

Thrifting, New Atlas for Indian Millenials Shopping

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the ideology behind thrift shopping, the attitude and factors driving the Indian customer's and their intention to buy second-hand fashion items. Data in this research is collected via poll on Instagram and articles available on the internet. The influence of the covid 19 pandemic on Indian fashion customers, the rise of Eco-conscious shopping, and mindful buyers are recorded here. The relationship between the purchase intentions, the new norm of sustainability is also considered. Covid 19 pandemic with no doubt has rapidly swept over the nation and has been a challenging time for all. Even though it has successfully induced fear, worry, and concerns in people's mindset there have also been some positive changes that have happened. With most of the world in isolation, it has made people aware of the situation which caused us to be in this condition and re-think our relationship with the environment. It has drawn a realization that we are capable of global, collective action and we can add value in building healthier ecosystems by making few alterations in our lifestyle. The research highlighted the shift in attitude and belief of the customers to accept and adapt to the concept of thrifting was caused by the covid 19 pandemic. The finding in this research paper is a contribution from both primary and secondary research.

Keywords: thrifting; millenials; shopping

1. INTRODUCTION

Life on earth is undoubtedly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic to which none of us were prepared. The main takeaway from this situation was to be grateful to our planet and evolving more towards an environmentally conscious mindset. There is a sense of responsibility that this generation has developed in their minds. Without a doubt, the trend of buying and consuming has changed drastically. E-commerce is at an all-time high over the decade and hence allowing small brands to be explored by the customer. This change in mindset is urging people to look at the way they consume products, the future of thrift shops seems very bright. Ever heard of the saying "One man's trash is another man's treasure". Thrifting is something similar to the saying except for the trash part. To put things simply, thrifting means going shopping at a thrift store where you'll find gently used apparel items at discounted/affordable prices. Thrifted items have been loved by a previous owner, but are usually in good shape with enough life left to be useful to a new owner. The thrift stores are also of different types and intentions such as chain thrift stores which are run by large and international chains which vary in selection and pricing of the items, Independent/family-run thrift store, Vintage/Antique thrift store which stocks only the vintage items and is positioned highly when compared to other stores as one can find a

screaming deal, specialty second-hand store, consignment stores which acts as a middleman between the seller and the buyer who at the end of the day earns profit margin when the products are sold, pre-loved store. Non-profit mission-based stores are also called charity shops where the profit made from selling thrift items here is used for charity. Internet Thrift shops. Thrift-shop and preloved are semantically related. In some cases, you can use "Thrift-shop" instead of the adjective "Preloved".

Thrifting is not a whole new concept to Indians. It has been around in India much longer than fast fashion. We all have seen street-side shops selling used clothes which are informal reuse economy powered mainly by the street vendors or hawkers. Apparel reuse has been a common practice in Indian households. We regularly see clothes are either handed down within the families or donated to the needy. The elder kid's clothes get passed onto the younger ones, and after all those uses, if they are still in wearable condition, they might be given to domestic workers or someone in need. If a garment is not in good condition, it is turned into a cleaning cloth. So we can say that second-hand clothing has been in India as part of donations, hand-me-downs. Also, earlier in India the thrift market used to operate by buying used clothing and selling it within India, usually from relatively higher income groups to lower-income groups. For instance, people bartered utensils for their used clothes in cities which in turn were sold to bulk

buyers. However, the new wave of looking at profits through reuse is something leading brands/entrepreneurs have either started tapping into or are keen to do. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, although the overall clothing demand is expected to decline, consumers are likely to buy used clothes in an attempt to cut down on expenses. India is in the unique position of being both a major apparel-producing country as well as a consumption market. According to McKinsey & Co. 2019, India is all set on the track to be the sixth-largest apparel market in the world by 2022 with its young population and a growing middle-class community. As per the report, the factors such as an increase in income levels will majorly impact the customer's shift from need-based purchasing to aspiration-based purchasing.

Still, the formal thrift clothing market in India is in its early stages of consumer adoption. Since the pandemic, thrifting on streets is not the only option available. Recently, social media platforms like Instagram have turned out to be a huge platform for establishing thrift stores. These stores comprise mainly start-ups of small and medium-size which usually cater to different consumer segments and clothing types (casuals, Indian wear, designer wear, etc.). India is the leading importer of used clothes and we are aware of that fact, hence thrifting online has quite a sustainable scope here. Once the clothes are imported they then segregate the clothes which can be sold and the ones which can be mutilated.

The fashion industry alone produces around 2.1 million tons of CO₂ everywhere which is a threat. So the concept of thrifting which promotes the reusing of clothes will help to reduce this carbon footprint.

