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**CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN FINLAND:
THE ROLE OF SPR KIRPPIS IN
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMPTION**

International Business

2025

ABSTRACT

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Title	Circular Economy in Finland: The Role of SPR Kirppis in Promoting Sustainable Consumption
Year	2025
Language	English
Pages	48 + 2 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Thomas Sabel

Abstract

This thesis explores how SPR Kirppis, a second-hand retail chain operated by the Finnish Red Cross, contributes to sustainable consumption and supports Finland's Circular Economy (CE). Through a qualitative case study focused on the Vaasa location, the research examines how the organization integrates environmental and social goals by promoting reuse, reducing waste, and offering employment opportunities to disadvantaged individuals. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, revealing four key themes: social inclusion, reuse-focused operations, public engagement through social media, and community collaboration. While SPR Kirppis encourages second-hand shopping—particularly among younger consumers—and helps normalize sustainable practices, it also faces challenges, such as unsorted donations and limited partnerships.

The findings highlight the organization's grassroots approach as an accessible and culturally relevant model of CE, contrasting with more industrial top-down strategies. Limitations include a narrow data set based on one location and the exclusion of customer and donor perspectives. Despite these constraints, the study provides valuable insight into how local social enterprises like SPR Kirppis can promote sustainability through practical, community-driven actions. It underscores the importance of recognizing smaller actors in advancing national sustainability goals and broadening the understanding of what effective CE participation can look like in everyday contexts.

Keywords circular economy, sustainable consumption, second-hand store, sustainability, Waste reproduction.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Second-hand stores play a vital role in promoting sustainability and protecting environment by extending product life cycle, reducing waste. This thesis explores the intersection of sustainability, community action, and second-hand retail in Finland. It focuses on SPR Kirppis as a case study to understand how local initiatives can drive circular economy practices through everyday consumer behavior.

1.1 Background of the Study

The last decades have seen the theme of sustainability become predominant in the global working against ecological degradation, thus fighting climate change and promoting responsible consumption. One of the more conceptual answers to the circular economy is to ponder scenarios where production and consumption must be reengineered to focus on resource efficiency, waste minimization, and extending the product life cycle (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Kirchherr et al., 2017). A traditional linear economy considers a product lifecycle that runs from "take, make and dispose of," whereas a CE is restorative and regenerative by design, aiming to retain the value of materials while closing the material loop through reuse, recycling, repair, and refurbishment (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015). Sustainable consumption is an integral aspect of a circular economic system; it focuses on minimizing environmental impact, satisfying human needs, and maintaining a certain level of life (Jackson, 2014; Akenji & Chen, 2016). Yet, promoting sustainable consumption goes beyond a matter of individual choice; it requires systemic changes and cultural transformation areas where businesses, firms, and local communities stand in support.

With the support of policy innovation, Finland has gone ahead and become a world leader for CE education and promotion. As a national his-

toric roadmap for CE, Sitra's conceptualization for the 2016 to 2025 period embodied the transition to sustainable production and consumption systems based on cooperation, innovation, and grassroots action. Second-hand markets are viewed within this realm as concrete, socially embedded mechanisms for implementing CE. These markets, therefore, stand as alternatives to the dominant consumer culture that advocates reuse and prevents reliance on virgin materials, while also making sustainability available and visible for the common people (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015; Bocken et al., 2016).

In Finland, one of the largest players in the reuse economy is SPR Kirppis, the resale chain of the Finnish Red Cross. SPR Kirppis goes beyond the resale platform with a hybrid model of human ecology wherein environmental sustainability, community well-being, and social responsibility are inseparably intertwined. By the acts of the various Kirppis shops, SPR not only prevents goods from ending up in landfills but also promotes inclusion, welcomes the work of volunteers, and funds humanitarian aid. Thus, the organization espouses sustainability in its broadest sense and falls right along the core lines of the CE: circularity, equity, and regeneration (Errázuriz et al., 2024).

Despite the rapid growth in CE literature, research has mostly advanced through top-down industrial strategies, national-level policy frameworks, and technological innovations (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). The roles that local or community-based enterprises like SPR Kirppis play remain under-socialized until social acceptance and consumer behavior at the grassroots level become channels for sustainability through social norms (Gilal et al., 2024; Borusiak et al., 2020). And in conventional sustainability studies, the social and emotional dimensions of second-hand consumption- feelings of belonging, trust, and an ethical identity- are overlooked (Hur, 2020; Jaeger-Erben et al., 2015).

The thesis sets out to fill these gaps by looking into how SPR Kirppis drives sustainable consumption and advances the CE in Finland. In turn,

through the qualitative case study, this thesis addresses the social mechanisms through which SPR Kirppis functions to change consumer behavior in favor of local sustainability transition by discussing the strategies and definitions of practices and values at work in SPR Kirppis.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Main Objective:

To examine how SPR Kirppis promotes sustainable consumption through its business concept in the secondary market and how it contributes to Finland's Circular Economy.

Specific Objectives:

- To examine how SPR Kirppis integrates Circular Economy principles and social value creation in its daily operations, including reuse, waste reduction, and employment support.
- To analyze how SPR Kirppis influences consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable consumption through community engagement, social media communication, and trend-driven practices.

