

Thrift-Fluencers and the rise of second-hand fashion: A behavioural Analysis of Gen-Z's shopping habits

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Abstract

The rapid growth of fast fashion has generated significant environmental concerns, including high carbon emissions, excessive water consumption, and increasing textile waste. In response to these challenges, second-hand fashion has emerged as a sustainable alternative, particularly among younger consumers. Social media has further accelerated this shift by enabling influencers to shape fashion trends and consumer behavior. The present study examines the relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement among Generation Z and explores the potential role of thrift-focused influencers in shaping second-hand shopping behaviors. A quantitative survey design was employed using an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. Data were collected from 120 respondents aged 16 to 27 years ($M = 19.24$, $SD = 1.89$). Two standardized measurement instruments were used: the Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (CSII) scale and the Fashion Clothing Involvement (FCI) scale. Descriptive statistics indicated moderate levels of both influencer engagement ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.94$) and fashion involvement ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.98$). Correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement ($r = .42$), while regression analysis indicated that influencer engagement accounted for approximately 18% of the variance in fashion involvement ($R^2 = .18$). These findings suggest that social media influencers, particularly thrift influencers, may contribute to increasing Generation Z's interest in fashion and potentially encourage the adoption of second-hand clothing. The study highlights the growing role of digital influence in shaping sustainable fashion consumption and provides insights for sustainable fashion brands, marketers, and policymakers seeking to promote circular fashion practices.

Keywords: thrift fashion, Generation Z, influencer marketing, sustainable fashion, second-hand clothing, social media influence

1. Introduction

Fast fashion refers to the business model of replicating recent catwalk trends and high-fashion designs, mass producing them at low cost, and bringing them quickly to retail markets while demand is highest (Wikipedia, n.d.).

However, despite meeting consumer demand rapidly, the fast fashion industry has significant environmental consequences. The industry contributes approximately **8–10% of global CO₂ emissions**,

equivalent to **4–5 billion tonnes annually**, and consumes approximately **79 trillion liters of water per year**. Additionally, textile dyeing and treatment processes account for nearly **20% of industrial water pollution**. The industry also contributes roughly **35% (190,000 tonnes annually) of primary microplastic pollution in oceans** and generates over **92 million tonnes of textile waste annually**, much of which ends up in landfills or is incinerated (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

In response to these environmental challenges, sustainable alternatives to fast fashion have gained increasing attention. One such alternative is **second-hand fashion**, commonly referred to as thrift fashion. Second-hand fashion refers to clothing that has been previously owned and reused, including pre-loved clothing, thrift garments, and rental apparel. It has emerged as a key component of the sustainable fashion movement.

Sustainable fashion, which is closely associated with the **slow fashion movement**, has evolved over the past several decades and is often used interchangeably with terms such as eco-fashion, green fashion, and ethical fashion. The concept gained prominence during the **1960s**, when growing awareness of the environmental and social impacts of clothing production led consumers to demand more responsible industry practices (Henninger et al., 2016).

Buying second-hand clothing, commonly known as **thrift shopping**, contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing the demand for new clothing production. This reduction lowers resource consumption and waste generation while minimizing textile waste that would otherwise accumulate in landfills. Furthermore, second-hand fashion supports local communities, as many thrift stores operate through charitable organizations (Geegamage et al., 2021).

In recent years, the popularity of second-hand fashion has increased significantly. According to Statista data cited by **Sepe et al. (2025)**, the global market value of second-hand clothing reached approximately **177 billion USD in 2022** and is expected to nearly **double to 351 billion USD by 2027**, demonstrating rapid growth in sustainable fashion consumption.

2. Growth of Thrift-Influencers

The rise of social media has significantly influenced modern marketing strategies, as platforms allow brands and creators to directly engage with audiences. Influencers have become key actors in digital marketing, as their followers often trust their recommendations and incorporate them into purchasing decisions (Chu & Seock, 2020).

The term “**thrift influencers**” refers to social media personalities who promote second-hand fashion through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. A notable online community known as “**ThriftTok**” showcases creative individuals sharing thrift store discoveries and styling ideas (Hardy, 2023).

Examples of popular thrift influencers include **Lesha Gilchrist (@ThriftNtell)**, who has promoted thrift fashion since her teenage years, and **Macy Eleni**, a content creator based in Los Angeles who views second-hand clothing as a form of storytelling (Hardy, 2023).

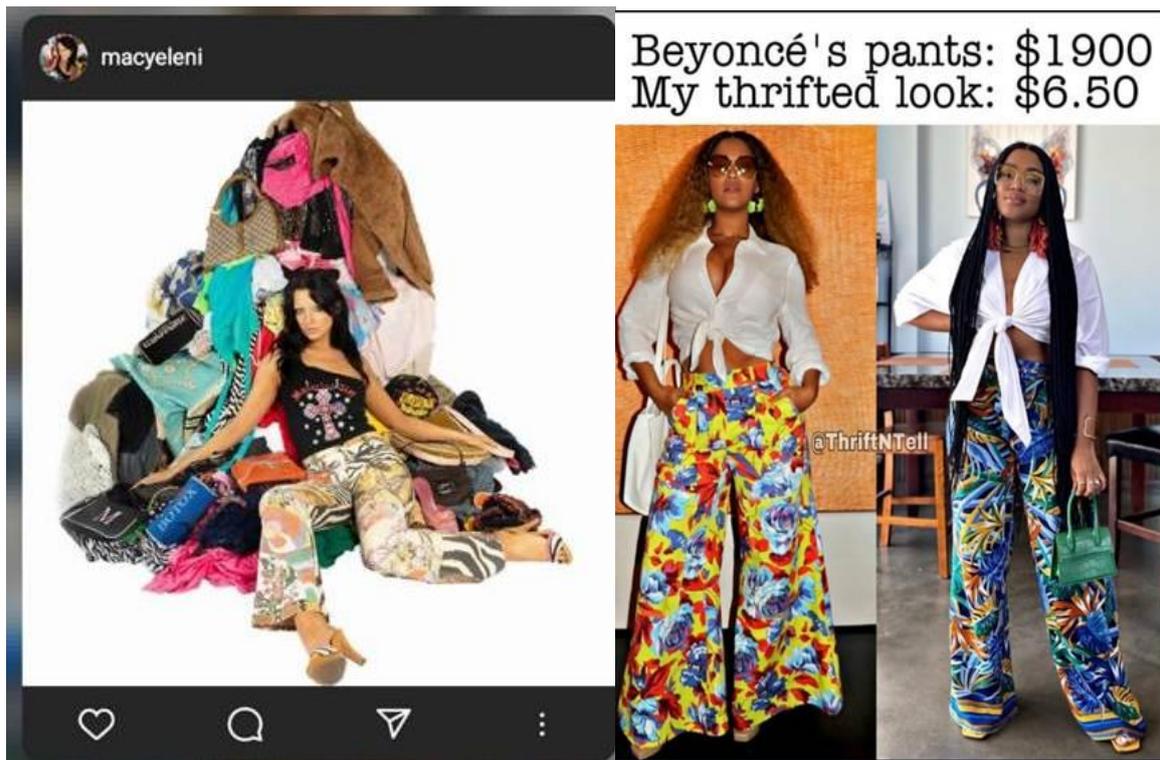
In India, creators such as **Shreya Jain (SJ Box)** and **Pooja Mundhra-Mahatme (@thecozyvibe)** actively promote thrift culture while also operating second-hand clothing platforms (BerryLush, n.d.).

