#thrifted: Values and Ethics of Secondhand Clothing Resellers on Instagram

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Abstract

This research analyzes the ethics, motivations and the relationship between secondhand clothing sellers and consumers on Instagram in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research explores the reasons why this increasingly popular phenomenon is occurring, considering issues such as aesthetics, cost, convenience, and environmental concerns/sustainability. in-person secondhand shopping, or thrifting, has been researched frequently in the past twenty years, but there is a research gap pertaining to online thrifting. Literature pertaining to in-person secondhand shopping yielded cost and aesthetic appreciation as the most frequent and popular determinants for choosing to purchase secondhand goods. This research interrogates common public and popular culture perceptions that the driving reasons for this phenomenon can primarily be attributed to sustainability, as well as the claim that resellers are motivated entirely by profit. To examine the ethics of secondhand clothing resellers, five resellers were interviewed and asked to share a short survey with their followers. The interviews and surveys allowed for a comparison between the resellers' understanding of their followers and their motives versus their followers' answers overall. The survey data expressed that while most respondents believe thrifting's popularity to be attributed to sustainability, the most popular determinants for online thrifting were aesthetic appreciation and convenience. Consumers believe sustainability to be a prominent factor while simultaneously admitting it is not as personally applicable. The resellers interviewed all expressed hedonic and/or beneficent motivation for running their pages. Survey data, and analysis of the resellers' responses indicates that the most common forms of criticism are unsubstantiated.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed,

Celeste Elise Bunten

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1. Introduction

The destigmatization of secondhand clothing was a phenomenon that seemingly occurred overnight. When I was a child, more than half of my wardrobe was secondhand. My mom would purchase bulk lots of clothing in my size on eBay because it was the most cost-effective option for our family. This was not a common practice in the 2000's in Marin County, California, but it persists in the present day. Children's clothing bulk sales, or “lots” are popular on Facebook Marketplace, eBay, and Trade Me. I remember hearing remarks about how “thrifty” and “resourceful” my mom was. Around 2014, consensus and response to secondhand clothing started changing. I was in high school and secondhand clothing was no longer an unfortunate aspect of my identity. Proud of my bargain hunting prowess, whenever I received a compliment on a piece, I would immediately respond with how much it cost me. I was now “good” at thrifting, and other students were asking me to “teach” them how to thrift. It was also around this time that I started purchasing more clothing from fast fashion retailers. It was within my budget and I relished the novelty of having new clothing. Additionally, the turnaround rate between purchase and donation decreased, and the amount of clothing in thrift stores increased. Clothing was no longer about quality or long term enjoyment; it was about quantity.

Thrift shopping has gained immense popularity and evolved from a counterculture practice to a commodified one. In 2009, secondhand clothing from charity shops accounted for a $10 billion dollar industry. In 2019, that number had doubled to $21 billion (thredUP, 2021). According to a GlobalData market sizing and growth estimate, the secondhand clothing market is expected to reach $77B in the next five years (thredUP, 2022). This metamorphosis of thrift shopping from counterculture to mainstream can predominantly be attributed to social media. A plethora of social, economic, and cultural factors contributed to the rise of secondhand clothing

as a trend, but “thrift hauls” on YouTube exponentially spurred the growth of thrifting (Thornton, 2021; Raszka & Borusiak, 2020; Sicurella, 2021; Pavich, 2021). Thrift hauls gained popularity from the early to mid 2010’s. In thrift haul videos, teenagers and young women would showcase garbage bags full of clothes from charity shops that they purchased for mere dollars per piece. A decade ago, thrifting was a preplanned and time consuming endeavor. Thrifting consisted of hours of sifting through racks in hopes of finding a bargain or something unique.

While thrifting was popularized via YouTube, a community centered around the buying and selling of secondhand clothing has since made a name for itself on Instagram. Lee & Weder (2021) identified Instagram as the “primary platform for following fashion conversations on social media”. Thrifting on Instagram is now conducted through “resellers”. Secondhand clothing resellers post curated collections that they have selected from thrift/charity shops or opportunity shops, better known as op shops in Aotearoa New Zealand. Reselling effectively eliminates the time aspect of thrifting. Resellers have faced frequent scrutiny in media and pop culture articles, with many wondering if it is ethical. These articles often describe thrifting’s evolution as “The Gentrification of Thrifting”. Two claims are most frequent in discourse regarding resellers and the ethical ramifications of their practice. One: sustainability led to the rise of thrifting. Two: resellers limit accessibility to affordable clothing for lower socioeconomic groups. This research seeks to determine if these claims are relevant. The roles that sustainability and accessibility play in relation to the ethics of secondhand clothing sales on Instagram are questioned. Five Aotearoa New Zealand based secondhand clothing sellers on Instagram were interviewed, and 198 of their followers were surveyed. Interviews were qualitative in nature, with the intention of determining what motivates resellers, what they find rewarding, and their conceptions around online thrifting. The survey intended to determine what specifically

motivates consumers to thrift online rather than in-person. The terms “secondhand” and “thrifted/thrifting” will be used interchangeably throughout this research.

1.1 Research Perspective

This research will focus on praxis rather than theory. Action is fundamental to creating a system of ethical consumption. We don’t have time for perfection; we need to act. Research on sustainability must not “sit on a shelf collecting dust” (Fletcher & Tham, 2019).There is a disconnect between theory and praxis in sustainability. Sustainability is often taught through a theoretical and economic lens, rather than one that encompasses advocacy and action. Karmasin and Voci (2021) analyzed 1068 university programs from 28 European countries and found that only 14% integrated some form of sustainability into their curriculum. Even then, it was frequently taught as a marketing buzzword, or an “abstract guiding principle that is not translated into action”.

Additionally, this research will employ a feminist perspective and framework adapted from feminist archaeology. The researcher and all of the resellers interviewed are women. All but four of the survey respondents identified as women. Furthermore, women are more likely to purchase secondhand clothing for themselves as well as for family members (Raszka & Borusiak, 2020; Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Weiss et al., 2014). 80% of textile workers are women (International Labour Organization, 2019). A majority of textile workers are impoverished and exploited; often facing unsafe working conditions. In 1911, 146 workers perished in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. In 2013, 1,134 workers perished when the Rana Plaza garment building collapsed. Both tragedies attracted widespread media attention and public outcry, but little has changed in the century between them. As for consumers, there are decades of research

suggesting women are victims to the cyclical whims of the fashion industry. Both men and women have historically been active participants in the fashion industry, but men are exempt from the perception of victimhood (Entwistle, 2015). In terms of production and consumption, fashion has a feminine connotation. Knowingly or not, everyone participates in fashion consumption. Stereotypically, women are vigilant observers of trends within the fashion industry, and men are reluctant participants. Each garment and outfit, regardless of the wearer's gender, is a decision; unconscious or conscious. Participation in a microtrend is a conscious continuation of fast fashion. Wearing the same pair of blue jeans out of disinterest and reluctance to buy a new pair is also a decision. However, fashion criticism falls entirely to women, as is the case with clothing resellers. These factors demonstrate the need for feminist research pertaining to sustainable and ethical fashion.

A practice based research methodology that encourages emotion over profit is exemplified in feminist archaeology. Feminist archaeology aims to eschew the idea of the objective researcher and apply an intersectional subjective approach which eliminates gender biases and allows a more realistic view of the people they are researching to take form (Wylie, 1992). A majority of contemporary anthropologists believe research should take place "with" a group of people, as opposed to the antiquated concept that research should be "on" a group of people. The work of archaeologist Janet Spector, specifically her 1993 book "What This Awl Means", can be used as a roadmap. "What This Awl Means" fulfills a traditional approach to archaeological artifact analysis, but goes into further depth by hypothesizing the cultural and emotional significance the awl would have had to the woman who owned it. It was an everyday item, but it meant something to her. Imposing a sentimental view of the awl decreases the disconnect between historical subjects and research. Readers can envision artifacts through the

lens of the people who used them in addition to their economic value. Like feminist archaeologists, a subjective view would best be applied in the construction of ethical fashion consumption. As it will be a global process, there is no way to remain fully objective. Everyone wears clothing, one way or another. We are all in this together.

Kannengießer (2021) noted the dearth of literature pertaining to how sustainable media is perceived and the effects it has on its consumers generally, socially, and economically. While sustainable media covers new and emerging phenomena, it seldom covers the effects it has on viewers and readers. This research gap has been observed in secondhand clothing research. Most of the research on secondhand clothing consumption does not account for online secondhand clothing sales. We have research on online retail and secondhand clothing from charity shops, but there is little research conducted on consumer determinants to purchase secondhand clothing online. This research intends to help fill that gap by providing a foundational analysis of resellers and their consumers.

2. Literature Review

Thirty scholarly, peer-reviewed articles and thirteen mainstream media & pop culture were reviewed. These articles focused on secondhand goods and clothing, ethical consumption, and social media. Research into vintage fashion was excluded from the literature review as it is considered to be more socially acceptable than traditional thrifting and does not face the same criticism (Cervellon et al., 2012; Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015; Sihvonen & Turunen, 2016). First, relevant concepts from scholarly peer-reviewed journals will be analyzed to give context and background to the research. Then, media & pop culture articles will be analyzed as this is where public criticism of thrifting occurs most frequently. The juxtaposition of academic research and media articles provided a foundation to examine whether common conceptions and criticisms pertaining to resellers were substantiated by the existing literature.

Based on the assumption that thrift shopping was popularized as a result of "thrift hauls" in the 2010's, a majority of the literature analyzed was published in 2010 or later. There are a few outliers from the 2000's which will be used to establish an understanding of secondhand consumption before it was trendy and destigmatized. Research into consumption of secondhand goods in the 1990's and 2000's built the groundwork for research into secondhand clothing to be conducted. Thrifting is currently observed as a trend online, however, there is a lack of academic research on fashion promotion (Davis, 2013), online consumption of secondhand clothing (Park & Lin, 2018), and secondhand clothing on curated Instagram thrift pages (Lee & Weder, 2021). While previous research has noted this gap, it has not been adequately filled. As there is a lack of research pertaining to online thrifting, the majority of literature analyzed pertains to in-person thrifting. Relevant themes and determinants from research on in-person thrifting will be used as a foundation and subsequently applied to online thrifting. A comparative analysis between

literature on in-person thrifting and the findings from both the interviews and surveys will help shape and develop substantial research on online thrifting.

The literature review will start with a brief overview of thrifting and the stigma associated with it. Then, the role of social media as well as the primary, and secondary determinants identified in the literature will be analyzed. Next, the significance of overconsumption, throwaway culture, promotional culture, minimalism, and maximalism will be covered. Finally, these aforementioned sections will be utilized in an analysis of media and pop culture articles covering "The Gentrification of Thrifting".

2.1 Origins & Stigma of Thrifting

Thrift shopping transitioned from counterculture to mainstream at an unprecedented rate. It was once highly stigmatized and viewed as unclean or contaminated. This association of secondhand clothing being "dirty" is due in part to antisemitism and xenophobia. During the start of the twentieth century in the United States, many pawnshops were Jewish owned and operated. Secondhand clothes were often purchased by immigrants who wanted to assimilate into American society but could not afford American clothing at a retail value (Le Zotte, 2013). Thus came the association that it was inappropriate, and even detrimental for middle class persons to purchase secondhand clothing. The consensus was that secondhand clothing should only be purchased and worn by those who did not have any other option. The stigma around secondhand clothing being unclean still remains to this day. A cross cultural study from Xu et al. (2014) found that 62% of American students indicated that they were comfortable shopping at thrift stores, compared to 16% of Chinese students. The Chinese students were much more concerned with "germ contamination, items being worn by others and possible negative impact on public

image" than their American counterparts. Interestingly, these findings transferred to hand-me-downs from friends and family as well. The study also found that the Chinese students indicated they 'would rather own fewer clothing items than own second-hand clothing items' Xu et al. (2014). Similarly, Yan et al. (2015) found a correlation between perception of contamination and purchase intention. In a study of American college students, 65% of respondents shopped at a secondhand clothing store in the past year. The remaining 35% of respondents perceived secondhand clothing to be contaminated and chose not to purchase secondhand clothing. In Irbid, Jordan, Na'amneh & al Husban (2012) surveyed residents and found that some still considered secondhand clothing, or al-balih, to be dirty or contaminated.

2.2 Social Media and Convenience

Ki & Kim (2019) examined how influencers are established as taste leaders on Instagram. Attractiveness, prestige, and expertise are more likely to establish an influencer as a taste leader, and followers are more likely to mimic someone they perceive to be a taste leader (Ki & Kim, 2019). Attractiveness refers to whether or not a follower personally finds them attractive. Prestige refers to the seller's style and status. Do they have an enviable sense of fashion? Can they take brandless items that are individually unappealing, and pull them together to create a fashionable outfit? Expertise refers to the seller's knowledge of the brands and materials of the clothing they're selling. The more expertise they demonstrate, the less likely consumers are to question their style or pricing. The most inconvenient aspect of thrift shopping is time; not everyone has the time to sift through clothes and hope they find something in their style or size. Thrifted clothing, especially in an online capacity, is about curation of clothing and aesthetics. Instagram sellers streamline the thrift ritual by appealing to a specific audience. The nucleus of

today's consumer culture is convenience. The more convenient an item is, the more likely consumers are to purchase it (Brown & McEnally, 2015). Instagram sellers craft an aesthetic that their followers can identify with and rely on. There are pages for babies, toddlers, children, and adults. Most pages sell sizes 6-12, but there are pages that specialize in plus-size clothing. Sellers behave similarly to social media influencers. Some sellers model the clothes themselves, while others opt to show the garment on a hanger.

The commodification of secondhand clothing has created a subjective norm. The more common sustainable clothing practices are, the more likely consumers are to engage with them. (Park & Lin, 2018). While it is often argued that sellers are hindering accessibility to secondhand clothing, the opposite is more likely to be true. Consumers who ordinarily would not go into a thrift shop due to social stigma or concerns around cleanliness likely would purchase from a seller online because they have a sense of familiarity due to the parasocial relationship occurring (Jin et al., 2021). Familiarity makes the stigma of secondhand clothing being unclean dissipate (Le Zotte, 2013). Hand me downs, especially from friends or family, are less stigmatized than purchasing thrifted clothing (Xu et al., 2014). The rising popularity of secondhand clothing consumption is due in part to social media commodifying and subsequently destigmatizing it.