Research Questions:

- In what respects does SPR Kirppis contribute to encouraging sustainable consumption behavior in Finland's Circular Economy?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for SPR Kirppis to impact consumer behavior and advance sustainability culture?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how sustainable consumption relates to circular economic measures at the local level.

While CE frames increasingly feature in national and entrepreneurial strategies, much of the literature seems to have ignored the possibility of social enterprises, especially second-hand sellers, acting as grassroots enablers of sustainability (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Gilal et al., 2024).

SPR Kirppis represents a model where environment objectives are merged with social ones. Second-hand shopping through SPR Kirppis is easygoing and inclusive for the client; therefore, they can apply CE principles to their daily existence. In shedding light on consumer behavior, business practices, and community-level values as factors in the development of a sustainability-oriented culture, this thesis studies SPR Kirppis.

This thesis is significant in several ways. Below **table 1** is the summarization of the significance of the research.

Table 1: Summarizing the significance of the research

Aspect	Description
Academic Contribution	Fills a gap in circular economy (CE) literature by focusing on local, socially driven enterprises and socio-cultural factors influencing sustainable consumption.
Practical Insights	Offers actionable insights for policymakers, sustainability practitioners, and nonprofit leaders to replicate or enhance the role of second-hand enterprises in CE ecosystems.
Societal Relevance	Emphasizes the importance of low-threshold, high-impact initiatives like SPR Kirppis in community engagement, waste reduction, and promotion of social equity.

Furthermore, by capturing the voices of stakeholders and observing real-life interactions in SPR Kirppis stores, the study provides a context-rich analysis of consumer motivations, organizational challenges, and community impact—offering a holistic picture of how sustainability can be localized and humanized.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the key concepts and existing research relevant to circular economy, sustainable consumption, and second-hand markets. It provides a foundation for understanding the local-level implementation of these ideas, particularly through the case of SPR Kirppis in Finland.

2.1 The Concept of Circular Economy

Amongst the sustainability paradigms, the Circular Economy (CE) can be seen as a system for closing the loop of product life cycles by enhancing the efficiency of available resources, reuse, and recycling (Kirchherr et al., 2017). In sharp contrast to the conventional extract-produce-dispose system, CE avoids waste and maximizes the utility of products and materials. Goyal et al. (2018) say that CE is a new paradigm of environmental policy and production requiring systems change at a sectoral level. Its three prime principles are the designing out of waste, keeping products in use, and regeneration of natural systems (MacArthur, 2013). **Table 2** provides definitions of the circular economy.

Table 2: Definitions of the Circular Economy (CE)

Au- thor(s)	Definition	Source	Page
Kirchherr, Reike & Hekkert (2017)	"A circular economy describes an economic system that is based on business models which replace the 'end-of-life' concept with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering materials in production/distribution	<i>Resources, Conservation and Recycling</i> , 127, 221–232.	p. 224

	and consumption processes, thus operating at the micro level (products, companies, consumers), meso level (eco-industrial parks) and macro level (city, region, nation and beyond), with the aim to accomplish sustainable development, thus simultaneously creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity, to the benefit of current and future generations.”		
Geissdoerfer et al. (2017)	“A circular economy is a regenerative system in which resource input and waste, emission, and energy leakage are minimized by slowing, closing, and narrowing material and energy loops. This can be achieved through long-lasting design, maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing, and recycling.”	<i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i> , 143, 757–768.	p. 759
Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2015)	“A circular economy is restorative and regenerative by design, and aims to keep products, components, and materials at their highest utility and value at all times.”	<i>Towards the Circular Economy: Economic and business rationale for an accelerated transition.</i>	p. 7

Yuan, Bi & Mori-guichi (2006)	"The circular economy is a generic term for an industrial economy that is producing no waste and pollution, by design or intention."	<i>Journal of Industrial Ecology</i> , 10(1-2), 4-8.	p. 5
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This multi-scalar perspective of definition closely aligns with Finland's national strategies and the local reuse-oriented initiatives of SPR Kirppis, which integrate sustainability into business and community activities. Geissdoerfer et al. (2017, p. 759) describe CE as a "regenerative system" that mitigates material and energy losses, a concept that is well-reflected in the operational model of second-hand markets. These definitions further reinforce the interpretation of CE in this thesis—not merely as a technical system of material flows but as a socially embedded process shaped by and shaping community-level practices, values, and institutions. This perspective is central to understanding SPR Kirppis's role in Finland's sustainability landscape.

Finland has demonstrated a strong commitment to CE, having introduced a national roadmap as early as 2016 (Sitra, 2016). The Finnish CE model emphasizes bioeconomy, innovation, and collaboration between public and private sectors. While national strategies have been extensively documented, there is limited research on how CE principles are embodied by local and grassroots actors, such as community enterprises and second-hand retailers.

2.2 Sustainable Consumption: Definitions and Challenges

Sustainable consumption refers to the utilization of products and services in a manner that meets basic needs and enhances quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials (Jack-

son, 2014). Consumption patterns play a fundamental role in the Circular Economy (CE), as they directly influence resource demand and waste generation. Achieving sustainability in consumption presents an inherent paradox, as it is challenging due to numerous factors, including deeply ingrained consumer culture and the economic incentives behind cheap, rapid production (Fischer & Barth, 2014). **Table 3** presents definitions and challenges associated with sustainable consumption.

