiasts use digital platforms to promote thrift shopping as creative, sustainable, and fashionable. Research on fashion and identity in African contexts has emphasized the creative ways consumers adapt global fashion trends to local cultural contexts and personal preferences. The concept of "sartorial citizenship" has emerged from research on clothing and identity in postcolonial contexts, describing how individuals use clothing choices to navigate between local and global cultural identities. This concept is particularly relevant to understanding thrift culture in Nigeria.

Fashion, Cultural Expression and identity formation in Nigerian market.

Research on consumption and identity formation has emphasized how consumer choices communicate social identity and cultural values. In the context of thrift shopping, this process may be particularly complex because secondhand goods carry histories and cultural meanings from their previous owners. McCracken's (1986) analysis of cultural meaning transfer in consumer goods provides a framework for understanding how secondhand goods acquire new meanings through the consumption process. This framework suggests that consumers actively transform the cultural meanings of secondhand goods through their selection, modification, and use practices

Research specifically focused on clothing and fashion markets in Nigeria has revealed complex dynamics of consumer preferences, cultural identity, and economic constraints. Jennings's (2019) ethnographic study of secondhand clothing markets in northern Nigeria emphasized how consumers navigate between traditional expectations and global fashion influences through their clothing choices. This paper reveals that clothing consumption in Nigeria serves multiple functions beyond basic utility, including social positioning, cultural expression, and identity formation. The availability of diverse styles through secondhand markets enables consumers to experiment with different identities and express individual creativity within cultural constraints. The concept of "fashion citizenship" has emerged from this research, describing how access to diverse clothing styles through secondhand markets enables broader

participation in global fashion cultures. This participation is not merely imitative but involves creative adaptation and local innovation that produces distinctly Nigerian fashion expressions.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods research design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide comprehensive understanding of Tejuosho and Arena thrift market dynamics. The research design follows an explanatory sequential approach, beginning with quantitative data collection to establish baseline understanding of market characteristics, followed by qualitative investigation to explore underlying mechanisms, motivations, and contextual factors.

Study Population and Sampling Strategy

The study population includes all stakeholders involved in Tejuosho and Arena thrift market ecosystem: vendors, customers, suppliers, market administrators, government officials, and support service providers.

Key Informant Sample: Purposive sampling will be used to select 30 key informants representing different aspects of the market ecosystem, including market leaders, government officials, supplier representatives, and long-term vendors with deep institutional knowledge.

Quantitative Data Collection Method

- Structured surveys of 100 questionnaires for customers, covering demographic characteristics, economic outcomes, and market perceptions, collected from the University of Lagos Students.

Qualitative Data Collection:

In-depth interviews with 20 vendors, during market visits, with quotas established for different demographic groups (age, gender, income level, education) to ensure representative coverage.

- Focus group discussions with different customer segments to explore shared experiences and collective perspectives
- Ethnographic observation during extended field visits to understand market functioning, social interactions, and cultural practices
- Digital ethnography analyzing social media content related to Tejuosho thrift shopping

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis: SPSS software for descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including correlation analysis, t-tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis approach following framework, with coding conducted using NVivo software.

Mixed-Methods Integration: Integration of findings through joint displays, comparison of results, and development of meta-inferences that synthesize insights from both methodological approaches.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics and Sample Profile

Vendor Demographics and Business Characteristics (n=20)



The respondent traders were 65 and 35% female and male respectively, which is representative of the gendered retail trade in the Nigerian informal markets. The age distribution were 60 years and below 20years, and with 50 percent of the total population in their 30s to 45. There was a difference in the level of education as 30% had primary education, 55 had secondary education and 15 had tertiary education.

Table 1: Vendor Demographic and Business Profile

Characteristic	Category	Percentage	Frequency (n=20)
Gender	Female	65%	13
	Male	35%	7
Age	< 30 years	25%	5
	30-45 years	50%	10
	> 60 years	25%	5
Education	Primary	30%	6
	Secondary	55%	11
	Tertiary	15%	3
Biz Scale (Turnover)	Small	60%	12
	Medium	35%	7
	Large	5%	1

Customer Demographics and Shopping Patterns (n=100)

Analysis of the customer survey data revealed the following demographic characteristics and shopping habits.

Table 4.2: Customer Demographic and Shopping Profile

Characteristic	Category	Percentage	Frequency (n=100)
Gender	Female	58%	58
	Male	42%	42
Age	18-29 years	31%	31
	30-45 years	42%	42
	> 60years	27%	27
Shopping Frequency	Daily/Weekly	29%	29
	Monthly	44%	44
	Occasionally	27%	27

Quantitative Analysis: Customer Motivations

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Items

Analysis of the 20 Likert-scale items from the customer survey (n=100) confirmed that economic motivations are the primary driver of thrift shopping. As shown in Table 4.3, items related to affordability and budget management received the highest mean scores.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Key Survey Items (n=100)

Motivation Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
Affordability drives shopping	4.40	0.70
Helps manage the budget	4.35	0.75
Saves significant money	4.25	0.82
Access unaffordable brands	4.10	0.88
Thrift shopping is enjoyable	4.05	0.85
Part of Nigerian creativity	4.00	0.80
Can't maintain a lifestyle without	3.95	1.10
Express personal style	3.85	0.92
Thrift goods are of good quality	3.85	0.95
Find unique/rare items	3.90	0.95
... <i>Environmental items</i> ...	...	...
Motivated by the environment	3.25	1.20

Factor Analysis of Motivations

Factor analysis was conducted to identify underlying motivation constructs. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation revealed four clear factors after recoding and refinement, explaining 68.3% of the total variance.