2.3 Primary Determinants: Cost and Aesthetic Appreciation

The primary determinants that influence consumers to shop secondhand identified in the literature are cost (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Franklin, 2011; Park & Lin, 2018; Raszka & Borusiak, 2020), and aesthetic appreciation (Ferraro et al., 2016; Franklin, 2011; Guiot & Roux, 2010; Herjanto et al., 2016; Lee & Weder, 2021; Na'amneh & al Husban, 2012; Yan et al. 2015). When consumerism grew at the start of the twentieth century, charity shops allowed the lower

classes to indulge their “buy, buy buy” desires where they were previously out of budget (Le Zotte, 2013; Bardhi & Arnould, 2005). The cost-effective nature of secondhand clothing is what attracted consumers to it. A family can be clothed for a fraction of the retail price. Cost has acted as the sole driving force and remains a primary determinant in the present day. Williams & Paddock (2003) posited that secondhand goods were purchased out of necessity or leisure. Respondents who purchased secondhand goods out of necessity expressed that they would purchase retail goods if they could afford to. Bardhi & Arnould (2005) surveyed thrift shoppers in the United States and found that they used bargain hunting to “realize consumer fantasies”. Respondents referred to items found in thrift stores that they could not afford at retail cost as “treasures, “gems”, and “jewels”. In the secondhand community, an item’s authenticity is a matter of debate. Finding a genuine piece is cause for celebration. This is not unlike the secondhand luxury community, where consumers identified “sustainable choice, pre-loved treasure, risk investment, unique find and real deal” as determinants for purchasing luxury items online (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). This expresses the second hand luxury consumers' environmental awareness, attachment to their finds/treasure, the risk they run of an item being fake, the one-of-a-kind aesthetic of the items, and the bargain hunting component of the item. A treasure is something that meets all of the consumers criteria; an occurrence that is rare. Even though luxury items are more expensive, consumers are still heavily motivated by cost because secondhand luxury items cost significantly less.

Secondhand clothing is inexpensive in comparison to retail. Gen Z is most likely to purchase secondhand clothing, and to sell it online (thredUP, 2022). While Gen Z is more aware of ethical clothing, they are less likely to purchase ethical products because they are out of their price range. Price and quantity/bargain are main determinants for younger generations of fashion

consumers according to research from Park & Lin (2018). Thrifting allows younger consumers to purchase clothes that align with both their budget and their values. It is a way to maximize fiscal potential and extend one's budget. A study from Raszka & Borusiak (2020) asked respondents in Poland what the last secondhand item they purchased secondhand, and why they chose to purchase that item secondhand rather than retail. Each respondent expressed cost, or "economic motivation" as part of their reasoning. Yan et al. (2015) found that shoppers who frequent secondhand stores have higher "price sensitivity", meaning lower price point attracts them. In terms of online thrifting, Sihvonen & Turunen (2016) found that when secondhand fashion is sold online, part of the item's ascribed value is tied to how well the seller describes it. The more transparent and descriptive the seller is, the more value is added to the item. Brand, quality, and condition are huge contributors to perceived value as well.

Cost and aesthetics are cited as determinants by Na'amneh & al Husban (2012). They examined consumption of imported Western secondhand clothing in Irbid, Jordan and found that it "blurred conventional distinctions such as rural-urban, rich-poor, and us-them". For some, wearing genuine, quality Western clothing was a symbol of wealth and status. For others, the view that secondhand clothing was unclean prevented them from purchasing secondhand clothing unless absolutely necessary. The commodification of American clothing is seen outside of the continental U.S. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand; fast fashion titan Glassons (2022) has started selling Vintage clothing described as "hand-picked" from Los Angeles.

Aesthetic appreciation, the other primary determinant identified, refers to the consumer's desire to express oneself and feel unique. The typical perception of thrifted style is that it is a hodgepodge of whatever is available in the consumer's general size, but it is more accurate to say that thrifted style is one that cannot be easily replicated. Ferraro et al. (2016) surveyed Australian

secondhand shoppers to examine the influence that "fashionability" has over them. They segmented 39% of respondents as "Fashionable Hedonists", and 38% of respondents as "Infrequent Fashionistas". Infrequent Fashionistas are motivated entirely by fashion, and Fashionable Hedonists are motivated by fashion, hedonism, and an affinity for the "surprising stock" seen at thrift stores. Both groups are driven by fashionability, with Fashionable Hedonists also enjoying the concept of having unique clothing. Research from Guiot & Roux (2010) surveyed French thrift shoppers and found a positive correlation between frugality, desire to be perceived as unique, and nostalgia in over half of secondhand consumers. Secondhand clothing, ironically, cultivates a sense of individuality for the wearer.

Desire to be unique is a driving factor for thrift shoppers. Whether it's on a smartphone or in a thrift shop, consumers like that their clothes are one-of-a-kind. For many, the supposed underground nature of thrifting was appealing. In the early 2010's, thrifting was a common practice and aesthetic on microblogging platform Tumblr (Back to Zero & Earth & Me, 2021). Tumblr was the heart of teenage internet culture in its heyday; best described by *The New Yorker* as a "petri dish of Internet quirkiness" (Chayka, 2022). Tumblr's current user traffic is similar to a bar at last call, but in 2014 the platform had surpassed Instagram in growth and popularity (Lunden 2014). Birthed from the restraints of Wordpress, Tumblr served to add more media to blogging than traditional blogging and/or social media platforms. This allowed users more individuality than Instagram or Facebook. Tumblr culture favored aesthetics: grunge, indie, boho, prep. Pages were devoted entirely to curating images that were a part of an aesthetic. Although this occurred less than a decade ago, it has already become a trend on TikTok to dress in outfits from the "Tumblr Aesthetic", a nostalgic amalgamation of the most popular Tumblr aesthetics (Navlakha, 2021). Tumblr was a conduit for Gen Z and Millennial misfits to

participate in a collective rejection of the norm. This encompassed thrifting. Thrifting was in no way as heavily commodified as it is now, but it was still much more socially acceptable in the Tumblr era than it would have been in the early 2000's. Tumblr thrfting was perceived as underground and alternative, but this is negated by the fact that it was a trend created and nurtured by the most popular app for teenagers of its era. The described Tumblr thrift aesthetic was a mainstream sheep in a counterculture wolf's clothing. It was not underground; it was just hashtagged that way.

The aesthetic appeal of secondhand fashion can be seen as an expression of morals, i.e., "wearing your values" (Lee & Weder, 2021). It can also be interpreted as a rejection of fast fashion and a desire for ethical, "slow" consumption (Clark, 2008; Lee & Weder, 2021; Orminski et al., 2020). Where once "thrifted" was whispered, it is now a shout of pride. Research from Guiot and Roux (2010) found that the bargain hunting economic aspect to thrifting was not *as* relevant as it once had been and secondhand shopping was now more a rejection of materialism. However, a rejection of the norm can become a trend in and of itself, as is the case with thrifting. Choice of fashion allows a sense of self expression as well as a sense of community (Clark, 2008; Guiot & Roux, 2010; Orminski et al., 2020; Park & Lin, 2018; Raszka & Borusiak, 2020). One example is punk fashion, which signifies both self expression and alignment with the punk movement. Punk fashion is deliberately unkempt, ragged, and torn. It is not meant to keep up with trends, but more of a signifier of utilitary rejection of fashion and consumerism.

2.4 Secondary Determinants: Leisure and Sustainability

Elements of leisure and hedonism were also noted in the literature (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Herjanto et al., 2016; Guiot & Roux, 2010). When secondhand shopping is conducted as a

leisurely form of entertainment, this typically occurs at garage sales, rummage sales, or charity shops and was seen as a form of "treasure hunting". Williams & Paddock (2003) found that respondents who purchased secondhand goods due to leisure & hedonism had the financial means to purchase retail goods, but enjoyed the experience of secondhand shopping more. Treasure hunting refers to the idea that shoppers might find something unique or of high quality for a lower cost in comparison to retail. In a survey by Bardhi & Arnould (2005), respondents identified "fun" and "thriftiness" as determinants for choosing to shop secondhand. They also noted occasions where they had purchased items just because they were cheap, only to realize they did not need or want them once they brought them home. Online clothing shopping is often an activity conducted out of boredom (Koch et al., 2020). Additionally, Gen Z is more likely to purchase clothing online from a smartphone than a computer (Eriksson et al., 2017). Scrolling through Instagram is often its own form of entertainment, but consumers do not always open Instagram with the intention to purchase clothing. Posts from thrift pages will show up on the consumer's feed, similarly to an advertisement or promotional email for a retail clothing company. Sellers acting as influencers and the convenience & specificity of thrift pages have helped shape thrift into the massive trend that it is now.

Given the rise in awareness surrounding sustainability, it's natural to assume that the popularity of thrift can be attributed to consumers having a heightened sense of environmental responsibility. While consumer awareness of sustainability and thrift became popularized at the same time, neither one influences the other. They are parallel lines that do not intersect when we look at the axis of ethical consumption. Consumers who shop secondhand care about the environment, but that's not why they choose to shop secondhand (Raszka & Borusiak, 2020; Weiss et al., 2014; Park & Lin, 2018; Yan et al., 2015). A study from Yan et al. (2015) found that

secondhand clothing consumers “tend to be more environmentally conscious” but “did not seem to shop at second-hand stores out of concerns for the environment”. Raszka & Borusiak (2020) also found that environmental concerns were more of a supplementary factor rather than a direct motivation to purchase secondhand goods.

2.5 Significance of Overconsumption and Origins of Throwaway Culture

Thrifting’s recent popularization is conventionally attributed to sustainability and a perceived rejection of consumer culture and consumption behavior. Research has suggested that these are secondary factors and do not hold the most influence overall (Raszka & Borusiak, 2020; Ferraro et al., 2016). The ongoing popularity of thrift hauls suggests that overconsumption rather than sustainability, contributed greatly to the popularity of thrifting. Participants of thrift hauls would gawk in disbelief at the amount of clothing they got for such a low price.

Overconsumption of secondhand clothing is influenced by cost, aesthetics, and feelings of beneficence. Consumers could express individuality and feel unique for a much lower cost. Purchasing secondhand clothing from a charity creates a “feel good” response for consumers (Weiss et al., 2014). However, secondhand stores are not always the pinnacle of morality. Secondhand shops have historically had a low-income consumer base out of necessity as they were the only demographic they could appeal to. All secondhand shops are not created equal, and do not have entirely philanthropic origins. Shops such as Goodwill and the Salvation Army were selective about what people were “worthy” of their services and “encouraged the belief that poverty could not be cured” (Le Zotte, 2013). Goodwill makes it a part of their image that they employ people with disabilities, yet a quarter of them are paid less than minimum wage (Cardoni, 2013). In 1986, The Salvation Army of New Zealand opposed the legalization of

homosexual intercourse and advocated for it to be criminalized again (Jones, 2013). The Salvation Army continued to be openly homophobic until 2013. The guise of sustainable and/or ethical consumption is a pleasant side effect of secondhand fashion that allows the consumer to pat themselves on the back for doing their part . While consumers like to conceptualize thrifted clothing as ethically infallible, Nguyen (2013) wrote that thrifting "exists in the same messy reality as everything else"

Throwaway culture bred overconsumption, overconsumption bred fast fashion, and fast fashion bred the thrift boom. Throwaway culture stems from a murky period of marketing in postwar America. Often in discourse pertaining to ethics and sustainability, the onus is put on the actions of the consumer, rather than the companies they purchase from. A quintessential case study is the origin of anti-littering campaigns. In the early 20th century, most beverage containers operated on a deposit and return system in the United States (Jørgensen 2013, Arablouei & Abdelfatah, 2019). The concept of throwing them away after one use was considered wasteful and counterintuitive, but this changed in the postwar era. With an excess of aluminum leftover from the war and the means to manufacture it quickly, it was decided that disposable aluminum cans were a more profitable packaging medium (Andersen, 2013). Here we can see the origins of throwaway and convenience culture simultaneously (Arablouei & Abdelfatah, 2019; Folk, 2020). Beverage containers were only the beginning. Microwave dinners, paper plates, and plastic cutlery were on the rise, too. The shift from refilling and reusing was neither subtle nor slow. According to Andersen, (2013), "In the early 1950s, refillable containers accounted for 95 percent of all beverage containers, but by the end of the decade half of all beer, the first beverage industry to take advantage of aluminum, would be supplied in throwaway containers". Although

a plethora of environmental harms around throwaway culture came to light later, the first observed consequence was litter.

In 1953, Vermont passed a law banning disposable bottles. This was the first law passed in an attempt to combat waste from single use packaging. The packaging industry was not pleased. Enter Keep America Beautiful: lovechild of packaging lobbyists and an organization responsible for some of the United States' most influential anti-litter campaigns. Coca-Cola was one of many founding companies behind Keep America Beautiful. Coca-Cola remains one of their top donors at present, along with McDonalds, PepsiCo, and Nestle (Greenpeace, 2021). Keep America Beautiful's focal point was that it is the American citizen's patriotic duty to protect natural landscapes, and keep litter where it belongs: in a landfill. Proxemics play a significant role in Keep America Beautiful's rhetoric. Trash exists on a roadside as much as it would exist in a landfill, but a landfill is out of sight and out of mind. It gives the consumer distance between their consumption habits and the waste they accumulate. Visible litter was positioned as a byproduct of irresponsible consumers rather than a consequence from the greed of packaging companies.

Their campaigns were wildly successful; simultaneously stimulating consumer awareness and responsibility. As Plumer (2006) says, "KAB's campaign worked—by the late 1950s, anti-litter ordinances were being passed in statehouses across the country, while not a single restriction on packaging could be found anywhere. Even today, thanks to heavy lobbying by the packaging industry, only twelve states have deposit laws, despite the fact that the laws demonstrably save energy and reduce consumption by promoting reuse and recycling…But hey, at least we're not littering." This is not to say that litter, an unfortunate side effect of throwaway culture, should not be addressed by environmentalism. On the contrary, transparency around its

origins will lift the veil and allow further discourse around corporate responsibility to create sustainable business patterns.

2.6 Overconsumption and Promotional Culture

Overconsumption and the growing significance of aesthetics exemplifies promotional culture. Davis (2013), posits that we are all promotional subjects to a certain degree. Promotional culture is less about the creation of new products and more about the meaning that can be attached to existing commodities via social capital and hegemony. Politics, social media, news, television and clothing all serve more of a promotional rather than functional or creative purpose. Politicians serve to promote the idea of themselves as leaders and personalities rather than their specific policies. Social media has become a stage for the average joe to chase their moment in the spotlight. News stories or social issues that are more nuanced are less likely to be covered. TV shows and movies rely on tried and true tropes for success, and most are expected to be failures. Clothing is no longer utilitarian, but purely aesthetic: "promotion has transformed clothing into 'fashion'" (Davis, 2013, page 83). Promotional culture has consolidated individual expression into distinct forms and limited the capacity for creativity and self-expression. The quickening pace of fast fashion production and deteriorating length of time that a piece of clothing is owned signifies a revolving door of self-expression.

