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Consumers' Perceptions of Fast Fashion and Secondhand Shopping

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Consumers' Perceptions of Fast Fashion and Secondhand Shopping

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As someone who loves clothing and fashion more than anything, I am so grateful to have the opportunity to complete a thesis on the thing I love most in the world. Everyone who knows me is well aware of my love for thrifting and shopping secondhand. The rush of excitement that comes when I find a gem at the thrift is like no other.

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I hope anyone who takes the time to read my thesis considers shopping secondhand the next time they look to buy clothes. The options are endless, and you never know just what you might find.

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Abstract

Studies show that fast fashion has a significant impact on the environment regarding greenhouse gasses, water pollution, and overfilling landfills (Lestari & Asmarani, 2021). In addition, the industry is responsible for about 20% of industrial water pollution resulting from textile dyeing and treatment (Niinimäki et. al, 2020). In this study, the influence of how knowledge of the environmental impacts of fast fashion on a person's shopping behaviors is further analyzed. The purpose of the study was to explore consumer perceptions of fast fashion and secondhand shopping and whether one affects the other.

This study was conducted utilizing a survey on the online platform Qualtrics using both closed and open-ended questions. Data was collected from 64 participants, 76% of whom were female (n=48), 22% were male (n=14), and one respondent preferred not to say (n=1). Additionally, 81% of participants were 18 to 22 years old. Within the study, 85% of participants were at least somewhat knowledgeable about fast fashion and 78% felt aware of the realities of fast fashion. After learning more about fast fashion, 61% of respondents reported changing their consumption of fast fashion. This finding is true of 67% of participants who were aged 25 and younger and 43% of those aged 26 and older. Equal numbers of participants were found to shop or not shop secondhand stores. Participants who elaborated on their favorite aspects of secondhand clothing shared that they like secondhand shopping because it's an affordable way to be stylish and the uniqueness of items. However, participants also commented on the affordability of fast fashion as a reason to like it, as well as the ease of finding what they are looking for. Because this study found no difference in responses between genders, these findings contradict previous research regarding gender and its influence on sustainability.

Introduction

In 2021, the global fashion industry brought in \$1.7 trillion in revenue (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Fast fashion is one method of clothing production, manufacturing garments to quickly reproduce trends or provide consumers with low priced versions of otherwise expensive fashion designs (Wang, 2010). Fast fashion makes up 18% of the global apparel industry (Lee, 2022), with an estimated 2022 market value of \$99.23 billion (Smith, 2022). Fast fashion's popularity is alarming because of the environmental and ethical consequences of its process of manufacturing. The fast fashion industry produces four to five billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions and contributes 20% of industrial water pollution (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Additionally, to quickly manufacture garments to keep up with trends, human resources are exploited in the lower labor-cost countries (Shrivastava et al., 2021).

One method to combat the environmental and ethical impacts of fast fashion is secondhand shopping, the purchase of goods that have been previously owned (Ferraro et al., 2016). Historically, secondhand shopping was seen as taboo and stigmatized due to the perception that it was meant for the lower class (Ferraro et al., 2016). In recent years, this stigma has faded, and the affordability and sustainability of secondhand shopping has positively impacted secondhand consumption (Ferraro et al., 2016). Social media has been a driving force regarding the recent popularity and trendiness of secondhand shopping and thrifting (Shrivastava et al., 2021). Celebrities have posted and promoted the idea (Moorhouse & Moorhouse, 2017). For instance, Emma Watson promotes sustainability and secondhand fashion through her Instagram account with 68.6 million followers. She is an environmental activist and has taken part in several sustainability campaigns including the People Tree Collection, White Shirt Project, and Green Carpet Challenge (Alves, 2022). The encouragement of secondhand

shopping by celebrities and influencers has minimized the stigma and increased motivation for secondhand consumption (Shrivastava et al., 2021). The secondhand market is expected to reach over \$81 billion by 2026 (Fenyo, 2022).

But in the minds of consumers, how connected are the effects of fast fashion and secondhand shopping? Does education about fast fashion lead to more secondhand consumption? The purpose of the study was to explore consumer perceptions of fast fashion and secondhand shopping and whether they affect each other. The hypothesis at the basis of this research is that as consumers become more knowledgeable about fast fashion's environmental impacts and employee treatment, consumers will turn more to secondhand clothing.

Literature Review

Previous studies about thrifting and fast fashion have focused on sustainability, consumer behavior, generational differences, and social media/influencers. These are the topics researchers have discussed in the past, but little is known about the impact of knowledge of fast fashion on secondhand shopping.

Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

The idea of sustainability was originally conceived in forestry (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). The initial definition of sustainability was to never harvest more than what the forest yields in new growth (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Since then, the definition of sustainability has continued to change. Currently, sustainability has several dimensions that require harmony: economic, social, and environmental (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). The Brundtland World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainability to be “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising those of the future” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987, p. 43). Sustainability aims to ensure the well-being of future generations, providing them with access to both natural and man-made resources.

Knowledge of the unsustainability of the fashion industry has become prevalent in recent years. The fashion industry produces numerous environmental and social concerns including pollution of the environment and exploitation of human resources (Shrivastava et al., 2021). The fashion industry is responsible for four to five billion tons of global CO₂ emissions and 190,000 tons of industrial water pollution annually (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The environmental issues of the fashion industry are not a secret. Brands such as Levi's and Patagonia have taken steps to address this issue and minimize the pollution produced by their clothing manufacturing. In 2011,

Levi's introduced a new line of denim named Water<Less jeans which produces denim with less water than conventional garment dyeing techniques (Sullivan, 2021). Since the implementation of Water<Less jeans, Levi's has saved more than three billion tons of water and recycled five billion tons of water (Levi's, 2020). Since 1993, Patagonia has employed the manufacturing of garments using recycled polyester made of plastic water bottles (Patagonia, 2022). Of their current collection of fall 2022 garments, 91% of the polyester fabrics utilized were produced from recycled polyester (Patagonia, 2022). Patagonia's use of recycled polyester avoided the emission of 12.3 million pounds of CO₂ into the air (Patagonia, 2022).

Another sustainability issue in the fashion industry is textile and clothing waste being sent to landfills. Clothing that sits in landfills may sit there for decades depending on the biodegradability of the material. Biodegradation refers to nature's method of breaking down materials to be used as nutrients (Rana et al., 2014). This process occurs thanks to microorganisms such as fungi, bacteria, and worms (Rana et al., 2014). Studies have found that dyed cotton fibers had a stronger resistance to biodegradation than raw cotton fabrics (Rana et al., 2014) and that microorganisms had difficulty breaking down wool and could not break down polyester, meaning that polyester is not degradable (Arshad & Mujahid, 2011). Clothing made from polyester and other inexpensive synthetic fibers will take longer to degrade and will sit in landfills longer than biodegradable garments.

Landfills can be found all over the world; the top ten largest landfills are located in China, Italy, South Korea, Mexico, India, and the United States (Cameron, 2021). These landfills produce negative side effects for those who live near them, raising ethical concerns. One example of this is the landfill found in Kantamanto (Bedat, 2021). Kantamanto, located in Accra,

Ghana, is one of the largest secondhand markets in West Africa (Bedat, 2021). Unwanted clothing and textiles are exported to Kantamanto but are rarely purchased. The garments eventually end up in disposal systems, which are not as developed as those in the United States (Bedat, 2021). Ultimately, this results in more pollution and environmental issues than if the United States had disposed of the items. The oversaturation of items in Kantamanto has resulted in Kantamanto being the most consolidated point of waste pickup in Accra, and possibly all of Ghana (Bedat, 2021). However, only 25% of the waste is sent to a landfill and about 15% is taken by private informal collectors (Bedat, 2021). The private collection of the waste often results in illegal dumping. The waste may be dropped off in waterways, left on the side of the road, or burned in public places. Illegal dumping can lead to serious health outbreaks, such as the cholera outbreak in 2014 that killed 243 people (Bedat, 2021). This outbreak exemplifies the dangers and negative side effects these landfills have on locals who reside near them. The pollution and oversaturation of garments in Kantamanto provide insight into another issue stemming from the fashion industry.

Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is a term that describes a method of clothing manufacturing that mass produces items quickly based on what is currently trending (Wang, 2010). The rises of microtrends and the fast fashion industry has changed consumers' perceptions, resulting in rapid turnover of clothing (Niinimäki et al., 2020). A trend, in the fashion industry, describes the popularity of a pattern, style, or piece of clothing (Nelson, 2021). Trends can last from six months to ten years (Nelson, 2021). The term "microtrends" refers to the new state of fashion trends that gain popularity quickly but fall off just as fast (Nelson, 2021). Historically, fashion

trends were limited to four seasons: summer, spring, fall, and winter (Domingos et al., 2022).