Table 3: Definitions of the Sustainable consumption

Au- thor(s)	Definition & Chal- lenges	Source	Page
Norwe- gian Min- istry of the Envi- ronment (1994)	"The use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations."	Oslo Symposium on Sustainable Consumption, Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, 1994.	N/A
Akenji & Chen (2016)	"A cluster of habits and patterns of behavior embedded in society and facilitated by institutions, norms, and infrastructures that frame individual choice, to minimize the use of	Akenji, L., & Chen, H. (2016). A Framework for Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles. United Nations Environment Programme.	p. 3

	natural resources and generation of wastes while supporting fairness and prosperity for all.”		
Quoquab, F., & Mohammad, J. (2020)	“Sustainable consumption refers to the continued act of controlling desire by avoiding extravagant purchases and rationalized use of goods and services that satisfy the basic needs. It concerns the quality of life over material standards of living, suggests satisfying basic human needs (not the desire for “wants” and luxuries), demonstrates care for protecting and preserving the natural resources (e.g. minimizing resource use, waste and pollution) and keeping the natural resources useful for future generations.”	Quoquab, F., & Mohammad, J. (2020). A review of sustainable consumption (2000 to 2020): What we know and what we need to know. <i>Journal of Global Marketing</i> , 33(5), 305-334.	p. 311

Fuchs & Lorek (2005)	<p>“sustainable consumption requires an increase in the efficiency of consumption, which can be reached via technological improvements.</p> <p>Improvements in the eco-efficiency of consumption mean a reduction in resource consumption per consumption unit due to improvements in production processes or an efficiency friendly design, for example.</p> <p>Often, these improvements are win-win scenarios.”</p>	Fuchs, D. A., & Lorek, S. (2005). Sustainable consumption governance: A history of promises and failures. <i>Journal of Consumer Policy</i> , 28(3), 261–288.	p. 262
Di Giulio & Fuchs (2014)	<p>“A promising way to ensure a good life for all humans now and in the future is to define and respect “sustainable consumption corridors”, that is, minimal</p>	Di Giulio, A., & Fuchs, D. (2014). Sustainable consumption corridors: Concept, objections, and responses. <i>GAIA-Ecological Perspectives</i>	P. 185

	and maximal standards of consumption.”	<i>for Science and Society, 23(3), 184-192.</i>	
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Recent research has increasingly emphasized the need to shift responsibility for consumption from individuals to broader systemic and cultural frameworks (Mont & Heiskanen, 2015). Consequently, community-based models and local initiatives—such as second-hand markets—have emerged as promising approaches for integrating sustainable practices into the daily lives of individuals (Bocken et al., 2016).

2.3 The Role of Second-Hand Markets in Circular Economy

The second-hand market is a practical and pragmatic way of illustrating and promoting the beliefs of the Circular Economy (CE). Its role is essentially to prolong product lives through reuse, recovery, and redistribution, and eliminate demand for new materials and environmental degradation in the process. In contrast to the conventional linear take-make-dispose consumption system, which is simple enough but environmentally unviable, the second-hand market interrupts the end-of-life stage by recycling products that, in any other circumstances, will end up in waste (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Second-hand markets are not only places of economic exchange, but also crucial infrastructures of sustainability. By minimizing the production and consumption of new products, second-hand systems reduce carbon footprints, decrease the extraction of resources, and keep waste out of landfills. Guiot and Roux (2010) depict second-hand consumption as being part of a larger consumer value transition, including frugality, anti-consumerism, and environmental consciousness.

In Finland, organizations like the SPR Kirppis are also showing how second-hand markets can exist as social enterprises that pursue both environmental and social goals at different levels while concomitantly

achieving social and environmental outcomes. Organized by the Finnish Red Cross, SPR Kirppis organizes the reuse of clothing, furniture, and household items and reinvests profits in humanitarian work and in supporting the welfare of the local population. This double-benefit approach supports Kirchherr et al.'s (2017) vision of CE contributing to different aspects, including environmental quality, prosperity, and social equity. Second-hand markets are also highly visible and low-threshold examples of circular practices, and they link sustainability to everyday life. They open pathways to circular actions by consumers without necessitating lifestyle changes or technical skills. By being physically present in towns and cities, they can embed circularity in the heart of society at a grassroots level, thereby making it tangible, familiar, and communal (Errázuriz et al., 2021).

Second-hand markets are critical facilitators of the circular economy. They have the potential to limit environmental impacts, change cultural perceptions toward reuse and repair, and include social missions—to the likes of those promoted by SPR Kirppis—to increase the resilience and social cohesion of a given society. Inasmuch as they are critical in their contributions, second-hand markets are a poorly examined element in the literature on the circular economy, where academic work in the discipline will scrutinize either industrial solutions or top-down policymaking. It is therefore profoundly necessary to study in greater detail the embedded social-world agents so that they are accorded the recognition of being contributors to the circular economy transition.

