Getting shoppers to think twice before buying to cut waste

While many were eagerly awaiting the Black Friday sale last month to "check out" their virtual shopping carts, undergraduate Woo Qiyun was trying to get shoppers here to think twice before they buy.

"I know people who would just scroll through social media and wonder what they should buy just because there is a sale," said the 22-year-old environmental studies student, who has made a personal commitment not to buy new clothes. "That got me thinking about how many people are actually buying things they don't need."

The National University of Singapore student decided to kick-start the White Monday movement in Singapore as a way of combating "mindless consumerism". She did this with her friend – Mr Sammie Ng, a 22-year-old Singaporean student studying at the University of Hong Kong.

The movement was originally started in Sweden two years ago with the aim of providing an "antidote" to the Black Friday shopping hysteria. It was held on Nov 25, the Monday before the Black Friday sale.

In Singapore, the duo took to Instagram to urge people to buy only what they needed, and to support businesses in the circular economy, such as thrift stores selling second-hand items, with the hashtag #sgwhitemonday.

Said Ms Woo on her sustainability-themed Instagram account @theweirdandwild: "While the best is still to reduce, if you gotta consume, try these – repair, reuse or rent!"

For Ms Woo, starting this campaign was her way of doing her part to combat climate change and reduce the feeling of helplessness in tackling the issue.

She hopes to continue the White Monday campaign next year, and is also working with her peers to develop a resource platform for sustainability-related information and tools, such as on the location of cobblers, tailors or vegetarian food stalls in Singapore.

"Many people think climate change is an issue that will affect future generations. But that future is my future too," said Ms Woo.

Audrey Tan

Undergraduate Woo Qiyun kick-started the White Monday movement in Singapore, urging people to buy only what they need and to support businesses in the circular economy, such as thrift stores.