That revolving door of self-expression has had detrimental environmental effects. According to research from Mckinsey Sustainability, consumers purchased 60% more clothing in 2014 than they did in 2000 and kept clothing half as long (Remy et al., 2020). This is indicative of a constant need to stand out and reinvent one's aesthetic. Clothing is a conduit (especially in regards to social media) that is used to project an image or aesthetic. Clothing always signified a

temporary form of self-expression; a garment can only last so many years. Years have now turned to days. We are buying twice as much and keeping it half as long. We have stopped mending clothing (Clark, 2008). Why pay as much as a garment is worth to have it repaired? The decline of quality ensures that customers will simultaneously need to purchase clothing more frequently, and see less of a desire to repair what they already own. According to Denisova (2021), "Three-fifths of all garments end up in landfill within a year of being produced". Clothing is now viewed entirely from a cost-aesthetic spectrum and the value of utility has declined. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (2021) estimates that in 2018 only 13% of clothing and footwear was recycled or donated to secondhand shops. This has stayed consistent for close to a decade. The reported rate of clothing and footwear recycled or donated in 2010 was 13.7%. The percentage of clothing donated decreased marginally, but the quantity of clothing recycled increased by 400 tons from 2010 to 2018. Consumers were not more likely to donate their clothing, but they purchased more overall.

2.7 Minimalism & Maximalism

Personal wardrobes are often encumbered with more clothing than can reasonably be worn regularly by one person. Minimalism and maximalism are frequently referenced as sustainable techniques to combat overconsumption of both retail and secondhand clothing. Some consumers adopt a minimalist approach for their own peace of mind, or for sustainability's sake. When minimalism is embraced for sustainability's sake, it is done as a rejection of consumerism. The minimalist wardrobe policy of "one in, one out" means that if a piece of clothing is purchased, be it retail or secondhand, another piece of clothing must be thrown out or donated in its place. The rationale being that having to rid themselves of another item will give consumers

pause, which will allow them to reconsider their consumption habits and rewire themselves away from overconsumption. This practice has been successful amongst dedicated sustainability advocates, but has contributed to the perception of clothing as ephemeral for others. Franklin (2011) states, “While buying new from appropriate sources was perceived as one option, and buying secondhand was another, much secondhand clothing on sales is as ethically tainted as when it was new, and given that many young women sell clothes in order to restock their own wardrobes, its resale would solve nothing”. Other minimalists follow a capsule approach to their wardrobes. A capsule wardrobe consists of a limited number of clothing per season, often between 20 and 30. The objective of the capsule wardrobe is to emphasize apparel that is the most useful and interchangeable. Ideally, this will reduce time spent choosing outfits as well as unnecessary clothing spending. Both of these practices highlight the use-value of clothing and allow consumers to appreciate the longevity of their clothes.

Organizing guru Marie Kondo contributed greatly to the popularity of minimalism. Kondo’s “KonMari” method suggests throwing away or donating anything that does not “spark joy”. Items are discarded with the knowledge that if they are needed in the future, they can go and buy another. Netflix series *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* saw exponential success at the start of the pandemic. Many thrift stores experienced a surge of donations and had to cut off donations during the pandemic decluttering mania (Koncius, 2020). Kondo serves as a lifestyle coach as well as personal organizer because the KonMari method serves to free up mental energy through the relinquishing of unjoyful items - clutter (Sandlin & Wallin, 2021). The view that possessions should spark joy implies that clutter is the absence of joy. In the uncharted waters of the pandemic, Kondo was a buoy. Kondo demonstrates that we should have an attachment to our possessions. Our possessions should serve a utilitarian and sentimental purpose when possible.

When applied to exceptionally individualistic and consumerist cultures such as the United States, these ideals are easily bastardized. Where once abundance implied wealth, the absence of possessions does (Sandlin & Wallin, 2021). Minimalism is an aesthetic choice as well as a show of status and self-control. It can express a desire to reuse and expand the lifespan of existing possessions. However, if status is a determinant, then it can express a flippant and transitory view of possessions and their purpose.

Minimalism is frequently hailed as sustainable, but an argument can also be made for maximalism as a sustainable interior design choice and style. While clutter is antagonistic to minimalism, maximalism embraces excess. Where there is the potential within minimalism to discard what is not currently en vogue, maximalism encompasses a more timeless and personal aesthetic. Hallmarks of maximalism include an abundance of color, patterns, and decor such as wall art and tchotchkes. Maximalism does not necessitate overconsumption just as minimalism does not necessitate sustainability. In an article for *The Guardian*, Bravo (2020) rejects the "one in, one out" wardrobe policy and suggests that articles of clothing do not need to be worn frequently to be appreciated. Bravo advises, "Ignore anyone who tells you to get rid of everything you haven't worn in a year. Fashion is cyclical – come on, we know this – and no sooner have you sent a tired old trend off to the charity shop than Vogue will suddenly declare it hot again". This is not to advocate hoarding more clothes or household items than one has space for. Sustainable maximalism entails using what you have and accepting that your possessions are not always going to be trendy or new. Joy is a variable indicator as our possessions are an extension of our values, sense of self, and aesthetic. This is in a similar vein to Baxter and Montgomery's (1988) theory of relational dialectics, which suggests that interpersonal relationships are always in a state of flux. Conflict is likely to arise more frequently the longer

the relationship continues. A temporary sense of discontent does not necessitate the entire relationship being discarded. This way of thinking can be applied to maximalism and minimalism. If adopted in the name of sustainability, both minimalism and maximalism must emphasize the utility value of one's belongings to best avoid waste.

2.8 The Gentrification of Thrifting

Mainstream media and pop culture articles that are critical of thrift are common, but articles from university student newspapers were found to be the most critical. The most abundant critique is that thrift stores have been "gentrified". This specific criticism will be discussed at length. The concept of the gentrification of thrift is often seen in university student newspapers. Gentrification in this context encompasses feelings of a loss of identity, as well as matters pertaining to accessibility such as scarcity, increased price. The argument posited is that it is unethical for resellers to go into a charity shop or secondhand clothing store, purchase bags of clothing, and sell them online for a profit. In doing so, they are making affordable clothing inaccessible to lower socioeconomic groups. Secondhand clothes have an intangible association with charity, and selling secondhand clothing as a side hustle is framed as a moral failing. The reality is much more nuanced.

Tariq (2021) states that while many believe reselling to be environmentally friendly and ethical, but resellers are just "financially-able people working the system to make themselves profits and taking clothes from people who actually need to thrift for their clothes, not just as a hobby or for quick cash." The issue of accessibility is recurrent. Hooper (2020) states that lower socioeconomic groups have relied on thrift shops for years, but they now have far fewer options to choose from. Hooper also attributes thrifting's rise in popularity to sustainability. In contrast to

Tariq and Hooper, currently it is common for charity shops to turn away donations because they simply do not have the capacity. A Radio New Zealand (2019) interview with various charity shop managers revealed there was no dearth of goods, but the logistics of sorting through low quality items was the biggest impediment. Red Cross shops even implemented "free" bins for the excess clothing they could not sell. One such manager commented, "If you can get a new shirt for $5 or $6, who is going to buy a second hand one for $2 or $3…". Hooper later cites that a secondhand shirt increasing from $3 to $7 doesn't seem drastic, but will disproportionately affect low income families buying in bulk and therefore having a higher cumulative cost. Elpa (2018) posits that consumers choose thrift shops for their "low prices and unique finds" but says this comes at an "ethical cost" given that thrift stores "have been evolving to cater to well-off clientele". However, all of Elpa's respondents expressed that aesthetics are the main reason they thrift. One respondent stated that thrifting had become "just another fad" and claimed it was more difficult to find "genuine pieces from the 90's", which best represent her aesthetic. When this respondent asked thrift store workers if there was any 90's stock, they retorted that "90's aren't in right now". Distress over the alleged gentrification of thrift can most accurately be attributed to feelings of a loss of identity. This criticism is less about accessibility and more so about thrifting becoming a mainstream practice.

Elpa's sole ethical quagmire also pertains to accessibility, specifically the perceived increased cost of secondhand clothing. There is little evidence to suggest that charity shops are raising their prices at a rate that is not in line with adjustment for inflation. Moreover, if prices are increasing, the only vehicle directly responsible for that choice is the company running a secondhand shop. In an article for Ryerson University's student newspaper, Zhu & Josic (2019) interviewed secondhand clothing resellers on Instagram. One interviewee believed that thrift

shops have raised their prices, stating that branded items cost more at secondhand shops, and that the cost had increased dramatically in the past decade. Secondhand shops have traditionally priced brand names higher than generic goods. Research from Sihvonen & Turunen (2016) indicates that the resale value of an item is tangential to its retail value and condition more than anything else.

Many consignment shops specialize in vintage and retro clothing and those shops are more likely to have higher prices. As mentioned previously, vintage and retro clothing have been excluded from this research as they are an inverted version of secondhand clothing. Secondhand clothing is associated with charity and uncleanliness. Vintage clothing is not subject to such negative connotations; it is associated with nostalgia, uniqueness, and status according to research from Cervellon et al. (2012). They suggest that vintage and secondhand are not interchangeable: "vintage pieces might be second-hand and second-hand pieces might be vintage, but not all vintage pieces are used and not all second-hand pieces are old" (Cervellon et al., 2012). The key element noted is status. Secondhand clothing has become an expression of identity and values for some, but it will never suggest elevated social status in the same capacity as vintage and/or retro clothing.

Cills (2021) posits in an article for *Jezebel* that secondhand clothing started getting destigmatized in the 1990's after riot grrrl movements started wearing secondhand clothing as an "ironic, anti-consumerist statement". Cills documents how the fashion industry picked up upon this and started producing pseudo-ratty clothing, noting how Courtney Love once proudly stated she was sent items from Marc Jacobs' grunge collection and promptly burned them.

Love's statement reflects the secondhand consumer's consensus that what they are doing is outside the sphere of consumption (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Thrifting, especially for clothing,

was stigmatized much more in the 1990's than at present. Marc Jacobs grunge collection served to bastardize everything that grunge is. The irony present is that grunge and riot grrls popularized and subsequently commodified second hand clothing in an attempt to reject consumerism. While burning the samples of Marc Jacobs' samples made a statement, it also expressed the cultural norm of discarding items that are not personally appealing. Whether or not Love approves of the grunge collection: it exists. Burning new, and costly, garments wastes the labor and materials that went into making them. Alternate statements would be to auction the clothing off and donate the proceeds to the impoverished workers who made them, or to donate them to a local charity shop. These would both accomplish Love's goal of a public anti-consumerist statement without wasting items that are already in the stream of consumption. It would not give Marc Jacobs good publicity as intended, and would have attracted attention to what anti-consumerism entails.

Both scholarly journals and pop culture media articles both represent a level of awareness and frustration. While it is assumed that increased awareness surrounding sustainability fuels online secondhand clothing consumption, the desire to maximize cost efficiency and aesthetics are most prevalent in the literature. Consumers and producers both have a stake in the ethical ramifications of secondhand clothing consumption. The exploitation present in fast fashion production has faced a deserved amount of criticism in the past decade. The criticism of secondhand clothing consumers is often allowed a separate discursive space, but both fall under the umbrella of promotional culture. Maximalism, minimalism, anti-consumerism and the rejection of the trend cycle have been observed as practices commonly used to combat overconsumption and unethical clothing consumption.

3. Methodology

This research utilized both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Methods of data collection include interviews and surveys. The interviews examined resellers of secondhand clothing on Instagram that were based in Aotearoa New Zealand. The interviews were predominantly qualitative in nature with the intention to individualize sellers. Resellers are often referred to as a collective cohort, if at all (Herjanto et al., 2016). Interviewing individual resellers puts a name to the face; it is often easy to forget there is a person behind a username. After the interview, resellers were asked to share a link to an anonymous survey with their followers via the story function on Instagram. Moreover, the surveys examined consumers of secondhand clothing on Instagram in Aotearoa New Zealand. The surveys were predominantly quantitative, but featured comment boxes on several questions for respondents to add additional feedback. Focusing on polls for most of the survey questions kept the survey brief, and allowed the resulting data to be easily interpreted. The dearth of academic research on online secondhand clothing has been noted. The limited research that exists examines resellers or secondhand clothing consumers separately, but rarely simultaneously. Interviewing sellers and surveying their customers within one piece of research allowed for a more comprehensive analysis.

Given the researcher's knowledge of thrift culture in both the United States and Aotearoa New Zealand, a cross-cultural analysis of sellers in both countries was considered. This was abandoned in the preliminary stages of the research. This could have produced data on secondhand clothing sales in both countries, but it would have been halved. The need for analysis of cultural differences posed a significant time constraint. Focusing on the secondhand clothing culture in Aotearoa New Zealand alone made for an uncondensed representation. While the research gap pertaining to online secondhand clothing is still prevalent, comparatively there

is a larger body of work around traditional secondhand clothing consumption originating from the United States. Providing a thorough analysis of the Aotearoa New Zealand Instagram thrift community will lay the foundation for cross cultural analysis to be conducted in the future.

Resellers were identified based on the researcher's familiarity with popular Aotearoa New Zealand thrift pages as well as algorithmic recommendations from Instagram. The tags for '#slowfashion', '#thrifted', '#preloved', and '#thriftnz' were searched weekly from June to July 2021. Afterward, the algorithm recommended pages relevant to those searches. The more accounts that were examined and subsequently followed, the more that were recommended. It was at this stage that pages that paid to promote their content started showing up regularly. This approach emulated what the experience of online thrifting would be like for most consumers. After months of searching these tags, many of the most popular and/or relevant pages had been identified. Exclusion criteria included sellers outside of Aotearoa New Zealand as well as resellers that had 'vintage' in their bio or username. Vintage clothing is a subset of secondhand clothing that does not face the same critiques or appeal to the same demographic. If a majority of their content is related to vintage clothing, they exist in a separate sphere of discussion. Many of the prominent factors identified in this research do not resonate or are not as applicable to a vintage resellers and consumer demographic. At the time sellers were chosen to be interviewed, they did not have vintage on their page. Some have since started to sell vintage, but it is not the primary focus of their page.

Interviews were conducted from April to June 2022. Thirty three sellers were contacted via direct message on Instagram or email. Email was the primary mode of communication. If an email address was listed on the seller's page, it was used in lieu of direct message. Direct message was only utilized for initial contact and all further correspondence was conducted via

email. Eleven resellers were contacted in April, and twenty-two were contacted in May. Sixteen resellers total responded to indicate that they were interested in participation and were subsequently emailed an information sheet. Those contacted were given two weeks to respond to the first email and arrange a suitable time for an interview. If they had not responded to the first email after a week, a follow up was sent. Of these sixteen resellers that expressed interest when initially contacted, interviews were able to be arranged with five. A higher quantity of interviews was intended, but the interviews conducted exceeded expectations in terms of insight.

Four of the sellers were traditional 'thrift flippers': Kelly (@youplusme_nz), Valaraka & Daizy (@simplythriftie), Katie (@closet.bykatie) Rebekah @nicetwice_nz.

