



## COLLABORATIVE FASHION CONSUMPTION: DIGITAL RESALE PLATFORMS AS ENABLERS OF CIRCULAR FASHION

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*Abstract: This paper examines digital resale platforms as key enablers of circular fashion within the broader field of collaborative fashion consumption. It starts from the premise that the fashion industry is moving, albeit unevenly, away from linear models based on ownership, rapid turnover, and disposal towards more circular systems organised around reuse, redistribution, and extended garment utilisation. In this transition, digital resale platforms are analysed as operational infrastructures that keep garments in circulation through authentication, pricing, listing, recirculation, and consumer interaction. The paper focuses on the organisational conditions that make resale viable at scale, including trust-building mechanisms, reverse logistics, quality control, product data management, and customer engagement. Methodologically, it draws on a qualitative comparison of two platform logics: a peer-to-peer model illustrated by Ganni and a buy-back/consignment model illustrated by Patagonia Worn Wear. The analysis further situates resale within the evolving European Union policy environment, particularly with regard to sustainable textiles, digital product information, consumer protection, and platform accountability. A brief contextual observation of the Moldovan market suggests that resale and exchange are currently mediated mainly through fragmented social-media channels rather than structured circular platforms, which points to the relevance of an open, multi-brand digital model with stronger traceability and customer-protection functions. It argues that digital resale platforms are not marginal secondary channels, but strategic infrastructures through which circular fashion acquires commercial, organisational, and regulatory form. In this way, the article contributes to current debates by linking platform-level resale models to the broader governance transformations shaping circular fashion in the European Union.*

**Key words:** collaborative consumption; circular fashion; resale platforms; reverse logistics; Digital Product Passport; EU textiles policy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Circular fashion is emerging as a major direction in the contemporary fashion industry. In response to the environmental and economic limits of the linear 'take-make-dispose' model, businesses, policymakers, and consumers are paying greater attention to approaches that extend



product life, reduce waste, and retain value within product cycles. Within this wider transition, collaborative fashion consumption has gained importance as a practical expression of circularity, shifting attention from ownership towards reuse, redistribution, and prolonged garment utilisation.

Among the mechanisms associated with collaborative fashion consumption, digital resale platforms have become especially prominent as enablers of circular fashion. They translate circular principles into market practice by supporting authentication, listing, pricing, resale, and consumer interaction, thereby extending product lifecycles and generating value beyond the sale of newly manufactured goods. Cases such as Ganni and Patagonia Worn Wear demonstrate how resale can be organised through distinct platform logics while remaining embedded in brand strategy.

This development matters because it reflects a broader redefinition of value creation in fashion. Under linear systems, value is tied mainly to the constant production and sale of new items. By contrast, circular fashion seeks to preserve the value embedded in garments for as long as possible through repeated use, repair, resale, remaking, and related forms of recirculation. In this sense, digital resale platforms function not as marginal sales channels, but as strategic infrastructures connecting consumer behaviour, brand management, and circular business innovation.

At the same time, resale platforms are shaped by wider regulatory and governance changes. In the European Union, the policy agenda on sustainable and circular textiles is evolving rapidly, with growing emphasis on product traceability, consumer protection, environmental claims, online platform accountability, and digital product information. Against this background, the article examines digital resale platforms as enablers of circular fashion, focusing on their operating logic, trust requirements, and policy implications within the emerging EU regulatory environment. Methodologically, it applies a qualitative comparative reading of two brand-led resale configurations, represented by Ganni and Patagonia Worn Wear.

The originality of this article lies in bringing together two levels of analysis that are often discussed separately: the operational logic of digital resale platforms and the emerging European Union regulatory framework for circular and digitalised fashion markets. In this sense, the paper does not approach resale merely as a secondary sales practice, but as a form of circular infrastructure shaped by platform design, trust mechanisms, product-data requirements, and governance obligations. Methodologically, the article applies a qualitative comparative case approach to two brand-led resale configurations, represented by Ganni and Patagonia Worn Wear. These cases were selected because they illustrate two contrasting yet influential logics of digital resale: peer-to-peer facilitation and buy-back/consignment under stronger brand control. The comparison is structured around four analytical dimensions: platform architecture, allocation of logistics responsibility, quality-control mechanisms, and the relationship between resale operations and regulatory preparedness.

## 2. DIGITAL RESALE PLATFORMS AS CIRCULAR INFRASTRUCTURE

### 2.1. From ownership to recirculation

Digital resale belongs to a broader shift from ownership-based consumption towards service-, access-, and reuse-oriented fashion practices. In this transition, value is increasingly linked to utility rather than mere possession. Consumers assess garments not only by novelty, but also by affordability, flexibility, and recirculation potential [1], [2]. Market analyses also indicate continuing growth in rental and second-hand segments, suggesting that recirculation is becoming an economically relevant part of the apparel market [2]. From a sustainability perspective, resale matters because it prolongs use and delays disposal in a sector facing growing waste-management pressure [3]. Yet its environmental contribution depends on operational conditions: poor product data, inconsistent quality



control, and inefficient reverse logistics may weaken circular outcomes. Resale should therefore be treated as a managed system of value retention rather than simple re-commerce.