The current fashion seasons have shifted from the historical yearly four seasons to over fifty per year (Diantari, 2021).

Clothing companies who utilize the fast fashion method produce large amounts of cheaply made fashion-forward clothing that can be purchased at a low and affordable cost (Caro & Martinez-de-Albéniz, 2015). Brands such as Zara, Old Navy, H&M, Forever 21, and Shein fall under this umbrella term. Fast fashion companies typically consist of both in-person retail as well as an online presence that allows consumers to purchase and browse at any time (Caro & Martinez-de-Albéniz, 2015). The easy accessibility and low cost has led to a disposable mindset when it comes to clothing (Caro & Martinez-de-Albéniz, 2015). A disposable mindset refers to a consumer's perception that clothing can easily be thrown away or replaced and leads to consumers' conception of clothing that contributes to the high rates of consumption and disposal (Yan et al., 2021).

The fast fashion business model is reliant on consumers' impulse purchases and continuous consumption (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Quickly changing trends push consumers to get the next best thing in their closet as soon as possible (Zhang et al., 2021). Since consumers want to be part of the trend, they prefer to buy cheap pieces because they won't be worn long anyway (Nelson, 2021). Fast fashion consumers want their trendy pieces fast and at a low price. This drive and desire to adhere to trends enables the fast fashion industry to produce low quality items while polluting the planet.

Consumers typically wear trendy pieces during the season in which they are popular. After the trend has passed, the pieces either sit in their closets unworn, get thrown away, or are

donated to thrift stores. The amount of clothing thrown away in America each year doubled from seven million to fourteen million tons from 2001 to 2021 (Nelson, 2021). Trends from the month prior are seen at the thrift store, showcasing the throwaway attitude towards clothing.

Fast fashion also leads to an increase in the overconsumption of clothing (Zhang et al., 2021). Overconsumption refers to when consumers purchase more items than they need, resulting in items not being worn for long periods of time or being quickly cycled out of their closet (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). The low cost of fast fashion and rapid clothing turnover encourage the overconsumption of clothing (Zhang et al., 2021). Large clothing corporations are continuously changing their designs and displays in order to keep up with the consumption of microtrends. A prime example of this is the brand Zara, which changes its in-store collection every fifteen days (Domingos et al., 2022). The ever-changing trends lead consumers to partake in the trend when it is popular and discard the garment as soon as the trend dies out (Hayes, 2022). As a result, consumers purchase more clothing while getting less wear per piece. Livia Firth, the creative director of Eco-Age, reported that an average piece of clothing only lasts in the consumer's closet for about five weeks (Morgan et al., 2016).

Ethical Issues in the Fashion Industry

The fast fashion industry produces several ethical concerns towards the environment as well as the welfare of employees (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The social costs associated with fast fashion include the negative impact on the environment, human rights, and human health (Bick et al., 2018). About 90% of the world's clothing is produced in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Bick et al., 2018). Fast fashion companies in LMICs typically pay workers below the legal minimum wage and those countries often do not enforce occupational and safety standards resulting in health hazards for garment workers (Bick et al., 2018).

The working conditions of garment factories are frequently unsafe (Hobson, 2013). A study conducted by Sant'Ana and Kovalechen (2012) researched cardiovascular risk factors of garment workers in Brazil. The results revealed that some garment workers had high BMI and reduced maximal oxygen uptake, which illustrates the cardiovascular risks stemming from their workplace (Sant'Ana & Kovalechen, 2012). In Bangladesh alone, at least 1,800 garment workers have lost their lives from factory fires or building collapses between 2005 to 2013 (Hobson, 2013). In 2013, the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh collapsed, killing 1,134 workers and injuring 2,500 workers (Webster, 2019). The Rana Plaza factory included multiple clothing companies that manufactured items for brands including Zara, Walmart, Mango, Primark, and several other fast fashion chains (Webster, 2019). The harsh working conditions garment workers find themselves in impact them negatively, especially in regard to their health.

The fast fashion industry produces even more environmental concerns in terms of its manufacturing practices. The fast fashion industry produces 8-10% of global CO₂ emissions (Niinimäki et al., 2020). In addition to CO₂ emissions, the industry is a major consumer of water. Overall, fast fashion is responsible for around 20% of industrial water pollution resulting from textile treatment and dyeing and produces around 35% of oceanic primary microplastic pollution (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Consumers are slowly but surely learning about the impact their clothing choices have on the environment and industry workers (Fenyo, 2022). As a result, some consumers have begun to shift away from the fast fashion industry. To prevent that loss, fast fashion giants have created “sustainable” lines in order to portray to consumers that large brands are worried about the environment as well (Rauturier, 2021). However, these fashion lines are not truly sustainable and do little to combat the environmental issues the industry creates (Rauturier, 2021). The

phenomenon of “greenwashing” has become more prevalent in recent years (Ruggiero et al., 2021). Greenwashing refers to when companies appeal to consumers with a seemingly “eco-friendly” and sustainable item, but the product fails to meet the criteria (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). H&M’s sustainable line, Conscious, emphasized the use of 50% sustainably sourced materials, but was often accused of greenwashing, culminating in a 2022 lawsuit that caused the company to cancel the line entirely (Mehorter, 2022). Various other companies advertise the same type of line utilizing sustainably sourced materials, yet this is limited to certain clothing pieces and collections.

Secondhand Shopping

Shopping secondhand is becoming a global trend and is expected to grow 127% by 2026 (Fenyo, 2022). Guiot and Roux (2010) defined secondhand shopping as the acquisition of previously owned objects from places and through methods that vary from the purchase of new items (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Similar to other retail options, including fast fashion, secondhand shopping includes two channels: brick-and-mortar and direct retail. Brick-and-mortar retail refers to the shopping experience where products are purchased by consumers in person (Murphy, 2022). Direct retail allows consumers to purchase items fully online, without ever having to step in store (Murphy, 2022). Secondhand garments can be purchased from thrift stores, charity shops, consignment stores, flea markets, yard sales, and pop-ups. Several reselling apps and websites have been invented as well, allowing consumers to shop secondhand without ever leaving home. The most popular reselling apps and sites are Depop, Grailed, Poshmark, Vinted, and Ebay (Scott, 2021). These apps and sites permit sellers to post images and descriptions of items they are selling and reach their target consumers.

Thriftling is one method of secondhand shopping. Thriftling refers to buying secondhand items from brick-and-mortar thrift stores, garage sales, or flea markets at a discounted price (Ronobir, 2020). The practice of thriftling commonly consists of consumers looking through garments at thrift stores searching for pieces that go with their personal style (Aldrich, 2022). Thriftling also enables consumers to upcycle and repurpose clothing that would eventually reach landfills. Upcycling or repurposing refers to the practice of transforming old or damaged garments into something new and wearable (Zhi, 2022).

Thriftling was previously stigmatized, viewed as a form of shopping for the lower class and a source of bullying for children (Ronobir, 2020). In recent years, the stigma towards thriftling has decreased. Sustainability, affordability, and current technology are key factors that have influenced the rise of thriftling (Kumari et al., 2020). In fact, 81% of first-time thrifters intend to consume the same or higher amounts of secondhand fashion in the next five years (Fenyo, 2022).

Fashion Consumer Behavior

Many studies have been conducted regarding consumer behavior and the driving factors behind retail shopping. Historically, consumers partook in the consumption of items for two reasons: need or entertainment (Rath et al., 2015). Now, according to Rath et al. (2015), fashion items are typically purchased in order to make statements about the individual, whether it be concerning taste, value, identities, or aspirations. Studies have found that some consumers are more likely to seek out trendy and cheap clothing items (Hernández, 2018). Rather than focusing and searching for pieces to hold for longer pieces of time, these consumers are interested in quickly acquiring pieces and discarding them. Other consumers are aware of the ethical and environmental impacts that are associated with fast fashion and choose to shop sustainably

(Kasasa, 2020) or want higher quality pieces that last for longer periods of time (Solanki, 2019). Consumers like these prefer to “choose fashion items according to their values and their personal style” (Junco, 2012). Personal style has been identified as a key factor that pushes consumers toward more sustainable or slow fashion options (Domingos et al., 2022). The differences in following personal style versus following trends heavily influences consumers’ decisions to shop sustainably or to purchase fast fashion.

A study conducted by Eastman et al. (2012) concluded that there are key driving differences between Millennial consumers and Generation Z. Millennials, or Generation Y, were born between 1980 and 1994 (Gazzola et al., 2020). Millennial consumers who are motivated to consume for status are more likely to be brand conscious, novelty/fashion conscious, and brand loyal (Eastman et al., 2013). Millennial shoppers tend to be more recreational and impulsive than their Gen Z counterparts (Eastman et al., 2013). Generation Z was born after 1995 (Gazzola et al., 2020). Kiehn and Vojkovic (2018) found that being sustainable is somewhat influencing Millennials to shop secondhand; however, staying on trend seems to be the most influential factor.