The fifth seller, Anna (@everlasting_recyclingwithlove), was not a reseller, but ran Everlasting, a charitable trust that conducts a portion of their sales on Instagram. While vintage resellers were excluded, this research did not exclude charitable organizations from participation. The organization interviewed is unique in its operation and there is little evidence at present to suggest that they do not fall under the same discursive atmosphere as the other resellers. Additionally, the average perspective of online secondhand clothing sales does not incorporate the role of charity. Charity is thought to be present solely in reference to in-person secondhand clothing shops. Given that many charity shops are establishing an online presence, it is necessary to examine the role of charity in online secondhand clothing consumption. The interviews ranged from fifteen to thirty minutes and were conducted via zoom. Written and/or oral consent were obtained prior to the interview. Resellers interviewed were asked six questions that they had been given in advance in order to maintain transparency and allow them time to consider their responses. The questions asked were:

1. What made you want to start this business?
2. What do you find most rewarding about this business?
3. What do you think motivates your consumer base to shop secondhand?
4. Do you donate any of the proceeds to charity? If so, how much? If not, why not?
5. Do you have any employees? If yes, how many, and why did you choose to employ them? Tell me about them.
6. If you conduct online sales, are people willing to pay more online for secondhand clothes than they would in-person?

The interviews were interactive. Interviewees could ask for clarifications or ask the researcher questions themselves. The first three questions were open ended, and the last three were more focused. While there can be a sizable profit margin for very successful sellers, it is not the standard experience. Given that fun and leisure have been observed in research pertaining to those who purchase secondhand clothing (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Herjanto et al., 2016; Guiot & Roux, 2010), resellers were initially asked why they started their page/business, as well as why they found it rewarding. This was to establish the seller's motivation, as well as a personable dialogue. If a respondent is passionate about a topic, it will be much easier for them to talk about it. Opening the interview on a positive note created a rapport centered around the reseller's positive experiences and enthusiasm in order to make them feel more comfortable and genuine. The interviews were cordial and informal. There is a power dynamic present between interviewer and interviewee in an academic context; Interviewees were limited to the scope of the questions asked. However, the intention was to emulate the environment of sitting down and having a cup of tea with someone (as best as can be done through a screen). The mutual interest

in the subject of secondhand clothing from both the sellers and the researcher often served as a common ground and facilitated an open forum for commentary. Four out of five interviews reached the thirty minute maximum and had to be cut off, but easily could have continued.

Asking the resellers what they believe motivates their followers allows for a juxtaposition between the sellers' perception of their audience beliefs versus their audience's beliefs. Criticism explored previously presents members of lower socioeconomic groups as voiceless; marginalized by the commodification of thrifting. They are seldom interviewed and asked if they share that sentiment. In the same vein, a majority of articles that criticize sellers do not interview the sellers themselves. One reseller, Rebekah, wrote to online news platform Re: and offered to share her perspective after they published an article scrutinizing the thrift flipping practice (Madden-Smith, 2022). They did not reply to her inquiry. Instead, Rebekah contacted Stuff, and they published an opinion piece for her (Clark, 2021). Articles written on thrift flippers focus on an economic perspective; often sociocritical in nature. A multitude of charitable events and collaborations within the Instagram secondhand clothing community have been observed on Instagram, but have yet to be reflected in media coverage. Since charity is not believed to be an applicable characteristic of online secondhand clothing consumption, resellers were asked about their experience. The existence of a charitable trust in the online secondhand clothing sector implies the presence of a developing deviation from hedonic motivation.

The final two questions pertained to the fiscal and organizational facets of running their pages. in-person thrifting relies on low prices, and news media often report that shops are raising prices because of resellers. A conclusion can be drawn that secondhand clothes are more expensive online than going into a secondhand shop in-person. Thrift pages are often a side hustle, but run marketing like it's a full time job. With followers in the thousands and clothing

drops weekly, the process can be extensive. Asking resellers if they have employees allows them to explain why they had and continue to have a need for them. When you ask someone to picture a thrift seller, a natural assumption would be a university student going into charity shops a few times a week and spending a couple hours posting what they find. Yet some pages run much more like a well-oiled machine that is beyond the capacity of one person. For resellers, the profit margin is not as immense as many would believe, but still exists to a certain degree. By no stretch of the imagination are resellers transforming themselves into Scrooge McDuck through the promotional nature of social media. However, the profit margin still needs to be acknowledged; along with the demands of running a secondhand clothing business on Instagram.

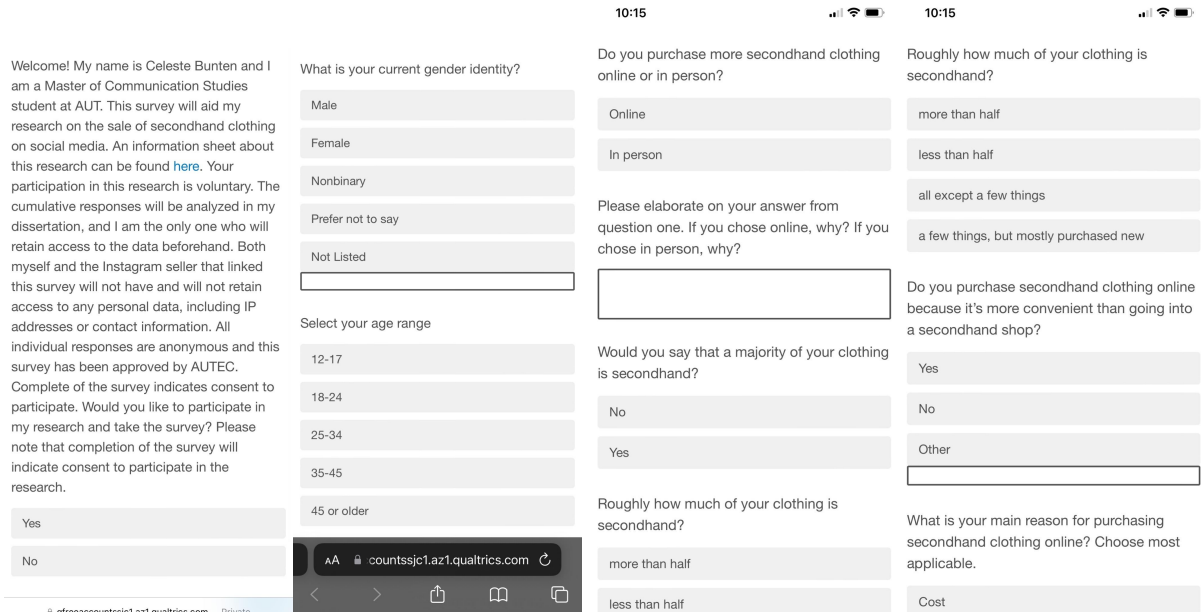
The process of obtaining ethical approval from AUTEC modified the structure of the research; namely, the survey component. The original intention for the survey was to utilize Instagram's story function. Stories on Instagram only last for 24 hours before disappearing. Given that both resellers and their followers were researched, it was thought that keeping both sets of respondents within the app would be the most efficient option. Resellers were going to be asked to put four different polls on their stories for their followers to answer and forward screenshots of the completed polls to the researcher. The poll function would have been the most convenient for the followers to answer, but logistic queries and concerns around data security on Instagram arose. The short form nature of the poll requires very little effort. Respondents would come across it of their own volition, and could fill in their answers with a tap of their finger. However, it does not give enough time to explain the purposes of the research and allow fully informed consent. As Instagram retains data on its users, the security of responses solely for research could not be assured. Additionally, the sellers themselves would still have access to the data. This method required the least amount of effort to participate but necessitated additional

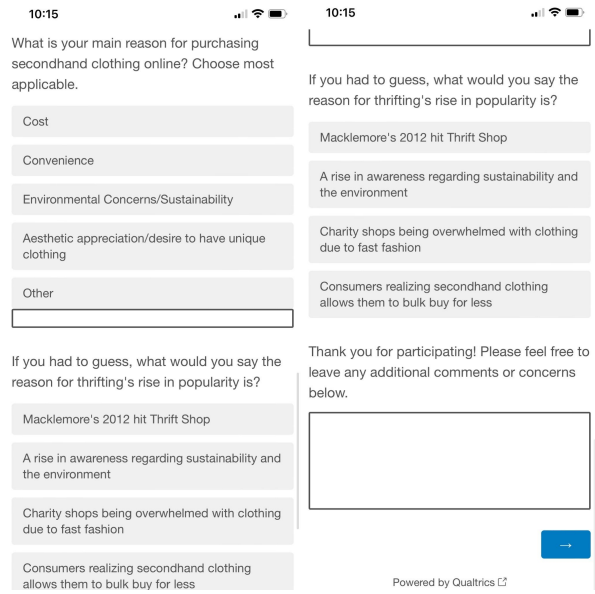
management from both the resellers and the researcher. Once 24 hours had passed and the polls were complete, they would need to be returned in their entirety to the researcher. Given these critiques, it was decided that the survey would instead be conducted on Qualtrics. Respondents still found the survey through Instagram stories, but could now be assured of its anonymity. Qualtrics does not save IP addresses and responses were only accessible to the researcher. Completed surveys were available to the researcher immediately; eliminating the need for any other correspondence. Demographic questions pertaining to age and gender were added as well to check for any perceived patterns.

The researcher's consumption of secondhand clothing from thrift pages was considered as a conflict of interest, but was ultimately dismissed. It is possible to be both a consumer and a researcher. What's personal is political; any research undertaken is due to an expressed interest. Having participated in this evolving trend births a more personal and detailed methodology. The joint approach of interviews and surveys yielded qualitative and quantitative data in addition to facilitating the outreach process for survey respondents. Surveying the sellers' followers established a clear demographic: online secondhand clothing consumers.

The interviews were interactive, but the surveys employed a linear model of communication. Additionally, the survey received twice as many responses than anticipated due to the sellers' influence in the Aotearoa New Zealand secondhand clothing community. The goal was for at least twenty surveys to be filled out for each seller interviewed. For five interviews, the goal was one hundred responses. That goal was exceeded and almost 200 were received. The survey consisted of eleven questions. All questions, bar two, were multiple choice. However,

three questions had an ‘other’ option with a text box to fill out additional feedback:





Given that the survey was intended to be filled out on a cell phone or device, mobile view is depicted. Question one explained the purposes of the research, a link to the participant information sheet, and asked the survey taker for consent to participate. Respondents that did not select ‘yes’ to the first question therefore did not consent and their responses were not counted.

The survey's goal was to analyze the degree to which that cost, convenience, aesthetics, and sustainability influence online secondhand clothing consumers. The prevailing body of literature dedicated to secondhand clothing consumption pertains almost entirely to charity shops. Cost (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Raszka & Borusiak, 2020), aesthetics (Ferraro et al., 2016; Franklin, 2011; Guiot & Roux, 2010), and sustainability (Lee & Weder, 2021; Orminski et al., 2020) were the most recurring factors in previous literature. Low prices were thrifting's origin story, but their aesthetic appeal is significant in contemporary context. In news media, sustainability is often attributed as the primary consideration behind the rise of online secondhand clothing consumption. Convenience was added because it is assumed to have a weighted influence in the popularity of online secondhand clothing consumption. Convenience is the cornerstone of online commerce in any sector (Brown & McEnally, 2015; Erikkson et al., 2017). The survey also sought out to determine why consumers choose in-person or online secondhand clothing, and how much of their wardrobe they estimated was secondhand. If this trend has grown at such a rapid pace, there must be consumers behind the rise in popularity. Are the contents of personal wardrobes a majority secondhand, or has consumption increased generally to the point that the rise of secondhand clothing is in line with retail? These questions expressed the need to survey consumers and determine their motivations.

The conjunction of interviews and surveys facilitated a thorough methodology for little administrative hassle. Asking sellers to share the survey established a clear audience and did not necessitate much extra outreach to obtain data from that audience. It gave a name to the face in many ways; establishing sellers as people rather than faceless representatives of a phenomenon often construed as exploitative. To effectively decipher the nuance of ethical consumption, this two-fold approach was necessary.

4. Findings

4.1 Interviews

The five sellers interviewed were Kelly (@youplusme_nz), Valaraka & Daizy (@simplythriftie), Katie (@closet.bykatie), Rebekah (@nicetwice_nz) and Anna (@everlasting_recyclingwithlove). They will subsequently be referred to by their first names in this research. At the time the interviews occurred, the participants' respective follower counts ranged from six hundred to six thousand. Follower counts are listed to provide insight into the scale of each reseller's influence and outreach. As of June 2022, Kelly had 3,200 followers, Valaraka & Daizy had 600, Katie had 3,000, Rebekah had 4,300, and Anna had 6,100. In the few months since the interviews occurred, every reseller (except Katie, who is no longer selling on Instagram) has gained at least 100 followers. As of September 2022, Kelly has 3,400 followers, Valaraka & Daizy have almost 800, Rebekah has 4,900, and Anna has 6,200. These figures are indicative of the ever rising popularity and relevance of the thrift community on Instagram.

The questions asked in the interviews will be analyzed chronologically. Rather than focusing on each interview participant individually, all five responses will be simultaneously analyzed for each question in order to keep the findings brief as well as enabling a cumulative view of all of the insights gathered from the interview responses. Recurring themes from the interviews include cost, sustainability, accessibility, convenience, & community. Kelly, Valaraka & Daizy, and Katie all sell plus-size fashion. This representation was accidental but is significant given that plus size secondhand clothing is not well represented in the secondhand clothing community on Instagram. All of the participants expressed interest and passion when discussing their contribution to secondhand fashion.

Q1: What made you want to start this business?

Each reseller expressed a desire to make secondhand fashion more accessible. For sisters Valaraka & Daizy, @simplythriftie was started when Valaraka lost her job and saw it as an opportunity. Coming from a family of six girls, they were no stranger to hand-me-downs and secondhand clothing. The sisters noticed a gap in the market with regards to plus-size fashion that extended to secondhand clothing. Daizy remarked, “we can't just go to the mall that's five minutes away and find something…fast fashion isn't fast enough for us plus-size women.” Their aim was to make plus-size secondhand fashion more convenient and accessible. Similarly, Kelly started @youplusme_nz at her sister’s encouragement. Her sister is also a reseller and has 7,000 followers, so she was able to follow in her footsteps to help fill the gap in plus-size secondhand fashion. In her words, “I've been freelancing for twelve years, and it was covid lockdown. And I was kind of waiting for this little job to pop up for me, and it just wasn't coming and so I thought, oh, well, I'll just start this and just see how it goes. Take a punt…So I did it. I don't know if I really think much about it. I just did it and I followed her passion.” Timing and opportunity played an integral part in the formation of both Valaraka & Daizy and Kelly’s pages.

Anna started @everlasting_recyclingwithlove out of “a need to want to do better for the planet and for women” that started while she was working as stylist: “one of the big things for me was that I saw a lot of waste in that process. I saw a lot of people have clothes that they wanted to get rid of, and they didn't really know where to put them. So they were giving them to clothing bins, generally. And then also the fact that when I was styling, so many people came to me and said, "I wish I could afford to use here, but I can't". And so I was really conscious that I wanted, actually, to provide somewhere where all women could have access to great clothing, not just women who could afford great clothing…And then what led me on from there was

actually talking to a friend who worked in a charity shop, and she ran some of the clothing bins that charity shop owned." Anna continued, "And just the data coming from her alone of what was happening to those clothing bin clothes. And then I did a lot of research around that. At the time when I did the research, 90% of clothing was going into landfill or rag industry. And I thought, "we've got to be doing better because people are putting great clothes in those bins"".