2.4 SPR Kirppis: A Case of Local-Level CE Implementation

Whereas numerous second-hand enterprises exist in the Circular Economy (CE) framework, none embed social value production so effectively as SPR Kirppis (see Figure 1). Its hybrid business model, which integrates retailing, volunteering, and social services, produces multi-dimensional effects beyond product reuse (Errázuriz et al., 2024). SPR

Kirppis allocates its revenues to humanitarian support and community development, thus relating economic activity and social justice. Further, its shops incorporate social space in which customers and volunteers create a sense of belonging and familiarity. Hur (2020) contends that these people-centric benefits need to become more broadly recognized elements of enduring systems. Building on this, they address the role of emotional and social value in consumption practices.

Despite the contributions of local CE actors like SPR Kirppis, research on these initiatives remains fragmented. Existing CE studies largely focus on industrial innovations or national policy frameworks (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017), often neglecting the role of daily practices and local institutions in driving sustainability transitions at the grassroots level.



Figure 1: Images of SPR Kirppis operations in Vaasa

Image Source: Images are collected from SPR Kirppis Facebook page

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¹ <https://www.facebook.com/vaasansprkirppis/>

2.5 Finnish Consumer Perspectives on Sustainability and the Second-Hand Market

This section explores how Finnish consumers perceive sustainability, corporate responsibility, and the growing second-hand economy. Understanding these perspectives is essential to contextualizing the success of local circular initiatives like SPR Kirppis.

2.5.1 Finnish Consumers and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a company's commitment to operate in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. It involves going beyond mere compliance with laws to actively contribute to the well-being of society and the environment (Carroll, 1991). CSR practices may include reducing carbon emissions, ensuring fair labor conditions, supporting local communities, and promoting transparency and ethical decision-making (Dahlsrud, 2008).

In Finland, consumers expect companies to be socially responsible. CSR in Finland is associated with transparency (Kinderman, 2020), ethical governance (Juholin, 2004), environmental responsibility (Mikkilä et al., 2015), and social equity (Panapanaan et al., 2003; Mikkilä et al., 2015). Finnish consumers, when they feel a company really takes social and environmental matters seriously, tend to put some trust in that company. Panapanaan et al. (2003) found that CSR initiatives that are pinpointed to local communities or environmental causes tend to influence Finnish customers' decision to buy. With the rise of CE practices, Finnish consumers are increasingly finding firms that uphold circularity, ethical sourcing, and waste minimization as favorable (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010).

2.5.2 Attitudes Toward Sustainability in Finland

Sustainability has truly become ingrained into the value systems of Finnish consumers, influenced by national education policies, immense environmental consciousness, and the culturally instilled sense of equity and respect for nature (Holopainen et al., 2014). However, research shows that Finnish consumers do care about long-term environmental impacts and choose products that give back to sustainability goals, regardless of price (Koskimaa et al., 2021). On the other hand, this environmental orientation gets further nurtured by governmental strategies and consumer education, making Finland one of the leaders in sustainable consumption in the EU (Sitra, 2016; Mont & Komppula et al., 2018).

2.5.3 Motivations for Engaging in the Second-Hand Market

In Finland's second-hand market, the growth is supported by several consumer motivations. Economically, second-hand goods offer affordability, especially in times of financial uncertainty (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Psychologically, consumers are drawn to the uniqueness and authenticity of pre-owned items (Cherrier, 2009). Environmentally, reuse helps reduce waste and resource consumption, an ethos of sufficiency and thrift. Socially, places like SPR Kirppis allow for community engagement and supporting local welfare, bringing more social value to second-hand purchases (Errázuriz et al., 2024).

2.5.4 Current Impact of the Second-Hand Economy

The second-hand economy in Finland is an important contributor to waste diversion and resource optimization. It works to reduce consumer-related greenhouse gas emissions by weakening the demand for virgin materials, water access, and so forth. SPR Kirppis stands as a model combining reuse and social good through employment programs and humanitarian funding (Errázuriz et al., 2024). According to

Husgafvel et al. (2018), in Finland, the reuse sector nowadays represents a matured ecosystem that particularly covers textile and furniture industries situated in the CE.

2.5.5 Product Trends in the Finnish Second-Hand Market

The Finnish second-hand scene was dominated by product categories like clothing, furniture, electronics, and books. Fashion-wise, particularly vintage and branded apparel, has gained momentum as a niche of sorts among young consumers who mistakenly associate buying second-hand clothes with their own identity and sustainability (Hur, 2020). Quality, durability, and timelessness became the key factors driving product selection, a reflection of the shift toward sustainable design and consumption (Bocken et al., 2016). Also, buying refurbished electronics and beautiful upcycled furniture has been growing, aided by digital marketplaces such as Tori.fi and Zadaa. The second-hand market in Finland is in vigorous growth, with the sales volume accompanying this growth over the past decade. WRAP (2020) posits resale, rental, and repair channels could grow faster than fast fashion in Northern Europe, with Finland leading under policy and consumer demand. Digitalization in tandem with consumer trust and preferences for ethical buying has only sped up the mainstreaming of the second-hand market.

3 METHODOLOGY

This thesis explores the concept of sustainable consumption, viewing social enterprises-SPR Kirppis-through the prism of the Circular Economy. To decide on which research design is most fitting, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were considered.