The environmental concerns about fast fashion are not the primary motive of secondhand shopping for Millennials. The opposite can be said of younger generations. Lestari and Asmarani (2021) concluded that young consumers, those in Gen Z, partake in thrifting to save the planet and reduce waste in the fashion industry. However, Gazzola et al. (2020) concluded that there was no evidence that Generation Z was more sustainable than other generations within their study.

Generally, women are more likely to engage in clothing trends and adhere to current beauty standards (Gazzola et al., 2020). Men are not held to the same standard and are usually given more freedom when it comes to fashion (Chea, 2011). One factor impacting the differences found between genders may be women's sensitivity and higher sense of altruism (Gazzola et al., 2020). Previous studies conducted by Zhang et al. (2021) and Ben-Amar et al. (2017) argue that women are more informed and aware of the consequences of fast fashion than their male counterparts. Zhang et al. (2021) concluded that the female participants were more sustainable in fashion than their male counterparts. These results are supported by the findings of Gazzola et al. (2020). In addition, Brough et al. (2016) concluded that men avoid sustainable options out of fear of being judged as feminine.

Social Media and the Fashion Industry

Current technological advances influence consumer behavior, trends, and how the population perceives the latest worldwide issues. The topics of sustainability, thrifting, and fast fashion are heavily intertwined with economic and social equality issues. Information and trends are passed through social media, apps, and influencers. Social networks are one of the main communication channels between corporations and their target audience or consumers and have created a new way for consumers to view and consume clothing products. In the past, consumers had no other choice than to go to stores to view and purchase new items. The evolution of social media has allowed consumers to purchase clothing online and be influenced by social media content (Kim & Sullivan, 2019).

Previously, media was in print, fashion was showcased through magazines, and consumers had to wait to learn about the next biggest trend (Boyd, 2015). Modern social media revolves around online platforms, which provide consumers with easy access to celebrities and

current trends. In recent years, social media has transformed from individuals posting personal pictures and videos to becoming an online marketplace. Among the top ten most popular social media platforms in 2022 are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, and TikTok (Lua, 2022). Social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter are optimal influencer platforms to promote and endorse content (Fulcher, 2022). YouTube has been a key social media outlet for the growing trend of thrifting. A study conducted by Pavich (2021) focuses on the use of YouTube as a promotional tool for thrifting, “GoodWill hunting” content. The findings highlight the importance of social media platforms as an instrument to promote sustainability and YouTube’s ability to influence consumer fashion choices (Pavich, 2021).

The social media app, Instagram, has even evolved its infrastructure into an outlet for individuals to buy and sell items through their accounts. Sellers have the option to create an account that posts pictures and descriptions of their goods and receive payments through Venmo, Cashapp, or PayPal. In addition, Instagram has incorporated different features, such as Instagram Lives, that enable buyers to watch live videos showcasing pieces that are up for sale. Sellers can also utilize Instagram’s payment system where purchases can be made directly through Instagram. Rather than utilizing payment platforms such as PayPal or Apple Pay, consumers can purchase and sell items directly through Instagram. A study conducted by Sariwaty et al (2021) focused on Instagram’s role as a social media outlet for resellers. The findings concluded that Instagram is chosen as an essential tool in marketing communications due to the information that can be provided (Sariwaty et al, 2021). The easy accessibility of using social media as a retail outlet has positively impacted the secondhand market (Kaye, 2021).

The evolution of social media has led to the rise of influencers (Nelson, 2021). Influencers are individuals who share a glimpse of their clothing, food, daily routine, and

majority of their life on their social media accounts (Chetioui et al., 2019). To be categorized as an influencer, the individual must have established credibility within a specific industry, access to a large audience, and the ability to influence others to purchase items based on their recommendations (Schaffer, 2022). Influencers have become increasingly popular in the fashion industry (Chetioui et al., 2019).

The incorporation of influencers on social media has created a new outlet for clothing trends to gain popularity and easily reach consumers (M & K, 2017). Fashion influencers tend to post clothing hauls, show off their best finds, and provide informational fashion do's and don'ts. Their content provides consumers with information regarding trends and where they can find and purchase the new hot item, which consumers want to acquire (Lang & Joyner Armstrong, 2018). Influencers are able to sway consumers through perceived credibility and expertise, as well as subjective norms (Chetioui et al., 2019). Influencers provide consumers with a way to learn more about clothing and items they are interested in. Topalova (2021) concluded that Millennials are influenced to buy new items of clothing by recommendations of Instagram influencers more than Generation Z. The study found that 80% of Millennials bought items after they were recommended or shared by influencers at least once. In comparison, 60% of Generation Z purchased an item after it was endorsed by an influencer. In addition, findings concluded that an influencer's values and orientations are the most influential factors for Generation Z but not for Millennials (Topalova, 2021). The fashion endorsed by influencers may also lead to the overconsumption of clothing depending on how easily influenced the consumer is (M & K, 2017).

As the population is exposed to the economic and ethical issues surrounding fast fashion, further analysis is warranted about the impact fast fashion and social media have on secondhand

shopping. Although thrifting is not something new, it has become trendy and popular in recent years (Fenyo, 2022). The impact of knowledge about fast fashion on secondhand shopping is the next step in further analyzing the topic.

Methodology

This study explored whether, as consumers become more knowledgeable about the process and impacts of fast fashion, consumption of secondhand clothing increased. To address this topic, the study examined both qualitative and quantitative data. Primary research was conducted utilizing an online survey through the survey software Qualtrics. Qualtrics is web-based software that is used to generate surveys, reports, polls, and feedback. This survey tool was employed due to the advanced features within the software. Qualtrics provided an easy and accessible way to create, distribute, and analyze the survey and survey data.

The survey included 24 questions relating to participants' consumer behavior and perceptions of fast fashion, thrifting, and influencers. The survey consisted of a variety of questions including close-ended questions, Likert scales, rating scales, and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was anonymous, and the two demographics identified during the study were gender and age. Participants were asked their exact age rather than using generational terms, such as Millennials or Generation Z, to learn if age played a factor in the consumption of fast fashion or secondhand goods. The study did not focus on generational differences, which is why exact age was identified.

After receiving approval from the Johnson & Wales University Institutional Review Board but prior to sharing the survey with the public, a pilot test was conducted with individuals within the sample population to determine if the survey's questions were easily understood. The pilot test assisted in ensuring the survey worked correctly and participants would be able to complete the survey easily. Data from the pilot test was analyzed in this study. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method, which is non-probability sampling that gathers participants that are easily accessible to the researcher (Qualtrics, n.d.). This sampling method

was employed because of the accessibility of participants to the researcher and time constraints of the study. Participants were given the opportunity to take the survey through links on social media. The survey was posted to two of my Instagram accounts. The survey was promoted twice on Instagram via story. An Instagram story allows content to be shared on an account for 24 hours. After the 24 hours passes, it is unable to be found. This specific feature of Instagram was utilized in order to provide participants with immediate access to the survey link. Non-story Instagram posts do not permit the content creator to list a link in the caption. A post could have been created to prompt participants to click a link in my profile but that creates unnecessary extra steps for participants. Since the story feature provides easy accessibility to the link, an Instagram story was employed.

The survey link was also posted once on Facebook on my timeline. The Facebook timeline grants ongoing availability and accessibility throughout the duration of the survey period, unlike the Instagram stories. The survey was posted on Facebook to target more people and enable the survey to be available continuously. Posting on Facebook provided an opportunity to give access to participants who do not use or follow me on Instagram and targeted different demographics.

In addition, two friends posted my survey to their Instagram story and two others shared the link on their Facebook timeline. One of the friends posted my survey because I asked them to. The other three friends posted my survey link without me asking them. The survey was available online from October 16th through October 30th. Due to the sampling method, the participants were limited to individuals who follow me or follow my friends who posted the survey on social media.

The results of the data were exported from Qualtrics into an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis. The data from the Excel sheet was edited in order to discard responses that did not meet the criteria of the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed in order to summarize the data which had been collected in a logical and meaningful way (Vetter, 2017). Since the quantitative data included single categorical variables, this was the best method for analysis. Frequency distribution analysis looks at how often each variable occurs (Geert van den Berg, 2020). This method was the best fit for analyzing data and the distribution of responses among participants.

