

## FLEA MARKET ECONOMY INFLUENCING LOCAL INDUSTRY: SYSTEM ANALYSIS OF LANDA BAZAAR IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*The data presented in this research paper entitled “Flea Market Economy Influencing Local Industry: System Analysis of Landa Bazaar in Pakistan” was researched using qualitative anthropological techniques. In this research 25 respondents 10 shopkeepers from the local market, 10 shopkeepers from Landa Bazar, and 5 customers were selected through purposive sampling. The locale for the study was based on multiple markets in Rawalpindi. The time scale of this research was 4 months. The main objective of this research was to study the economic impacts of the Landa bazaar (flea market) on the local economy. In the last decade, the use of second-hand clothing has been increased in Pakistan. The research shows that on temporary basis periphery countries are in an advantageous position as they are receiving high-quality products at cheaper rates and it is also creating a number of employment opportunities. But no one can deny the fact that over time the trade of second-hand clothing will put a negative impact on the local production of Pakistan as the local industries lack in providing compatible products at cheaper rates. Thus it can be said that the donation from the core will participate in the demolishing of the local industry of Pakistan. It is suggested that the government must quantify the number of job opportunities created by this trade and also predict the number of job losses in the domestic clothing industry due to an upsurge in demand for imported secondhand clothes, to facilitate the policymakers to develop their policies effectively.*

**Keywords:** Landa Bazaar, flea market, local economy, second-hand clothing, employment opportunities, system analysis.

### INTRODUCTION

Many countries like Phillipines, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda imposed a ban on the trade of secondhand clothing to strengthen their local textile industry (Africa Renewal, 2017). The flea market economy has mainly relied on the imported secondhand clothes in these countries which provides the opportunity to low-budget consumers to purchase quality stuff at cheaper rates. It has been observed that the flea market provides temporary benefits to the consumers in these third world countries. But when the policymakers realized the negative impact of secondhand clothing trade on the local textile industry they imposed a ban on it thus creating room for the progress of the local industries (Baden & Barber, 2005).

The use of secondhand clothing among Pakistanis is growing at a higher pace due to the high inflation rate. Pakistan has one of the highest population growth rates in the world. A higher population growth rate means; more people to house, more people to feed, educate, and employment. The condition of Pakistan is even worse as compared to other underdeveloped countries because of poor economic management. The inefficient policies of the government, epidemic, and low level of foreign investment have led Pakistan to slow expansion in the developmental sector. Further, political chaos and economic upheaval led the Pakistani rupee to a depreciation of more than 40% since 2007 (Stimpson and Farquharson, 2014). Under the rule of current government, the rupee witnessed massive depreciation from Rs123 against the US dollar in August 2018 to Rs177 against the US dollar in December 2021,

which is considered a historic devaluation of the Pakistani currency (Haider,2021). It is also evident that over the past few years, a surge in food and petroleum prices, and a high rate of unemployment have increased the ratio of poverty in Pakistan which affected the living pattern of the people badly. In order to fulfill their basic necessities, people adopt different affordable options. Landa Bazaar (flea market) is a place that offers quality clothing at cheaper rates thus making it most favorable option to poor people.

Research shows that every year tons of clothes have been shipped from western countries to Pakistan through Karachi port and also smuggled from the Afghanistan border. The data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics confirms that the imports of secondhand clothes rose by 90 percent in terms of quantity, worth \$309.56 million, declaring 83.43 percent escalation in terms of value as compared to the preceding year 2020 (Ahmed 2021). This situation clearly depicts that Landa Bazar has the potential to reduce the demand for new goods that will definitely impact the local production in a negative way. But on the other hand it also generates a number of other employment opportunities for the involved persons.

