

Do we need a third wheelie bin for fast fashion cast-offs?

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Dr Connie Bianchi

As the pile of clothes sent to landfill sites mounts up, Queensland University of Technology marketing researchers have studied the ways in which people can have a wardrobe clean-out without hurting the environment.

Dr Connie Bianchi from the QUT School of Business said the three main ways people discard unwanted clothes apart from popping them in the rubbish bin is to donate them to charity, give them to family or friends (which includes clothes swaps) or sell them.

With her co-researcher Professor Grete Birtwistle from Glasgow Caledonian University, Dr Bianchi conducted a cross-cultural study of 988 women located in Scotland, Australia and Chile (her home country)

to find out which disposal methods dominated and what was behind them.

"We are all familiar with recycling packaging such as cardboard, glass and metal but not much work has been done on what motivates people in the fast fashion cycle of today to recycle clothes," Dr Bianchi said.

"We found that in Australia donating to charity was the leading way of disposal but this was done only by those who were already recycling.

"It seems recycling is habit forming because we found that awareness of the environment was not enough to prompt people to recycle their clothes if they were not already recycling other materials.

"Also the older the person is the more likely they are to recycle [clothing](#) by donating it to charity. When people see other recycling they are more likely to follow suit."

"However, an awareness of the environment was strongly correlated with those who recycled, suggesting that policymakers could focus more on moving the awareness into recycling action. Perhaps they could provide regular pick-ups of unwanted clothing."

Dr Bianchi said [Australians](#) also favoured selling their unwanted clothing, mostly online.

"We found that [recycling](#) behaviour was not a strong driver for selling your used clothing and giving them away to family and friends - obviously there are other motivations afoot here."

Dr Bianchi hopes to do a follow up qualitative study of people's motivations and clothing disposal methods.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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