Qualitative data was analyzed using the constant comparative method, a coding method that allows researchers to develop categories from data reduction and record other core categories that are prominent within the data (Fram, 2015). This method was employed in order to gain a better understanding of the driving factors behind participant's consumption behavior and feelings towards influencers and celebrities.

Results

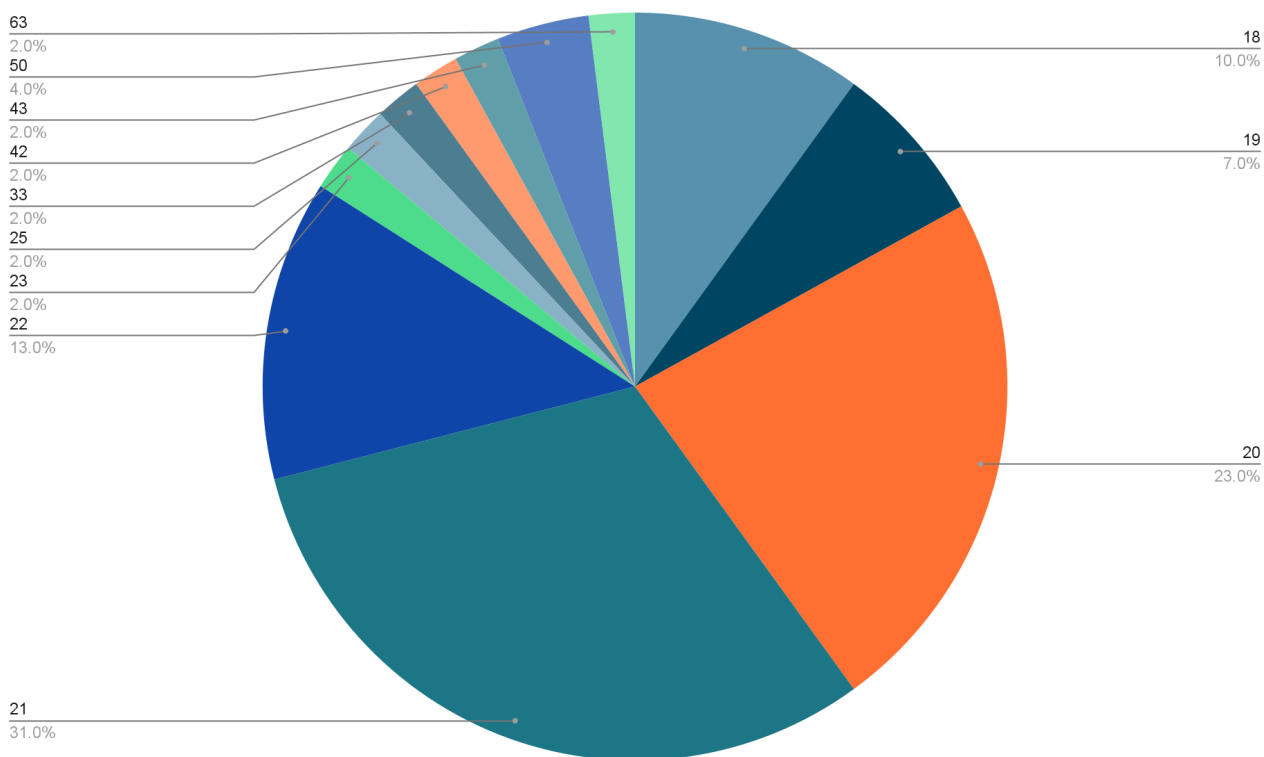
The survey yielded 116 participants; however, 64 survey results were included in the analysis. One response was eliminated because the respondent was under 18. The remaining 51 responses were incomplete, resulting in them being excluded from the analysis.

Demographics

The gender participation within the sample was 76% female (n=48), 22% male (n=14), and one respondent preferred not to say (n=1). The results did not vary when comparing between gender groups. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 63. The majority of respondents were aged 18-22 years old, which represented 81% (n=53) of the total sample with the most represented age being 21 at 31% (n=19). The following graph (Figure 1) depicts the ages of respondents.

Figure 1

Age Range of Participants



To classify the data by age group, the data was divided into two categories: participants aged 25 or younger and those aged 26 and older. The two groups overlapped in their responses regarding consumer behavior and knowledge of fast fashion. The two age groups differed in their perceptions of secondhand fashion consumption, the influence of influencers, and the impact of knowledge of fast fashion on purchase of those kinds of goods. These similarities and differences will be explored more fully in later sections.

Fashion Interest

The participants were asked to reflect on their interest in fashion and were prompted with the statement “I am interested in fashion.” The majority of participants disclosed that the statement was either somewhat (33%, n=21) or very (32%, n=20) true of them, and 21% (n=13) felt neutral about the statement. The minority of participants selected somewhat untrue (8%) and very untrue (6%). They were also asked about their interest in fashion trends. The results found that the largest number of respondents (39%) reported that they occasionally participate in fashion trends, 21% reported they rarely do, and 17% reported very rarely. In total, 23% of respondents frequently or very frequently participated in fashion trends. To compare, while 65% of respondents were very or somewhat interested in fashion, only 23% participated in trends.

Respondents were asked to further explain their participation in fashion trends. The results of the survey disclosed that 15% of participants chose to participate in fashion trends through their media consumption and their desire to stay on trend. Respondents shared that they “buy newly launched clothing which is trending,” “consume media on the latest fashion trends on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram,” and are “constantly keeping up with fashion trends.” Participants discussed the importance of social media as a tool to learn about fashion

trends. Magazines and catalogs were revealed to be another tool that provides consumers with access to up-and-coming trends. Respondents who emphasized the use of media to keep up with trends shared “If I like something in a magazine or catalog, I will seek out that item,” “I try to follow fashion I see on social media,” and “I keep up with fashion trends that come up through social media or advertised by popular magazines.”

Respondents shared the key factors that affected whether or not they would participate in fashion trends. One deciding component identified by 22% of participants (n=10) was personal style. One respondent who emphasized personal style shared “I have my own style and I dress for me and my own preferences.” Another influential aspect that impacted if respondents participated in fashion trends was body type. The results of the survey revealed that 7% (n=3) of participants took part in fashion trends depending on how the trend suits their body. A respondent who mentioned body type disclosed “I tend to buy whatever I can find that fits me size-wise.” One said:

If I like something that’s trending in fashion, I will look around and see if it will work for my body type. It’s something that I have to seriously consider or else it would be a waste of money for me.

Several components were pointed out by participants as to why they chose not to participate in fashion trends. Unsurprisingly, the leading aspect that prevented respondents from participating in fashion trends was disinterest in both trends and fashion. Responses from the 22% of participants (n=10) who shared a disinterest in trends and fashion included “I am not fashionable,” “I just don't care,” and “I don’t really care to follow trends.” Another obstacle to their participation in trends was comfort. Participants mentioned the discomfort that they believe often comes with fashion trends, which is why they do not participate in them. Respondents who

emphasized comfort shared “I have a pretty comfy style, and trends don’t really fit with that” and “Depends if I like it enough and if it's comfortable. Most trendy things aren’t comfortable.” The findings revealed that 11% of respondents emphasized comfort.

The prevention of clothing overconsumption was mentioned in the results of the survey as a reason not to participate in trends: 5% (n=2) of participants limit clothing consumption and emphasize owning basics. One respondent shared “I try to buy basics and staples so they don’t go out of fashion and can be worn for a longer time.” Secondhand clothing stores were discussed as a factor in the participation of fashion trends as well. Three participants disclosed that they didn’t search for trends but if they found a trendy item at a thrift store and liked it, only then would they purchase it. In addition, purchasing clothing as a necessity was mentioned in the findings. Two participants said they don’t focus on trends because they only purchase clothing when they need it or to replace old clothes. Other topics mentioned in the results included the knowledge that trends shift often and the importance of originality. One participant mentioned that they did not participate in fashion trends due to their lack of funds and the cost of trend participation.

The survey also asked participants to share their level of interest in sustainability. Respondents were prompted with the statement “I am interested in sustainability.” The majority of participants shared that this statement was somewhat true (52% n=31) and very true (33% n=26) of them. Four participants felt the statement was neutral (10%) and two (3%) felt it was somewhat untrue of them. The majority of male participants (79% n=11) and female participants (92% n=45) shared that the statement was somewhat true or very true of them. However, of the two respondents who stated the statement was somewhat untrue of them, both were male. The majority of participants aged 25 and younger, 90% (n=48) stated the statement was somewhat or

very true of them. Of the respondents aged 26 and older, 100% (n=7) agreed that the statement was somewhat or very true of them.