Finding an alternative towards clothing waste is why Katie started @closet.bykatie as well. Katie recalled that her page started as a response to her own fast fashion consumption: "I was just obsessed with buying new clothes. I was so bad. I hate it…I knew that second hand shops get heaps of donations and a lot of it kind of ends up not getting sold. So I wanted to find, like, a different solution to that, and I ended up starting my Instagram page". She is transparent about her previous tendency towards overconsumption and it has since led her on a path towards sustainable fashion advocacy on Instagram and TikTok.

For Rebekah, @nicetwice_nz was started in order to make secondhand children's clothing available for parents who do not have time to go in to op shops. Rebekah observed how "oversaturated" the secondhand clothing market was on Instagram and waited until she was sure she could "add value" to it. Like many parents, Rebekah shopped not only for herself, but for her whole family (Bardhi & Arnould 2005). She saw large quantities of quality clothing and wondered who she knew that could use them, "And then that was the real turning point for me was there are so many people, I'm sure, who would love to be able to buy second hand. But just like, as Mums just can't because they're either working or like, the idea of taking young children into an op shop is just horrific, which it is. Or even geographically. Like, people who live rurally just don't have that option. So I just wanted to be able to provide that service to other moms, basically."

Q2: What do you find most rewarding about this business?

Every response pertained to a sense of beneficence. Most resellers felt that the sense of community was the most rewarding. Kelly, Valaraka & Daizy, and Katie found that representing plus-size women was gratifying. Kelly found that having a regular presence led to a dedicated consumer base who were grateful for her efforts which allowed them to be able to participate in online secondhand fashion consumption. She commented, “The community is really awesome. I guess people, for me, because I'm one of the only ones doing plus-size. Like, there are other small pages doing plus-size, but they're not as regular as I am and they'll just pop up occasionally. I think I have a really nice space of really loyal customers who don't have a whole lot of other options and are really thankful for what I'm doing. So, yeah, the reward is in the people really for me”.

For Valaraka and Daizy, their gratification came from representing plus size women as well as Māori and Pacific Islanders. Daizy commented on representation of Māori and Pacific Islander body types,“the most rewarding part, I think it's being able to serve plus-size women. Especially within New Zealand. The majority of plus-size women are, from research that I've done, are of Pacific and Māori descent. And just being a part of something that is different, I feel, because there are so many businesses that are in activewear for plus-size and it's all coming out. But I haven't actually seen other thrift stores online that are mainly focused on having a Pacific audience…Also, we did find that Pacific and Māori women, they tend to draw towards our products because we model it ourselves and our bodies are very different from non-Pacific and [non] Māori women”.

Katie found plus-size and mid-size representation rewarding as well as the aesthetics of secondhand fashion. In her words, “I really enjoy being able to give people unique clothes rather

than, you know, kind of what everyone else has…I really like being able to help people find their own sort of personal style that they like. And I also focus a lot on mid to plus-size thrifting because I think in terms of accessibility, that's really hard to find, like stuff that's actually nice." Katie's response exemplifies the value of quality secondhand clothing, as well as the purpose of style. Thrifting helped her develop her own style, and she finds it gratifying to help others do the same. This speaks to the emotional significance of aesthetics in thrifting, as echoed by Anna.

Anna's response emphasized the importance of kindness. She found that making clothing a joyful experience regardless of cost was most rewarding, "But for such a small amount of money and that we're not focused on the label, so to speak…We're just seeing them as great clothes. But these women, like, are getting amazing pieces and they're just like, "I can't believe that I could look this good and feel this good!" And it's a really joyful place. So I love that we've been able to create that space. But also, I guess service all of New Zealand is what we do…life is so hard. People are going through such hard stuff. We just want that moment in time when they're with us, whether they're online or interacting with us or having an email or in our shop. That part needs to be easy and light for them. It needs to be like a joyful time because you don't know what people are going through".

For Rebekah it was not the sense of community that was rewarding as much as contributing to a paradigm shift regarding clothing consumption. She stated, "I think what has been most rewarding is just seeing little changes in the culture of Instagram. You see all these influencers being like, "you need this, you need this, you need this, and you need to dress your kid like this, and you need these products" and just being able to see a shift in that culture to be like, "actually, you don't need all this stuff and you don't need these particular brands and you don't need to dress your kids like this". And I just think I've been able to contribute to that culture

shift by just sharing my thoughts on the state of our fashion consumption. And I think that's been probably the most rewarding for me." Similar to Katie's response to the first question, Rebekah found that speaking openly about overconsumption had the power to shift the norm. Much of what the participants answered pertains to a metaphysical reward rather than profit alone.

Q3: What do you think motivates your consumer base to shop secondhand?

All of the resellers felt that a mixture of factors influenced their audience, rather than one singular factor. Cost was the most referred to reason that participants thought motivated their consumers to shop secondhand. Sustainability was thought to have a significant influence as well. Aesthetics and convenience were also prevalent factors.

For Rebekah and Kelly, cost was the main determinant, and sustainability second. Rebekah stated, "I think definitely price comes into it when you think about I mean, for sure, I have lots of customers who probably don't care as passionately about the environment as I do, but want to dress their kids in certain things for a better price point". Rebekah went on to say that cost is a specific determinant for children since they "grow so fast and trash their clothes like nothing else". For many parents, expensive children's clothing is not a justifiable expense.

This sentiment was echoed by Kelly. She believes that the main factor that motivates her consumers is cost, "I think affordability is a big part of probably why people come to me. There's definitely people who come for the sustainability factor, but I think sustainability factor is secondary." Kelly also noted that there were not a lot of size inclusive options on Instagram, and that helped draw potential consumers to her page. This dearth of size inclusive clothing is why she wants to keep her prices "as affordable as possible".

Anna noted cost and sustainability as two factors she sees most often, but overall considered a mixture of multiple things to motivate her audience, but "I think some of them it's a

blend. We also have shoppers who do a mixture of both. Like they openly say look, 'I shop new and I shop second hand where I can as well'". Anna's response attests to the role of accessibility; consumers are more likely to engage in behaviors that are accessible or convenient to them (Brown & McEnally 2015) Sometimes that will entail purchasing secondhand; sometimes that will entail purchasing retail.

Katie mentioned the lower cost of secondhand clothing compared to retail, "Even though obviously a lot of online second hand shops increase the price compared to what they would have bought it at, it's still way cheaper than, or the same price or cheaper, than buying something from glassons, for example". While cost is the primary factor mentioned, the aesthetic appeal of having unique pieces is a draw as well. Katie mentioned that for her audience, feeling unique was part of the appeal, "knowing that that's the only time you'll see this thing, and if you don't buy it, then you're probably never going to find that piece of clothing again". This sense of pressure could be a contributing factor to overconsumption of secondhand clothing. However, Katie considers many of her consumers to be "very conscious of their sustainability and their wardrobes," and wants to "help to encourage people to go in that direction as well."

Valaraka and Daizy thought that the "convenience of online shopping" motivated their audience the most. Daizy elaborated, "we've actually spoken to a few of our cousins and close family and friends and they just, they love the idea of op shopping - they don't love the idea of going in and just taking the time and effort". The notion of convenience in online thrifting will be discussed more in the survey portion. They went on to speak to the aesthetic appeal of Instagram thrift pages, "we have a taste that they like, the taste in clothing, but we also don't want to be that shop that is specific to one type of genre in clothing". By having the sisters model and cultivate their own "genre" of clothing, they hope to appeal to a larger audience

Q4: Do you donate any of the proceeds to charity? If so, how much? If not, why not?

The participants, bar Anna, do not regularly donate to charity. The intention was to examine the role of charity from all walks of online secondhand clothing. Some of the sellers have participated in charitable events or collaborations with other resellers. All of them reported finding some aspect of their efforts to be gratifying and philanthropic.

Kelly participated in a collaborative reseller event to benefit a local women's refuge last year. She donates her "leftover stock" to women's refuge as well, "I know that they really like plus size stuff. And so I donate direct back to them because even op shops, people who don't have money, don't have the money for op shops. A lot of op shops are steep in the sense that if you've got no money, it's still expensive" Additionally she dislikes donating back to op shops, saying "It's unsustainable. They've got so much already."

Katie participated in a "Movember" fundraiser in November 2021 where a percentage of her profits went towards the Movember Foundation, which raises awareness around men's "mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer" (Movember Foundation New Zealand, 2022). In addition, she added "the option for my customers to add a donation to their order, and then I would match whatever their donation was." She has participated in similar events for Gumboot Friday "an initiative created by I AM HOPE to provide FREE kids counselling in a timely manner" (I AM HOPE, 2022).

Katie also mentioned an occasion where a follower reached out to her after trying to donate clothing to an op shop but was turned away due to the shop overflowing with donated clothing. Katie paid for the clothes to be shipped to her, and asked the follower what charity she would like the entirety of the profits to go to. In her words, "I didn't really buy any of those clothes, so I wasn't that interested in making a profit on it."

Rebekah considered the time and effort she put into running her page to be a form of charity on its own. She has not donated proceeds to charity directly, “but would donate thousands of dollars in terms of buying stock into charity.” Rebekah said she was transparent with local op shop owners about being a reseller and that she has elicited positive responses from them. She went on to say that the owner of her local St. John’s op shop commented, “that Resellers actually keep his shop open because of the price of rent and power and dumping fees and all sorts is just horrendous.”

Similarly, Valaraka & Daizy consider the time and effort they put in to be a form of charity given their limited profit margin. Sometimes they will purchase items to resell knowing that they will not make a profit, but want to make secondhand fashion accessible. Daizy explained, “So sometimes we will just talk about it and discuss it and we will be like, "okay this dress was $40 but it's not worth $40 [online/on Instagram]; how can we even buy this?" But it's such a beautiful dress, so we either sell it for $40 or we sell it for $35. So we drop it; and as much as we don't get profit from it, that's our way of almost, not giving back to the community, but our type of charity if that makes sense”.

As @everlasting_recyclingwithlove is a not for profit organization, their entire mission is centered around charity. Anna started by answering, “We are a charitable trust, so no one's getting rich” she continued, “This is a heart project, not a financial”. Expenses for Everlasting include utilities for their Mount Albert Store, website costs, and payroll for their three employees. Excluding operating expenses, “all the other money is just give away money. We give to other charities, but we also give to individuals. We pay for people's rent, we pay for people's food, we send out food vouchers, petrol vouchers. Yeah, we're just constantly looking at ways that we can give”.

Q5: Do you have any employees? If yes, how many, and why did you choose to employ them? Tell me about them.

Everlasting was the largest account interviewed. Their scope extends beyond Instagram; much of their sales occur on Facebook and their own website. To keep up with the bustling charity, they have three employees; including Anna. The employees are "all on the minimum wage, and we get paid for X amount of hours, and we work Zed". Additionally, there is a roster of volunteers that assists Everlasting. The process of obtaining employees took two years, with Anna running Everlasting entirely as well as working as a primary school teacher. All of her efforts for the first two years were unpaid, until a board meeting occurred where it was decided she should be compensated. Eventually, two other staff were added. Anna said, "But it all happened very slowly. Like, basically we're really conscious that we don't want to make more money to cover a person because that's not what the purpose of us bringing in money is for; it's to help other women."

Valaraka & Daizy had one employee besides themselves who assists with administrative duties. Given that the sisters select and model the clothes themselves, which is time consuming, they felt that it was important to have outside help. They both felt it was important to be descriptive in order to best emulate the feeling of in-person thrift shopping. Daizy explained, "I feel like detail is important. This person who wants to buy it, I want to know what type of material it is, what size it is, are there any imperfections, is there a rip, things like that are important especially when it's thrifted."

Rebekah, Kelly, and Katie all run their pages themselves. Katie remarked, "I don't even pay myself, so I technically am not an employee." She continued, "That's why when people are like, "oh, you're making profit off of this thing", it's like, I'm not. So there definitely are people

that do it full time that I don't personally agree with. But it's definitely not profitable for most people." Fun and personal enjoyment motivates Katie to run her page more so than profit. She commented, "I work full time. I don't need an income." The general consensus around the profit margin for sellers is that the income they make is supplementary, not their entire livelihood.

Q6: If you conduct online sales, are people willing to pay more online for secondhand clothes than they would in-person?

Rebekah and Kelly both thought that consumers were willing to play more for secondhand clothes online due to how much more convenient it was. Kelly thinks of reselling as a "service based industry". Given that many of her consumers don't have the time to "filter through the racks", part of what they're paying for is the convenience of having secondhand clothing sourced and selected for them. Kelly commented, "a lot of them aren't in Auckland, so just don't have great access to clothing, to second hand clothing in plus-sizes. And so by me putting it up, it just creates something for them, an option for them to buy secondary." Rebekah commented attesting to the lower costs for in-person shopping, but said that "people are definitely happy to pay more, I think, for the ease and essentially like the service provided."

Katie agreed that online shopping was more convenient, but was unsure if that meant consumers were willing to pay more. Katie started off selling through Instagram posts alone, but eventually transitioned to hosting sales through her own website and linking to her website on each Instagram post. Her prices increased to cover website costs, but she didn't feel that it affected her sales. She remarked, "It's more like a convenience to have a website. But, yeah, I've never really found that people would be more or less willing to pay because I've done selling at markets at the same price. And people were still keen on that."

Valaraka and Daizy didn't think that consumers were willing to pay more online for secondhand clothing. According to Daizy, "A price is a price, regardless of if it's online, face to face or in-person. I think it would matter if it was convenient to them or if it was something that they really need or want." Further, they believed risk and stigma affect consumers and their price points. Some consumers might want to purchase clothing in-person, feeling that seeing the item themselves reduces risk. Others might not want to purchase secondhand clothing but would "buy something of the same quality, same price, from a bigger store like ASOS or something like that". Valaraka continued, "For me, personally, I wouldn't measure it by price. I would measure it by the situation that the person is in."

Anna was also unsure, but said that pricing for online items compared to in-person is "tricky". Similar to what Valaraka and Daizy commented on question five, she thought there was much more labor associated with online thrifting. Anna stated, "the beautiful thing about putting it in the shop is if there's a little mark or stain, a blemish or something like that's, not 100%, that is probably going to be fine. We know that the customer has seen it, but for putting it online, everything has to be perfect and it has to be explained because people will say, "I bought this and there was a bit of like, it felt like there was an armpit staining under it" or, "I didn't realize that it looks like those pants have been taken down and rehemmed". There is a lengthy time cost associated with modeling certain items and putting up the posts in great enough detail to cover the item well.