Celebrities have also contributed to the normalization of second-hand fashion. For example, **Bella Hadid** has publicly shared that she frequently purchases clothing from resale platforms (Restitched, n.d.). Similarly, musicians such as **Florence Welch, Janelle Monáe, and SZA** have worn vintage or second-hand clothing during performances, reinforcing the cultural acceptance of thrift fashion.

Gen Z is driving the Shift Toward Thrift Fashion.

The rising demand for second-hand items is primarily driven by **Generation Z**, individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Younger consumers represent a large share of the resale market, with approximately **80% of Gen Z purchasing pre-loved goods** (Hardcastle, 2022).

This trend reflects broader shifts in consumer values, where sustainability, affordability, and individuality are becoming increasingly important factors in purchasing decisions.



MACY ELENI & LESHIA GILCHRIST



POOJA MUNDHRA-MAHATME & IZZY MANUEL

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing interest in second-hand fashion consumption has attracted significant academic attention in recent years, particularly in the context of sustainability, consumer psychology, and digital media influence. Researchers across disciplines have examined the motivations, behavioral patterns, and cultural shifts associated with second-hand clothing (SHC) consumption, especially among younger consumers such as Generation Z.

Holmqvist et al. (2025) explore consumer behavior within the second-hand luxury fashion sector, highlighting the intersection of exclusivity and sustainability in shaping purchasing decisions. Their research identifies three primary consumer journeys that characterize engagement with second-hand luxury markets. The first group consists of price-sensitive consumers who are motivated primarily by affordability and the opportunity to access luxury brands at reduced prices. The second group includes uniqueness-driven consumers who value individuality and view second-hand markets as a way to discover rare or distinctive items unavailable in mainstream retail. The third group comprises sustainability-oriented consumers who are motivated by environmental concerns and ethical consumption values. An important contribution of this study is its exploration of the emotional evolution experienced by consumers as they transition into second-hand consumption. Many individuals initially experience feelings of stigma or embarrassment associated with wearing previously owned clothing. Over time, however, these emotions often transform into feelings of pride, identity reinforcement, and ethical satisfaction. This emotional transformation reflects broader societal shifts toward the acceptance of circular consumption models and sustainable fashion practices.

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has also significantly influenced the fashion industry and consumer behavior. Melgarejo-Espinoza et al. (2025) examine how TikTok has transformed the way

fashion trends are created, disseminated, and consumed. Their research highlights the role of TikTok's algorithm-driven "For You" page, which utilizes machine learning to analyze user engagement metrics such as likes, comments, watch time, and shares. This recommendation system allows niche aesthetics, including trends like "cottagecore" and "Y2K fashion," to spread rapidly among users. As a result, fashion brands have adapted their marketing strategies to align with these algorithmic dynamics by collaborating with micro-influencers, incorporating user-generated content, and responding quickly to emerging trends. While these changes have democratized fashion by allowing ordinary users to shape trends, they have also accelerated the pace of consumption and encouraged what some researchers describe as "fast aesthetics," where trends emerge and disappear rapidly.

Another significant stream of research focuses on the motivations that encourage consumers to adopt second-hand clothing consumption. Mobarak et al. (2025) examine the transition from fast fashion to second-hand consumption and identify several key drivers influencing consumer behavior. Their study reveals that consumers are motivated by economic considerations, environmental awareness, and the desire for unique fashion items that enable self-expression. These motivations are consistent with previous studies that highlight affordability, sustainability concerns, enjoyment, and social contribution as major drivers of second-hand consumption. However, the study also identifies several barriers that discourage consumers from engaging with second-hand markets, including concerns about hygiene, perceived product quality, and social stigma. Using a mixed-method research design involving both interviews and surveys, the study emphasizes the importance of addressing consumer perceptions and perceived risks in order to expand the adoption of sustainable fashion alternatives.

In addition to practical motivations, some scholars emphasize the ethical and emotional dimensions of second-hand clothing consumption. Auxtova et al. (2024) examine this phenomenon through the theoretical framework of virtue ethics, suggesting that second-hand consumption is often driven by moral reasoning rather than purely economic or practical considerations. According to their findings, purchasing second-hand clothing can evoke feelings of pride and satisfaction, as consumers perceive their actions as environmentally responsible and ethically aligned with sustainable values. However, the research also reveals that these positive emotions can coexist with negative feelings such as embarrassment or social discomfort, particularly in cultural contexts where newness is associated with status and wealth. This emotional tension highlights the complex interplay between personal values and societal expectations in shaping consumer behavior.

Cross-national perspectives further enrich the understanding of second-hand fashion consumption. Ciechelska et al. (2024) conducted a large-scale study involving consumers from Germany, Sweden, Slovenia, Lithuania, and Poland to investigate the motivations behind participation in second-hand clothing circulation. Their findings reveal that ecological motivations, including environmental concern and the desire to reduce textile waste, are among the strongest drivers of second-hand fashion consumption. At the same time, economic benefits such as cost savings remain nearly as influential. The study concludes that second-hand consumption is shaped by a combination of environmental ideals and practical benefits rather than a single dominant motivation. Importantly, the authors highlight a gap between consumers' environmental attitudes and their actual purchasing behaviors, suggesting that convenience, accessibility, and economic incentives often play a decisive role in shaping real-world decisions.

Psychological motivations and barriers also play a critical role in shaping second-hand consumption patterns. Frahm et al. (2024) explore the complex interplay between emotional motivations, perceived risks, and situational factors that influence consumers' willingness to purchase second-hand goods. Their research identifies several motivators, including the enjoyment of discovering unique items, opportunities for resale, perceived financial value, and the satisfaction associated with supporting charitable causes. At the same time, concerns related to personal identity and social perception may discourage consumers from participating in second-hand markets. For instance, individuals may feel that second-hand consumption conflicts with their desired self-image or social status. The study emphasizes that motivations and barriers often vary depending on the product category and social context, making consumer behavior in second-hand markets highly nuanced and situational.