Participants discussed sustainability in answers to other questions, as well. One participant mentioned sustainability when asked about their most liked aspect of shopping secondhand. The respondent shared that secondhand clothing “is usually much better quality than fast-fashion and sustainable.” Another participant discussed sustainability when asked about their least liked aspect of shopping fast fashion, which was “the quality and unsustainability.”

Clothing Consumption

Participants were asked how often they purchase new clothing items. Most participants reported that they buy clothing less than once a month (33%), once every few weeks (32%), or once a month (25%). Eight percent of participants buy clothing once a week and only one respondent purchased new clothing items several times a week. This data supported the participants’ previous responses regarding fashion interest since the majority of respondents shared that they bought clothing less than once every few weeks (90%) and 77% of participants said they take part in trends occasionally to very rarely. If an individual is not interested in staying on-trend, then they likely have no need for constant consumption.

The survey also asked respondents to reflect on how often they purchase clothing secondhand. The results found that almost equal numbers shopped in secondhand venues frequently or very frequently (39%) and rarely or very rarely (40%), with 20% buying secondhand clothing occasionally. However, the frequency of secondhand clothing purchases varied between age groups. Respondents aged 25 or younger were more likely to frequently shop secondhand whereas respondents aged 26 or older were more likely to shop secondhand very rarely.

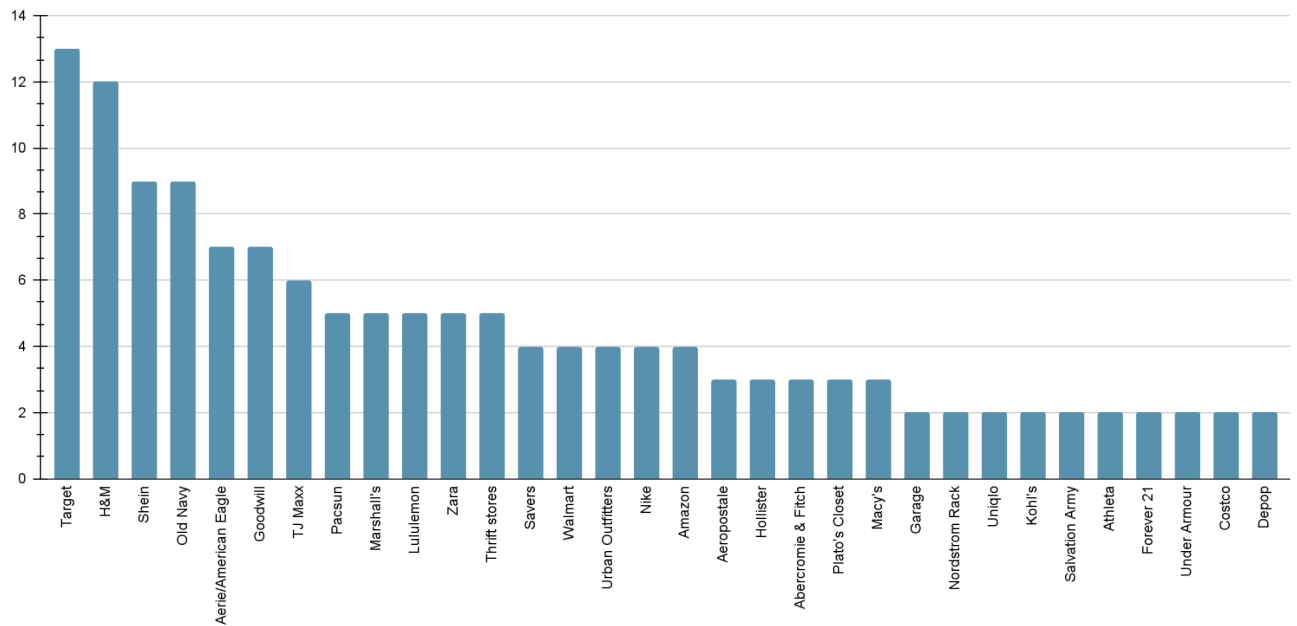
To further explore shopping preferences, participants were asked to identify the top three retailers where they buy clothes most often. Participants identified 184 retail choices, with a combination of in-person and online shopping options. Seven (4%) listed categories (e.g., “Asian websites,” “Greek Apparel websites,” “local boutiques”), but most identified specific retailers, including discounters, specialty stores, department stores, off-price retailers, and secondhand stores, for a total of 64 different retailers. Off-price retailers are stores that host a variety of brand name and designer goods at 20 to 60 percent below full-retail price (Londrigan & Jenkins, 2018). Examples of off-price retailers include TJ Maxx, Marshall’s, and HomeGoods.

Overall, 52% of participants’ favorite retailers were categorized as fast fashion companies, 14% were secondhand retailers, and 9% were off-price retailers. The remaining 21% were classified as traditional retailers who sell higher quality goods at higher price points, such as Lululemon, North Face, and Ssense. The four retailers named most often were fast fashion giants: Target (identified by 13 respondents), followed by H&M (12 respondents), Old Navy and Shein (nine respondents mentioned each of them). Goodwill was the most popular secondhand store, with seven mentions, followed by five mentions for general “thrift stores.” Marshall’s and TJ Maxx were tied for most popular off-price retailer, with six mentions for each of them. Thirty-three retailers, including such diverse options as Fabletics, “the Taylor Swift store,” and Supreme, were named only once. Stores that were mentioned by two or more participants are listed below in figure 2.

Figure 2

Participants’ Top Stores

Stores Participants Purchase Clothing From



Perceptions of SecondHand Shopping

Participants were asked about why they shop secondhand and were provided with four options, as well as a fill-in option if a factor was missing from the available options. For this question, participants were allowed to select all options that applied to them. In general, 40% of participants agreed that the most influential reason for secondhand shopping was that it is an affordable way to be stylish. The second most influential reason was the prevention of clothing reaching landfills, with 19% of participants selecting it. The idea that thrift stores support the local community, and that secondhand shopping slows fast fashion were both selected by 16% of participants. In addition, 9% of participants identified another reason that contributed to their shopping behavior, including “different pieces have different era aesthetics,” “I like old or rare clothing items and second hand is the only way,” and “It honestly has what I am looking for half the time. Sometimes I hate the trends in stores and turn to thrifted clothes.”

To learn more about participants' opinions regarding shopping secondhand, they were asked to describe their favorite and least favorite aspects. In general, participants were in agreement of the best parts of secondhand shopping. However, there was a larger variety in responses regarding the worst features of shopping secondhand. Most participants described that the best traits of secondhand shopping were the uniqueness of garments (36%) and low prices (33%). Other most liked qualities mentioned by participants included the "environmental benefits" (14%), better quality items (7%), and the thrill of the hunt (7%). For instance, participants shared their favorite aspects were "the treasures you find unexpectedly," "good quality clothing for a small price," and "finding rare and unique clothing items." Respondents interested in the thrill of the hunt explained that "it is exciting when you find a good item" and "you never know what you'll find." One participant summed it up as saying that secondhand shopping is "affordable, [has] incredible vintage clothing, and is a fun little adventure." Another identified the ability to upcycle and rework previously unwearable items into something that fits their personal style as their favorite component. The respondent who mentioned upcycling shared "I like getting to alter and change old pieces into something I'll wear."

The least liked attribute of shopping secondhand had a larger variety of responses. Examples included difficulty in finding their size (24%), the "smell of stores" and clothing (10%), the perception that secondhand clothes are not as hygienic as new items (8%; "I'm not sure where it's been or how sanitary it is"), the process is too time consuming (8%), and the stores can be overwhelming (8%). Responses from participants about negative aspects included "not finding clothes in my size since I'm plus sized," "the amount of time it takes to sift through all of the items," and it "can be difficult to find exactly what you want." One respondent mentioned the difficulty of shopping specifically online for secondhand items. Another

respondent discussed the frustration of finding good secondhand store options because, unlike big clothing brands, secondhand stores do little to promote their store and bring in more customers.

Perceptions of Fast Fashion

Because fast fashion is such a large part of the current fashion industry, the survey asked several questions focusing on participants' perceptions of it. First, the survey inquired about participants' knowledge regarding fast fashion's impact on the environment. The findings convey that a majority of participants felt they were educated about fast fashion. The results found that the largest group (38%) felt they were somewhat knowledgeable. One quarter (25%) felt very knowledgeable and 22% felt knowledgeable. The remaining 15% said they were not knowledgeable. Participants were also prompted with the statement "I am aware of the realities of fast fashion." The majority of participants disclosed that the statement was somewhat true (47%; n=29) or very true (31%; n=19). The minority of participants selected somewhat untrue (10%), very untrue (6%), and neutral (6%).

