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Consumer Behavior of Young Finns Towards Second-Hand Clothing

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ABSTRACT

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Given the growing concerns about global warming and environmental concerns this thesis looked into the growing trend of second-hand clothing consumption among young Finns as a sustainable alternative to fast fashion within the framework of circular economy principles. It explored the consumer behavior of 18-30-year-olds in Finland the aim being finding out whether sustainability or other factors determine their buying decisions towards second-hand clothing. To better understand the consumer behavior among the target group a quantitative research approach including an online survey was used.

Analysing both theoretical data and survey findings the research shows that the second-hand market has an important role in mitigating environmental challenges caused by the fast fashion industry, which ranks as the second most polluting industry in the world. While theoretical findings indicated a growing alignment of second-hand clothing with the principles of circular economy the survey revealed a complex picture of consumer attitudes and the actual behavior. Internal influences such as personal factors, perception, motivation, attitudes, and beliefs were found to shape buying decisions, alongside external factors including social influences, cultural values, affordability, and accessibility. Despite a positive attitude towards sustainability, the survey revealed a preference for new clothing driven by factors such as affordability and accessibility. Challenges, such as size variety, hindered the full adoption of second-hand clothing despite respondents' awareness of its environmental benefits.

Recommendations emerged for closing the gap between sustainable attitudes and buying behavior, highlighting the need for improving accessibility, variety, and awareness of second-hand options. Continuous monitoring of consumer trends was suggested to ensure the effectiveness of initiatives promoting circular economy principles in the fashion industry. The findings underscored the interplay of individual preferences, economic restrictions, and environmental concerns in shaping consumer behavior, highlighting the importance of various approaches to promote sustainable consumption patterns among consumers.

Keywords: second-hand clothing, fast fashion, circular economy, sustainability, consumer behavior, internal influences, external influences

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1 INTRODUCTION

Global warming and environmental issues have led to a widespread desire of reducing one's carbon footprint and making more sustainable choices. Different industries, especially the textile industry have a significant contribution to pollution and waste creation accounting for 20% of the world's industrial wastewater emissions and it produces 92 million tonnes of waste yearly (European Parliament News, 2023). Second-hand buying has gained popularity as a solution to reduce pollution and waste. More and more second-hand stores and online resale platforms have entered the market, and it is important to conduct more research for it to understand their effectiveness in reducing textile waste creation.

The main objective of the thesis is to understand the consumer behaviour of young Finnish people when it comes to second-hand clothing, and if their buying motives are driven by sustainability or other factors. The author's interest is to see if the movement of buying second-hand has reached the population of young Finns in a way that it is to stay. Therefore, the author carried out quantitative research among 18-30-year-olds in Finland to understand the factors that guide their choices when it comes to second-hand fashion.

The thesis is structured to begin with an introduction to its conceptual framework and research questions. The next chapter explores the transition from a traditional linear model to a more circular approach highlighting the textile industry's waste creation and the growing preference for second-hand clothing as a sustainable alternative, especially among environmentally conscious younger consumers. The following chapters delve into the fast fashion and second-hand industries in Finland, analysing the impact through the lens of circular economy principles. The chapters analyse the global demand for cheaply made clothes and how it leads to faster resource exhaustion and

waste. Moreover, it is show-cased that there is a rising popularity of second-hand stores in Finland as a response to these environmental concerns. While also examining the theoretical aspects of consumer behavior, the internal influences, as in personal and psychological factors that influence the buying process. As well as the external influences like social influences, cultural values, and accessibility. In the final chapters the author outlines the survey conducted among the target group and presents the results. These findings offer valuable insights into the thesis's objectives and research questions completing the analytical framework and providing deeper understanding of the topic.

2 PROBLEM SETTING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

The main objective of the thesis is to understand the consumer behavior of young Finns when it comes to buying second-hand clothing with an emphasis on both internal and external influences. The thesis places importance on the act of buying second-hand clothing within the context of the circular economy, which is an important pillar in the pursuit of a more sustainable society.

In order to fulfil the objective of addressing the research problem, four research questions are thought out.