Perceived risks associated with second-hand clothing have also been examined in greater detail by Koay et al. (2024), who identify three key categories of risk that influence purchase intentions. These include sanitary risk, aesthetic risk, and psychological risk. Sanitary risk refers to concerns about hygiene and the previous ownership of garments. Aesthetic risk involves doubts about whether second-hand clothing will meet consumers' expectations regarding style, fit, or appearance. Psychological risk relates to concerns about how others may perceive individuals wearing pre-owned clothing. The authors further demonstrate that personal traits such as consumer innovativeness and environmental consciousness can mitigate these risks. Individuals who are open to new experiences or strongly committed to sustainability tend to perceive second-hand clothing more positively.

Cultural context also plays an important role in shaping second-hand consumption patterns. Moon (2024) examines second-hand clothing consumption in Japan and highlights the influence of cultural perceptions surrounding used goods. Historically, second-hand clothing in Japan has been associated with dishonor or poverty, which creates barriers to widespread acceptance. However, digital resale platforms and online flea markets have begun to transform these perceptions by making second-hand fashion more accessible and appealing to younger consumers. The study emphasizes that generational differences play a key role in this shift, with younger individuals demonstrating greater openness toward sustainable consumption practices.

Research on second-hand luxury consumption provides further insight into evolving consumer attitudes. Wang et al. (2024) investigate second-hand luxury markets in Shanghai and identify several factors influencing purchasing decisions, including store credibility, product authenticity, perceived benefits, personal characteristics, and social environment. Their findings indicate that transparency, trust, and authenticity verification are essential for building consumer confidence in second-hand luxury markets. Additionally, social acceptance and peer influence play a significant role in reducing stigma associated with purchasing used luxury goods.

The role of digital platforms in facilitating sustainable fashion practices has also been explored extensively. Charnley et al. (2022) examine how technological innovations such as resale marketplaces, blockchain authentication tools, and clothing rental platforms can reduce consumer barriers to circular fashion participation. These digital solutions enhance transparency, convenience, and trust, thereby encouraging consumers to engage with second-hand and circular fashion models.

Generation Z's relationship with sustainable fashion has received particular attention due to the demographic's growing influence in the global fashion market. Palomo-Dominguez et al. (2023) investigate how Gen Z interacts with the resale platform Vinted and identify a significant "value-action gap." While many young consumers express concern about environmental issues, their purchasing decisions are often driven primarily by practical considerations such as affordability and convenience. This gap between stated values and actual behavior highlights the complexity of sustainable consumption among younger consumers.

Similarly, Tran et al. (2022) examine sustainable fashion consumption among Generation Z and find that environmental awareness significantly influences purchase intentions and brand loyalty. Consumers who possess higher levels of environmental consciousness are more likely to support sustainable fashion brands, provided that these brands also meet expectations related to quality, aesthetics, and social responsibility.

Earlier research by Hur (2020) identifies several key values that motivate second-hand clothing consumption, including economic savings, hedonic pleasure, self-expression, environmental concern, and social contribution. The study also highlights the persistent barriers associated with second-hand fashion, such as hygiene concerns and negative social perceptions. These findings align with earlier work by Yan et al. (2015), who demonstrate that thrift shopping among college students is motivated by environmental awareness, affordability, and the desire for unique vintage styles.

Taken together, the existing literature indicates that second-hand fashion consumption is shaped by a complex combination of economic motivations, environmental concerns, emotional factors, and social influences. While sustainable values are increasingly important in shaping consumer attitudes, practical considerations such as affordability, accessibility, and peer influence remain central drivers of behavior. Furthermore, the rise of social media influencers and digital platforms has significantly altered how second-hand fashion is perceived, marketed, and adopted, particularly among younger consumers such as Generation Z.

4. Research Gap and Justification for the Present Study

Although existing literature provides substantial insights into second-hand fashion consumption, several gaps remain in understanding how digital influence shapes the behavior of younger consumers. Many studies have examined the motivations behind second-hand clothing purchases, identifying factors such as affordability, sustainability awareness, and the desire for unique fashion items as key drivers (Mobarak et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2015; Hur, 2020). Other research has explored the psychological and emotional dimensions of thrift consumption, emphasizing the role of identity formation, moral satisfaction, and social perception in shaping consumer attitudes toward second-hand fashion (Auxtova et al., 2024; Frahm et al., 2024).

Additionally, scholars have investigated the broader cultural and structural dynamics influencing second-hand fashion markets. Cross-national studies highlight how ecological values and economic motivations interact to encourage participation in resale markets (Ciechelska et al., 2024), while research on digital platforms demonstrates how technology facilitates the growth of circular fashion systems by improving

accessibility and transparency (Charnley et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies focusing on Generation Z suggest that younger consumers exhibit increasing awareness of sustainability issues, although their purchasing decisions often remain influenced by practical considerations such as affordability and convenience (Palomo-Dominguez et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2022).

Despite these contributions, relatively limited research has specifically examined the role of **thrift-influencers** in shaping Generation Z's attitudes and engagement with second-hand fashion. While studies on social media marketing highlight the growing influence of digital creators in shaping fashion trends and consumer preferences (Chu & Seock, 2020; Melgarejo-Espinoza et al., 2025), there remains a lack of empirical research investigating how influencer engagement interacts with fashion involvement to influence thrift shopping behavior.

Moreover, much of the existing research focuses either on **consumer motivations for second-hand fashion** or on **social media influence in fashion marketing**, but rarely integrates these perspectives within a single analytical framework. As a result, there is limited quantitative evidence examining how influencer engagement may contribute to shaping Gen Z's adoption of second-hand fashion practices.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the relationship between **influencer engagement and fashion involvement among Generation Z**, with particular attention to the influence of thrift-focused digital creators. By employing standardized measurement instruments such as the **Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (CSII)** scale and the **Fashion Clothing Involvement (FCI)** scale, the study aims to provide empirical insights into how social influence and personal fashion engagement interact to shape thrift shopping behaviors among young consumers.

In doing so, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainable fashion consumption by examining the role of social media influence in encouraging second-hand clothing adoption among Generation Z. The findings offer implications for sustainable fashion brands, digital marketers, and policymakers seeking to promote circular fashion practices in an increasingly influencer-driven digital environment.

5. Research Design

Research Approach

The present study employed a **quantitative survey design** to investigate the influence of thrift-influencers on Generation Z's thrift shopping behaviors. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the systematic measurement of attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral tendencies across a defined population. Survey-based methods are particularly suitable for consumer behavior research as they allow researchers to examine relationships between variables such as social influence, fashion engagement, and purchasing behavior.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study incorporated **pre-existing standardized measurement scales** that have been widely used in consumer behavior research. The use of established scales strengthens the credibility of the study by ensuring that the constructs being measured have already been validated in previous academic literature.