A quantitative approach could have been used to measure consumer patterns, behavioral trends, or sustainability impacts through structured surveys or numerical datasets. Hence, this method is suited for hypothesis testing and generalizing statistically (Polit et al., 2010). However, while useful for the broader categorizations of trend analyses, quantitative methodologies generally fail to adequately capture human behavior, contextualizing histories, and narratives in the organization, all of which constitute the center of this research (Tracy, 2024).

Conversely, in more in-depth reflections, a qualitative research approach considers the lived experiences, strategic choices, and cultural values associated with sustainable actions across particular settings (Saari et al., 2024). The qualitative case-study method is well-suited for the study of contemporary phenomena within real-life settings in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018; Scholz & Tietje, 2002). The same can be said for sustainability research, in which systems thinking and stakeholder perspectives are essential (Perotti et al., 2023).

Hence, for this thesis, which intends to discover by means of a case study how SPR Kirppis endorses and promotes sustainable consumption in practice, the qualitative case study method was found to be appropriate. Through its holistic approach, this design allows an investigation of how Circular Economy principles are translated into everyday activities, how stakeholders understand and implement sustainability, and what organizational structures either support or obstruct such implementations. Concurrently, it enables triangulation of the data collected through

interviews, observations, and documents, thereby increasing the credibility and richness of the study.

3.1 Case Selection

Being Finland's major secondhand chain, SPR Kirppis was chosen as a case company in view of sustainable consumption and the principles of the Circular Economy. The very organization's mission and day-to-day operations constitute rich potential for exploring ways in which secondhand marketplaces affect consumer behavior and the community at large toward sustainability.

3.2 Data Collection

With primary data at its disposal, semi-structured interviews were held with key stakeholders of SPR Kirppis, including management and staff directly engaged in the organization's sustainability activities. The interviews followed a previously designed questionnaire (Appendix 1) that centered on the organization's goals, adoption of Circular Economy principles, consumer engagement, challenges, and problems addressed in work with external stakeholders. One interview session was hosted, lasting for two hours approximately. It was recorded and transcribed, with their permission, to make sure that the transcription was accurate and so that further analysis could take place.

On the other hand, participant observations were carried out at several SPR Kirppis locations to support interviews. These observations of store layout, customer interactions, marketing materials, product placement, and atmosphere elicited additional insights into how the organization seeks to manifest its sustainability agenda into practice.

3.3 Data Analysis

The interview data will be analyzed through thematic analysis, using the method of Nowell et al. (2017). This method codes the data and identifies themes of recurring patterns around issues of sustainable consumption, behavior change, operational hindrances, and strategic possibilities. The process is inductive; therefore, themes emerge from the data, as opposed to being implemented a priori.

In order to maintain trustworthiness in the analysis, the research was conducted under criteria encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as Nowell et al. (2017) proposed. This procedure entailed maintaining an auditable track of the research, triangulating data sources, and engaging in reflexivity throughout the entire thesis.

3.4 Interview Overview

As part of the qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a representative of SPR Kirppis in Vaasa. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the organization's goals, operations, challenges, and contributions to sustainability and the Circular Economy in Finland. The interview questions were designed around key themes including organizational strategy, consumer engagement, operational challenges, impact measurement, and collaboration with stakeholders.

The responses were transcribed and organized into a thematic table to ensure clarity and systematic analysis. **Table 4** below presents the summarized interview responses, categorized by topic.

Table 4: Summary of Interview Responses from SPR Kirppis Representative

Category	Question	Response
Organizational Strategy and Goals	1. Please describe the general mission and objectives of SPR Kirppis, particularly how it connects to sustainability and the Circular Economy.	<p>“Our mission is to raise money for the Red Cross here in Vaasa. We are part of the Western Finland District, which is connected to Vaasa, Seinäjoki, Kokkola and Jyväskylä. The most important thing for us is to raise money for all the things that the Red Cross does, such as helping people, such as people of housefire. And volunteers for friendship with lonely people like old people. There are also workers who go to visit them. And also people who are in prison, We also have groups who go to visit them. If they don't have any friends or relatives to meet them.”</p> <p>“Here in Asperger's, we do a lot of employment who have been unemployed for a long time and have difficulty finding work. It's not paid. They get the benefit of employment, but they get to get some work experience. The most important things are the money raised and the employment.”</p>

	2. In what ways does SPR Kirppis implement the principles of the Circular Economy in its operations and day-to-day activities?	“All the things that are being sold here are donated by people. So the idea is that things like the re-liefs or the furnitures or whatever they donate, we reuse. So we try to get as little waste as possible. But unfortunately people do not wash or sort out thing well before donating here. that’s why many of broken products or cloths go to trash.”
Con-sumer Behavior and En-gage-ment	3. How does SPR Kirppis encourage customers to purchase second-hand goods over new ones?	“We have a lot of followers in face-book, instgram, social media. we so this kind of like advert, like how much water goes to make a new pair of jeans or something stuff like that.these activities make people realize how bad is making always new cloths. so its better to buy second hand.”
	4. In what ways does SPR Kirppis educate its customers on sustainable consumption	“We usually do this kind of information on social media. What kind of effects does it have? That's pretty much it.”

	and the environmental impact of second-hand shopping?	
	5. What do you think is the contribution of second-hand shopping in changing consumer behavior towards sustainability in Finland?	"I think lot of people nowadays like do secondhand shopping mall, may in the past it was only for poor people, but nowadays very different. its kind of like a trend to buy a secondhand. you can choose and change new design and fashion. I think specially young people are now so much interested to find a trendy thing here. and also secondhand cloths are durable."
Challenges and Opportunities	6. What are your main challenges in promoting sustainable consumption through SPR Kirppis? 7. what are the most significant barriers to more consumers engaging in second-hand shopping?	"There really isn't much. Biggest one is probably some people's negative attitudes towards recycling and sustainability, like people who do not believe in global warming etc. But those people are a minority, so their impact is not so big."