## 2.2. Platform architecture and operating models

A brand-led digital resale platform is more than an e-commerce extension. It combines a customer interface for pre-owned items, a seller module for simplified listing, and a back-end layer supporting authentication, classification, and traceability. In more advanced versions, seller portals can reduce friction by reusing historical product data, while back-end systems support condition grading, provenance checks, and standardised product presentation. Such architecture is essential because the platform must create trust without losing operational speed.

The comparison of Ganni and Patagonia Worn Wear illustrates two dominant resale logics [6], [7]. In peer-to-peer systems the brand mainly facilitates trust while the physical transfer occurs between users. In buy-back or consignment systems the brand takes possession of the garment, controls inspection and presentation, and resells it directly. The choice affects cost structure, quality assurance, data capture, and customer experience.

*Table 1: Comparison of peer-to-peer and buy-back resale models*

Criteria	Peer-to-peer model	Buy-back/consignment model
Brand role	Facilitator and trust intermediary	Direct resale operator
Logistics responsibility	Mainly distributed between users	Centralised under brand control
Quality control	More limited and variable	Higher and more standardised
Operational cost	Lower direct handling cost	Higher processing and presentation cost
Strategic advantage	Scalability and speed	Brand consistency and data capture

*Source: author's synthesis based on [6], [7].*

The analytical value of this comparison lies in showing that digital resale is not a uniform circular solution. Rather, different platform models redistribute control, cost, trust, and data capture in different ways. Peer-to-peer systems may offer greater scalability and lower direct handling costs, whereas buy-back and consignment models provide stronger brand control over quality, presentation, and customer experience. This distinction is important because it demonstrates that the contribution of resale to circular fashion depends not only on the existence of a digital platform, but also on the organisational design through which resale is implemented.

Regardless of model, viability depends on operational efficiency. Pricing should reflect garment condition, age, and demand; reverse logistics should limit handling costs; and communication should reduce the stigma sometimes attached to pre-owned fashion. Brands also need to consider how products are collected, assessed, cleaned, photographed, and relisted with minimal delay. Loyalty incentives, visible circularity benefits, and convenient return or drop-off options can reposition resale as a branded service rather than a discounted secondary channel.

## 3. EU POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR FASHION RESALE

The policy environment for digital resale platforms is becoming more structured within the European Union. Circularity in textiles is no longer framed only as voluntary corporate responsibility, but as part of a broader agenda for product durability, resource efficiency, and digital-market accountability [4], [5].



The Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation establishes the framework for a *Digital Product Passport* for relevant product groups [8]. For resale platforms, this is strategically significant: structured data on composition, care, provenance, and repair can reduce information asymmetry, support authentication, and improve the grading of second-life products. Brands that invest early in interoperable product-data architecture may gain both operational and compliance advantages.

European textile policy is also increasing the importance of *take-back pathways and extended producer responsibility* as collection, sorting, and take-back systems. The EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles and the revised waste-policy framework strengthen the logic of reuse before disposal and raise the strategic relevance of organised return flows [4], [9]. For brands, resale platforms may therefore function not only as revenue channels, but also as instruments for managing product responsibility after first sale.

*Digital resale ecosystems* also operate under stricter expectations regarding governance and substantiated communication. Claims linked to resale must be transparent and methodologically defensible, otherwise they risk becoming reputational liabilities rather than assets [5]. In parallel, platform accountability requirements in the Digital Services Act reinforce the need for mechanisms addressing counterfeit listings, illegal content, and marketplace transparency [10]. Regulatory readiness should therefore be treated as part of platform design rather than as an afterthought [11].

#### 4. THE MOLDOVAN MARKET CASE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR OPEN PLATFORM DESIGN

##### 4.1. Informal recirculation through social networks

Actually, the Moldovan market does not have a dedicated brand-led digital resale platform comparable to Ganni or Patagonia Worn Wear. Publicly visible digital circulation is concentrated instead in fragmented channels: local-brand aggregation is represented by DININIMA, while resale and exchange activity is visible mainly through Facebook groups and Instagram-based resale accounts [12]–[14]. This does not mean that secondary circulation is absent; rather, it suggests that it is organised informally and outside a platform architecture specifically designed for circular fashion.

