

Interplay between TikTok & Generation Z: the trickle-up effect of #thriftflip

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Introduction: Expanding from conventional Internet exploring, online social networking services (SNS) of textual and image distribution have led to an emergence of extensive multilateral social media channels (Cheng et al., 2013). However, such vertical and horizontal social media have evolved into popularized video platforms (e.g. TikTok, YouTube, etc.) in the forms of #challenges or algorithmic keywording (e.g. Storytime, GRWM, etc.) with relative convenience in effectively transmitting and generating informative content (Zhao et al., 2015). Consequently, prompting the advent of the #thriftflip phenomenon on both video platforms since late 2020. The #thriftflip initially began with directly upcycling wardrobe items due to global COVID-19 governmental lockdown procedures, which has further developed into increased awareness for sustainable fashion alternatives and decision-making. Moreover, this #challenge has progressed into an unprecedented subculture who seek personalized secondhand clothes to better project individuality and socio-cultural identity. As such, the following research paper focuses on #thriftflip across the different responses from both video platforms, YouTube and TikTok, to identify the characteristics of Generation Z, its interrelationship with both SNS, and its effects on initiating a trickle-up phenomenon.

Background: This paper defines the characteristics of the subject group being discussed, Generation Z, with the following - practical professionals, active altruists, and candid communicators. With strong attachment to the digital environment, Generation Z hold rosy retrospection to reality (Issa et al., 2016); thus, prompting this cohort with an experimental nature across motives for entertainment, improving productivity (Dabija et al., 2019) and instilling professionalism within these individuals (Dolot, 2018) as practical professionals. Characterized with altruistic awareness (Last, 2014) of active involvement and adoption of socially responsible and environmentally conscious behavior, Generation Z's direct demonstration of sustainable actions influence and increase proactive engagement of their peers (Dabija et al., 2019) on virtual platforms. With no restraints in navigating the current digitalscape, Generation Z is highly communicative in expressing themselves (Dolot, 2018) as users, creators, and authoritative gatekeepers of Internet content (Hardey, 2011) with the expectancy for appreciation through bidirectional feedback (Dolot, 2018) emphasizing the digital message's value and its implicative effects for developing oneself. This paper recognizes the extensive influence of Tik Tok with its increasing 500 million global users (Zhong, 2018), of which Generation Z accounts for more than 69% of its dedicated young user base (Sloane et al., 2019). This paper notes the designated platform of TikTok, a decentralized user-generated content (UGC) community (Jung et al., 2019), which allows creators to fully practice user autonomy (Ahlse et al., 2020) from low entry points and low audit and its progression as a

positive medium for knowledge (Wang et al., 2019) (e.g. #FemBoyFriday, #thriftflip). This paper identifies the trickle-up effect, which indicates the social influence that ascends the hierarchical structure of fashion trends (Wo et al., 2019) from subcultural fashion trends from fashion gatekeepers and the masses; hence, being dependent on the sensitivity of fashion gatekeepers and the level of exposure of subcultural groups.

Methods: The paper selected subversive video SNS platforms (i.e. TikTok & YouTube) as unstructured data sources and extracted keywords related to #thriftflip from a composition of COVID-19 lockdown situations and its advancement as a subculture amongst Generation Z users. Data was cleansed reflecting the spike of #thriftflip mentions on Google Trend by limiting the scale to the first 300 keyword-associated co-occurrence hashtags between April 2020 to April 2021. Further visualization was conducted from hashtag text mining on Textom and NodeXL.

Results: From compiling the big data networking results of the keyword, #thriftflip, and refining the contextually relevant items, it could be concluded that both TikTok and YouTube hold the highest connectivity and frequency on main keywords (i.e. clothes, fashion, thrift). When discussing the YouTube platform, its script highlighted the actual participation of #thriftflipping from keywords of fashion design (e.g. bandeau, skirt, etc.) and methodologies (e.g. sew, bleach, etc.), whereas its comments focused on socio-cultural and environmental discussion (e.g. obesity, landfill, etc.). Thus, despite both networks sharing relevancy on the core values of #thriftflip, influencer-generated videos delivered the topicality and information necessary to the content, whilst audience references held substantial debate as an expansion of the content-conveyed as a means of potential problem-solving to prevalent social issues within the fashion industry.

Conclusion: It could be identified from the preceding literature that Generation Z are majorly composed of highly attentive and adventurous digital natives, who interplay in the virtual environment as both consumers and creators through user-generated content. Specifically, portraying this innate disposition through algorithmic-pushing TikTok hashtags (i.e. #FYP, #xyzbxca) in further publicizing and increasing the exposure of one's contents. It could be implied that the subculture of #thriftflip has expanded its applicability from wearable fashion goods into the lifestyle domain. In regards to the determinants for initiating the trend of the #thriftflip subculture, the characteristics of Generation Z were foundationally influential in order of USG trickling up, creative professionalism, visual communication, and environmental altruism, respectively. It could be summarized that the #thriftflip phenomenon does not limit its parameters to the digital atmosphere and is advancing into the dynamics of individual consumption behaviors for secondhand clothing from online commerce markets. It could be derived that this participatory engagement equates to the inclusion of the #thriftflip subculture; hence, implicating these secondhand clothing markets as the materialistic gatekeepers of the #thriftflip trickle-up effect. When considering the values collected from the YouTube analysis, it could be inferred that YouTube positions itself as a platform gatekeeper between the two extremities of subculture and mass culture within the video-sharing SNS platform. Thus, it is expected from this research finding that the subculture, #thriftflip, will trickle-up from its foundations of TikTok to that of mass media by Generation Z user-creators and extensive features on larger video platforms such as YouTube.

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