Measurement Instruments

Two established instruments were selected for the study.

The first instrument was the **Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (CSII) scale**, which was used to assess the extent to which the opinions and behaviors of others shape individual purchasing decisions. The CSII scale measures how strongly individuals rely on external social influence when evaluating products or making consumption choices. Within the context of this study, the scale provided insights into whether thrift-influencers significantly affect Generation Z's attitudes and shopping behaviors, thereby capturing the role of external social influence in consumer decision-making.

The second instrument used in the study was the **Fashion Clothing Involvement (FCI) scale**, which measures the degree of personal engagement individuals have with fashion in their everyday lives. The scale assesses how important fashion is to an individual's identity, lifestyle, and daily activities. In the context of this research, the FCI scale helped determine whether Generation Z's thrift shopping behavior is driven primarily by aesthetic motivations such as style, self-expression, and personal identity, or by practical considerations such as affordability and utility.

Together, the CSII and FCI scales enabled a comprehensive examination of how **external social pressures and internal fashion interests intersect to shape Generation Z's thrift shopping patterns**.

6. Data Collection

Data for the study were collected through an **online survey administered via Google Forms**. The online format ensured accessibility and convenience for participants, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire easily using digital devices. This method is particularly appropriate for research involving Generation Z participants, who are highly accustomed to interacting with digital platforms.

A total of **120 valid responses** were collected through the survey. The sample consisted of individuals aged **16 to 27 years**, with an average age of **19.24 years (SD = 1.89)**. This reflects a relatively young and concentrated demographic, which aligns with the study's focus on Generation Z consumers and their engagement with thrift fashion and influencer-driven content.

The collected data provided a suitable sample for exploratory analysis of the relationship between **influencer engagement and fashion involvement within the context of second-hand fashion consumption**.

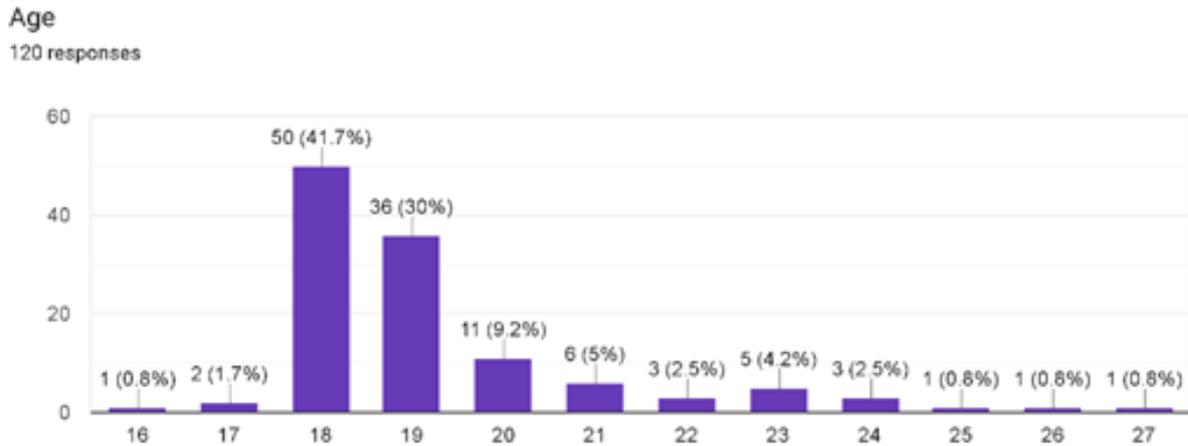


Figure 1

7. Results

Measurement Instruments

Two measurement instruments were employed to evaluate the constructs examined in this study: the Influencer Engagement Scale, derived from the Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (CSII) scale, and the Fashion Involvement Scale based on the Fashion Clothing Involvement (FCI) framework.

Influencer Engagement Scale

The Influencer Engagement Scale was used to assess the extent to which respondents rely on others' opinions when making purchasing decisions. The mean score for the scale was $M = 4.44$ on a seven-point Likert scale, with a **standard deviation of $SD = 0.94$** , indicating a moderate dispersion of responses around the mean. The observed scores ranged from **1.25 to 7.00**, suggesting variability in the degree to which respondents engage with external social influence when evaluating products.

These results indicate that Generation Z respondents demonstrate a **moderate level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence**, reflecting the role of social networks and influencer content in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions.

Fashion Involvement Scale

The Fashion Involvement Scale was used to measure the degree of personal engagement respondents have with fashion and shopping behaviors. The mean score for this scale was $M = 4.77$ on a seven-point Likert scale, with a **standard deviation of $SD = 0.98$** , indicating a moderate spread of responses. Scores ranged from **1.33 to 6.83**, suggesting variation in the level of fashion involvement among respondents.

Overall, these findings indicate that fashion holds a **moderate to relatively significant role** in the daily lives and consumption behaviors of the Generation Z participants included in this study.

8. Individual Survey Question Responses

Influencer Engagement Items

Responses to individual survey items further illustrate patterns in respondents' reliance on interpersonal influence.

For the item "I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class" (IE_Q1), the most frequent response was **Somewhat Agree (33.61%)**, followed by **Neither Agree nor Disagree (20.49%)**. This distribution suggests that a considerable proportion of respondents rely on external opinions when evaluating product alternatives.

Similarly, for the item "If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product" (IE_Q7), the most common responses were **Agree (36.07%)** and **Strongly Agree (22.95%)**. These responses indicate that respondents frequently seek advice from friends when they lack familiarity with a product category.

A comparable pattern was observed for the item "I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy" (IE_Q10), where **Agree (36.07%)** and **Strongly Agree (22.95%)** were again the most frequent responses. These results highlight the importance of social networks in shaping product-related information gathering and purchasing decisions among Generation Z consumers.

Fashion Involvement Items

Responses to the Fashion Involvement items suggest that fashion plays an important role in respondents' lives.

For the statement "Fashion is a significant part of my life" (FI_Q1), the most frequent responses were **Agree (31.97%)** and **Strongly Agree (22.13%)**, indicating that fashion represents a meaningful aspect of identity and lifestyle for many respondents.

Similarly, for the item "Fashion is important to me" (FI_Q4), **Agree (36.07%)** and **Strongly Agree (22.95%)** were the dominant responses, further reinforcing the perceived significance of fashion among participants.

For the item "I have little or no interest in advertisements for fashion products" (FI_Q18), which was **reverse-coded for scale calculation**, the original responses showed **Agree (29.51%)** and **Somewhat Agree (22.95%)** as common selections. Although these responses initially indicate lower interest in fashion advertising, reverse coding of the item contributes to a higher overall fashion involvement score.