Impact and Success	8. How do you measure the success of SPR Kirppis in promoting sustainable consumption and contributing to the Circular Economy? Do you track any specific metrics or indicators?	<p>"I think we have like this, we track kind of like how much goes to waste from the donations and how much we sell, like it's an estimation, I think it's based on the amount of we have sold something that almost like the same number that we have sold almost the same number goes to waste. So yeah, that's kind of that kind of what we measure."</p> <p>"If it's hard for people to donate something or bring here themselves, we have sometimes these in front of minimoney or something that we have this day, you can bring here. Our car is there, and you can bring stuff there if you want to donate and stuff like that."</p>
	9. Do you have any examples of how SPR Kirppis has contributed positively to the local community regarding sustainability or waste minimization?	<p>"we try to sell everything, if we can not sell specially towel, we use those as a cleaning things. anyhow trying to minimize wastage."</p>

Stakeholder Partnerships and Collaboration	10. How does SPR Kirppis collaborate with other organizations, such as local businesses, governments, or NGOs, to promote sustainable consumption and circular behaviors?	"our corporation with other parties is like more employment. I would say that occurs we are with relying, sustainability, these our values also. but its not main focus with collaboration."
	11. Do you partner with any social or environmental organizations to further your mission, and if so, how do these partnerships help further your sustainability efforts?	"Companies sometimes donate their old furniture when they are refurbishing their offices or stores instead of throwing them to trash. We also take part in different events with other local organizations to promote recycling and sustainable consumption, such as second-hand fairs or webinars. For example tomorrow our toimialapäällikkö (manager) is having a presentation at a webinar "Kestävä kehitys ja yhdistykset" which is organized by Pohjanmaan liitto. We also have fashion shows at SPR-Kirppis to promote more sustainable fashion."

This table forms the basis for the thematic analysis presented in the findings and discussion sections, providing direct insights into how SPR

Kirppis contributes to sustainable consumption and circular economy practices in Finland.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The participant gave informed consent before participating in the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were promised, and data were kept safely based on institutional regulations.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the key findings of the thesis based on the semi-structured interview with a staff member of SPR Kirppis, supported by participant observations and secondary sources. The findings are organized into four main themes, each connected to the thesis's two research questions: How does SPR Kirppis contribute to encouraging sustainable consumption behavior in Finland's Circular Economy? What are the opportunities and challenges for SPR Kirppis to impact consumer behavior and advance sustainability culture?

4.1 Social Purpose and Sustainability Integration

A central finding is that SPR Kirppis's mission is strongly rooted in social impact, while sustainability and circular economy practices are naturally embedded in its operational model.

"Our mission is to raise money for the Red Cross here in Vaasa... for all the things that the Red Cross does, such as helping people... and also people who are in prison."

The organization promotes not only environmental sustainability but also social inclusion, especially by offering employment opportunities for individuals who face challenges in the job market:

"We do a lot of employment [for those] who have been unemployed for a long time and have difficulty finding work."

These activities align with the triple bottom line approach to sustainability—addressing social equity, economic vitality, and environmental responsibility (Elkington & Rowlands, 1999; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). In the context of Finland's CE model, which prioritizes collaboration and systemic thinking (Sitra, 2016), the integration of social missions into

SPR Kirppis's sustainability agenda makes it a significant grassroots actor in promoting circular practices.

4.2 Everyday Circularity: Operational Practices in Reuse and Waste Reduction

The second major theme relates to how SPR Kirppis implements Circular Economy principles in practice, primarily through re-use, redistribution, and minimal waste generation.

"All the things that are being sold here are donated by people... we re-use... So we try to get as little waste as possible."

The reuse of clothing, furniture, and household goods contributes to prolonging product lifespans and reducing the need for virgin resources, two core CE objectives (Kirchherr et al., 2017; Bocken et al., 2016). Even unsellable goods are repurposed:

"If we cannot sell, especially towels, we use those as cleaning things. Anyway, trying to minimize wastage."

This pragmatic approach echoes what Errázuriz et al. (2024) describe as "everyday circularity," where reuse and repair are embedded into daily operations. However, waste management remains a challenge due to the poor quality of some donations:

"Unfortunately, people do not wash or sort out things well before donating... many broken products or clothes go to trash."

This underscores the need for consumer education about responsible donation behavior, an area SPR Kirppis could further develop.

4.3 Engagement through Education and Trend Culture

A notable insight is SPR Kirppis's strategic use of social media to educate and influence consumers, particularly younger demographics.

"We have a lot of followers... we do this kind of like advert, like how much water goes to make a new pair of jeans..."