- What is the consumer behavior amongst young Finns towards second-hand clothing?
- What are the factors influencing the decision-making process of young Finns when purchasing second-hand clothing?
- How do the attitudes of young Finns towards sustainability and the environment affect their willingness to buy second-hand clothing?
- What is the impact of buying second-hand clothing on the environment in the context of circular economy?

The conceptual framework in figure 1 shows the connection of the core concepts within the thesis providing a clear picture of how all of them contribute to the overall understanding of the thesis. The framework shows what affects the buying behavior of young Finns towards second-hand clothing. Internal and external factors they interact and influence each other. These factors are used to find answers to the questions of consumers about purchasing behavior and its various aspects such as personal, psychological, social, and cultural factors. Promoting a circular economy through the reuse of products and materials like second-hand clothing requires an understanding of consumer behavior and the internal and external factors that influence it. Therefore, the circular economy in the conceptual framework connects through all concepts.

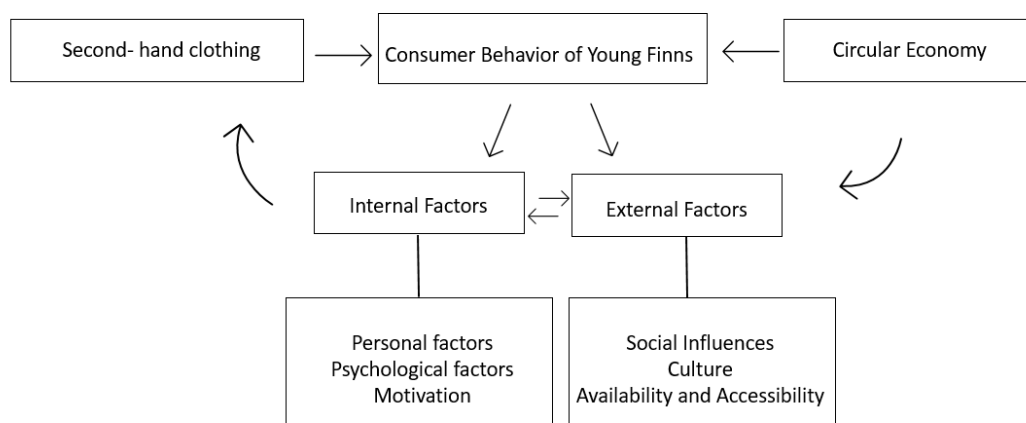


Figure 1. Conceptual framework (Author of thesis, 2023)

3 CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Circular economy challenges the traditional linear economy model by presenting an improved approach to production, use of resources and to the disposal of goods. In the linear model the resources are extracted, processed into products, used, and then disposed of as waste. This approach is called a “take-make-dispose” model. It has led harm to the environment, exhaustion of

resources and waste creation. The goal of circular economy is to create a closed loop system, where the resources stay in use as long as possible, and the waste creation is as minimal as possible. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.)

Figure 2 greatly exhibits the differences between a linear economy model and a circular economy loop. Where the “take-make-dispose” model proves to be an inefficient strategy whereas the circular economy goes beyond recycling and encompasses a wider range of strategies and principles for sustainable resource management. In the linear model products lifecycle will end whereas in the circular model the product will be reused, recycled, or repurposed.