9. Correlation Analysis

Relationship Between Influencer Engagement and Fashion Involvement

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the **Influencer Engagement Scale** and the **Fashion Involvement Scale**.

The results indicated a **moderate positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .42$)**. This finding suggests that individuals who report higher engagement with influencers also tend to demonstrate greater involvement in fashion-related activities.

A scatter plot was generated to visually examine the relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement. The data points generally display an upward trend, indicating a positive association between the variables.

A regression line fitted to the scatter plot produced an **R^2 value of .18**, indicating that approximately **18% of the variance in fashion involvement can be explained by influencer engagement**.

10. Interpretation of Results

The results of the analysis suggest several important patterns regarding Generation Z's consumer behavior.

First, respondents exhibited **moderate levels of both influencer engagement and fashion involvement**, with mean scores of **$M = 4.44$** and **$M = 4.77$** , respectively. This indicates that while social influence and fashion engagement are present among the sample, the degree of involvement varies across individuals.

Second, the survey responses indicate that Generation Z consumers frequently rely on **friends and family members for product-related information**, particularly when they have limited experience with a product category. This pattern underscores the importance of interpersonal networks in shaping purchasing decisions.

Finally, the correlation analysis demonstrates a **moderate positive relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement**. This suggests that increased interaction with influencers may be associated with greater interest in fashion and shopping behaviors.

Taken together, these findings imply that **thrift-influencers may play a meaningful role in shaping Generation Z's attitudes toward second-hand fashion**, particularly through their ability to influence fashion-related interests and consumption behaviors.

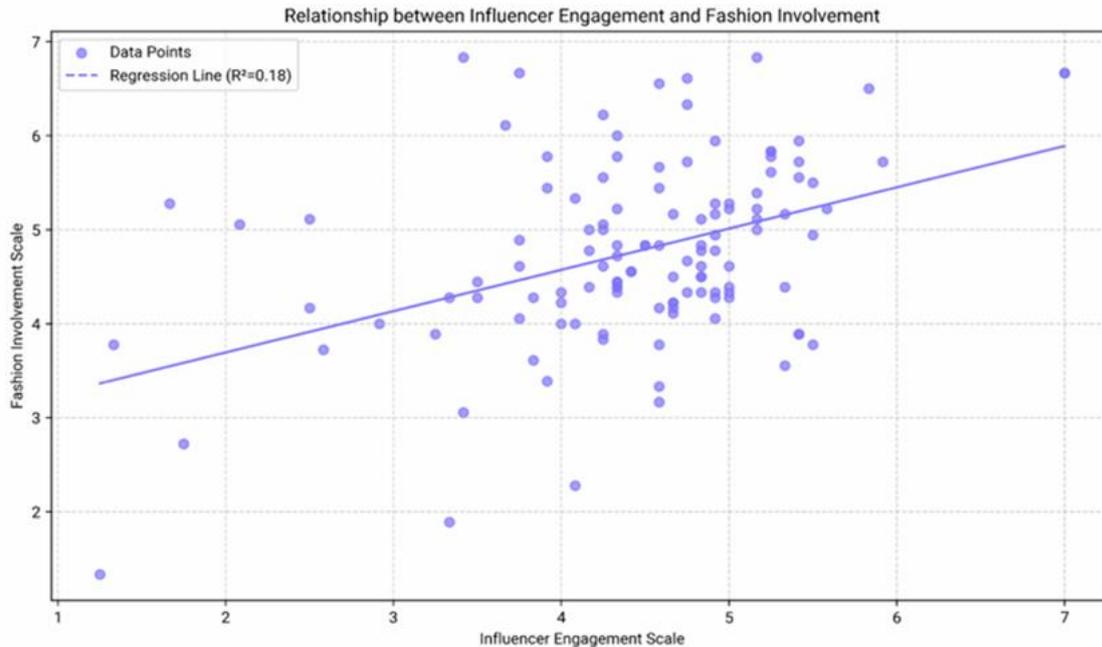


Figure 2

The scatter plot visually confirms this positive relationship, showing data points generally trending upwards from left to right. The regression line, with an R-squared value of 0.18, suggests that approximately 18% of the variance in Fashion Involvement can be explained by Influencer Engagement.

From the above figure, it could be inferred that the correlation coefficient between the 'Influencer Engagement Scale' and the 'Fashion Involvement/Shopping Habits Scale' is approximately 0.42. This indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two scales. As influencer engagement increases, there is a tendency for fashion involvement and shopping habits to also increase.

11. Visualizations

Scatter Plot: Influencer Engagement and Fashion Involvement

A scatter plot was generated to illustrate the relationship between the **Influencer Engagement Scale (X-axis)** and the **Fashion Involvement Scale (Y-axis)**. The visualization includes a regression line that represents the overall trend in the data.

The distribution of data points generally shows an upward pattern, indicating a positive association between the two variables. This pattern suggests that individuals who report higher levels of influencer engagement also tend to demonstrate greater involvement in fashion-related behaviors.

The regression analysis produced an **R² value of .18**, indicating that approximately **18% of the variance in fashion involvement can be explained by influencer engagement**. This statistical relationship supports the interpretation that influencer engagement contributes to increased interest and participation in fashion activities among Generation Z respondents.

12. Conclusion and Insights

The results of the analysis provide several insights into the relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement among Generation Z consumers.

First, the respondents exhibited **moderate levels of both influencer engagement and fashion involvement**, with mean scores of $M = 4.44$ and $M = 4.77$, respectively, on a seven-point Likert scale. These findings indicate that while both variables are present within the sample, the degree of engagement varies across individuals within the Generation Z demographic.

Second, the survey responses suggest that Generation Z consumers **frequently rely on friends and family members for product-related information and approval**, particularly when they lack prior experience with a product category. This behavior highlights the important role of interpersonal networks in shaping purchasing decisions and aligns with the broader concept of social influence captured by the influencer engagement construct.

Third, the correlation analysis revealed a **moderate positive relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement ($r = .42$)**. This finding suggests that individuals who interact more frequently with influencers tend to demonstrate higher levels of interest and participation in fashion-related activities.

Taken together, the findings suggest that **thrift-influencers may play a meaningful role in shaping Generation Z's second-hand shopping behaviors**. Given the established relationship between influencer engagement and fashion involvement, influencers who promote thrift fashion may encourage greater interest in and adoption of second-hand clothing among younger consumers.

13. Findings and Discussion

Demographic Insights

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates a predominantly young population, with a mean age of **19.24 years**. Participants ranged in age from **16 to 27 years**, with a relatively small **standard deviation of 1.89**, suggesting that responses were concentrated within a specific segment of the Generation Z population. This concentration is significant because it reflects a life stage in which individuals are actively exploring their identity through fashion choices, social media engagement, and evolving consumer behaviors.