Participants were then asked to reflect on if learning about the impact of fast fashion on the environment influenced their consumption of fast fashion. The results of the survey found that 61% (n=39) respondents answered yes, while 39% (n=25) respondents said no. Interestingly, while all ages were at least somewhat knowledgeable regarding the impact of fast fashion on the environment, the influence on consumer behavior varied between groups. The results found that 67% of respondents aged 25 or younger reported that their fast fashion consumption was influenced by becoming educated about fast fashion, but that number was only 43% for respondents aged 26 or older.

Participants who replied that learning about the impact of fast fashion on the environment did not influence their fast fashion consumption provided various reasons as to why. Some respondents shared that they shop exclusively at thrift stores, which is why their fast fashion consumption has not changed. One participant reported “I grew up poor so I never shopped outside thrift stores since before learning about fast fashion.” However, 14% of participants said that fast fashion is their only source for clothing and another 14% reported they only buy cheap clothes to wear for years.

In general, participants who shared that their levels of fast fashion consumption were influenced by their education on the production process were in agreement that the environmental and ethical concerns were the leading factor. Specific examples included overconsumption and waste produced. One participant shared, “One of the biggest sources of microplastics is the polyester material our new clothes are made out of. I believe we all have a responsibility to be conservation minded.” This contrasted with one participant who shared that their consumption of fast fashion has not been influenced by knowledge of its environmental impact because “I don’t feel like my behavior has an impact on fast fashion.” These responses exemplify the differences between collectivistic versus individualistic mindsets. Collectivism emphasizes thinking of the group as a whole and acting in a way to benefit the group, while individualism focuses on behaviors that will benefit the individual (Johnson, 2021).

Participants discussed other consequences of the knowledge of fast fashion’s impact, including their switch from fast fashion to secondhand clothing (13%) and limiting their consumption of clothing (13%). In addition, 7% of respondents pointed out the poor quality of fast fashion and the desire to have higher quality clothing as a determinant for the change in their consumption. The low quality of garments produced by fast fashion was mentioned by

participants several times. One participant shared “I prefer high quality clothing that I know will last me a long time.” And though their fast fashion consumption changed, 7% mentioned that it is difficult to avoid due to its low price and easy accessibility.

To learn more about participants’ opinions regarding shopping fast fashion, they were asked to describe their favorite and least favorite aspects. Participants were mostly in agreement about the best characteristics of shopping fast fashion, though 18% of participants shared that there were no features of shopping fast fashion they enjoyed. Participants’ favorite components of fast fashion shopping included the low prices, convenience, ability to keep up with trends, and size inclusivity. Intriguingly, respondents also mentioned the ability to find exactly what they want when shopping fast fashion. This is opposite of what was said regarding shopping secondhand. The easy accessibility of online websites was discussed as well as the large range of clothing options. One respondent mentioned the “ability to see something designers make and then being able to buy them at a reasonable time frame and for a reasonable amount of money.” Sutor (2020) discusses the practice of fast fashion companies copying styles from original designers. Fashion is not protected under intellectual property laws, so while this process seems to be unethical, it is completely legal.

In fact, the unethical practices of fast fashion were identified to be among the least liked aspects by respondents. Respondents specifically pointed to the environmental impact and treatment of workers. Quotes from participants who emphasized these factors included “the negative effects it has on our environment and the behind-the-scenes labor work that happens which is oftentimes wrongfully done,” “the negative environmental impact,” and “what it does to the environment and the exploitation of workers.” Other aspects mentioned by respondents included that everyone looks the same or has the same clothes, and promotion of

overconsumption. One respondent shared that their least liked aspect was everything besides the affordability of garments.

Influencers' and Celebrities' Impact on Participants

The survey also inquired about whether participants followed influencers on social media and if so, who their favorites were. The results discovered that 53% of participants do not follow influencers. However, of those 53% of participants, 9% still identified their three favorite influencers. The influencers identified by participants varied drastically. Of the 60 influencers identified by respondents, only Emma Chamberlain was named more than once (n=7); all other influencers received one mention each, including Billie Eilish, Dave Portnoy, and Mark Boutillier. Of the influencers mentioned by participants, 75% (n=45) were female and 25% (n=15) were male. The majority of influencers identified were White (53%) while the minority of influencers were Asian (16%), Black (15%), Hispanic (13%), or Middle Eastern (3%). Notably, respondents aged 26 or older followed influencers more than their younger counterparts.

More generally, participants were asked the name of a person who inspires their sense of style. Only 33% (n=21) provided a name, and of those responses, 29% identified individuals they know personally, mostly their friends. One respondent identified their mother to be the individual who inspires their sense of style. The remainder of individuals identified to inspire participants' personal style included influencers (78%, e.g., Emma Chamberlain, Mark Boutilier, Chelsea Amaro), musicians (12%, e.g. Rihanna, Kid Cudi, Billie Eilish), and celebrities (10%, e.g., Hailey Bieber, Kim Kardashian, Kevin Hart). Interestingly, one respondent chose not to identify an individual who inspires them but rather a style. They shared "honestly a lot of people mostly

go for style rather than one person, I like the Stockholm style right now, minimalist in a sense of no print clothes but also chic.”

Lastly, to explore the impact of outside influences on shopping behavior, participants were prompted with the question “If a celebrity you admire shopped secondhand, would that influence you to shop secondhand as well?” The majority of respondents (62%) answered no to this question. In general, participants explained their answer through their disinterest in celebrities and pop culture. Notably, personal style came up once again as a deciding factor. Respondents (16%) shared that their personal style is what influences their consumer behavior. Others (8%) shared that they do not enjoy shopping secondhand and that, regardless of whether a celebrity shopped secondhand, their own disinterest in secondhand shopping is the deciding component. However, 17% shared that the influencers they follow are vocal about their thrifting. In addition, respondents shared that seeing influencers thrift is what originally got them to shop secondhand. However, 14% of participants said that fast fashion is their only source for clothing and another 14% reported they only buy cheap clothes to wear for years.

When asked to elaborate on whether or not participants would engage in secondhand shopping if celebrities promoted it, one participant mentioned that if celebrities promoted this form of clothing consumption, secondhand shopping “would become more expensive and glamorized when [in the past,] I've been shamed for it”. This statement brings up the stigma often associated with shopping secondhand. The rise of thrifting as a result of social media was reflected in the results of the study. Participants mentioned fashion specific influencers, such as Emma Chamberlain, who promote the consumption of secondhand clothing.

Discussion

This research revealed much about consumer behavior regarding fast fashion and secondhand clothing. The majority of participants were aged to 18 and 22. The results of the study support research regarding younger individuals' secondhand clothing consumption. Lestari and Asmarani (2021) concluded that young consumers partake in secondhand shopping and thrifting in order to save the environment. Participants' reasoning behind secondhand consumption aligned with their findings. Respondents emphasized the environmental impacts as a driving determinant of secondhand consumption. The findings revealed that as respondents learned about the realities of fast fashion, they began to shop secondhand or limit their fast fashion consumption. The results support this study's hypothesis and convey how education about fast fashion impacts consumer behavior.

Contradictory to previous research (Brough et al., 2016), gender did not play a major role in secondhand shopping or sustainability. Brough et al. (2016) concluded that males avoid purchasing the sustainable option due to the perceived femininity of sustainability and secondhand shopping. However, in this study male respondents shared their dislike of fast fashion due to its environmental impact. Both female and male participants were found to participate in secondhand shopping. However, the findings of the study support previous research conducted by Zhang et al. (2021) that women are more interested in sustainability.

In addition, the findings of the study support research discussing the importance of self-image and personal style regarding fashion and clothing consumption (Domingos et al., 2022). Domingos et al. (2022) concluded that personal style was identified as a determining component influencing secondhand consumption. The results of the study also support the findings of Aldrich (2022) that consumers shop secondhand to find pieces that go with their

personal style. Personal style was mentioned several times as a driving factor for the purchase of secondhand clothing. In addition, personal style was identified to be a determinant influencing participants to not purchase fast fashion. Respondents shared their dislike of the lack of originality stemming from trends. Therefore, it can be concluded that the importance of personal style and originality in clothing pushes consumers to shop secondhand to find unique or one-of-a-kind pieces.

Results of the study contradicted previous research regarding secondhand consumption between younger individuals and Millennials. The findings of the study concluded that individuals aged 18-22 are more likely to shop secondhand than their older counterparts. The findings of Gazzola et al., (2020) concluded that both younger consumers (Generation Z) and Millennials equally purchased secondhand clothing but, in this study, participants aged 26 or older did not engage in secondhand shopping as often as younger participants. However, the results showed that individuals aged 18-25 shopped a variety of both fast fashion and secondhand. The trendiness of thrifting may be influencing younger consumers to shop more secondhand. This can be attributed to the higher rates of secondhand content creators on platforms utilized by younger consumers such as Instagram and Tiktok. Content creators who promote thrifting online may not be reaching all age groups.

