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## How Sweden's 'secondhand only' shopping mall is changing retail

Sweden's innovative secondhand mall is transforming consumer culture, challenging traditional shopping models by offering a sustainable, eco-friendly marketplace that prioritizes recycling and conscious consumption.

By [Mary-Ann Ball](#), [Nottingham Trent University](#)

As a fashion sustainability researcher, finding the [ReTuna shopping mall](#) in Eskilstuna was a delightful surprise. Stepping into this Swedish shopping centre felt refreshingly different – it is the first in the world to sell only secondhand and repurposed items.

During [numerous visits](#) to the shopping mall over the last 18 months, I have spoken to customers, managers and employees – all of whom seemed excited by ReTuna's innovative business model.

The mall instantly feels very different to the cluttered charity shops or vintage boutiques most of us associate with pre-owned retail. There is a wide range of products on sale – fashion, sports equipment, household items, children's toys, antiques – and even an Ikea secondhand store selling previously used and repaired furniture.

This is not just a retail space. It is a municipality-led experiment in circular consumption, where everything sold has

been donated by the public.

ReTuna was established in 2015 as part of Eskilstuna's climate and waste reduction strategy. Built alongside the city's recycling centre, it includes a dedicated drop-off point called The Return, where residents donate unwanted items. These are sorted and redistributed to the retailers in the mall, creating a low-cost, low-waste circular system.

The model is only possible because of public funding and local government support – a reminder that circular innovation often requires structural investment, not just consumer goodwill.

However, what makes ReTuna so distinctive is not just its inventory but its atmosphere. Consumers describe it as “accessible”, “curated” and “convenient”. The mall's layout and product displays mirror conventional retail spaces, making secondhand shopping feel stylish and enjoyable.

ReTuna sells only secondhand clothing, books, bikes and other items. Mary-Anne Ball, [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

One shop manager told me customers often mistake the secondhand items for new, a testament to how fashionability and design are used to make reuse attractive without increasing cost. At ReTuna, the clean, calm environment helps make ethical consumption feel desirable and emotionally rewarding. As one shopper put it: “It's not just ethical, it's beautiful.”

Retailers use low-cost stock and infrastructure to create visually appealing stores. The result is a pleasurable shopping experience that challenges the stigma of secondhand. While affordability and environmental values remain central, ReTuna also reimagines what sustainable retail can look and feel like.

## Demand for pre-loved

Consumer interest in “pre-loved” fashion is accelerating, with the secondhand market growing 2.7 times faster than the broader apparel market, according to [one recent industry report](#). Globally, it is projected to reach US\$367 billion (£272 billion) by 2029.

And it is not only pre-owned fashion that is growing. [Another market research report](#) forecasts the wider secondhand products market will reach US\$1.04 trillion by 2035, growing at a compound annual rate of 17.2%.

In a [YouGov survey](#) spanning 17 markets, 43% of secondhand buyers favoured instore purchases, compared with 39% who preferred online (19% were undecided). ReTuna is part of this shift – not as an outlier, but a glimpse of what mainstream retail could become.

This pioneering Swedish mall turned ten this year. It has grown from a local government initiative to an internationally recognised model of circular retail. The mall's success shows that secondhand shopping does not have to feel like a compromise – it can be stylish, convenient, and socially meaningful.

Circular retail is not just about what we buy, but how and where we buy it. ReTuna demonstrates that with the right infrastructure, design and public support, sustainable consumption can be embedded into everyday life – not as a chore but a rewarding experience.

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Image1: [Eemab](#) at Wikimedia, [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Image2: Second-hand books for sale at ReTuna, Sweden's shopping centre dedicated to only selling preloved items. Mary-Anna Ball, [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

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