Generation Z participants in this study appear to be in a transitional phase between adolescence and early adulthood. This stage of life is often associated with heightened peer influence, experimentation with personal identity, and increased sensitivity to emerging trends. Many individuals within this demographic are likely to be students or early-career professionals, which further influences their consumption patterns and financial decision-making.

This demographic context is particularly relevant for understanding second-hand fashion consumption. Factors such as affordability, sustainability awareness, and exposure to digital influencers are especially salient for younger consumers. Although the present study did not extensively analyze differences across gender, geographic location, or educational background, these variables may play an important role in shaping second-hand fashion adoption and present valuable opportunities for future research.

Second-Hand Shopping Behavior

The analysis indicates that fashion holds a **moderate level of importance** for the respondents. The Fashion Involvement/Shopping Habits Scale produced a mean score of **M = 4.77 (SD = 0.98)** on a seven-point Likert scale, suggesting that while Generation Z respondents demonstrate a noticeable interest in fashion, levels of involvement vary among individuals.

A substantial proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements such as “Fashion is a significant part of my life” (54.1%), reinforcing the notion that fashion plays a role in shaping personal identity and self-expression.

Although the study did not directly measure the frequency of thrift purchases, the combination of **moderate fashion involvement and moderate influencer engagement** suggests an increasing openness toward second-hand fashion consumption. This trend aligns with broader patterns observed among Generation Z consumers, who often seek to balance style preferences with affordability and sustainability considerations.

Social influence also appears to play a significant role in shopping behavior. Approximately **36.07% of respondents agreed, and 22.95% strongly agreed** that they frequently consult friends or family before making purchasing decisions. These findings highlight the socially embedded nature of consumption behavior among Generation Z and suggest that shopping decisions are often shaped by interpersonal validation.

Second-hand shopping behavior can therefore be interpreted not only as an individual preference but also as a socially influenced activity. These findings are consistent with existing research that frames thrift shopping as both an economic and cultural practice influenced by peer networks, aesthetic values, and evolving lifestyle choices.

Both physical thrift stores and digital resale platforms are increasingly perceived as legitimate spaces for fashion experimentation, particularly when endorsed by peers or social media influencers.

Impact of Thrift Influencers

One of the most notable findings of this study concerns the relationship between **influencer engagement and fashion involvement**. The Influencer Engagement Scale produced a mean score of **M = 4.44 (SD = 0.94)**, indicating moderate levels of engagement with social influence.

Correlation analysis revealed a **moderate positive correlation between influencer engagement and fashion involvement (r = .42)**. Regression analysis further indicated that influencer engagement

accounted for **approximately 18% of the variance in fashion involvement ($R^2 = .18$)**. These findings suggest that influencer engagement plays a meaningful role in shaping Generation Z's interest in fashion-related activities.

Survey responses also demonstrated a strong reliance on external opinions when respondents lacked familiarity with a product. For instance, **36.07% of respondents agreed, and 22.95% strongly agreed** that they ask friends about products when they have limited prior knowledge. Similarly, a majority of respondents reported gathering information from friends or family before making purchasing decisions.

These patterns highlight how influencers function as extensions of social networks. Influencers often act as trusted sources of information whose recommendations guide consumer decisions, particularly in categories characterized by exploration and uncertainty, such as thrift fashion.

The rise of **“thrift-influencers,”** content creators who promote second-hand clothing through styling advice, thrift hauls, and sustainability messaging, fits directly within this behavioral pattern. For a generation that values authenticity and relatability, thrift influencers serve as intermediaries who bridge the gap between affordability and aspirational fashion.

Unlike traditional advertising, which many respondents reported disengaging from (for example, **29.51% initially indicated disinterest in fashion advertisements**), influencer-generated content tends to be perceived as more authentic and trustworthy. This shift illustrates why influencer-driven narratives are often more persuasive for Generation Z audiences than conventional marketing strategies.

Key Motivations for Second-Hand Shopping

Several motivations appear to drive interest in second-hand fashion among Generation Z consumers.

Affordability

Affordability is a major factor influencing thrift shopping behavior. Many Generation Z consumers operate within limited financial resources, particularly as students or early-career individuals. Thrift shopping provides access to fashionable clothing at significantly lower prices compared to traditional retail outlets, allowing individuals to maintain a fashionable appearance without exceeding their budget constraints.

Sustainability

Generation Z is widely recognized as one of the most environmentally conscious generations. Although sustainability attitudes were not directly measured in this study, existing research suggests that many young consumers are attracted to second-hand fashion because of its association with environmentally responsible consumption.

By extending the lifecycle of clothing items, thrift shopping contributes to reduced textile waste and promotes circular fashion practices.

Trendiness and Experimentation

Fashion experimentation and personal expression also appear to motivate second-hand shopping behavior. Thrift stores often provide access to unique, vintage, or unconventional clothing items that are not readily available in mainstream retail stores.

For many Generation Z consumers, thrift shopping offers an opportunity to develop a distinctive style and differentiate themselves from mass-market fashion trends.

Influence of Social Media

Influencer engagement further strengthens these motivations. Thrift influencers present second-hand fashion as stylish, creative, and socially acceptable, increasing its appeal among digital audiences. Their presence on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enhances the visibility of thrift fashion and reinforces its association with identity expression and social belonging.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite the positive outlook for second-hand fashion, several barriers continue to limit its widespread adoption.

One challenge relates to the **perceived stigma associated with second-hand clothing**. Some consumers continue to associate thrift fashion with concerns about hygiene, product quality, or outdated styles. These perceptions may discourage individuals from engaging with second-hand fashion even when they recognize its economic or environmental benefits.

Limited awareness and accessibility of thrift platforms also represent potential barriers. While thrift stores exist in many urban areas, availability can vary significantly by location. Online resale platforms are emerging rapidly but may not yet enjoy the same level of recognition as mainstream e-commerce retailers.

Quality concerns remain another important issue. Some respondents expressed low interest in traditional fashion advertising, suggesting that marketing alone may not be sufficient to overcome concerns about durability, value, and product reliability.

Finally, second-hand fashion must compete with the convenience and rapid trend cycles of **fast fashion**, which continues to dominate the apparel market due to its accessibility and constant product turnover.

14. Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

The findings of this study suggest that Generation Z's engagement with second-hand fashion is influenced by a combination of **affordability, sustainability awareness, social validation, and fashion involvement**. The analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between influencer engagement and

fashion involvement, indicating that individuals who interact more frequently with influencers also tend to demonstrate greater interest in fashion-related activities.

Generation Z consumers rely heavily on social networks, including peers, family members, and influencers, when making purchasing decisions. Influencers, therefore, function as important intermediaries in shaping perceptions of emerging consumption trends such as thrift fashion.