There is the time cost, as well as the varying socioeconomic status of each consumer. Anna says she "struggles" with pricing. She explained that some consumers will come for a bargain and some will come for necessity, but her "heart has always been to keep the pricing as low as possible." Everlasting's board has encouraged Anna to raise their prices, but she has

declined, “I feel like that's what takes us down. I'm okay with that. Like, if we can't afford...if this becomes not viable because I won't put up the price of the clothes to become viable. That's just where I'm at with that. I think, because then we're not living at our "why" in our purpose, which was to provide affordable clothing for everyone.”

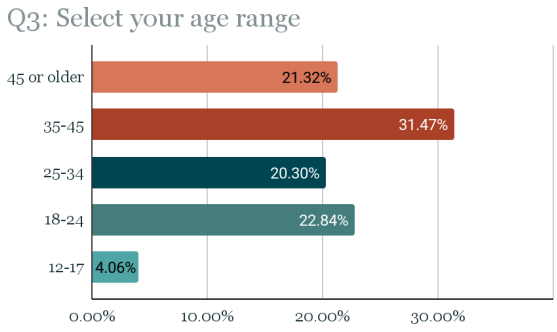
4.2 Survey Data

Q1 - Q3: Introduction and Demographics

The first question of the survey served as an introduction to the research as well as a consent form. In order to participate in the research and have their responses included in the survey data, respondents need to select “yes” to question one. A grand total of 229 responses were received. However, 31 of those were incomplete or did not fill out the first question. This left a working total of 198 respondents who selected “yes” and therefore consented to be in this research. All questions were voluntary. As long as every question was opened, the survey was considered complete. If a respondent closed their browser while filling out the survey, it was considered incomplete. Up to three respondents per question left it blank. The range for total responses per question is from 190 to 198. Every quantitative question will be analyzed by overall data as well as by age group. Quantitative questions will have graphs to accompany them, but qualitative questions will not. Visual representation of quantitative questions would be too lengthy and counter intuitive, so they will be analyzed by theme in place of age. Data will be analyzed by percentage for quantitative questions, and by count for qualitative questions.

Question two asked respondents what their current gender identity was. The question incorrectly used the terms male and female, which refer to sex, instead of man or woman which

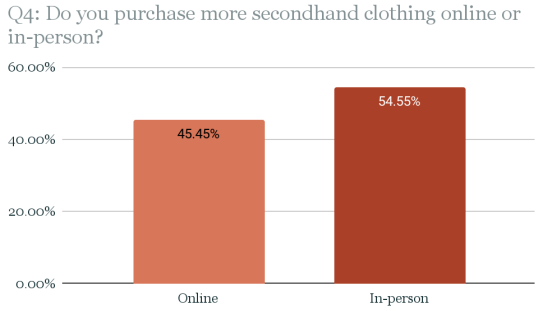
refer to gender. Regardless, 194 respondents selected “female”, 2 selected “nonbinary”, 1 selected “not listed”, and 1 selected “prefer not to say”. No respondents selected “male”.



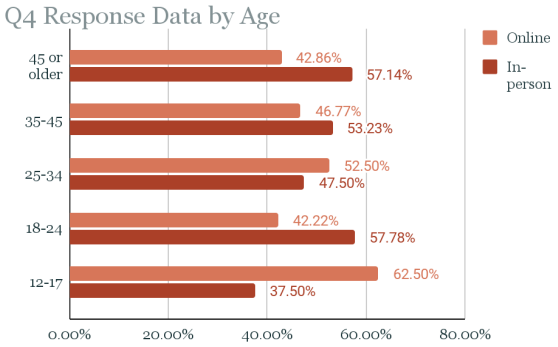
Graph 1

While there were 198 total valid surveys, one respondent did not select their age, so the analysis by age is out of a maximum range of 197. Their answers were still included in the overall data. A chart has been provided for Q3 in order to give perspective for the analyses by age group. Age 35-45 was most represented, at 31.47%. Ages 45 or older, 25 to 34, and 18 to 24 were selected a near equal amount of 21.32%, 20.30%, and 22.84% respectively. Only 4.06% of respondents selected age 12 to 17. Given that ages 12 to 17 had a much smaller sample to pull from, the data from that group has a greater variance.

Q4- Do you purchase more secondhand clothing online or in-person?



Graph 2



Graph 3

A majority of respondents reported that they purchased more secondhand clothing in-person, but only marginally. Overall, 108 respondents, or 54.55%, selected in-person. 90 respondents, or 45.45% selected online. There was a slight majority for in-person in ages 45 or older, 35 to 45, and 18 to 24 as well. However, ages 25 to 34 as well as ages 12 to 17 reported purchasing more secondhand clothing online.

Q5 - Please elaborate on your answer from question four. If you chose online, why? If you chose in-person, why?

Question five featured a text box for respondents to expand upon their reasoning for question four. The responses to question five were analyzed based on what themes were most prevalent in the response. Certain responses had more than two themes present, but the most relevant two were selected. Each response could count for one theme or a combination of two themes that were of equal relevance. For example, 21 responses only pertained to “leisure &

entertainment" for the in-person subgroup. However, 10 responses pertained to "leisure & entertainment" *and* "risk reduction". The latter 10 responses received their own category and did not also count towards the individual totals for leisure & entertainment and risk reduction. Themes may not have a high individual count, but were more relevant when combined with other factors. This was taken into consideration when selecting the most relevant themes for analysis. Responses that did not pertain to any of the themes were placed under "miscellaneous".

Themes in Q5: In-person	Count	Percentage
Risk Reduction	44	42.72%
Leisure & Entertainment	21	20.39%
Miscellaneous	11	10.68%
Leisure & Entertainment and Risk Reduction	10	9.71%
Cost and Risk Reduction	9	8.74%
Cost	7	6.80%
Leisure & Entertainment and Cost	1	0.97%
Totals	103	100%

Table 1

Themes in Q5: Online	Count	Percentage
Convenience	21	24.14%
Accessibility	18	20.69%
Time Poorness	13	14.94%
Convenience and Curation	9	10.34%
Curation	6	6.90%
Convenience and Time Poorness	5	5.75%
Convenience and Accessibility	4	4.60%
Accessibility and Time Poorness	4	4.60%
Time Poorness and Curation	4	4.60%
Miscellaneous	3	3.45%
Totals	87	100%

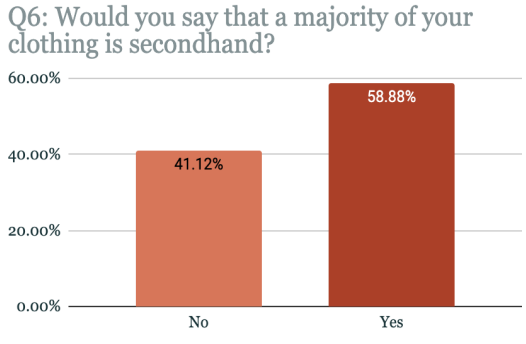
Table 2

Of the 108 respondents who selected in-person on question four, 103 provided their reasoning in question five. The three most prevalent individual themes were leisure & entertainment, cost, and risk reduction. Leisure & entertainment refers to hedonic motivations for shopping secondhand (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Weiss et al., 2014). 20.39% of responses fell under leisure & entertainment. This encompasses treasure hunting, fun, and personal enjoyment. Respondents noted that they enjoyed thrifting and there was a thrilling or exciting feeling to finding something good. Cost refers to financial motivations or bargain hunting. At 6.80%, cost was not heavily represented individually, but 8.74% of responses were a mix of cost and risk reduction. Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) noted the concept of risk in online thrifting. Risk reduction refers to behaviors that consumers engage in because they are perceived to negate the risks associated with online thrifting. Risk reduction was the most represented theme, at 42.72%. Responses in the risk reduction category said they preferred in-person shopping because they could try the clothes on and better gauge fit and quality.

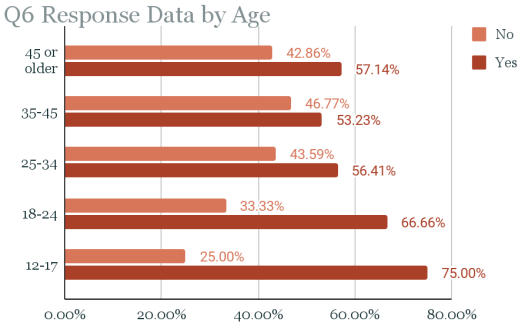
Of the 90 respondents that selected online on question four, 87 provided their reasoning in question five. The four most prevalent individual themes were convenience, time poorness, accessibility, and curation. Convenience was the most represented theme, at 24.14%. Any responses that listed convenience or ease were placed under convenience. Time poorness represented 14.94% of responses. Time poorness refers to a lack of free time. Time poorness refers to those who explicitly stated they did not have enough free time to go thrifting in-person. Responses that said online thrifting took less time were placed under convenience; Some might have the time, but prefer the time saved by shopping online. Accessibility had the second highest representation, at 20.69%. Accessibility refers to barriers to the respondents' access to secondhand clothing. Those barriers are geographic, health, or sizing limitations. Geographic

includes rural communities and those who reported a dearth of secondhand shops close to them. Health refers to those with disabilities as well as COVID-19 restrictions. Respondents could be physically unable to shop in-person, or uncomfortable with the idea due to COVID-19. Sizing refers to a reported lack of clothes in the respondents' size, often plus-sizes. Finally, 6.90% of responses fell under curation. Curation refers to aesthetics, quality, and trust. This means that respondents prefer online thrifting because they trust resellers to curate quality items and collections for them.

Q6 - Would you say that a majority of your clothing is secondhand?



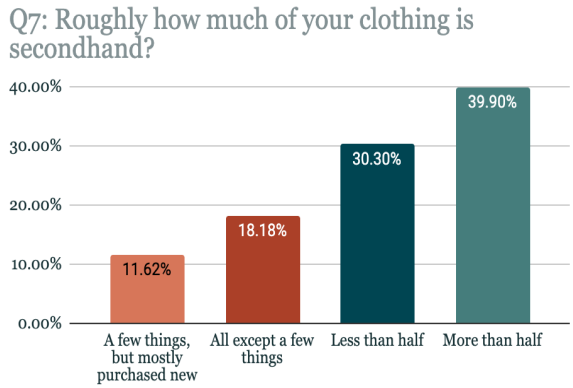
Graph 4



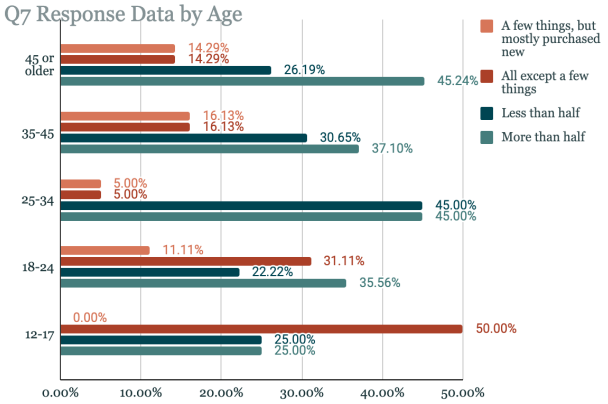
Graph 5

58.88% of respondents felt that a majority of their clothing was secondhand. The remaining 41.12% did not feel that a majority of their clothing was secondhand. This was consistent with the findings for every age group.

Q7 - Roughly how much of your clothing is secondhand?



Graph 6

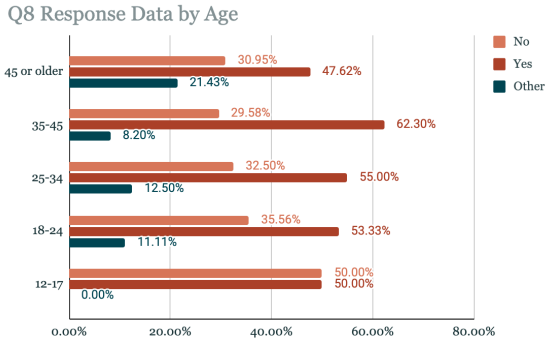


Graph 7

Selections “A few things, but mostly purchased new” and “less than half” refer to a minority of the respondents clothing being secondhand. Selections “all except a few things” and “more than half” refer to a majority of the respondents’ clothing being secondhand. Most people will not have an exact figure of how much of their clothing is or isn’t secondhand. Approximations were used to give more specificity and build upon question six. 39.90% of respondents felt that more than half of their clothing was secondhand, compared to 30.30% who felt that less than half of their clothing was secondhand. Additionally, 18.18% of respondents felt that all except a few things of their clothing was secondhand. 11.62% of respondents felt that they had a few things that were secondhand, but most of their clothing was purchased new. Selections “all except a few things” and “more than half” made up the majority of responses for age groups except ages 25 to 34, which was split evenly between a minority and a majority.

Q8 - Do you purchase secondhand clothing online because it's more convenient than going into a secondhand shop?

Graph 8



Graph 9

55.33% of respondents felt that they purchased secondhand clothing online because it was more convenient than going into a secondhand shop. 32.49% did not feel that they purchased secondhand clothing online because it was more convenient. The remaining 12.18% selected "other". Other featured a text box for respondents to explain their reasoning. 45.45% of the text box submissions pertained to curation and treasure hunting. These responses explained that they would shop online if an item was high quality, hard to find, unique, or something they really wanted. The majority of every age group, except ages 12 to 17, reported that they felt online secondhand thrifting was more convenient than in-person. Half of ages 12 to 17 thought online thrifting was more convenient than in-person thrifting; the other half did not.

Q9 - What is your main reason for purchasing secondhand clothing online? Choose most applicable.

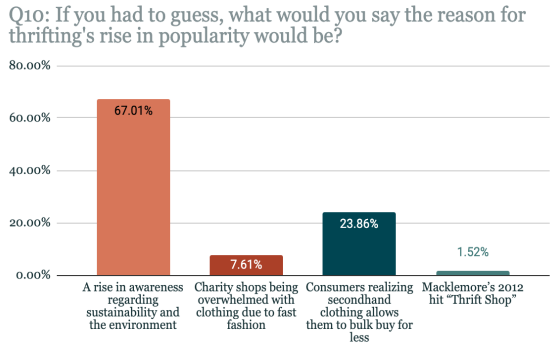
Respondents were asked to choose the *most* applicable reason they purchase secondhand clothing online. The choices were cost, convenience, environmental concerns/sustainability, and aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing. However, many respondents chose multiple reasons. Overall, the most prevalent reasons selected were still the individual four reasons. Convenience and aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing were selected the most; both accounted for 20.92% of selections overall. Cost was the second most selected reason, at 12.24%. Environment was the fourth most popular reason and accounted for 10.71% of selections. The four most popular selections varied by age group. The most popular reasons for age 45 or older were aesthetic appreciation, environmental concerns, cost, and cost & environmental concerns, which accounted for 21.95%, 17.07%, 12.20%, and 9.76% respectively.