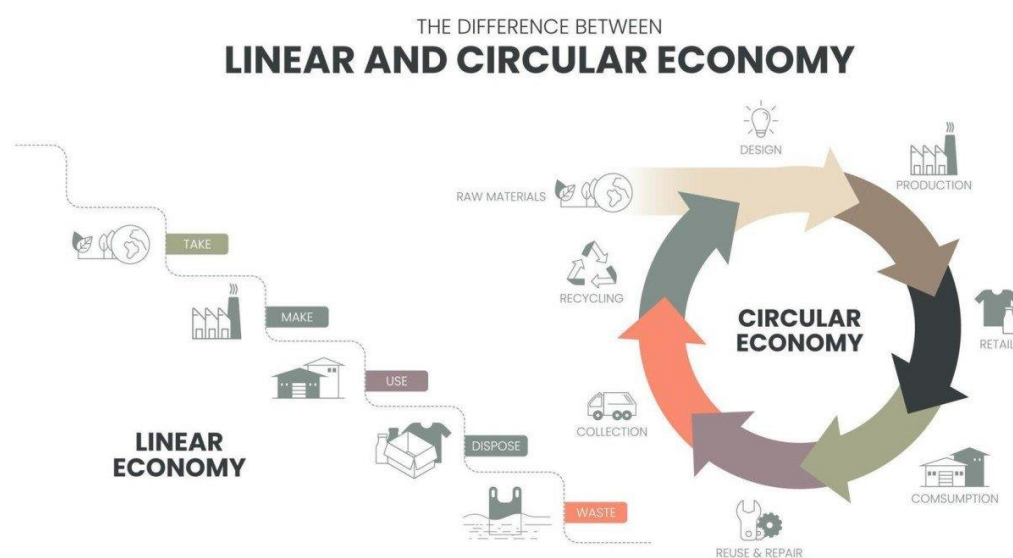


Figure 2. Closing the Loop: How Circular Companies are Changing the Game (Sustridge, 2023)

There are several environmental issues associated with the fashion and textile industry. Textile alone consumes 4% of the total global yearly water use, from crop growing to the process of dyeing and finishing textiles. Water-intensive practices strain freshwater resources, particularly in regions already facing water scarcity. The industry produces 20% of the world’s industrial wastewater emissions. The discharge of untreated wastewater from textile factories often contains harmful chemicals such as fabric dyes, bleach and finishing agents which will end up in the nature harming the soil, waterways, and the air. 10%

of global industrial carbon emissions comes from the textile industry. This surpasses the combined emissions of international flights and maritime shipping. (European Parliament News, 2023) In the context of fashion, the circular economy approach strives to establish sustainable systems as alternatives to the linear model.

In Europe, as a step towards circular economy, the European Union renewed its waste directives in 2021, which include a new strategy specifically targeting textile waste. According to the updated directives, EU member states are now obligated to establish separate collection systems for textile waste by 2025. The waste framework directives require member states to actively promote the reuse and repair of textiles. To support this effort the European Commission will provide guidelines on efficient waste separation and collection to the member states. These measures aim to enhance the circularity of textile materials and reduce their environmental impact throughout the EU. (European Commission, 2022.) Finland is developing a circular economy program aimed at advancing the principles of circular economy that is strategic with the goal of transitioning the economy towards a circular base by 2035 (Ympäristöministeriö, n.d.). Through this initiative the Finnish Government wants to reinforce Finland's position as a frontrunner in circular economy. Emphasizing its commitment to sustainable and resource-efficient practices. On January 1, 2023, new law regarding textile recycling came into force in Finland. Under the new law, Finland's municipalities are now required to collect textiles that are discarded by residents. As a result, textile waste must be sorted separately from other types of waste from now on. The waste textiles are collected and processed in a factory and the end result is textile fibres suitable for reuse. These recycled fibres are used in crafting yarn, insulation, and even the making of brand-new clothing. (YLE, 2023c.)

However, just shredding and reprocessing textiles into new clothes will not fully address the challenges faced by the environmentally harmful textile industry, but it will increase the recycling rate of textile waste in Finland. The fast fashion model cannot simply become environmentally friendly by encouraging the disposal of poorly lasting clothes that are not often worn, only to be replaced by

new clothes. Recycling textiles into reusable fibres is a good start in promoting the circular economy of textiles. Yet, it is important to realize that simply purchasing clothing without considering their lifespan and neglecting repairs, and relying only on recycling efforts is not sufficient. (YLE, 2023c.) Emphasizing responsible consumption habits, including proper maintenance and repair, is necessary to complement recycling initiatives in achieving a more sustainable textile industry.

One way of steering the fashion industry more towards circular economy is the promotion of second-hand markets as it can play a crucial role in redirecting consumption away from new products, emphasizing the value and usage of existing items. By buying and selling used clothing people contribute to a more circular and sustainable fashion system. Second-hand markets provide opportunities for clothing to be reused, repaired, and remodelled, allowing for the continuous circulation of fashion items (Loop Generation, n.d.). This not only reduces the environmental impact of manufacturing new clothes but also encourages a shift towards a more conscious and responsible approach to fashion consumption.