Influence of Thrift Influencers on Shopping Behavior

Thrift influencers appear to play a significant role in reshaping Generation Z's perception of second-hand fashion. By presenting thrift clothing as fashionable, affordable, and environmentally responsible, influencers help reduce the stigma historically associated with pre-owned clothing.

Their content resonates with Generation Z audiences because it aligns with the generation's digital-first lifestyle and preference for authentic, relatable communication.

However, the influence of thrift influencers is moderated by persistent barriers such as concerns about hygiene, quality, and accessibility of second-hand products.

Implications for Sustainable Fashion Brands

The findings highlight important opportunities for sustainable fashion brands and resale platforms. Collaborations with thrift influencers may help normalize second-hand fashion and increase its acceptance among younger consumers.

Brands can also strengthen trust by emphasizing transparency, quality assurance, and environmental impact within their marketing strategies. Ethical influencer collaborations may therefore serve as an effective mechanism for promoting sustainable consumption practices.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could expand the scope of the present study by incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews with influencers, thrift store owners, and consumers to gain deeper insight into motivations and storytelling strategies surrounding thrift fashion.

Cross-cultural comparisons and gender-based analyses may also provide valuable insights into how second-hand fashion adoption varies across different sociocultural contexts. Longitudinal studies could further examine how thrift shopping behaviors evolve.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample was drawn from a relatively small segment of the Generation Z population and may not fully represent the diversity of the broader demographic. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, as respondents may provide socially desirable answers rather than accurate reflections of their behavior.

These limitations suggest that while the findings offer valuable insights into Generation Z's engagement with thrift fashion, they should be interpreted with caution and supplemented by further research.

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Appendices

Thrift-Fluencers and the Rise of Second-Hand Fashion: A Behavioral Analysis of Gen-Z's Shopping Habits

I am Bhoomika Wadhwa, an 18-year-old first-year student currently pursuing Business Administration at OP Jindal University. I am conducting this survey as part of my research on the *Influence of Social Media Influencers Promoting Thrift Fashion on Gen Z Consumers' Shopping Behaviors and Sustainability Consciousness*.

Your responses will provide valuable insights for my study and contribute to a deeper understanding of this topic. Please be assured that all responses will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes.

I sincerely appreciate your time and participation in this survey!

* Indicates required question

Name *

Your answer

Age *

Your answer

Voluntary participation *

My participation in the survey is completely voluntary, and I have not been pressured or coerced in any way.

Yes, I agree

Next Clear form

Questions included in Google Forms

Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence

Q1. I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.

Q2. If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.

Q3. It is important that others like the products and brands I buy

Q4. To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using

Q5. I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them

Q6. I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase

Q7. If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product

Q8. When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of

Q9. I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others

Q10. I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy it

Q11. If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy

Q12. I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase

Fashion clothing involvement

- Q1. Fashion is a significant part of my life
- Q2. I have a very strong commitment to fashion that would be difficult to break
- Q3. For me personally, fashion clothing is an important product
- Q4. Fashion is important to me
- Q5. I am very involved with Fashion
- Q6. I think a lot about my choices when it comes to fashion
- Q7. Purchase decisions related to fashion are very important to me
- Q8. I attach great importance to purchasing fashion products
- Q9. The purchase of fashion products is important to me
- Q10. Purchasing fashion products is important to me
- Q11. The feeling of self-fulfillment I get from wearing fashion products is significant
- Q12. I like to think about wearing fashionable products
- Q13. Wearing fashionable products is important to me
- Q14. Wearing Fashionable products means a lot to me
- Q15. I pay a lot of attention to ads for fashion products.
- Q16. Ads about fashion products are relevant to me
- Q17. Ads about fashion products are important to me
- Q18. I have little or no interest in ads for fashion products

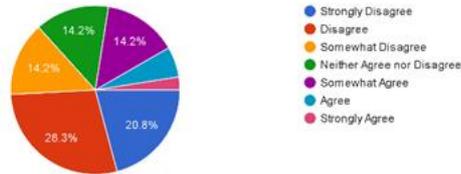
Responses

Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence

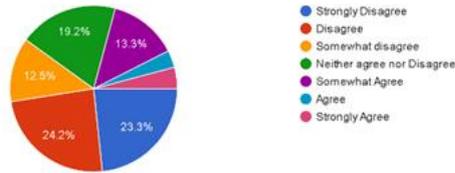
1. I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class
120 responses



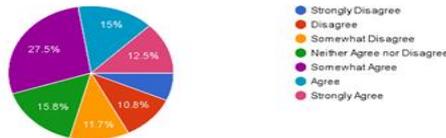
2. If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy
120 responses



3. It is important that others like the products and brands I buy
120 responses



4. To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what other are buying and using
120 responses



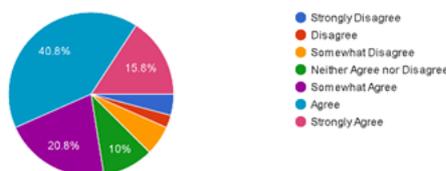
5. I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them
120 responses



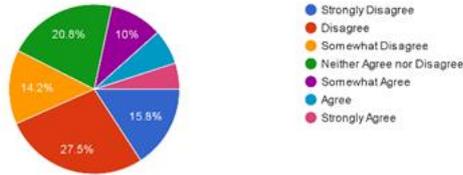
6. I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase
120 responses



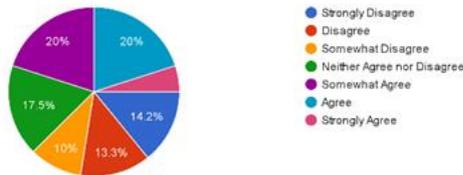
7. If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product
120 responses



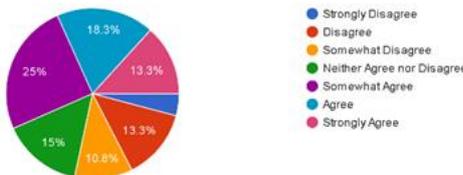
8. When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of
120 responses



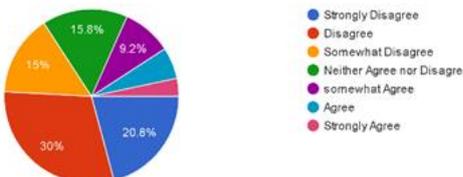
9. I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others
120 responses



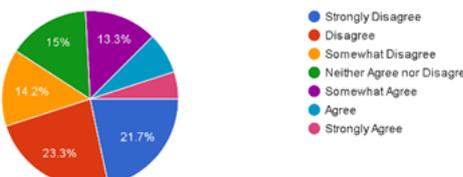
10. I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy
120 responses