The results show that participants are more interested in the affordability of thrifting rather than the environmental benefits. This information is extremely fascinating especially since fast fashion is considered to be affordable as well; other respondents said they shop fast fashion due to its low prices. Websites such as Shein sell clothing for as little as \$3.25. It is surprising to see that out of all the components listed, the affordable way to be fashionable was deemed to be the most influential reason to thrift. Even more so is that the affordability characteristic received

higher than double the number of selections as the next leading response, to keep clothing out of landfills. It was surprising to see how respondents who shopped fast fashion and thrifted shared that the leading component was their inability to afford clothing items from elsewhere. This raises the question of which is more affordable, thrifting or fast fashion?

Notably, 85% of respondents had previous knowledge of the effects of fast fashion on the environment yet the majority of stores shopped by respondents were fast fashion brands. Findings of the study reveal that participants have changed their rate of fast fashion consumption, but the majority of retailers that participants purchase clothing from are still fast fashion companies. The deterrents of secondhand shopping identified by respondents including size inclusivity, length of time shopping secondhand entails, and the perceived cleanliness of thrift stores may be contributing to the continuation of fast fashion consumption. Depending on respondents' personal preferences, knowledge of fast fashion resulted in the lower rates of fast fashion consumption or an increase in secondhand shopping.

The responses shared by participants provide insight into their knowledge regarding fast fashion. The fact that participants are aware of the consequences of fast fashion and don't support them, yet they still consume fast fashion suggests their cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance refers to the inconsistency between what an individual believes and how they behave (Cherry, 2022). The cognitive dissonance seen within participants may be due to the fact that size inclusivity was identified to be a reason hindering the purchase of secondhand clothing. Respondents share their difficulty finding their clothing size at thrift stores, leading them to shop fast fashion. Fast fashion has a variety of sizes and provides easy accessibility to clothing with a large variety of options.

Findings of the study shared much regarding the importance of social media and influencers on consumer behavior and support the findings of Kim and Sullivan (2019) regarding the impact of technology and social media on consumers. The technological advancements have created a platform for clothing to be purchased online, mentioned several times by respondents, and social media has become an essential tool for the consumption of trends and following of influencers, as reported by participants. The study supports previous research regarding influencers. Individuals aged 26 or older reported higher rates of following influencers than respondents aged 25 or younger, supporting the findings of M & K (2017) who concluded that individuals aged 15-30 were more likely to follow brands, whereas individuals aged 31 and up followed influencers and bloggers. The results contradict the findings of Topalova (2021) regarding influencer's persuasive effect on Millennial's' clothing consumption. The findings of the study showed that the younger participants within the study were more likely to be influenced by social media influencers than older participants.

The influences of collectivistic versus individualistic mindsets was alluded to in participants' explanations of their fast fashion and secondhand consumption. Collectivism focuses on engaging in behaviors that will benefit the group whereas individualism focuses on behaviors that will benefit the self (Johnson, 2021). Interestingly, respondents who elaborated on their motivators for shopping secondhand mentioned that they believed that everyone has a responsibility to be "conservation minded." On the other hand, respondents who discussed driving factors of their fast fashion consumption said that they did not believe their individual behavior would have an impact on fast fashion. Encouraging a collectivistic mindset may help promote and increase the rate of secondhand clothing consumption.

Implications

The findings of this research provide information regarding motivations behind consumer behavior. The issues preventing and contributing to the consumption of both fast fashion and secondhand were brought to attention. Knowledge about fast fashion's impact on the environment and treatment of workers were identified to be factors influencing consumer behavior. Findings revealed that as participants gained more knowledge, they changed their fast fashion and secondhand consumption. Perhaps increasing education of the impacts and unethicity of fast fashion can minimize fast fashion consumption and endorse secondhand consumption.

The lack of knowledge of both in-person and online secondhand shopping retailers was addressed within the study. Participants shared that they did not know where to shop secondhand, preventing them from shopping in stores. The majority of secondhand shops identified by participants were mostly in-person stores. The scarcity of online secondhand retailers in the results reveals the absence of online secondhand shopping by participants. The only secondhand apps mentioned were Depop and Grailed, but there are copious other platforms that participants failed to reference. Perhaps secondhand stores and consumers could benefit from advertisements and online reviews. To promote in-person and online secondhand shopping, retailers may create ads or video advertisements to encourage the consumption of secondhand clothing. Secondhand retailers can take this information and promote their stores online and in person.

Participants also discussed their lack of knowledge regarding which secondhand stores were good to shop at. The review platform, Yelp, may be an important tool to provide consumers with information about what type of items are in the store and the price range of items. Retailers can encourage their customers to write reviews on apps like Yelp to provide consumers with more information about their stores. Reading reviews is an easy way to learn more about establishments. Encouraging customers to use review apps can allow stores to help consumers find locations and know exactly what to expect.

The issue of size inclusivity was pointed out as a deterrent of secondhand shopping. Plus size clothing is not as available at thrift stores. Unfortunately, consumers who like to upcycle and repurpose items at the thrift typically purchase plus size clothing for their projects (Desmond-Harris, 2022). Preventing smaller consumers from buying clothing that is not their size may allow plus sized consumers to find more items at the thrift store. More attention should be brought to this issue so consumers can take into account others' experiences at the thrift store. Making consumers who upcycle and repurpose items more aware of how their garment choices impact others may help plus size consumers find clothing that fits them.

Respondents also found that thrift stores can sometimes be overwhelming when they first step in. In order to make thrift stores seem less overwhelming, stores may post a guide to help shoppers know exactly where to go. Although thrift stores have signs and sections, they are not always accurate or plentiful. Providing consumers with a guide hung up throughout the store can help their secondhand experience become more successful. Knowing exactly where to go to find what they want is a reinforcer that can encourage secondhand shopping.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the study that future studies may address. The first limitation is the participant pool. A convenience sample was employed for the data collection for this study. This method does not provide representation for all populations. Since the study was promoted mainly on my own social media accounts, primarily individuals I knew personally had access to the survey. It is probable that those who follow me share similar ideals and engage in similar consumer behavior. This may have resulted in bias within the data. In addition, the study was mostly made up of 18- to 22-year-olds, meaning that other age groups' attitudes may not be reflected in the results. The majority of respondents were female, and it is possible that the findings of the study are not representative of the male population.

Another limitation of the study is that a sizable number of participants appeared to be Chicago locals. Respondents identified several Chicago-area thrift stores, indicating that respondents lived there. The uneven distribution between location of participants may have caused bias within the study. The study may not be representative of the population and may reflect Chicago ideals and behaviors.

Lastly, the online survey instrument itself was a limitation because it was not distributed in person, and therefore I could not ask participants to further describe their answers. The digital tools may have limited the participation of older generations as well. Future research should focus on using different tools to broaden the age range of the participant pool. Using a combination of social media and in person surveys and phone calls may allow for a more representative sample.

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Appendix A:

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



JOHNSON & WALES
UNIVERSITY

Memo

To Sibel Truong
From David Hood, JWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair
Date September 20, 2022
Re Review Type Assigned to Research Proposal Application (RPA) #220906

This note is to inform you that RPA#220906 for your project entitled *Does Education about Fast Fashion lead to More Secondhand Consumption* has been assigned the review type- Exempt. The following procedures pertain to this determination and is also available on the [IRB webpage](#) along with other important information.

Procedure for Reviewing Exempt Applications

1. The IRB chair or designee will determine whether or not a research protocol is exempt from expedited or full review. Although the protocol may be exempt from review as defined on the [IRB webpage](#), the chair or designee will review the protocol for compliance with university policies and procedures or overall quality.
2. Following review, the Principal Investigator (PI) will receive official notification from the IRB chair concerning the result of the review: Approved, Modifications required or Declined¹. This information will be entered in the official log maintained by the Provost's Office.

Please understand that we are unable to offer an exact date for when the final review process will be completed. It is important that you do not start any portion of your research until you have received approval from the IRB, as you may be asked to suspend your research project and start the review process over.

Your interest in scholarship is encouraging and is something the IRB and ultimately the entire Johnson & Wales University community are proud of. We are here to assist with anything we can do. Feel free to reach out regarding your project and/or IRB involvement. Please reach out in the meantime, if you have any questions and/or changes to your RPA: institutionalreviewboard@jwu.edu

CC: Sara Jablon-Roberts

¹ The reviewer may decline a proposal for reasons related to compliance with JWU's policies and procedures or its overall quality. If the reviewer recommends that the application be "Declined" for reasons related to protection of human subjects or for other reasons, he or she will submit the application to the IRB for full review according to the IRB's regular procedures.