Typically, people only use half of their clothing which results in a significant number of unused clothes with unfulfilled potential. This leads to wastage of materials and resources used in their manufacturing. While consumers keep purchasing new versions of the same items, which then further contributes to exhausting resources. As a result, there are hundreds of millions of clothes that remain unused (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). By promoting second-hand buying the number of uses increases. Clothes that already exist can be given a second, third, or even fourth life, thereby extending their value and reducing the need for new manufacturing.

4 FAST FASHION AND SECOND-HAND CLOTHING IN FINLAND

Fast fashion's carbon footprint

Fast fashion is a global phenomenon. Fast fashion refers to the production and consumption of inexpensive and quickly produced clothing items. Usually associated with low-quality materials and unethical labor practices (UNEP, 2022).

The carbon footprint of the fast fashion industry is considered to be alarmingly sizeable. As stated earlier, the industry is responsible for 10% of the global carbon dioxide emissions. Resulting from many energy-intensive stages across the supply chain of fast fashion items as illustrated in figure 3. A large percentage of clothing is made in developing countries with looser pollution regulations than in Europe. As mentioned in the previous chapter, manufacturing process contributes to the industry's overall environmental impact, from spinning and weaving raw fibers into fabric to dyeing and sewing the clothes. Also, the high volume of machinery used that is often run by non-renewable fossil fuel increases the carbon emissions. The shift to renewable energy options such as solar and wind energy, require a significant number of finances. Which makes facilities face obstacles like budget and infrastructural limits, therefore leading them to not transform their practices into more sustainable alternatives (The Conscious Club, 2019).

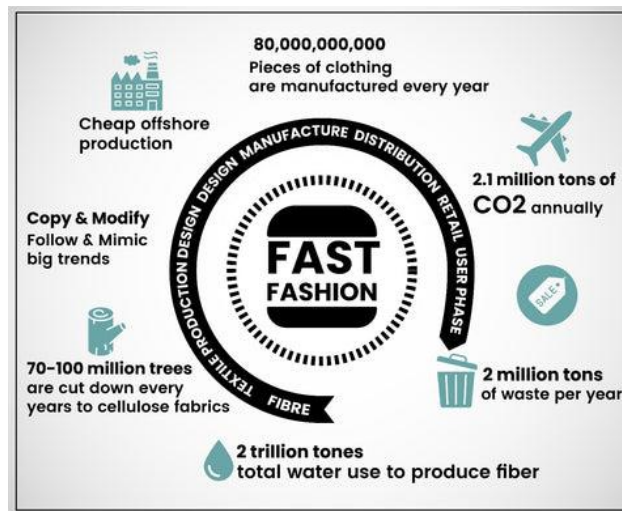


Figure 3. Circular Fashion Instead of Fast Fashion (Dunne, 2021)

The negative carbon footprint of fast fashion industry already starts from the production of the fibers used for the making of the clothes. Every phase of the supply chain affects the environment in some way. The industry's transportation of fashion items involves international supply chains. It is uncommon for raw materials to be grown, processed, manufactured, and sold in the same area. The shipment of raw materials to manufacturing facilities, and the transportation of finished items to distribution centers and retail locations, increase greenhouse gas emissions significantly. The manufacturing process of some clothing even may involve several journeys around the world. The amount of the emissions depends on the way of transportation – air, sea, or land. Ships are the most used methods of transportation, 90% of global trade is moved by them, handling almost 9,98 billion metric tons of goods per year. Around 2,5% of carbon dioxide emissions in the world comes from shipping. Even with this large carbon footprint shipping by boat is currently the most affordable and environmentally friendly option. A large ship releases about 10 grams of carbon dioxide to move one ton of goods one kilometre. That is half the amount of a train and almost one-fiftieth of what airplane would release to do a similar job (Lee, 2020).