11. If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy
120 responses

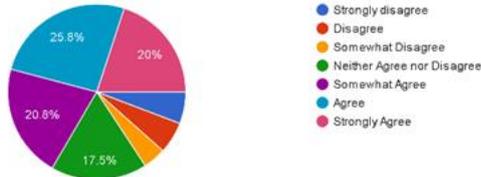


12. I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase
120 responses

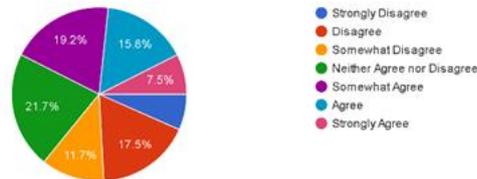


Fashion clothing involvement

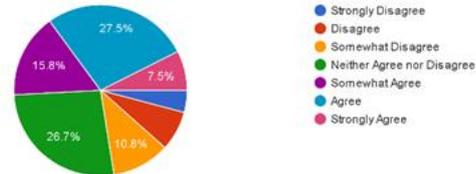
1. Fashion is a significant part of my life
120 responses



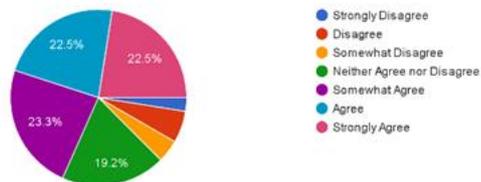
2. I have a very strong commitment to fashion that would be difficult to break
120 responses



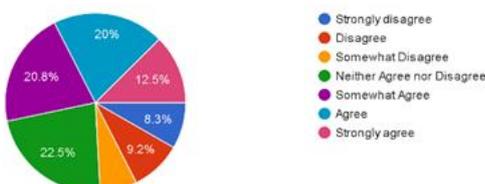
3. For me personally fashion clothing is an important product
120 responses



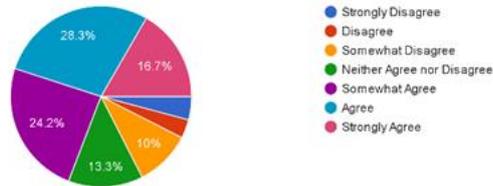
4. Fashion is important to me
120 responses



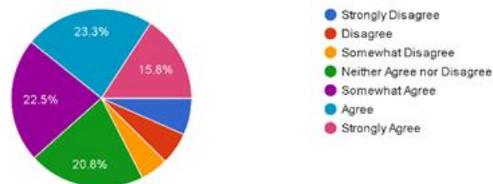
5. I am very involved with Fashion
120 responses



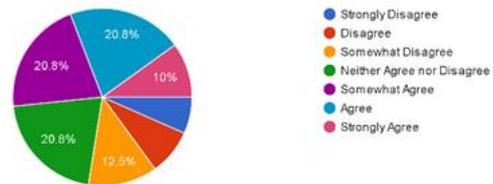
6. I think a lot about my choices when it comes to fashion
120 responses



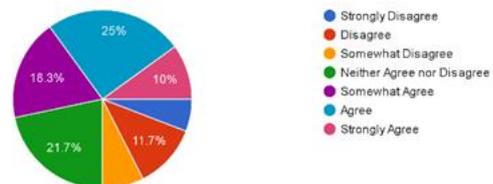
7. Purchase decisions related to fashion are very important to me
120 responses



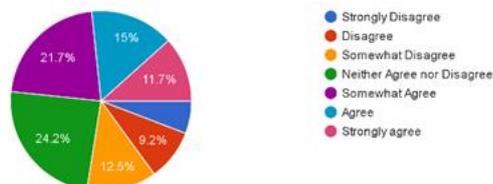
8. I attach great importance to purchasing fashion products
120 responses



9. The purchase of fashion products is important to me
120 responses

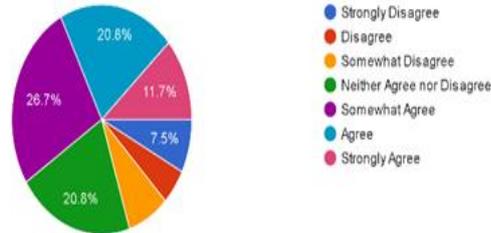


10. Purchasing fashion products is important to me
120 responses



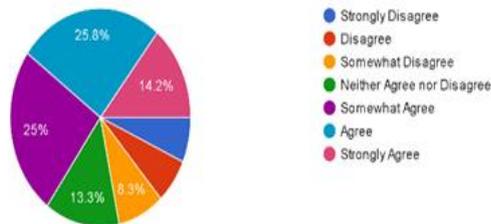
11. The feeling of self-fulfillment I get from wearing fashion products is significant

120 responses



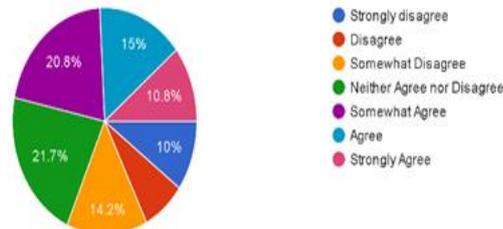
12. I like to think about wearing fashion products

120 responses



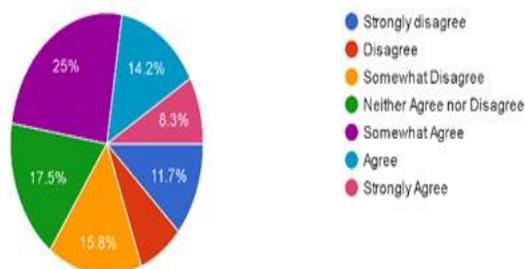
13. Wearing fashionable products is important to me

120 responses

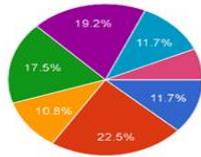


14. Wearing Fashionable products mean a lot to me

120 responses

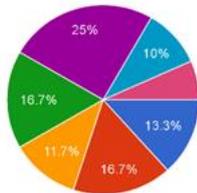


15. I pay a lot of attention to ads for fashion products.
120 responses



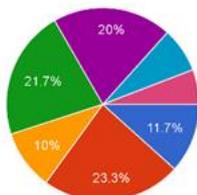
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. Ads about fashion products are relevant to me
120 responses



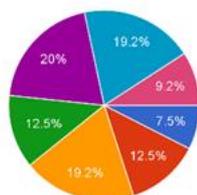
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

17. Ads about fashion products are important to me
120 responses



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. I have a little or no interest in ads for fashion products*
120 responses



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Google form link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd7CgkeGk3kU5gGpX0zvQpYw7sMph_krpQ_VZpWtmGhZcKTyg/viewform?usp=header