The study is applicable to explain the effect on the economy of the country through the trade of second-hand clothing as it is considered to provide a livelihood for the people. This study investigates how more consumption of second-hand clothing moves the local industry both positively or negatively and how flea market strengthens or debunks the ideas of world-system theory. This anthropological research will play an effective role by filling up the existing gaps in the literature. In Pakistan, there is little research done on this topic so this research will aid the coming generation of researchers to have a piece of baseline information about the dynamics of the Landa Bazar and open new dimensions for analysis.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach was used in this study. Researchers used participant observation, focus group discussion, and interviews for data collection. Purposive sampling was used in the research to select the ideal respondents for the research study. In this research 25 respondents participated; 10 shopkeepers from the local market, 10 shopkeepers from Landa Bazar, and 5 customers who gave their ideas about the concerned topic. During the research, two focus group discussions were conducted by the researchers to gain the group's idea about the effects of Landa Bazar on the local economy. The locale for the study was based on multiple markets in Rawalpindi. The time scale of this research was 4 months.

## THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

This research has been embedded in the theoretical discourse of world-system theory commonly known as world-systems analysis. The world system approach was developed by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s and 1980s. His three-volume work "The modern world-system" (Wallerstein,1974, 1980, 1989) and several essays (Wallerstein, 1974, 1979a, 1979b, 1983, 2004), were the major contribution to the development of the theory. The other contributors to world-system theory are Samir Amin (Amin, 1970, 1973), (Cardoso and Falleto, 1969), (Santos, 1970a, 1970b) (Rodney, 1974), and (Andre Gunder Frank, 1969, 1991). During the last decade (Mohyuddin et al, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2012f, 2013) are trying to examine how the development of underdevelopment influences the masses at the grass-root level, especially in the field of economy, education, and health. (Husain, 1976) (Di Bona, 1997) (Keith, 1998) also sees the impact of development at the micro-level. This research is also a micro-level study in which researchers are trying to analyze that how the trade of second-hand clothing from the core countries impacts the people's lives living in the periphery.

World system theory has divided the world into three divisions, i.e. core, semi-periphery, and periphery. This division is based on economic conditions in these countries. Thomas Barfield in his study explained that core countries have significant means of influence over poor nations. This influence allows the core countries to exploit the non-core countries by erecting trade barriers, exploitation of cheap labor, and by dumping their unsafe products. As a result non-core countries not only bear economic loss but also face environmental degradation as well (Barfield,1997). The ultimate source of second-hand clothing is the core countries and periphery countries are on the receiving end. On one side core countries are giving the benefit to the poor countries by donating their clothes and on

the other hand, these rich countries are also exploiting the periphery countries by dumping their waste into these countries to maintain their environmental conditions (Anzak et al, 2019).

Core countries are responsible for the exploitation of periphery and semi-periphery countries. There is a continuous cycle in which the periphery is exploited by the core by all means. Here in the present research, we can observe that although the shipping of second-hand clothes from the core countries towards the periphery is taken as a blessing by the poor people of Pakistan, as it is far less in price than the local clothing but inwardly the core is donating these clothes for their own economic and environmental benefits. The research shows that on temporary basis periphery countries are in an advantageous position as they are receiving high-quality products at cheaper rates and it is also creating a number of employment opportunities. But no one can deny the fact that over time this trade of second-hand clothing will put a negative impact on the local production of Pakistan as the local industries lack in providing compatible products at cheaper rates. Thus it can be said that the donation from the core will participate in the demolishing of the local industry of Pakistan. If we see the demand and supply model here, it is obvious that people prefer to buy these foreign clothing, as they are cheaper than the local clothing. With the decrease in demand for local products, supply automatically gets abrupt which ultimately will lead to the failure of the local cloth industry. (Baden & Barber, 2005) also highlighted this point in their study that the secondhand clothing trade undermines the local textiles and garment industries in sub-Saharan Africa over the past two decades. So we can say that same can happen in Pakistan, in the coming years.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Landa Bazar (flea market) acts as an economic generator. The majority of the shopkeepers agreed on the point that Landa is increasing the standard of living of local people by providing employment opportunities in the Landa circuit. Unskilled people get involved in this business easily because no special skill is required in this type of business. Landa bazaar offers a great opportunity to the unskilled force to earn living, a little knowledge about sales and purchases with minimum financial investment can lead the individuals to success.