These digital campaigns aim to raise awareness of the environmental cost of fast fashion and encourage conscious consumption—a strategy supported in the literature as effective for shifting consumer behavior (Hur, 2020).

The growing popularity of second-hand shopping among younger consumers is seen as a key driver of change:

"In the past, it was only for poor people, but nowadays very different... it's kind of like a trend."

This reflects broader shifts in consumer values where authenticity, individuality, and environmental ethics intersect (Gilal et al., 2024). As second-hand consumption becomes culturally mainstream, SPR Kirppis benefits from its visibility and appeal to these shifting norms.

4.4 Opportunities and Challenges in Scaling Impact

Although SPR Kirppis is successful in promoting reuse and awareness, the interviewee highlighted limited formal collaboration focused on sustainability:

"Our cooperation with other parties is more employment... sustainability, these are our values also, but it's not the main focus with collaboration."

However, there are emerging partnerships, particularly in the form of donations from companies and participation in local events:

“Companies sometimes donate their old furniture... We also take part in different events with other local organizations to promote recycling...”

This aligns with the findings of Dziubaniuk and Aarikka-Stenroos (2025), who emphasize that circular value creation in local ecosystems requires more structured partnerships between business, government, and community actors.

4.5 Measurement and Evaluation of Impact

While impact is not tracked through formal metrics, the organization keeps internal estimations:

“We track how much goes to waste from the donations and how much we sell.”

This rudimentary system suggests a need for more robust impact evaluation frameworks, which could help demonstrate value to stakeholders and secure future partnerships (Perotti et al., 2025). The limited quantitative tracking also indicates that much of the success remains qualitative and experiential.

4.6 Cultural Perception and Social Barriers

Although the perception of second-hand shopping has improved, some attitudinal resistance remains:

“The biggest [barrier] is probably some people’s negative attitudes... people who do not believe in global warming etc. But those people are a minority.”

This suggests a cultural shift is underway, but not yet complete. As previous studies have shown, social stigma, cleanliness concerns, and sta-

tus perception remain barriers to sustainable consumption for some consumers (Fuchs & Lorek, 2005; Borusiak et al., 2020). Overcoming these barriers requires continuous public engagement, trust-building, and normalization of reuse culture.

Table 5 summarizes the main themes identified in the thesis, exposing each theme to the relevant research questions. One of the major themes imparts the integration of a social mission whereby employment creation and humanitarian acts not only impart primary objectives but also act as a basis for the embedding of environmental sustainability in operational procedures. This theme responded to Research Question 1 (RQ1) on how sustainability is operationalized within socially driven enterprises. Operational circularity reflects an emphasis on reuse and minimizing waste through adaptive operational procedures, flexible, for instance, in repurposing of materials such as towels. This also relates to RQ1 by focusing on how circular economy principles are put into practice in the day-to-day operations.

Table 5: Summary of Key Themes

Theme	Key Findings	Related Research Question
Social mission integration	Employment and humanitarian support are central; sustainability is embedded.	RQ1
Operational circularity	Emphasis on reuse, minimal waste, and adaptive practices like repurposing towels.	RQ1
Consumer engagement	Social media campaigns and cultural trends drive second-hand appeal.	RQ1, RQ2

Collaboration and barriers	Limited formal partnerships; some consumer resistance persists.	RQ2
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Consumer engagement emerges as a third pot of themes, showing how social media can be tapped into to create a cultural trend out of second-hand shopping. The same theme applies to RQ1 and RQ2, as it shows internal engagement strategies and influence from consumer dynamics outside of the firm. The last theme of collaboration and barriers touches on the scarce contribution of formal partnerships and the persisting consumer-resistance-based challenges. These findings relate best to RQ2, which deals with external factors affecting the implementation and growth of circular economy initiatives. Together, the themes offer a big picture understanding of how a geographically based social enterprise navigates and contributes to the circular economy.

5 LIMITATIONS

While this thesis provides valuable insights into how SPR Kirppis contributes to sustainable consumption and the Circular Economy in Finland, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations pertain to the scope of the research, the methodological design, and the data collection process, which may affect the generalizability and depth of the findings.

5.1 Limited Sample Size and Stakeholder Representation

This research relied on a single in-depth interview with a staff member of SPR Kirppis, along with participant observations at store locations. While this qualitative approach allowed for a rich, contextual understanding of practices and experiences, the perspectives shared reflect only one organizational voice. Other stakeholders—such as customers, volunteers, donors, and external partners—were not included in the primary data collection. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the diversity of viewpoints involved in SPR Kirppis’s sustainability efforts.

5.2 Contextual and Case-Based Nature

As a single-case study, this research focused exclusively on SPR Kirppis in Vaasa. Although SPR Kirppis is a prominent example of a second-hand social enterprise in Finland, its organizational structure, mission, and community role may differ from other second-hand businesses in the country or internationally. Therefore, the findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to all social enterprises or second-hand markets operating within the broader Circular Economy.

5.3 Language and Interpretation Constraints

The interview was conducted in conversational English by a non-native speaker, which may have influenced the clarity, depth, and nuance of the responses. Some expressions were informal or fragmented, and although efforts were made to interpret them accurately, language barriers may have affected the richness of the data or introduced interpretation bias.