These channels perform an important market function by enabling garments to reach second users at low transaction cost. However, they rarely provide the governance features associated with structured resale platforms. In practice, product descriptions are heterogeneous, condition grading is inconsistent, provenance is difficult to verify, and platform-level mechanisms for authentication, repair history, standardised returns, or dispute handling are weak or absent. As a result, recirculation exists, but it remains only partly traceable and institutionally underdeveloped. For circular fashion, this is a significant limitation because reuse takes place without the data capture, brand involvement, and consumer safeguards that would allow recirculation to become a systematic business model.

The wider e-commerce environment in Moldova nonetheless suggests that a more structured digital solution is feasible. Recent market reporting indicates continued growth in Moldovan e-commerce and strong consumer use of online purchasing channels [15]. In this context, the absence of a dedicated circular-fashion platform should be interpreted less as a lack of demand than as a gap in platform design and market organisation.

##### 4.2. Towards an open digital platform for Moldovan brands

The comparative analysis of global cases points to a strategic direction relevant for Moldova: the development of an open, multi-brand digital platform through which local brands could combine primary sale, controlled resale, exchange, take-back, and repair-related communication within one interoperable environment. Unlike a single-brand system, an open platform would correspond better



to the scale of the Moldovan market, where individual labels may not generate sufficient transaction volume to sustain separate resale infrastructures. Such a model could also build on existing initiatives that already aggregate local brands without yet offering structured second-life services [12].

The objective of such a platform should not be simply to digitise informal resale, but to formalise and govern it. Minimum functions would include standardised listing rules, verified seller identities, condition-grading categories, clear photo requirements, traceable transaction histories, and a channel for complaints or post-sale communication. A further design element could be garment-level QR identification. Even in simplified form, a QR code linked to a product record could connect information on composition, care, initial sale, repair history, and subsequent resale or take-back events. This would not constitute a full Digital Product Passport in the regulatory sense, but it would represent a practical traceability mechanism aligned with the broader European shift towards digital product information and platform accountability [8], [10].

For consumers, the value of such an approach lies in improved transparency and stronger procedural safeguards. For brands, the benefits would include better control over product presentation, clearer communication with customers, and the gradual accumulation of data on durability, returns, and second-life demand. In this sense, the study of global brand practices does not imply direct imitation. Rather, it provides a reference framework for building an open, context-appropriate digital infrastructure capable of connecting circular-fashion ambitions with the practical needs of Moldovan firms and clients.

For Moldova, such an open platform would be especially relevant because it could pool transaction volume across multiple brands rather than requiring each label to build its own closed resale system. This is a small-market solution: scale would be created collectively, while trust would be strengthened through common rules, shared data fields, and visible customer-protection procedures.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Brand-led digital resale platforms represent a concrete intersection between collaborative consumption, circular business models, and digital governance in fashion. Their significance lies not only in extending garment life, but also in reorganising how brands capture value after first sale. In this respect, resale is not simply an environmental add-on; it is a strategic mechanism through which circular fashion becomes commercially legible and operationally manageable. The contribution of this article lies in showing that digital resale platforms should be analysed not only as commercial channels, but also as governance-sensitive infrastructures located at the intersection of circular business innovation, brand strategy, and the evolving European regulatory environment.

The comparison between peer-to-peer and buy-back models shows that resale is not a single formula. Different platform architectures distribute control, cost, and responsibility in different ways, and each model requires a specific balance between user convenience and brand oversight. Successful resale initiatives therefore depend on coherent alignment between platform structure, logistics, pricing, and trust mechanisms.

From a policy perspective, the evolving European framework positions resale as an increasingly strategic organisational capability. Product data, take-back capability, substantiated claims, and digital governance are becoming essential features of competitive preparedness. Digital resale platforms should therefore be understood as circular infrastructure rather than short-term marketing innovation. Their long-term value lies in combining commercial recirculation with organisational readiness for a more regulated and sustainability-oriented fashion economy. For brands,



this means that platform design, data architecture, and compliance capacity must develop together rather than sequentially.

Seen in this way, the rise of digital resale also signals a broader cultural shift in fashion. It normalises second-life value within mainstream brand environments and links consumer-facing innovation with policy-driven circularity objectives. For companies seeking long-term relevance in a more resource-constrained and regulated market, resale can therefore function as a practical bridge between circular fashion as an industry trend and circularity as an embedded business practice.

For a small market such as Moldova, the next logical step may not be the replication of separate single-brand platforms, but the development of an open digital infrastructure shared across local labels. If such a system integrates resale, exchange, take-back, repair communication, and simple QR-based product histories, it could convert currently fragmented social-media recirculation into a more traceable, customer-oriented, and governable circular ecosystem.

Seen in this way, digital resale platforms do not simply support circular fashion as a market trend; they help institutionalise it as a structured business and governance practice.

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