From the importer to the consumer flea market is producing a number of vacancies. The commercial importer employs 4-6 local staff, apart from truck drivers, security officers, etc. Landa Bazar is providing jobs in the field of transportation, which is giving benefits to the poor man. Cleaning and pressing the clothes also require several jobs which are lavishing the lives of the labor class by paying the income. Landa bazaars also provide work opportunities for the tailors. Tailors altar the damaged pieces and change them according to the demand of the shopkeepers and the customers. One of the shopkeepers told that: *"Landa Bazar is offering multiple job opportunities to the local people. It is not only shopkeepers or sellers who are getting benefit from it but also other indirect participants are taking advantage of it. This trade helps us to make employment opportunities for other people. Now we have our own tailors who altar the damaged coats into waistcoats and we sell them readily in our shops... thus we can say that it is a win-win situation for all of us..."*

From a trader to consumer Landa products passes from many stages i.e. organizing of the piles into diverse categories according to the typology and the condition of the clothes, finishers sort the shirts, trousers, jackets, woollies, pants, sweaters, according to color, design, and quality. The clothes are then checked for missing buttons, slipped stitches, torn parts, cuts, stains, and other damages which are repaired by the tailors. Tailors almost work for ten to twelve hours a day for the mending of the garments. Later on, workers' ironed these clothes thus creating an illusion of brand new clothes which appeal to a number of customers in the Landa bazaar.

Norris also elaborates that how the secondhand clothing trade is creating employment opportunities in India by saying that, "the raw material of imported and domestic second-hand clothing gets a new life through recycling and a variety of processes that create employment at many levels of the Indian economy. By establishing links between specific global economic domains and clothing recycling in India, .... the growth of an informal economy that turns used garments into industrial rags, reassembles fabrics for interior decoration, and manufacturers 'Indian' fashions for tourists. In the process, an export supply chain has emerged, formalizing what had begun as an informal trade" (Norris, 2003).

There are also food stalls placed outside of these Landa shops (such as *chatwala*, *daibalha*, *samosawala*, soup, tea, etc.) who earned through the potential customers of Landa Bazar. Those customers who visit Landa Bazar move to these food stalls for refreshments. Not only customers but also shopkeepers order their lunch from the stalls and fulfill their appetite, which contributes to the earnings of these food stallholders.

Further different shop owners also place stalls in front of their shops on footpaths either on carts or on rugs to grab more profit. One of the shopkeepers shared that *"I earned plenty of profit from these stalls because of high sales. The rate of these stalls is quite lower as compared to shops, therefore, more customers get attracted to these stalls thus giving more profit"*. Shopkeepers avail the services of the young boys who look after the stall and in return got a decided commission on each sale. So we can say that these businessmen are also providing employment opportunities to poor young and energetic men who are unable to start their businesses. One of the shopkeepers shared his journey in the following words: *"when I was a young boy, I started to manage stalls on commission. In beginning, I thought that am just wasting my time but over time I learned a lot of new things about customer behavior and also about the whole trade. Later on, I set my own stall and after 3 years of struggle I own two shops and now am trying my best to engage more young boys so that they can learn the techniques and apply them in setting themselves as a young entrepreneur"*.

In Pakistan, the flea market is mostly visited by the customers in winter season. The demand of woollies, coats, sweaters, jackets, socks, and trousers is at its peak in winter season. One of the salespersons said that: *"People who visit Landa bazaar are now well aware of brand and their value, now every customer attempts to buy famous international brands to beautify their personalities. In summer our business is at a loss because imported summer clothing is not acceptable in our culture. People usually avoid buying those clothes"*. Small stall holders usually set their stalls in winter season so it is seasonal business for them. One of the stallholder stated that: *"I am a seasonal stallholder in Landa Bazaar. Every year, I place my stall in winter because the demand for Landa Clothes increased in the cold season. And in summer season I work as a laborer on daily wages"*. Thus we can say that landa bazar is giving a number of opportunities to the young men to establish their businesses.