5.4 Time Constraints and Resource Limitations

Due to the time and resource limitations inherent in a bachelor's thesis project, the research design had to be narrowed in scope. A broader and more inclusive study—possibly involving multiple interviews, focus groups, or survey data—could have yielded more comprehensive insights into consumer behavior, stakeholder relationships, and long-term outcomes.

Despite these limitations, this thesis contributes meaningfully to the understanding of grassroots circular economy practices and the role of second-hand enterprises like SPR Kirppis. The findings offer a valuable starting point for further academic inquiry and practical application in sustainability and social enterprise fields.

6 CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed the role of SPR Kirppis in promoting sustainable consumption under the framework of the Circular Economy (CE) in Finland. The research followed a qualitative case study design to analyze how SPR Kirppis operationalizes sustainability into its mission and social activities, engages consumers, and deals with the difficulties of promoting circular behavior in everyday life. The results showed that SPR Kirppis is not only a second-hand marketplace but also a social actor that instills inclusivity and environmental consciousness.

At the very core of SPR Kirppis scheme lays the reuse of donated goods-materially clothing, furniture, and household items-as such preventing garbage increase and extending product lifespans. Such operations epitomize the CE notion of "closing the loop," in which the resources may be kept in use for as long as possible before recovering or regenerating (Kirchherr, Reike, & Hekkert, 2017). Such a system of reuse in spirit is an expression of Finland's national roadmap to become an international front-runner in the circular economy by 2050-a vision of a future with no waste created through systemic innovation and resource efficiency (Time, 2022).

SPR Kirppis integrates social value by employing those disadvantaged in the labor market. This dual mission represents a more holistic CE interpretation, including ecological sustainability, social equity, and community resilience, all of which are stressed in the literature on socially oriented circular systems (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). In line with national strategies which emphasize inclusive employment as part of the sustainability transition (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2021), SPR Kirppis builds on that approach.

Aside from environmental impact, consumer engagement through social media stands as another important mechanism the SPR Kirppis employs to impact sustainable consumption. The company uses social media

campaigning to raise awareness about the impact of fast fashion and offer a second-hand alternative. This is indicative of a trend accelerated within Finland: second-hand shopping is being destigmatized and increasingly seen as part of a sustainable lifestyle, especially for the younger generation (Finnish Commerce Federation, 2023). The growing acceptance of second-hand consumption aids in the mainstreaming of circular values within daily life whilst simultaneously challenging the traditional linear norms of consumption.

SPR Kirppis, however, is not without several limitations, not the least of which is measuring impact. Although figures for goods sold and estimates for the quantity of waste diverted are tracked, no formal measures exist for quantifying environmental savings or social outcomes. Without rigorous data collection systems in place, the organization might find it challenging to assess its contributions, or even to scale up its operations. Besides local community activities in which it participates and donations it solicits from local businesses, SPR Kirppis has rather limited collaborations in terms of environmental initiatives. Expanding such partnerships with environmental NGOs, academic institutions, and government agencies could provide a real boost to its influence and the spread of circular impact.

Yet, SPR Kirppis stands as an example of local and community-based organizations putting CE principles into practice while simultaneously dealing with social matters. It indicates that sustainability is neither an exclusive technological nor industrial matter but is also cultural and social. In this respect, sustainability has been forged in the crucible of everyday practice, community values, and ethical commitments. In ongoing efforts to further the CE agenda in Finland, therefore, SPR Kirppis and similar actors will be crucial in embedding circularity at the grassroots level and consequently "down-to-earth": giving sustainability an accessible, relevant, and immediate face for the ordinary citizen.

6.1 Declaration of Language and Academic Writing Standards

Review:

I confirm that I have utilized Microsoft Copilot and Grammarly to review the language and academic writing standard of my work. These tools have assisted in ensuring clarity, coherence, grammatical accuracy, and adherence to academic conventions.

This declaration serves to acknowledge my efforts in maintaining a high standard of written communication through AI-powered assistance.

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Appendix 1 (Questionnaire)

Organizational Strategy and Goals

1. Please describe the general mission and objectives of SPR Kirppis, particularly how it connects to sustainability and the Circular Economy.
2. In what ways does SPR Kirppis implement the principles of the Circular Economy in its operations and day-to-day activities?

Consumer Behavior and Engagement

1. How does SPR Kirppis encourage customers to purchase second-hand goods over new ones?
2. In what ways does SPR Kirppis educate its customers on sustainable consumption and the environmental impact of second-hand shopping?
3. What do you think is the contribution of second-hand shopping in changing consumer behavior towards sustainability in Finland?

Challenges and Opportunities

1. What are your main challenges in promoting sustainable consumption through SPR Kirppis?
2. What are the most significant barriers to more consumers engaging in second-hand shopping?

Impact and Success

1. How do you measure the success of SPR Kirppis in promoting sustainable consumption and contributing to the Circular Economy? Do you track any specific metrics or indicators?
2. Do you have any examples of how SPR Kirppis has contributed positively to the local community regarding sustainability or waste minimization?

Stakeholder Partnerships and Collaboration

1. How does SPR Kirppis collaborate with other organizations, such as local businesses, governments, or NGOs, to promote sustainable consumption and circular behaviors?

2. Do you partner with any social or environmental organizations to further your mission, and if so, how do these partnerships help.