Even though Finland is not a major producer of clothing, the carbon footprint of fast fashion industry in Finland is significantly affected by consumption, disposal, which are discussed in the next chapter, and transportation.

Transportation is a big part of the carbon footprint since the clothing is transported from manufacturing facilities to retail locations across the country. These logistics increase greenhouse gas emissions, especially foreign shipping. Because distances are long, transportation takes a lot of energy and harms the environment, due to the heavy reliance on fossil fuels for transportation. The further away the clothing is produced the larger environmental impact it has when transported (Finnwatch, 2022). The value of Finland's clothing imports in 2022 was a total of 1,62 billion euros, and most of the clothes, 38%, were transported to Finland from China (Tchitcherin, 2022). This highlights the global supply chain's substantial carbon footprint, particularly when considering international shipping.

Fast fashion in Finland

While Finland may not be a major hub for fast fashion production, it is still affected by the industry due to its global nature and consumer demand. Back in the 1960s, clothing held a significant value for the Finnish population, they were even documented in estate records as they were a significant financial investment during that time. Rather than discarding old clothes, Finns embraced the practice of modifying their garments to align with evolving fashion trends. In 1970 buying habits changed when clothes made from oil-based synthetic fibres were introduced to the market. The clothes were significantly cheaper, due to the fabric and the new materials enabled creation of more colorful and casual clothes, which attracted buyers. These clothes were not as long lasting and could not be modified as easily. This led to clothes were no longer repaired or modified but replaced by new clothes made from cheaper materials (Ekholm et al., 2019).

This trend of fast fashion has ever since grown even bigger. The shopping culture of fast fashion has been characterized by frequent shopping and trend-driven purchases. The constant desire for new clothes strains the supply chain and exhausts resources. In Finland there are world-famous clothing store giants that produce fast fashion in higher rates than ever. Clothing stores familiar to the Finnish population such as H&M, Zara, Reserved and many others are the biggest culprits for the growing fast fashion trend. The clothing collections

in the stores change rapidly, with the goal of selling as much as possible to a wide range of consumers. The clothes quickly become waste after their production due to surplus inventory from changing collections and short periods of usage for sold clothes. In the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century clothes production doubled, meaning the majority of European brands have released up to 24 collections annually, instead of just two for summer and winter seasons. The wearing time of clothes has also progressively shortened and since the late 1990s, the average lifespan of garments has decreased. This shift indicates that either the quality of clothing has decreased, or prices have become more affordable. Suggesting a trade-off between durability and affordability (Clarke, 2021; YLE, 2019)

Social media plays a significant role in driving daily trends and pushing the fast fashion industry's fast pace. Shopping hauls and try-on videos that are popular on Instagram and TikTok, have encouraged a culture of excessive shopping as trends change rapidly. One example, Shein, a Chinese fast fashion brand has notably gained popularity on TikTok. Influencers frequently showcasing large quantities of sponsored clothing. These platforms actively promote the consumption of low-quality, inexpensive clothing, often leading to their quick disposal. This adds to the already excess amount of textile waste produced yearly. (Afifa, 2022.) Annually, the textile industry worldwide creates 92 million tons of waste (Ruiz, 2023). In Finland around 90 million kilograms of textiles are thrown away every year. This sums up to 13 kilograms of textile waste per an average Finn. The majority of these textiles are disposables from consumers. (YLE, 2023d) This suggests that Finnish people still prioritize affordability over environmental impact in their decision-making process. However, despite this there are promising signs of a shift towards more sustainability. While fast fashion still holds a significant part in the lives of most Finns, the growing awareness of environmental issues and the praise for sustainability indicate a changing mindset. It suggests that more individuals are becoming conscious of the need to prioritize ethical and sustainable fashion choices, even if it has not fully made into their purchasing habits yet. Example being the rising

popularity of second-hand and vintage clothing markets in Finland offering consumers a more sustainable alternative to fast fashion.