The most popular reasons for age 35 to 45 were convenience, aesthetic appreciation, cost, and environmental concerns, which accounted for 24.59%, 22.95%, 18.03%, and 11.47% respectively. The most popular reasons for age 25 to 34 were convenience, cost & environmental concerns/sustainability, cost, and aesthetic appreciation, which accounted for 35.00%, 12.50%, 12.50%, and 10.00%. The most popular reasons for age 18 to 24 were aesthetic appreciation, convenience, environmental concerns, and environmental concerns & aesthetic appreciation which accounted for 28.89%, 15.56%, 11.11%, and 8.89%. All eight respondents in age group 12 to 17 chose different reasons, so they are all of equal relevance.

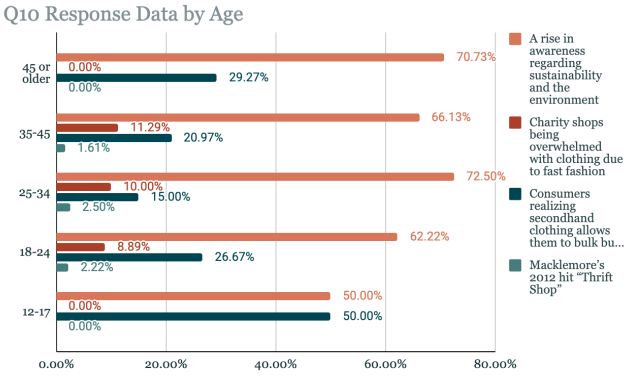
Responses to Q9 by Age	45 or older	35-45	25-34	18-24	12-17
1. Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	21.95%	22.95%	10.00%	28.89%	12.50%
2. Convenience	7.32%	24.59%	35.00%	15.56%	12.50%
3. Convenience, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	0.00%	3.28%	0.00%	2.22%	12.50%
4. Convenience, Environmental Concerns/Sustainability	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	2.22%	12.50%
5. Cost	12.20%	18.03%	12.50%	6.67%	0.00%
6. Cost, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	2.44%	1.64%	2.50%	2.22%	12.50%
7. Cost, Convenience	0.00%	4.92%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
8. Cost, Convenience, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	2.44%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%	0.00%
9. Cost, Convenience, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing, Other	0.00%	1.64%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
10. Cost, Convenience, Environmental Concerns/Sustainability	4.88%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
11. Cost, Convenience, Environmental Concerns/Sustainability, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	0.00%	1.64%	2.50%	4.44%	12.50%
12. Cost, Convenience, Environmental Concerns/Sustainability, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing, Other	0.00%	1.64%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
13. Cost, Environmental Concerns/Sustainability	9.76%	4.92%	12.50%	4.44%	0.00%
14. Cost, Environmental Concerns/Sustainability, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	2.44%	1.64%	2.50%	2.22%	0.00%
15. Environmental Concerns/Sustainability	17.07%	11.47%	2.50%	11.11%	12.50%
16. Environmental Concerns/Sustainability, Other	4.88%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
17. Environmental Concerns/Sustainability, Aesthetic appreciation/desire to have unique clothing	2.44%	0.00%	2.50%	8.89%	12.50%
18. Other	12.20%	1.64%	12.50%	11.11%	0.00%

Table 3

Q10 - If you had to guess, what would you say the reason for thrifting's rise in popularity would be?



Graph 10



Graph 11

Answers for question ten were a rise in awareness regarding sustainability and the environment, charity shops being overwhelmed with clothing due to fast fashion, consumers realizing secondhand clothing allows them to bulk buy for less, and Macklemore's 2012 hit "Thrift Shop". 67.01% of respondents felt that the reason for thrifting's rise in popularity was a rise in awareness regarding sustainability and the environment. 23.86% of respondents felt that it was due to consumers realizing secondhand clothing allows them to bulk buy for less. 7.61% of respondents felt that it was due to charity shops being overwhelmed with clothing due to fast fashion. 1.52% of respondents felt it was due to Macklemore's 2012 hit "Thrift Shop".

Q11 - Thank you for participating! Please feel free to leave any additional comments or concerns below.

The text box on question eleven received 30 responses. Most of the responses further explained the respondents' reasoning for thrifting. Question five asked respondents to explain why they preferred in-person or online thrifting, but the survey did not ask respondents why they chose to thrift clothing. Those who responded expressed knowledge and excitement about the subject.

5. Discussion

5.1 Survey

Although the concept of cleanliness was frequent in the literature as a stigmatized facet of secondhand shopping, it is unsurprising that it did not appear as a factor. It is likely that those who believe secondhand clothing is unclean simply do not purchase it (Yan et al., 2015) and it is therefore unlikely that they would follow resellers on Instagram. Given that the survey demographic was followers of Instagram secondhand clothing resellers, it was assumed that a majority of them would prefer online thrifting over in-person. In Q4, 54.55% of respondents said they purchased more secondhand clothing in-person; meaning that people who found the survey due to their interest in online thrifting still did not feel it was their main way of obtaining secondhand clothing. This indicates that in-person thrifting is more popular than expected, and still the most common avenue for thrifting. Additionally, resellers are facing the bulk of criticism, yet the data indicates online thrifting does not account for the majority of secondhand clothing sales.

While the data from Q5 explained the respondents' preference for in-person or online thrifting, it neither asked nor explained the respondents' overall reasoning or determinants for choosing to purchase secondhand clothing. The research's purpose was to examine online thrifting rather than the entirety of thrifting, which could explain the lower prevalence of cost. Research from the past twenty years has consistently yielded cost as a determinant for in-person thrifting (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Williams & Paddock, 2003; Park & Lin, 2018; Raszka & Borusiak, 2020). Earlier in this research, cost and aesthetic appreciation were presented as primary determinants for purchasing secondhand clothing consumption. Given cost's historic

role in the popularization of thrifting (Le Zotte, 2013), it was assumed that it would also be a primary determinant in online thrifting. The data from Q9 supported aesthetic appreciation as a primary determinant, but not cost. Convenience was noted as the nucleus of online commerce, and it appears this applies to secondhand clothing as well. Given that 55.33% of respondents in Q8 felt that they purchased secondhand clothing online because it was more convenient, it is understandable that convenience appeared as a primary determinant. There is still something to be said for aesthetic appreciation. Romanticizing the appeal to individuality and essence that thrifted clothing signifies is effortless. And ironic. Millions of people trying to stand out in the exact same way.

In Q6, 58.88% of respondents believed that a majority of their clothing was secondhand. Correlation between convenience, aesthetic appreciation, and overconsumption could be triggering this. Consumers could be purchasing more secondhand clothing to satiate the need to be unique and reinvent themselves constantly. It was not asked how long respondents kept their clothing for. While overconsumption based upon cost and aesthetic appreciation were observed in thrift hauls, it seems that aesthetic appreciation fuels overconsumption at present. Given the diminishing length of time that trends are relevant in the online atmosphere, it is unlikely that clothing bought to suit a trend will have a long shelf life. The convenience of online thrifting has the potential to contribute to the quickening pace of trends. However, this is true of any form of online commerce.

The data from Q5 indicated that resellers increase accessibility, just not as much on the economic dimension. In addition to making secondhand clothing available to those who do not have the time, resellers increase variety and access to secondhand clothing for rural communities, people with disabilities or health concerns, and plus sized people. The self

identified plus-size survey respondents expressed that they could not find their sizes, or items in their size that they liked, in thrift shops and preferred to purchase from resellers. There is no shortage of secondhand clothing, but it might not be in the right areas at times. Resellers have made secondhand clothing readily available to a wider audience in terms of style, size, and location.

The belief that sustainability has supplementary rather than direct influence over thrifting was reinforced. Respondents felt that sustainability contributed to thrifting's rise in popularity, but admitted it was not their main reasoning. Q10 found that 67.01% of respondents felt that thrifting's rise in popularity was due to "a rise in awareness regarding sustainability and the environment". However, in Q9, convenience and aesthetic appreciation were the most popular reasons that respondents chose to thrift online, with 41.84% identifying one as their primary determinant. Only 10.71% of respondents selected "environmental concerns/sustainability". It is possible that consumers like to believe that thrift was popularized due to sustainability simply because it elicits positive feelings (Weiss et al., 2014). Takedomi Karlsson & Ramasar (2020) posit that the theory of cognitive dissonance explains the inflated and overestimated significance of sustainability in fashion. Cognitive dissonance refers to the concept of rationalizing conflicting beliefs because they are overwhelming or uncomfortable. Researching the degree to which clothing brands and secondhand clothing can be described as sustainable is time consuming, and can potentially be personal. It might require an individual to reevaluate their consumption habits and subsequently, their identity. Some might perceive themselves are sustainable consumers and look for ways to reinforce that facet of their identity. Believing that sustainability caused and contributes to thrifting's popularity absolves consumers of environmental guilt by associating thrifting with sustainability. Subsequently, it perpetuates the

belief that thrifting is always sustainable; overconsumption and all. Even if the data contradicts the belief that sustainability bolstered thrifting's popularity, it gives consumers a sense of action and control.

Q10 choices "consumers realizing secondhand clothing allows them to bulk buy for less" and "charity shops being overwhelmed with clothing due to fast fashion" both pertain to overconsumption. Collectively they accounted for 31.47%. This indicates not only that sustainability is incorrectly attributed as the reason for thrifting's popularity, but that this belief eclipses the reality of overconsumption. Overconsumption is confronting, especially in reference to one's own consumption habits. It could be that consumers are choosing to attribute thrifting's rise in popularity to sustainability because it's easily digestible and has a positive connotation. The final choice "Macklemore's 2012 hit "Thrift Shop" was somewhat flippant, but was also to see if claims that Macklemore contributed to the thrift boom had any merit. After garnering only 1.52% of responses, it is evident that Macklemore had little influence over why consumers choose to purchase secondhand clothing.

5.2 Interviews

This research aimed to personalize resellers not to put a target on their back, but to humanize them in the face of one dimensional, and potentially sexist, criticism. It is easy to criticize a faceless cohort; it is much more difficult to criticize community members, working mothers, and environmentalists. The juxtaposition of the interview findings and the common criticism discussed demonstrate the necessity of the feminist perspective employed in this search. The interview findings reinforce the ideology in feminist archaeology that research should extend beyond the economic lens and be conducted with people, rather than on people. Thrifting

is perceived as a sustainable practice, and sustainability is understood almost entirely from an economic and theoretical perspective. This allowed the disconnect between perception and reality of resellers to occur. Criticism of resellers positions itself in an economic dimension without considering the non-economic reasons that individuals, even from lower socioeconomic groups, choose to thrift. Further, extending beyond the economic dimension and interviewing resellers helped clarify misconceptions while acknowledging the nuance of the topic. Research from Swim et al. (2019) suggests that pro-environmental behaviors are viewed as feminine. Similarly, research from Brough et al. (2016) suggested that green consumption is associated with femininity, and men avoid eco-friendly products to preserve their masculinity. Additionally, heterosexual men are more likely to partcipate in pro-environmental behavior due to their partner's influence (Borau et al., 2020). It is possible that criticism of resellers is more common than research on resellers because the topic was trivialized on the basis of gender and sustainability. Criticism posits resellers as exploitative opportunists looking to make quick cash, yet every reseller expressed a non-financial motivation for starting their page. When they spoke of what was rewarding to them, it was evident that Anna's words were applicable to everyone: it was a heart project, and not a financial one.

The responses to interview Q3 were noteworthy. Valaraka and Daizy attested to convenience, but were the only resellers to confidently name convenience and aesthetics alone. Seeing the survey data substantiate that confidence was interesting. Katie was the youngest reseller interviewed, and specifically mentioned aesthetics as part of her answer. Katie would be placed in age group 18 to 24, which ranked aesthetic appreciation as its primary reason for choosing to thrift online. Katie happened to mention her age and the demographics for her followers in the interview, but other resellers were not explicitly asked. From this happenstance,

it is known that 57.9% of her followers are also aged 18 to 24. It is likely that resellers might have guessed what determinants were most important to their corresponding age group, in which case their responses could be more accurate. However, the survey data was analyzed cumulatively and anonymously, so it is not able to be determined what percentage of respondents came from each reseller. As it was hypothesized that cost would hold as much weight in online thrifting as it does in-person, it is understandable that the other four resellers assumed it would be a primary determinant. However, every reseller's answer was correct in some form, and they all seemed to have a thorough understanding of their consumers. Cost and sustainability did still hold relevance, and perhaps might have held more if survey respondents were asked what their overall motivation for thrifting was, rather than their motivation for thrifting online.

Interview Q4 reinforced the non-financial motivations expressed by the resellers. It was meant to add depth to the role of charity in online thrifting and see if it was still relevant. Purchasing from charity shops elicits a "feel good" response (Weiss et al., 2014) regardless of whether or not the proceeds are actually used for philanthropic reasons. The resellers expressed more participation in charitable collaborations or fundraisers than anticipated. Even if participants did not donate formally, their time and energy was donated often at their own fiscal loss. Given that charity is seldom associated with resellers, these findings indicate that charity plays a larger role than general perception indicates.

Responses to interview Q6 were split. Anna and Valaraka & Daizy's commentary on the time investment it takes to provide an accurate, detailed depiction of the items aligned with survey respondents' concerns in Q5. Concerns around quality and risk seem to prevent consumers from thrifting online. Katie pointed out the distinction between forms of in-person secondhand shopping, saying that she had sold clothes at flea markets and found that people

were willing to pay the same amount they would online. While a flea market is a form of in-person thrifting, it varies more from a traditional thrift shop in terms of price. It is likely that items sold at flea markets by curated sellers would sell for more than they would at a thrift shop. It is unknown how pricing at specialty and curated secondhand stalls at flea markets compares to both traditional thrift shops and online resellers. Given that Q9 survey data showed that survey respondents were overall motivated by convenience and aesthetic motivation than cost, it is indicated that consumers are willing to pay more for secondhand clothing online.

The growing awareness surrounding exploitative practices in the clothing industry means that even criticism of thrifting is centered in a desire to do better, but the recipient of such condemnation is misplaced. The systems of exploitation and power that led to the rise of fast fashion led thrifting to its exponentially growing popularity. The rate of clothing consumption needs to slow dramatically, but ultimately, it is policy reform that needs to occur in order to develop more ethical clothing practices. A brand new shirt should not cost $8. That is indicative of a production chain that is rife with exploitation. As a consequence of this exploitation, a majority of consumers are "financially-able" to purchase retail clothing. The belief that resellers have harmed low income communities in a financial capacity has yet to be supported by academic research. Criticism frequently claims that an increase in price leads to a decrease of resources for low income communities, but there isn't evidence to suggest that thrift shops have raised their prices at a rate that isn't in line with inflation. When speaking about the gentrification of thrift, authors often use distancing language when referring to low income persons. It is an act of "othering" for middle and working class individuals to speak on behalf of low income communities instead of allowing them to have their own voice. Those who posit low income people as victims of thrift gentrification are often using them as an afterthought to defend

perceived scarcity of items that are aesthetically pleasing to them. Retail clothing is not as inaccesible for lower income communities today. The association of secondhand clothing being for those who cannot afford anything else is not unfounded, but it is not applicable to the secondhand clothing market that exists today. The criticism of thrift is centered in the false narrative of finite resources for the lower class in reference to clothing at charity shops. While this may have been true twenty years ago, the rise of fast fashion has rendered this obsolete. It is not outlandish to speculate that the passage of time has distorted our barometer for what items should cost. Clothing, even secondhand, is going to cost more now than it did a decade ago. Furthermore, the interviews indicate that resellers are amassing wealth from a side hustle. If an individual is looking to make quick cash, it is safe to assume they are not amongst the 1%.