And on the other hand, the trade of second-hand clothing is also responsible for the decline of the domestic textile industry. As Sally Baden and Catherine Barber in their study said, *"Supporters of the second-hand clothing industry point out that the trade creates employment in the receiving countries (in transporting, cleaning, repairing, restyling clothes, etc.). It also provides low-cost clothing for people living in poverty. At the same time, however, there are concerns that the trade may be undermining local textiles and garment industries and livelihoods in some developing countries. Production, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, has declined over the past two decades, with numerous firms reducing their output or going out of business altogether and industrial production falling substantially. Several parties have cited SHC imports as a causal factor in this decline"* (Baden & Barber, 2005). One of the customers also supported the idea by saying that: *"In Landa Bazaar we have the best quality products at an affordable price. If we can get an international brand for Rs.800 then who will go to purchase a local product. The local products are double in price but still, their quality is very poor. I always prefer to shop at a flea market because I know that I will find the best."*

The shopkeepers of local markets have a neutral view when their opinion was asked about that: is there any competition between local clothing and secondhand clothing? Shopkeepers said that our local industry is almost diminished not because of the flea market but the main reason behind the failure of local industry is a lack of provision of sufficient resources which are significant for the production and sustainability of the local industry. So if the Pakistani industry is not producing enough to fulfill the demand of the people then definitely people will move to find out other alternatives. And Landa Bazar is one of the best options because it not only provides quality but also at cheaper rates. One of the shopkeepers expresses his views: *"There is no competition between imported second-hand clothes and local products because most of the clothes placed in our shops are imported from China and Korea, we do not place Pakistani stuff because our so-called Pakistani industries are passing through a major strain due to unavailability of electricity so their production is almost zero...."*

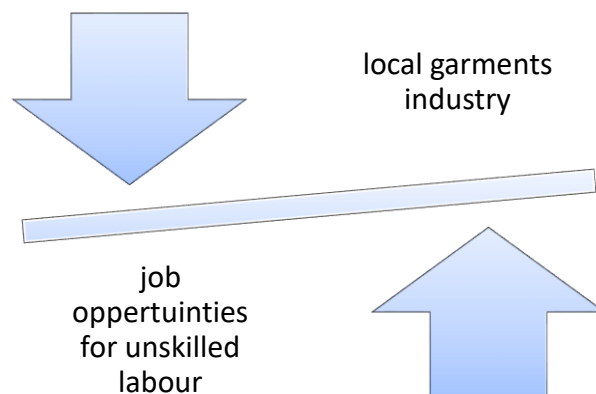
Shopkeepers are also of the view that the quality of the second-hand Landa items is far better than the standard of local items. The reliability of secondhand clothing is one of the reasons for its popularity among people. Another shopkeeper said that: *"Our Pakistani clothes are not equivalent to*

*the quality and standard of the imported second-hand clothes.... So, there is no competition between these two.... quality of Landa items attracts the potential customer*" that's why the local economy of Pakistan is facing a hard time. The standard and quality of imported second-hand clothes are very high as compared to the local production, which affects the potential customer of local clothes because now people prefer to buy second-hand clothes as compared to new local clothes. It is evident that after a few years, the effects of second-hand clothing import can create crucial effects on local industry.

Earlier researches also elaborate that "In Pakistan, where used clothing imports are legal, under-invoicing and imports of new clothes from Southeast Asia make it impossible for local garment manufacturers to compete, as brand-new goods enter the country with customs declarations as second-hand clothes" (Pakistan Newswire, 2001). In some countries of the world, there is a ban on the secondhand clothing trade to strengthen the local garments industry. "Second-hand clothing imports are banned in Indonesia because of the threat they pose to local garment production" (Indonesian National News Agency, 2002). The manufacturers of Poland also blame the trade of second-hand clothing which is affecting the growth rate of local industries. "Poland's growing demand for, and re-export of, second-hand clothes to the former Soviet republics led clothing manufacturers to attribute their industry's decline to this trade" (News Reporter, 2002). The government of the Philippines also passed legislation that forbids the trade of used clothing because the government takes the trade of second-hand clothing exceedingly uncertain for the local textile industries which are responsible for the economic development of the Philippines as the demand for imported second-hand clothing is increased as compared to local clothes due to its low rates. "Philippine law also forbids the import of used clothing because the ministry of industry and trade views it as a threat to textile industries" (News Reporter, 2003). Several studies highlighted that "the trade of second-hand clothing created many jobs in the business and retail sectors, but this trade is also inhibiting the development of a local textile industry" (Field et al, 1996).

