Resale Fashion: A New Chapter of Value, Sustainability, and Growth?

Resale must be branded not as hand-me-downs but as a smart, stylish, and sustainable choice

Fashion has always thrived on reinvention. But the latest shift isn't about hemlines or seasonal trends — it's about how people value clothes in the first place. Around the world, the industry is being squeezed by environmental damage, supply chain breakdowns, shifting consumer priorities, and a digital revolution that won't slow down. Out of this turbulence, resale fashion has stepped forward. What once lived in the margins — a hobby for eco-conscious shoppers — has exploded into a structural shift powerful enough to reshape global commerce.

For Thailand, a country with both a vibrant fashion scene and entrepreneurial hustle, the resale boom is not just a passing opportunity. It's a test. Will the country seize the momentum to become ASEAN's resale powerhouse, or watch the wave pass it by?

A Market Growing Faster Than Fashion Itself

The scale of growth is staggering. Analysts at ThredUp and GlobalData project the global resale apparel market to reach USD 367 billion by 2029 — growing three times faster than traditional retail. In the United States, resale is expected to outsell new apparel by a factor of five this year. Millennials and Gen Z are at the center of this revolution.

The drivers are no mystery. Shoppers under financial strain turn to resale for breathing room. Growing awareness of fashion's carbon footprint — nearly 10% of global emissions — has made sustainability not just a talking point but a purchase decision. And digital platforms have erased the stigma. What used to feel like a bargain hunt now looks more like social gaming: scroll, tap, bid, own.

Asia sits at the heart of it all, accounting for 41% of the global resale market. With smartphones in nearly every pocket and a cultural pivot toward sustainability, the region has become the epicenter of change.

Thailand's Quiet Boom

In Thailand, resale has quietly become big business. The luxury resale segment alone hit THB 40 billion in 2024, climbing at more than 30% a year for three straight years. Platforms like Bagnifique.brandname have been riding the wave, with transactions leaping from THB 164 million in 2021 to THB 640 million in 2024 — a growth curve that looks more like Silicon Valley than Chatuchak.

The street view tells the same story. Walk into a Bangkok boutique and you might see a Chanel flap bag going for half its retail price. Check Instagram and a pair of limited-edition sneakers is gone within minutes. Shoppers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos are increasingly making Thailand a stop on their fashion map, lured by trend-driven items they can't find at home. It's a contrast with Japan, where resale culture revolves around meticulous vintage preservation.

Thailand's strengths are clear: a product mix broad enough to serve every taste, a digitally fluent generation buying and selling on TikTok and Facebook Marketplace, and a growing circle of authenticators who help build trust in a market where fakes could otherwise kill momentum.

Why Luxury Resale Works in a Slump

The resilience of luxury resale is striking. Even as global headwinds weigh on consumer spending, the sector has thrived. Pre-owned luxury provides entry points into premium brands at more accessible prices. It offers scarcity and exclusivity by circulating pieces long gone from store shelves. And for younger buyers, it signals sustainable prestige — a badge of both style and responsibility.

In Thailand, this plays out in the rise of a new middle class. Many start their relationship with luxury brands through resale, testing the waters with pre-owned pieces before graduating to new purchases. It's a pattern that cushions the sector even when broader consumption weakens.

Global Benchmarks, Local Lessons

Thailand isn't alone in chasing the resale boom. In the United States, the market is projected to reach nearly USD 52 billion this year, turbocharged by tariffs that make new goods more expensive. Europe's story is different: rising living costs have made resale a necessity, with online sales forecast to hit EUR 23.8 billion by 2025.

China, meanwhile, has turned resale into a digital juggernaut. Alibaba's Xianyu app moves more than RMB 1 billion in goods every day, proof that for young Chinese consumers, secondhand is simply commerce by another name. In Japan, the philosophy of Mottainai — the idea that nothing should go to waste — anchors a market built on vintage quality. And in Singapore, high digital adoption and environmental consciousness are blending into a resale sector expected to reach USD 2.37 billion by 2025.