Second-hand clothing

Second-hand stores, also referred to as thrift stores or charity shops, have a lengthy history in Finland. These stores have played a significant role in offering reasonably priced clothing, household items, and other goods to the Finnish population while also encouraging sustainability and waste reduction. Thrift store-style sales and donations have existed in Finland since the late 1800s. To help those in need, during this time churches and other charity organizations began accepting and distributing donations of used clothing. In 1920-30s textile peddlers sold textiles that had been removed from use in the marketplace. In 1960 the thrift store shop chain "The Salvation Army" was established in Finland, which is still one of the biggest thrift store chains in the country. Although, for a longtime thrift stores carried a negative reputation. Wearing used clothes that had previously belonged to someone else did carry a stigma. The stigma was often associated with the idea that wearing second-hand clothing indicated a lack of money. The societal norms and standards of beauty at the time placed a high value on new and clean clothing as a symbol of status and desirability (Nummelin, 2007). Attitudes towards used clothing have changed over time. The rise of more second-hand fashion movements, rising concerns of environmental issues and changing fashion trends have influenced a shift in perception. One of the most influential contributors to the development of second-hand stores in Finland is the "Finnish Red Cross". Established in 1877, the organization began collecting and selling second-hand goods to raise funds for their humanitarian work. Their efforts were particularly important during the economic recession of the 90s in Finland. As many Finns faced financial challenges during that period there was an increase in the demand for affordable items. The economic recession left many looking for a budget-friendly options to purchase clothing, furniture, and other essential items. Second-hand stores came to the rescue. These stores' affordable prices drew many towards them. (Suomen Punainen Risti, n.d.) Since then, the popularity of second-hand and vintage shops keeps on rising.

In 2020, around 26% of people aged 18 to 64 in Finland purchased second-hand clothing. In Europe's scale this exceeded Sweden where it was 23%, and Germany where it stood at 17%. (Trading Economics, n.d.) Second-hand stores are experiencing a growth rate twice that of other retail sectors in Finland. Between the start of 2023 and October, the second-hand market has grown by 18 percent (YLE, 2023a). The number shows how the second-hand movement is creating a notable impact in Finland's retail market. Second-hand stores are opening throughout the country to meet customers' demand. In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a couple hundred new clothing stores had to close their doors due to the challenging economy. Surprisingly, second-hand stores kept entering the market, showing the surge in Finnish interest in second-hand. Another example being second-hand store "Relove". Being a frontrunner in the second-hand market, making its mark by opening the world's first second-hand store operating within an airport. The store was opened in the Helsinki-Vantaa airport adding an innovative touch to airport retail. (YLE, 2023b) In addition, according to the Finnish Commerce Federation, circular trade in Finland has an estimated value of EUR 895 million (Kaupan Liitto, 2023) Estimates by the University of Tampere and the Finnish Commerce Federation the resale market of consumer to consumer were growing at an annual rate of 5-10 percent in Finland with a total estimated value of EUR 370 million in 2020. (Pirttikoski, 2020). There is confidence among second-hand store owners that the Finnish population will favor shopping for used items also in the future. More and more specialized second-hand stores catering to specific target audiences have been opened, such as "Almost New," a second-hand store mainly offering second-hand clothes for men (YLE, 2021).

Purchasing second-hand clothing has become increasingly popular as people become more conscious of pressing environmental issues and interested in adopting sustainable actions. One reason for this is the desire to fight the harmful effects of fast fashion making second-hand clothes an attractive alternative. Buying second-hand helps to reduce the carbon footprint of oneself and the industry in numerous ways. The biggest factor being decreasing the demand for new production of clothing, which helps to reduce waste, pollution,

and reserve resources. Buying second-hand emphasizes the importance of reusing what already exists in the world, diverting them from ending up in the landfills as waste. To highlight this, fast fashion clothing items that are worn fewer than 5 times emit a shocking 400% higher carbon emissions compared to clothes that are worn 50 times. Reduced consumer purchases of new clothing translate to lower production by the industry which leads to decrease in released pollution. This also contributes to reserving natural resources such as water. The production of one single t-shirt needs 2,700 litres of water, comparable to the amount needed to supply one person with drinking water for 2,5 years. The production of a single pair of jeans demands 10,000 litres of water. To fight the emissions from international transportation of shipping clothing, second-hand shopping usually involves shorter transportation distances. Logistics associated with the fashion supply chain are therefore reduced, resulting in lower carbon dioxide emissions (Loop Generation, n.d.)