Thrift stores are not just a part of an environmentally conscious mindset, they are now a part of the global multi-billion-dollar industry not only in India throughout the world. The consuming behavior and preferences of this generation are more economical and environmentally conscious, which ensures that the thrift-shop model won't fall out of fashion for the next few years.

The scope for thrifting is quite evident, hence several entrepreneurs have come forward and are using social media platforms, particularly Instagram, to sell what's in their closet like a pre-loved closet sale or to source second-hand clothes.

Since most of the online thrifting stores are on Instagram, the process to open a store is straightforward. The owners every day follow a simple process of clicking pictures of the pieces they own or sourced, posting them on their page, sharing the price details, and answering other queries of the customers through emails, DM's, and snapping it up by a digital transaction. Most of the thrift shop owners use India post or partner with a courier service for the delivery of their products.

Also, many Instagram thrift pages are planning to expand their Instagram business into websites since the sales now show no signs of slowing down. The buying habit of millennials is to make sure the amount they pay for a product is worth, this does well for online thrifting. Often the owners of these pages support each other by giving shout-outs. Their shared love for thrift items is visible.

Many new thrift stores are being found every single day. This increases competition, but sideways, it also increases the influence of the community, so it's a double-edged sword. It is competitive, yet not threatening.

COVID-19 pushed more retail consumers online and hence has given such a boost that many of the online thrift stores are likely to turn into full-time careers benefiting both the consumers and the owners. There's no significant count of data on the growth of these stores, but we can see around 46,000-plus posts with #thriftindia on Instagram in recent times gives an idea of the rise in interest in second-hand items.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research was aimed at finding out the consumer attitudes, intentions, and behavior toward their buying habits, usage, and handling of second-hand clothes concerning the Indian context. The survey conducted here is independent of any brand or anticipation concerning the ongoing discussion. The approach used for this survey is the Instagram poll method, one on one interviews.

- **The Instagram poll method:** Questionnaires were made to record the response from the consumers who are of an age group between 18 and 30. As it was an online survey the respondents here can be considered as the ones who have access to the internet, may have interest in ecological issues, and may likely hold views and interest in any particular area.
- **One-on-one interview**
For this survey, the customer group who were interviewed were between the age group of 25 to 35 and these were different from the individuals who took online surveys. Around 6 members shared their thoughts on the ideology of thrifting and their thrifting experience if they had any.
- **Literature study**
Collected data from some journals and the study available on the internet.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results derived from this survey throw light upon the aspects of buyer's motivations and behavior toward thrifting and the barriers to purchasing clothing from thrift stores. The initial questionnaires were to know the understanding of shoppers concerning the concept of thrifting and how their thoughts on the items they thrifted. The shoppers who responded as thrift customers were then questioned about their motivation to buy the clothing from thrift stores to which they mainly mentioned it is to reduce their environmental impact and some mentioned the ideology is to obtain a branded piece at a relatively lower price point compared to a brand new one. The Respondents with lower incomes were primarily motivated by the low price point of clothing in a thrift store. The other factors

that were mentioned about getting an opportunity to try out brands or designer clothing at low prices before purchasing them brand new with confusion in mind whether that particular brand style would suit them before investing in them, so instead they could thrift the items from those brands in a pocket-friendly manner.

To validate the responses obtained the shoppers were further questioned about the feeling they had after thrifting. To know whether it gave them a sense of satisfaction in adding value to sustainable fashion by helping to divert clothing waste from the landfill and reduce the carbon footprint. The majority of the response received to this questioner was "Yes". In some of the responses, the shoppers also mentioned that the item which they purchased on thrift stores were trendy and lasted longer as well. Few mentioned how they have not yet shopped anything from thrift stores but would not mind buying from a thrift store in the future if they could find trendy and unique pieces through which they can make a fashion statement. The other responses were from the shoppers who are not yet aware of the thrift stores and how they operate. Few were about the shoppers who are not comfortable with the idea of thrifting.

The reason for that was stated as they were concerned about the hygiene of the product sold in thrift stores as for them thrifting sounded unhygienic. They also had a perception that the clothes purchased from a thrift store will either be damaged, faded, stretched, or not durable. When this set of shoppers were then further questioned if they would shop

from thrift stores if these concerns were tackled then most of them responded that they would come forward for thrifting whereas few were not sure about thrifting even if these concerns were no more in the picture. The shoppers who had shopped from thrift stores were questioned about the motivation behind their purchase of second-hand clothing, they mentioned that it gave them a sense of satisfaction when they play a role in making a positive environmental impact and when they add value to the sustainable lifestyle. They also mentioned that they can happily shop from a thrift store if the quality and hygiene were assured.

