

## U.S. Generation Z Consumers' Motivations and Purchase Behavior Towards Secondhand Clothing

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*Introduction:* Gen Z consumers are growing aware of the apparel industry's waste challenges, which is propelling them towards fashion re-commerce options such as the secondhand clothing market. Cline (2019) emphasizes the importance of shifting the retail trends from disposable fast fashion towards higher-quality clothes. Sustainability and a multitude of clothing offerings are the two factors driving the growth in secondhand clothing. In order to appease consumer demands, sustainable high-quality clothing should be tagged at a sensible price (Sweet, 2019). Strydom (2020) indicated that the most direct way to design out waste and pollution and capture value is by raising the average number of times clothing is being worn.

Public donation is one of the main sources of secondhand clothing. In recent years, expensive antiques and rare luxury goods have appeared in the secondhand market, and the pattern of secondhand consumption is changing (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016). Nowadays, secondhand shoppers are searching for bargain fashion items when they go shopping. Their motives are not just driven by economics and recreation as prior studies have shown, but also by environmental issues (Chi & Zheng, 2016). Besides, the internet changes the channel of secondhand clothing.

Gen Z who were born in mid-90 to 2010, is distinguishable from earlier generations, particularly by their values and communication ways. Gen Z will be the dominating group for the market soon (Jalakas Kihl, & Vähänen, 2018). Gen Z's current buying power is placed at \$44 billion and is a significant target for marketing as well as the secondhand market ("Why It's Imperative," 2019). Since a lot of previous studies have already discussed secondhand clothing for Millennials, Gen Z aspect was referred to a little in recent years. Previous studies have found that Gen Z spend large amounts of time on the Internet; therefore, it is significant for us to understand secondhand clothing development on the Internet and social media. They strongly rely on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram compared to traditional communication channels (Ferreira, 2018).

Multiple retail channels, such as high-end stores, thrift stores, and online retailers have acknowledged the value of secondhand clothing and have designed into this consumer niche by incorporating vintage product collections and hosting flea markets (Ferraro et al., 2016). "Secondhand retailers must take action and start connecting with their consumers online" along with investigating the changing consumer views on secondhand shopping as a sustainable way of consumption (Markova et al., 2017). According to recent studies, there is a gap in literature which can demonstrate Gen Z's reasoning behind the rise in secondhand shopping and offer guidance to interpret consumer attitude towards second-hand shopping (Markova et al., 2017).

*Purpose:* The purpose of the study is to identify emerging themes influencing U.S. Gen Z consumers' motivations toward secondhand shopping and their willingness to purchase secondhand clothing based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB).

*Method:* A qualitative method approach was used to conduct 18 in-depth interviews as a data collection method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interviews were semi-structured with the deliverance of open-ended/semi structured questions carried out in a conversational style. To approach the objective of this research, the whole constructs in relevant literature were adopted into our study. For understanding Gen Z consumer's buying behavior, theory planned behavior (TPB) is applied to explore their motivation for buying secondhand clothing. In TPB framework, it includes three variables, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (PBC), respectively. Those three variables have an impact on behavioral intention, which consequently will influence the actual purchase behavior of consumers (Zheng & Chi, 2015).

*Findings and Discussion:* The participants were motivated to shop secondhand clothing for the following values perceived: (1) financial benefit, (2) social value, (3) emotional value, (4) convenience value, (5) sustainability value, and (6) perceived behavior control. Financial benefit, social, emotional, convenience and sustainability values form the overall positive attitudes of Gen Z consumers toward secondhand clothing. The general encouragement and support from significant others such as close relatives, friend, admired influencers enabled the emotional, social and sustainability values perceived. The participants felt shopping secondhand clothing was completely within their own control.

The participants tend to shop secondhand clothing in order to save money. The participants spent a range between \$20 - \$600 with an average spend of \$200 on secondhand clothing in the last year. They described their experience of shopping for secondhand clothing in thrift stores as relaxing and fun. Although 44% of the participants reported that the most popular type of secondhand clothing shopped for are jeans and t-shirts. Majority participants didn't have preferences for shopping for certain types of clothing. There were some obstacles pointed out when purchasing secondhand clothing, such as size problems, stains, or less high-quality products to purchase. Some participants inclined to buy specific brands although a majority of the participants did not care too much about specific brands. They just wanted to shop the styles which they really liked and enjoyed the shopping experience. Finding something surprisingly good is a great reward from secondhand clothing shopping. Some participants indicated that shopping secondhand clothing is an effective way for reducing waste and protecting the environment and they wanted to make their own contributions to this critical issue.

Furthermore, some participants haven't shopped secondhand clothing online. They prefer shopping brick and mortar stores because they want to check on the condition of secondhand clothing and feel the fabric texture. Identifying the values desired by Gen Z consumers from shopping secondhand clothing can help retailers and brands to develop marketing strategies that make sense to this new generation, and improve product offerings and shopping experiences by providing valuable findings and practical solutions.

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