Appendix B:

Recruitment Materials

For participants to take the survey, I posted on Instagram and Facebook:

“Hi everyone! I’m conducting research on fast fashion and secondhand shopping. I would really appreciate it if you took my survey!”

Appendix C:

Informed Consent Document

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Johnson & Wales University

Title of Study: Does Education About Fast Fashion lead to More Secondhand Consumption

Introduction- You are being asked to be in a research study of/about fast fashion and thrifting. You were selected as a possible participant because of your interest in fast fashion and thrifting.

Please read this form. You may also request that the form be read to you. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document that choice. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary; however, you may withdraw at any time.

Purpose- The purpose of the study is to explore if there is a connection between the knowledge of the environmental impact of fast fashion and thrifting. Ultimately, this research may be presented as a paper, poster, or oral presentation.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: complete a 10–15-minute survey regarding fast fashion, thrifting, and shopping behaviors.

What are the risks and/or discomforts of being in this study? There are no reasonable foreseeable (or expected) risks.

What are the benefits of being in this study? There are no benefits of being in this study

Will I be compensated for participating in this study? You will not be compensated for participating in this study

How will my privacy be protected? How will my data be kept confidential? This study is anonymous. We will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity. The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you unless you provide additional consent.

May I refuse to participate in the study? Yes. The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or Johnson & Wales University. You have the right not to answer any single question, and you have the right to request that the researcher not use any of your data. Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the university. You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason. If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

What if I decide I no longer want to participate in the study? May I withdraw? You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research study there will be no penalty to you.

If you are not satisfied with the way in which this study was conducted, you may convey your concerns to the chair of the JWU IRB at institutionalreviewboard@jwu.edu or 401-598-1467 and/or Sibel Truong at J02242254@jwu.edu or 773-372-5219.

What are my rights as a research participant? If you sustain an injury while participating in this study, your participation may be ended. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the chair of the JWU IRB at institutionalreviewboard@jwu.edu or 401-598-1467.

Whom may I contact with questions? For more information regarding this study, please contact the principal investigator Sibel Truong at J02242254@jwu.edu or 773-372-5219 or Sara Jablon-Roberts at sara.jablonroberts@jwu.edu.

If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research-related injury, please contact the chair of the JWU IRB at institutionalreviewboard@jwu.edu or 401-598-1467. If you have any concerns or problems that you believe occurred as a result of your participation, you may report them to the chair of the JWU IRB at institutionalreviewboard@jwu.edu or 401-598-1467

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

If you would like a copy of this consent form, please contact the investigator Sibel Truong at J02242254@jwu.edu or 773-372-5219

Will I be informed of the findings from this study?

If you would like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you, please contact the investigator Sibel Truong at J02242254@jwu.edu or 773-372-5219.

Appendix D:
Survey Questions

1. How old are you? Please answer in whole numbers (ex: 18 or 26)
 - a. _____
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Prefer to self-describe _____
 - e. Prefer not to say
3. How often do you buy clothing per week?
 - a. Less than once a week
 - b. Once to twice a week
 - c. Three to four times a week
 - d. More than five times a week
4. How often do you find yourself participating in fashion trends?
 - a. Very Frequently
 - b. Frequently
 - c. Occasionally
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Very Rarely
5. If you do, what influences you to participate in fashion trends?
 - a. _____

6. Where do you buy your clothes most often? Fill in your top three retailers. (Ex: Shein, Macy's, Goodwill)
- _____
 - _____
 - _____
7. How often do you buy secondhand clothes? (Thrift stores, The RealReal, secondhand stores, Depop?)
- Very Frequently
 - Frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Very Rarely
8. If you shop secondhand, what retailers do you shop at? Fill in your top three secondhand retailers.
- _____
 - _____
 - _____
9. If you shop secondhand, why? (Select all that apply)
- Affordable way to be stylish
 - Thrift stores support the local community
 - To keep clothing out of landfills
 - Slows fast fashion
 - Other _____

10. Is there a person who inspires your sense of style? If so, please name them below.
- fill in _____
11. Do you follow influencers on social media?
- Yes
 - No
12. If yes, list your top three favorite influencers
- _____
 - _____
 - _____
13. If a celebrity you admire shopped secondhand, would that influence you to shop secondhand as well?
- Yes
 - No
14. Please explain your answer.
- _____
15. How knowledgeable are you about the impact of fast fashion on the environment?
- Very knowledgeable
 - Knowledgeable
 - Somewhat knowledgeable
 - Not knowledgeable
16. Did learning about the impact of fast fashion on the environment influence your fast fashion consumption?
- Yes

b. No

17. Please explain your answer

a. _____

18. What do you like most about shopping for secondhand clothes?

a. _____

19. What do you like least about shopping for secondhand clothes?

a. _____

20. What do you like most about fast fashion?

a. _____

21. What do you like least about fast fashion?

a. _____

Respond to the following statements regarding your personal beliefs regarding yourself

	Very True of Me	Somewhat True of Me	Neutral	Somewhat Untrue of me	Very Untrue of Me
I am interested in fashion					
I am interested in sustainability					
I am aware of the realities of fast fashion					

Appendix E: Coding Guide

1. Motivation for Shopping Fast Fashion
 - a. Personal style
 - i. If current trends aligned with participant's personal style they may participate in trends
 - b. Body Type
 - i. Would participate in trends if they looked well on their body type
 - c. Social Media
 - i. Online posts
 - ii. Catalogs and magazines
 - d. Desire to stay on trend
 - e. Purchased if found at thrift stores

2. Motivation for not Shopping Fast Fashion
 - a. Comfort
 - i. Clothes that are trendy are not comfortable
 - ii. Participants prefer to wear comfy clothes (ex: sweatpants)
 - b. Body Type
 - i. Would not participate in trends if they did not suit their body type
 - c. Clothing is bought as a necessity
 - d. Do not want to over consume clothing
 - e. Trends can be found at thrift stores
 - f. Disinterested in fashion
 - g. Not up to date on fashion trends
 - h. Personal style
 - i. Aware that fashion trends shift

3. Why celebrities shopping secondhand would not influence them to shop secondhand as well
 - a. Don't follow celebrities or aren't interested
 - b. Celebrities don't influence behavior
 - c. Don't like secondhand
 - d. Personal style and desire
 - e. Already shop secondhand

4. Why celebrities shopping secondhand would influence them to shop secondhand as well
 - a. Easily influenced
 - b. Should be more awareness on the benefits of shopping secondhand

- c. Seeing secondhand content would motivate secondhand consumption
 - d. Favorite influencers have already motivated them to shop secondhand
 - e. Shows that thrifting doesn't mean you are poor
 - f. Shows that style can be obtained in an affordable and conscious way
5. Learning about impacts of fast fashion did not influence fast fashion consumption
- a. Low price of fast fashion prevents from buying elsewhere
 - b. Haven't been educated about fast fashion
 - c. Purchase fast fashion but keep pieces for years
 - d. Only shop secondhand
 - e. Fast fashion is always their top option
 - f. Prefer high quality clothing that will last a while
 - g. Fast fashion is low quality
 - h. Don't think their behavior has an impact on fast fashion
6. Learning about impacts of fast fashion influenced fast fashion consumption
- a. Scary to think about the waste produced
 - b. Started shopping at thrifts
 - c. Poor quality clothes
 - d. Don't shop fast fashion anymore
 - e. Desire to limit consumption
 - f. Fast fashion has low prices
 - g. Desire for higher quality clothes
7. Most liked aspect of shopping secondhand
- a. Low price for good quality
 - b. Unique and rare pieces
 - c. Helps the environment
 - d. Beneficial to the community
 - e. Fabric is worn in
 - f. Better quality
 - g. Reinforces individual style
 - h. Thrill of the search
 - i. Like to upcycle clothing
8. Least liked aspect of shopping secondhand
- a. Hygiene, having to wash clothes
 - b. Difficult to find in their size
 - c. Process is very time consuming
 - d. Overwhelming

- e. Odor of stores/clothes
 - f. Clothing can be damaged
9. Most liked aspect of shopping fast fashion
- a. Convenience
 - i. Online
 - ii. Stores are everywhere
 - b. Cheap prices
 - c. Large size range of clothing
 - d. Nothing
 - e. Trendy pieces
 - i. Allows consumers to keep up with latest trends
 - f. Ability to always find what you want
 - g. Variety of options
 - h. Quality
 - i. Makes one more attractive
10. Least liked aspect of shopping fast fashion
- a. Everyone looks the same
 - b. Environmental impact
 - c. Poor quality items, don't last
 - d. Promotes overconsumption
 - e. Treatment of garment workers
 - f. Everything
 - g. Ethics
 - h. Expensive