To further analyze the perceived scarcity of aesthetically pleasing clothing in thrift shops, the popularization of thrift does not negate the existence of "counterculture" thrift. One possibility for the perceived scarcity of 90's clothing expressed in the literature could be actual scarcity. It's important to consider who is donating those items, and why. It's unlikely they only bought clothes in the 1990's and have been undergoing decluttering for two to three decades. They most likely bought newer clothes and donated their old ones. Fewer and fewer clothes from the 90's will be donated as time goes on, and pieces from the 2000's and 2010's will take their place. At a lower quantity, those same 90's pieces are still in thrift shops, albeit buried under mountains of Zara, H&M, and Topshop. They are not impossible to find, but it will require a bit of modern archaeology to dig through and find some artifacts. Alternatively, it can be perceived as a benefit that the genuine 90's pieces they are searching for aren't "in". It means they are more likely to trickle down onto a Goodwill rack when someone else donates them to make room for the next big thing…which, coincidentally, appears to be Y2K fashion (Sicurella, 2021).

Contemporary criticism of secondhand clothing consumption and resellers should consider the broad spectrum of societal and environmental factors at play. While an argument can be made that thrifting has contributed to overconsumption, the popularity of thrifting is more of a symptom than a cause of overconsumption. The thrift boom is a consequence of throwaway culture. Should we blame those who are combatting the environmental and ethical violations of the fast fashion industry just because they benefit economically from it? It seems more appropriate for the blame to fall to the individuals who created and continue to uphold a system that ensures systematic environmental and ethical violations.

5.3 Words into Action: Envisioning Ethical Clothing

After looking at the findings of the interviews, surveys, and literature review, it's reasonable to ask what would constitute ethical clothing and what it would take to enact change. Our action must extend beyond criticizing consumers, or it is null and void. NBC sitcom "The Good Place" describes the predicament consumers are facing. The context is that no one has gotten into heaven, a.k.a. The Good Place, in 521 years. After a brief investigation, it is determined that this is due to the complexity of everyday actions the average person faces:

> "Life now is so complicated, it's impossible for anyone to be good enough for the Good Place. I know you don't like to learn too much about life on Earth to remain impartial, but these days just buying a tomato at a grocery store means that you are unwittingly supporting toxic pesticides, exploiting labor, contributing to global warming. Humans think that they're making one choice, but they're actually making dozens of choices they don't even know they're making" (Schur et al., and Weng 2019).

The choices we make every single day have a variety of environmental and social consequences, albeit inadvertently. However, the issue at hand extends beyond the individual person. Overall, there is a deficit of nuanced discourse pertaining to sustainable clothing consumption. Conceptions about sustainability are all too often black and white rhetorically; the issue is that life is a conglomerated gray area. Consumer perception and willingness to change to more sustainable habits falls into extremes of existentialism and nihilism. The two most prevalent attitudes are “I must do everything I can before it is too late” and “nothing I do matters unless companies are held accountable, so why bother?”. The attitude that will bring about the most change falls somewhere in the middle. From all the information established so far, it is simple to surmise that thrifting isn’t as sustainable as previously thought, charity shops aren’t charitable, and packaging companies have actively prevented environmentally beneficial systems from being implemented. For many, it is difficult to conceptualize a system where this is not the case. The advancement of consumerism and normalization of overconsumption is less than a century old. This is a comforting reassurance when feeling powerless. As Fletcher (2010) says, “We created it. We can create something else”.

5.3.1 Cyclical Consumption: Using Existing Technology

Technology that enables cyclical consumption already exists. While it can and should be utilized, that burden should not be placed entirely on consumers. Governments and policy makers should regulate clothing production and facilitate the implementation of textile recycling and repurposing programs. Denim company Madewell (2021) runs a denim recycling program. Customers receive a $20 discount towards a new pair of jeans for every pair they bring in to be recycled. The donated denim is sent to a facility in Arizona where it is converted into insulation for housing. Denim recycling is crucial given the resounding resources needed to make denim. It

takes 1,800 gallons to make one pair of jeans (Merchant, 2018). Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Wellington clothing company Little Yellow Bird (2022) accepts 100% cotton clothing for recycling to break down and reuse in new garments. San Francisco clothing company Marine Layer (2021) runs a similar program called Respun. Customers receive a discount towards their purchase if they drop off unwanted t-shirts to be recycled. The t-shirts are then shipped to a facility in Spain where they are broken down into thread that will eventually be respun into new shirts. While these programs would limit their output dramatically by using local facilities, the outsourcing of the developed technology is preferable to discarded garments sitting in local landfills. Emphasizing local goods is intertwined with the development of a more personal relationship with the people who make our clothing. In turn, this allows sentimental value to grow into our relationship to the clothing we wear. A system that does not exploit garment workers will eliminate the 'othering' that is seen within clothing consumption.

Ultimately, buying less clothing and keeping it for as long as possible is the most sustainable option. Implementing a sustainable form of fashion consumption is an extensive cultural process. Sustainability must be viewed from a sociocultural perspective and not purely economic. We need to discuss the psychology of buying (Denisova, 2021) as well as provide resources for those coming to terms with the gravity of shifting to sustainable forms of consumption (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). Retail therapy has been shown to improve and/or control mood (Koch et al., 2020; Atalay & Meloy, 2011; Lee & Lee, 2019), as well as alleviate sadness (Rick et al., 2014). Additionally, many do not experience buyers remorse (Atalay and Meloy, 2011). During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, online clothing consumption increased. This could be attributed to pragmatism, but research from Koch et al. (2020) suggested consumers were motivated by a desire for "entertainment and enjoyment". Shying away from

such practices will deprive many of a tried and true coping mechanism. Some other form of support must be available in its place.

5.3.2 Accountability and Regulation

At present, use of terms such as ‘sustainable’ and ‘environmentally friendly’ are unstandardized (Denisova, 2021). Materials that are able to be recycled are easily identifiable because of the iconic logo; which was made by a college student in the 1970’s. Labels communicate whether or not consumables are organic or fair trade. There is not an agreed upon set of standards to determine if a product is “sustainable” or a board of authority to judge said standards. There are a myriad of organizations devoted to the development of sustainable fashion production, yet they all have different parameters determining what is and is not sustainable. Sustainability is complex, and most consumers possess only a rudimentary knowledge. Additionally, greenwashing has decreased consumer trust in green branding. While interactive brand media and transparency can help rebuild trust between brands and consumers (Szabo & Webster, 2020), responsibility to determine what is and is not sustainable should not fall on the consumer. Weiss et al. (2014) surveyed consumers on their perception of sustainable fashion. 80% of respondents thought that there should be some standard of sustainability that the clothing industry should comply with. Moreover, 40% felt that some sort of organization or review board could properly rate how sustainable a company was, and an additional 40% felt a review board was “worth considering”.

5.3.3 Social Media and Activism

Social media can simultaneously criticize unsustainable practices and act on media to inspire change. It can be said that influencers bear some responsibility for advocating and

advertising unsustainable clothing consumption. In spite of this, they also possess the ability to influence consumers towards sustainable consumption patterns. Influencers can encourage their followers to purchase products as well as sway public opinion. As discussed previously, influencers can be established as "taste leaders" that consumers look to for aesthetic guidance (Ki & Kim, 2019). Alternately, expertise, information, and interaction can establish influencers as "opinion leaders". Follower count and "visually pleasing" content were also evidenced as factors that establish an influencer's credibility. Transparency is a requisite for establishing trust between influencers and their followers. The slow fashion movement is gaining traction; most notably on Twitter (Orminski et al., 2020) and Instagram (Lee & Weder, 2021). According to Denisova (2021), "Online searches for 'sustainable fashion' have tripled between 2016-2019". Denisova's "policy regulations" outline the role that influencers would need to play in order to construct a system of sustainable clothing consumption. These include the regulation of paid content and increased coverage of "restyling advice, and promoting sustainable clothing for varied budgets. Influencer content must be clearly labeled when it is a paid advertisement. Extending beyond influencers, fashion & lifestyle media companies must start emphasizing the utility of clothing we are to purchase, and that we already own. As little as 2% of clothing in fashion magazines are depicted in workplaces or homes. 40% of fashion magazine content depicts evening or occasion wear. Fashion companies must stop promoting the consumption of clothing that will see very little use. Instead, their focus could be used to encourage expression of style through pieces that most consumers already have in their closet. Clothing brands that are widely regarded as sustainable are often more expensive (Denisova, 2021; Clark, 2008). This can be attributed to the increased costs associated with ethical production in both materials and labor. Thrifting provides a cheap alternative, but the inevitable goal is to eliminate the "choice between

what is right and what is cheap" (Stringer et al., 2021). A majority of consumers are willing to pay a marginal increase of 5% for sustainable goods (Weiss et al., 2014). We need to accept that ethical consumption is more expensive. Media coverage of sustainable clothing at a variety of price points will help to popularize and normalize it.

The interviews and surveys both uncovered inconsistencies in the way secondhand clothing and resellers are viewed versus how they actually are. Non-financial motivations for resellers are often ignored, and sustainability is attributed an excessive level of influence over consumers. While online thrifting has the potential to increase overconsumption, it also increases accessibility for rural communities or those who simply do not have the time to thrift. There is not one simple take away or individual action needed. There is a way to move forward and construct a better clothing system. At the individual level: Buy better quality, buy less, and be kind. At the systematic level: action, accountability, and regulation. Sustainability is an ongoing process that will endure as long as humanity does. There are unethical or unsustainable tendrils emanating from every existing form of production. Changing this requires progress, and not perfection. Thousands of imperfect environmentalists can make much more of an impact than hundreds of perfect environmentalists.

6. Conclusion

This research employed the use of literature analysis, interviews, and surveys to examine secondhand clothing resellers on Instagram and their consumers. Five resellers were interviewed and asked to share a survey with their followers. This methodology allowed for a dual analysis of secondhand clothing resellers as well as their followers. Literature analysis of scholarly articles revealed a research gap pertaining to resellers and secondhand clothing consumption on social media. Instead, research on traditional in-person thrifting was analyzed and used in comparison to the findings of this research. Despite the research gap in scholarly articles, media and pop culture articles concerning online thrifting are abundant. These articles attribute online thrifting's popularity to sustainability and frequently posit resellers as opportunists participating in an unethical cash grab at the expense of lower socioeconomic groups. The interviews considered a broad spectrum of factors in order to sufficiently address the nuance of the issue. The interviews served to determine the ethics and values of secondhand clothing resellers on Instagram; both in comparison to conceptions posited by criticism and the values and determinants of their consumers/followers. Resellers were asked what motivated them to run their pages, as well as what they found rewarding in order to analyze the validity of the claims being made. Subsequent interview questions examined their administrative duties, the role of charity, as well as the resellers' perceptions of their consumers and what motivates them. Literature on in-person secondhand clothing consumption yielded cost and aesthetic appreciation as the main consumer determinants. Given this understanding, the survey examined whether cost and aesthetic appreciation were as relevant in relation to online thrifting. Additionally, the survey examined the role of sustainability, frequency of online thrifting in relation to general clothing consumption, and perception of online thrifting overall.

The survey findings substantiated the belief in existing literature that sustainability was a supplementary determinant. Sustainability did not directly influence secondhand clothing consumers and resellers increased accessibility on many levels. However, the vast majority of consumers believe online thrifting's rising popularity to be attributed to awareness surrounding sustainability and the environment, despite environmental concerns not being a primary determinant expressed by survey respondents. While cost and aesthetic appreciation hold primary influence over in-person thrifting, the survey results indicated that the main determinants for online thrifting are aesthetic appreciation and convenience. Cost holds some influence in online thrifting, but not nearly as much as it does for in-person thrifting. Consumers of online secondhand fashion like to be perceived as unique, or appreciate the convenience that online thrifting offers. Convenience was expressed through time saved, the curated nature of Instagram resellers' pages, or the physical act of searching through racks, which survey respondents expressed contempt for. The survey also revealed that in relation to online thrifting, in-person thrifting's appeal was in risk reduction. Many consumers did not have a high enough degree of trust regarding fit and quality to thrift online.

The interviews indicated high levels of enthusiasm, awareness, and beneficence in resellers. Despite criticism often expressing that resellers lack morality, charity and beneficence were observed in the interviews. Four out of five resellers have participated in charitable collaborations or events, and one is a charitable trust. Each of the resellers interviewed expressed non-financial motivations for running their page. There was no evidence to substantiate the claim that resellers' main motivation is financial. Nor was there evidence to substantiate the claim that lower socioeconomic groups are adversely affected by the reselling practice. Survey response data indicated that resellers increase accessibility for those who may not have time to thrift

in-person or may not live close enough to secondhand shops. Additionally, a theoretical conception of ethical fashion was outlined in this research based upon the literature review, survey findings, and interview findings. The thought of constructing an ethical fashion system can seem daunting, but it is possible through activism, accountability, and the use of existing technology.

This research has contributed to the existing field of study on secondhand clothing by developing an understanding of resellers and consumers of secondhand clothing on social media simultaneously. The Instagram thrift scene is gaining popularity, and that growth is not likely to stop or slow. Social media has changed our collective consumption habits, and secondhand clothing is not exempt. The influence of sustainability was proven to be overestimated by both resellers and consumers. Convenience and aesthetic appreciation were established as primary determinants for choosing to purchase secondhand clothing online. The geographic, cost, and time dimensions of accessibility were examined. A sense of community and well doing rather than strictly financial motivation for the resellers was found. These findings can be used as a stepping stone for future research and contribute to contemporary perception and understanding of the reselling practice.

The limitations of this research and implications for future research should be noted. Interviews and surveys were limited to Aotearoa New Zealand, which is a smaller country with many rural populations. Studies in countries with a larger population might yield different results. The cultural context is significant. Resellers in countries with a higher prevalence of individualism, such as the United States, might not be as motivated by feelings of community or charity. This research looked at online thrifting, not thrifting as an overall practice. Previous literature on in-person thrifting was used comparatively. Given how frequently issues pertaining

to accessibility are referenced in criticism of resellers, future research could examine this and conduct interviews or surveys of secondhand shoppers who express an economic motivation. Instead of being a ‘voice for the voiceless’, research could examine whether the claims of limited accessibility hold validity. An expansion upon the findings from survey Q5 serving as a comparison of in-person and online thrifters could help determine how they vary from each other as well as the existing literature. Given the cognitive dissonance between perception and reality of sustainable habits pertaining to clothing (Takedomi Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020), a study concerning consumer perception of sustainability and secondhand clothing could contribute greatly to secondhand clothing research.

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