- **Factor 1: Economic Necessity** (Affordability, Budget Management, Savings)
- **Factor 2: Cultural Expression & Enjoyment** (Uniqueness, Enjoyment, Personal Style, Creativity)
- **Factor 3: Social Influence** (Fashion Trends, Social Inclusion, Peer Groups)
- **Factor 4: Environmental Consciousness** (Waste Reduction, Sustainability, Product Life)

Qualitative Analysis: Vendor Interviews and Market Dynamics

20 vendors interviewed for insights into the market's operations, challenges, and opportunities.

Market Ecosystem and Supply Chain

A Vendor, Hippolithus, Igbodika described a complex, multi-tiered supply chain. According to Hippolithus, goods are primarily sourced in bulk from distributors or importers in Areana market, Oshodi. The traders in Arena market import from overseas either through Apapa sea

port or Cotonou of which they will smuggle into the country. Onyebuchi Nnanna confided to us that In Buhari led government, due to intensive border marking, some traders were so unwilling to take the risk of crossing border, owing to the seizing, theft, robbing on Seme border. With time, many Tejuosho traders stopped going to Cotonou as those importers in Cotonou who many were Nigerians too found their way to Arena market. The Arena -Yaba market made it easier for middlemen to procure goods without hassle, or fear of customs, although the process is relatively cost than when they were buying in Cotonou, one vendor, reported," the closure of Seme border has opened more economic door for the importers in Arena."

Socioeconomic Impact

According to vendor one medium sized vendor, "each good month I am able to earn up to N300,000 after capital removal". The business also hires at least one apprentice.

Primary Challenges: Infrastructure and Governance.

- **Infrastructure:** 18 out of 20 vendors cited poor electricity, bad drainage, and inadequate parking as major constraints. *"The flood, when it rains, is our biggest problem. It chases customers away and spoils our goods,"* one vendor lamented.
- **Governance & Taxation:** Vendors expressed frustration with multiple levies and inconsistent enforcement. *"Local government, market association, even the youth leaders... everyone comes with their ticket. It is too much,"* explained another vendor.

Digital Transformation

Digital adoption is emerging but uneven. Younger, more educated vendors are leveraging WhatsApp and Instagram for sales. *"I post my new items on my status. My customers call me to set things aside before they come,"* said a vendor under 30.

Integrated Discussion: Synthesizing Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

1. Economic Pragmatism is the Core Driver: The quantitative data overwhelmingly identify affordability as the key motivation (Mean=4.4). This is complemented by qualitative data where vendors consistently observed that customers are "looking for quality but they don't have plenty of money."

2. Cultural Expression is a Significant Secondary Motive: While economic factors lead, the cultural value of finding unique items and expressing personal style (Mean=3.85) is strong. Vendors corroborate this, noting that some customers are "not just buying for need, but for style... to look different."

3. Environmental Benefits are Incidental, Not Intentional: The survey showed environmental motivations were the weakest (Mean=3.25). Interviews confirmed that while vendors and consumers acknowledge the practice is sustainable, it is rarely a primary reason for engagement.

4. Infrastructure and Policy are Critical Constraints: The findings explain potential limitation in the quantitative data. While the survey captured motivations, the interviews revealed that *external factors* like poor infrastructure and multiple taxes are the most

significant barriers to growth for vendors, which ultimately affect prices and accessibility for consumers.

Unexpected Findings

- **Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer:** The apprenticeship model was found to be a key mechanism for skills transfer, with several vendors having started as apprentices themselves.
- **Social Role of the Market:** The market serves as a social hub, not just a commercial space, where relationships between vendors and regular customers are strong.

Research Findings: The evidence research finding analysis of the number of vendors who participated in the study (n=20) revealed a female-dominated trade (65%) with varying educational levels, with a majority (60%) operating at a small scale yet earning good levels of income with potential earnings of N300,000 month-end after expenses, reported by medium-scale vendors. The goods are sourced through bulk distributors in the major ports in Lagos and Cotonou who have connections with the international suppliers in Europe and North America.

Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

The study presents factual findings on the role played by informal markets in promoting the concept of the circular economy, even without any particular intentions to be environmentally friendly, implying that policies of the circular economy must consider and promote the prevailing informal systems instead of relying solely on formal recycling efforts.

For urban development policy, the research demonstrates that thrift markets serve crucial economic and social functions that formal urban planning often overlooks. Urban development policies should recognize informal markets as legitimate components of urban economic systems.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

The research shows that thrift culture in Tejuosho and Arena market are complex informal economic system with several important roles in the urban economy of Lagos. The study proves that thrift shopping goes socioeconomic necessity into cultural manifestations, ecological advantages, and coping economic strategies. The results dispute formal-informal polarities and show how informal markets develop institutional structures that can be more flexible than formal systems. The study unveils the interplay of various consumer's motivation from economic necessity, cultural expression and newfound environmental awareness.

The promotion of thrift markets should be supported by new policy designs that are supportive in terms of infrastructure, but that leave flexibility and adaptability, which make informal markets effective. The findings have significant implications for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to poverty reduction (SDG 1), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and climate action (SDG 13).

Recommendations

1. There is urgent need for infrastructure investment. The government needs to focus on consistent power supply, drainage, proper parking space, and sanitation.
2. The reform on the market governance structure by creation coherent tax structure not the multi-tax regime and lessen bureaucracy. Establish one-stop shops for market-related services such as registration of business, payment of taxes, and taking up of permits.
3. Enhancing market savings and credit cooperative societies so that they can access capital to grow their business and access emergency capitals and appropriate microfinance that meet vendor needs with flexible repayment schedules aligned to irregular income patterns
4. Establish structured apprenticeship systems that institutionalises the current skills transfer by Integrating informal economy studies into urban planning, economics, and business education curricula.
5. Engage in public-private partnerships to provide digital infrastructure and training, while developing affordable pricing structures, making digital services accessible to small-scale informal vendors.

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