The business model which is operating on the ideology of thrifting in India should be designed and operate in a way that motivates shoppers to buy secondhand clothing and addresses their major concerns such as hygiene. Also, introducing new behaviors through the business model and communications could influence the movement of secondhand clothing. The thrift lovers can also encourage others to thrift by being a visual reminder of why thrifting can be a great idea. By mentioning about the items they thrifted and how long they lasted and how useful was it for them. The influences on social media platforms who influence the mass should take the initiative to promote thrifting and make realize the value they add to their environment by purchasing from thrift stores.

The results of the survey are represented below in Figure 1.

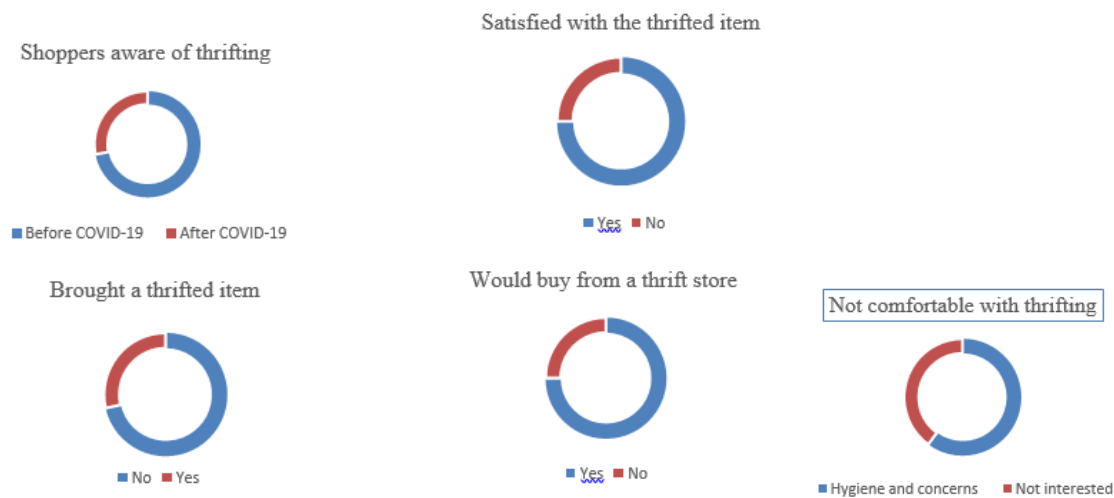


Figure 1 Survey Result

4. CONCLUSION

The one major impact of thrifting which is agreed universally is thrift shopping is environmentally beneficial. Thrift shopping is an essence of sustainability. Each item purchased from a thrift store is one less item that makes its way into the landfill. We are aware of the fact that India's per capita apparel consumption has always been lower than other countries, however, the recent data shows it is steadily

rising. India is poised to be the world's sixth-largest apparel market by 2022. Earlier, informal methods of clothing reuse have existed in India in one or another way. Either as hand-me-downs, donated, barter, or resold clothes in the informal marketplace. However, the recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made a shift in customer mindset which resulted in businesses, mostly start-ups are just beginning to formally tap the value of second-hand clothes for profits and to move toward circular fashion. To further

strengthen these businesses understanding the customer motivation, attitudes, and behavior toward pre-owned, or thrift clothing is very critical. To inform and guide the actions of stakeholders/brands participating in the transition of circular fashion.

One of the biggest benefits for the planet from thrifting is, keeping the clothes out of landfills which would stay there for hundreds of years causing major concerns. Especially now that a lot of clothing is made out of synthetic material that won't degrade, these clothes tossed into landfills take up a vast amount of space and contribute to the greenhouse gases plaguing our planet. People are now aware that the clothes they no longer want will make much more of an impact when donated or brought to thrift stores, rather than tossed as a trash. This major shift in mindset is not only beneficial to the environment, but it also helps some of the shoppers to get their hands on some unique pieces which they can style in different ways and make a fashion statement without burning a hole in their pocket.

For many thrifting is not just about acquisitions, it is about the experience they get. The satisfaction they get. As thrifting increases the lifespan of a product which is a win-win for both the shopper and the planet. Thrifting will undoubtedly reduce the demand for new clothing production which directs to sustainability. Also, the cultural aspects of Indians such as the belief were some find it is inauspicious to wear second-hand clothes, the status of a person is determined by the products she owns and claims ownership to be now being edged out slowly. People now don't mind the things handed down to them by strangers. Thrifting with no doubt will soon contribute significantly to India's e-commerce scene in an environmentally conscious way, with a sense of a growing community.

The results of this survey can be considered as a data that can be used by thrift store owners / entrepreneurs / brands to understand the attitude of consumers towards thrifting in the Indian market. In addition, this survey can be used for further researches with a greater scope and so that it can strengthen and complement the previous research.

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