

Sustainable Fashion Consumption Among Youth in Springfield

One solution to environmental issues is sustainable shopping - thrift store shopping. According to Green America, approximately 85% of textiles end up in landfills and pollute the planet Earth (Park and Lin, 2020). Unlike fast fashion: there is no new production, no waste, no labor, and no carbon emission when shopping for secondhand clothes. Thus, it can be extremely beneficial if we focus our efforts on reusing and recycling clothing. In addition to its sustainability, repurposing clothing leads to unique and new styles never seen before.

This research examines sustainable fashion consumption behaviors among the youth in Springfield, IL. Purchase intentions and motivations were analyzed that will help thrift store managers understand fashion consumption decisions and behaviors. Thrift stores within the community are easily accessible and are growing in popularity due to fashion trends which motivated me to engage in this research.

This research using survey research measured items related to sustainable fashion consumption that included buying second-hand clothing, donating clothing, repurposing clothing, re-wearing clothing, and frequency of washing clothing. Items used to measure the reasons to buy specifically in thrift stores were also considered. All the items were measured on a Likert scale 1-5 where 1 was least likely and 5 was most likely. An open-ended question as to why youth buy from thrift stores was also included in the survey. The survey was deployed across social media platforms where the audience was mainly composed of teens and young adults. Key demographics like age and gender were also asked in the survey. Descriptive and t-test analyses were run to compare mean responses across females and males.

The results within a group of 55 females and 21 males, with a mean age of 18, suggest that females are more likely to have better sustainable behavior than males specifically in buying

second-hand clothing and donating. Results further suggest that females are more inclined to buy from thrift stores. The results suggest various reasons why females are more inclined to buy from thrift stores which include motivation to stay fashionable, able to mix and match to create new styles etc. The results of this study generalize and support the findings from the extant literature as fashion motivations and using clothing to create unique styles are considered key motivations for young females to buy from thrift stores (Ferraro et al., 2016). Some secondhand pieces can be priced higher due to their age or rarity, but this characteristic can appeal to many modern young buyers.

The results of this study support that thrift shopping is popular among female youth in Springfield. This helps the youth to remain fashionable, create their unique styles, and thus are further able to indulge in sustainable consumption behaviors. Thus, Springfield can have an increased presence of thrift stores and market themselves accordingly. By advertising and promoting thrift store shopping online and on social media, the negative stigma associated with secondhand clothes can be reduced, and in turn, can attract a more variety of consumers to thrift stores and enhance sustainable fashion consumption behaviors. Secondhand retailers can also emphasize fashion in their stores and seek brands to attract consumers, especially youth.

Nishi Korrapati, Grade 12, Springfield High School

Advised by Dr. Shipra Gupta (Associate Professor, Marketing, Dept. of MMO, UIS)

References

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