The general point of view of the shopkeepers is, that now the Landa Bazar is not affecting our local industry, but in a few years, it will affect the local industry. Earlier research in poor countries also elaborates that the second-hand clothing imports are flooding the domestic market and reducing consumer demand for new clothes. The import of second-hand clothes also place negative effects on the local economy of Kenya. As Ongile explained in his article, "The garment industry was the most noticeably affected by the surge in imports, particularly the widespread availability of second-hand clothing or Mitumba. Mitumba, literally "bales" in Swahili, denoting the form in which the second-hand clothing arrives in East African ports, were cheaper than Kenyan products and rapidly gained favor from consumers. Other researches also strengthen the idea that the second-hand markets are reducing the demand for new goods (Ongile & McCormick, 1996), (Thomas, 2003).

The whole concept of secondhand clothing is quite controversial because on one hand it is creating job opportunities for unskilled labor and provides quality clothing at affordable rates but on the other hand, it is going to put tremendous pressure on the local garments and textile industry.



**Figure 1: Impact of Landa Bazaar on Local Industry**

*Landa items in seasons:*

In Pakistan, the Landa bazaar is mostly visited by customers in the winter season. The the demand for woollies, coats, sweaters, jackets, socks, and trousers (to keep the body worm in economical prices) are in peak in the winter season which drags customers into the Landa bazaar.

One of the salespersons said: "People who visit Landa bazaar are now well aware of brands and their value, now every customer attempt to buy famous Landa items in seasons."

In Pakistan, the Landa bazaar is mostly visited by the customers in winter season. The demand of woollies, coats, sweaters, jackets, socks and trousers (to keep the body warm in economical prices) are in peak in winter season which draws customers into the Landa bazaar. One of the salespersons said: "People who visit Landa bazaar are now well aware of brands and their value, now every customer attempts to buy famous." "Usually we try to cooperate with our customers because we know that due to inflation good and quality clothes become out of the reach of the poor people"

Different stalls of the same Landa owners to hold the market: Landa bazaar is expanding day by day in Rawal Pindi. The owners of different shops also place stalls in front of shops on the footpaths either on carts or on rugs. Shopkeeper avail the services of the young boys who look after the stall and in return they decided commission. In this way shopkeepers are getting double profit from their Landa business and taking hold on the market as much as possible. One of the customers said: "From these footpath stalls I get a variety of clothes for just rupees 50 per piece. For me these stalls are blessings of God."

In these stalls customers get number of stuff at very low prices. Especially in the winter season number of stalls outside of the shops are seen by the customers where they get sweaters, jackets, mufflers, socks, Leganes, trousers, bags, curtains, table clothes, working overalls, tea-cozies, table napkins, floor mates, carpets etc

## CONCLUSION

Pakistan is one of the underdeveloped countries, it lacks sufficient resources to fulfill the basic needs of the population. In order to overcome this deficiency Government of Pakistan with the contribution of the rich countries allow the trade of second-hand products which is considered a cheap source to accommodate the basic need of people i.e. clothing. Throughout the year, many ships from these foreign countries shipped towards Karachi ports where the donated stuff from the foreign countries sold out at cheaper rates to the traders, from those traders it is sold out to the wholesalers and then to the retailers through whom customers buy the second-hand stuff, especially clothing. Landa Bazaar is considered a paradise for the poor people because it is the only place where poor men can also have the opportunity to buy imported and quality clothes at cheaper rates. Flea market in Pakistan is not only providing cheap clothing to the poor but also provides job opportunities for the local people. The second-hand clothing trade involves a number of people in its circuit and provides a great opportunity to earn their livelihood. But no one can deny the fact that the import of secondhand clothes has a potential threat to the local garments industry as they are unable to compete with imported clothing due to many reasons such as power shortage, infrastructural deficiencies, poor government policies, etc.

In order to avoid such a situation, the government must initiate detailed research to quantify the number of job opportunities created by the secondhand clothing trade and also to predict the number of job losses in the domestic clothing industry due to an upsurge in demand for imported secondhand clothes. This research will definitely help the policymakers to conclude whether this trade is good or bad for employment and develop effective policies accordingly.

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