There is no single model. Some countries lean on cultural values, others on technology, still others on policy nudges. Thailand's task is to borrow the best elements from each and adapt them to its own mix of fashion culture, digital fluency, and regional reach.

Building Thailand's Next Chapter

If Thailand wants to lead ASEAN's resale economy, it will need to move on several fronts at once. Digital infrastructure must come first — smarter platforms with AI authentication and analytics to keep buyers confident. Small resellers also need more than grit: access to financing, skills, and logistics would help them scale.

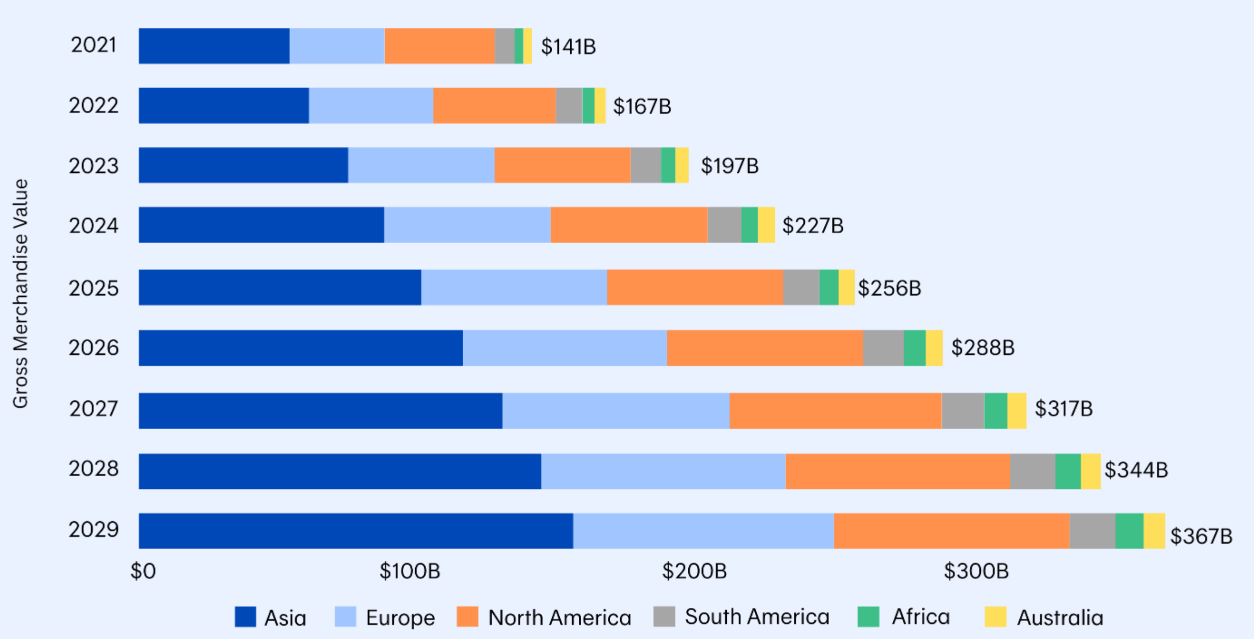
Rules will matter too. Transparency, fair competition, and product verification can protect consumers and attract serious investment. And perhaps most importantly, the story has to change. Resale in Thailand must be branded not as hand-me-downs but as a smart, stylish, and sustainable choice — one that reflects modern values as much as fashion sense.

Toward a Circular Future

Resale fashion is no longer just about buying used clothes. It's about giving value a second life, and in the process, reshaping how economies grow and how identities are formed. For Thailand, this is more than a commercial opportunity. It's a chance to reposition itself from being seen as a low-cost producer to becoming a curator of quality, culture, and conscious consumption.

If the country can align its economic ambition with environmental responsibility, it could pioneer a new growth model — one where resilience and sustainability reinforce each other. In that light, the resale revolution isn't just economic. It's cultural.

Chart1: Global Resale Apparel Growth



Source: ThredUp.

Archawee Eiamsoonthonchai
Archawee.Eiamsoonthonchai@bangkokbank.com

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