It is important to note that buying second-hand is not without challenges. While second-hand buying does offer many environmental and economic benefits, it could contribute to over consumption, even though it seems counterintuitive. As second-hand items are often more budget-friendly than new ones this might encourage some people to buy more than they need or replace items frequently due to the lower cost. Some individuals might view second-hand buying as completely sustainable and believe they can buy more without negative environmental consequences. In the past purchasing second-hand items was valued for its affordability and sustainability. (Cartwright, 2023.) The current trend has shifted towards consumerism and staying fashionable. Thrifting, which was once a widespread activity, is now more niche catering mainly to people with time and financial resources. Embracing a minimalist mindset and adopting a less-is-more approach can benefit the society and the planet. (Watson, 2021).

5 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behaviour studies the choices, purchases, uses, and disposal of goods made by consumers to fulfil their needs and wants. The consumer behavior occurs as the routines, habits, and choices individuals make in the marketplace, in other words how the consumer engages in the market and why. Every buying decision is influenced by the consumer's life and the environment around them. These influences can be divided into internal and external factors, (Solomon, 2020) even when attempting to approach the purchase decision with rationality, these factors play a significant role.

5.1 Internal factors

To understand consumer behavior deeper, it is important to understand internal factors, where personal and psychological factors shape the decision-making process. Personal factors include demographics, lifestyle and personality traits that influence preferences. Psychological factors such as perception, motivation, attitudes, and beliefs unfold how consumer thinks when making purchasing decisions. (Solomon, 2020)

Personal factors

Personal factors such as age, life stage, occupation, economic status, lifestyle, and personality, shape consumer buying behavior. Consumers' preferences for products and brands often vary across different stages and ages of their lives. Life events like divorce or marriage trigger shifts in preferences impacting buying decisions as people adapt to new circumstances. (Solomon, 2020)

A person's occupation and economic status shapes needs and preferences in products. Higher-paying jobs provide bigger financial ability to buy premium products. The opposite being lower-paying jobs need budget-conscious plans focusing on essential and budget-friendly options to maximize more limited funds. Lifestyle influences buying habits. Similar lifestyles attract people to the

same products making it easier to do targeted marketing. In the example of second-hand shopping, younger consumers particularly young adults and students might be drawn to second-hand shopping due to limitations of student budget, and the growing awareness of environmental issues related to fashion industry. Personality traits guide consumer behavior with different personality types leaning toward specific products based on preferences and needs. Marketers consider these traits to create personalized and meaningful experiences for specific consumer segments. (Solomon, 2020)

Perception

Perception is the cognitive process through which individuals interpret, engage and interact with the world around them. It involves the brain's processing of various stimuli that impact the five different senses. It plays an important role in consumer behavior. It affects how individuals understand and respond to information and stimuli associated with products, services, brands, and marketing messages. (Solomon, 2020)

Consumer perception involves four stages, as seen in figure 4: exposure, attention, interpretation, and adaptation. In the example of second-hand buying, exposure occurs when a consumer encounters information or stimuli related to second-hand buying. For instance, the consumer is exposed to second-hand clothing through various channels such as second-hand stores and online resale platforms or coming across social media influencers promoting sustainable buying. In attention stage the consumer begins to pay attention to the idea of buying second-hand. The consumer could start more actively to seek out second-hand stores in the area. Attention filters what is relevant to the consumer in terms of fashion choices, which could lead to exploring more second-hand options. Interpretation happens as the consumer evaluates their options and interpret second-hand clothing as a means to express their style in a sustainable way and they acknowledge the environmental benefits of reducing clothing waste influenced by their existing knowledge and beliefs. Finally, the consumer adapts their behavior by incorporating second-hand shopping into their buying habits. This adaptation results in decreased sensitivity to

traditional retail options over time. These stages collectively shape consumer responses and guide marketing efforts. (Solomon, 2020).

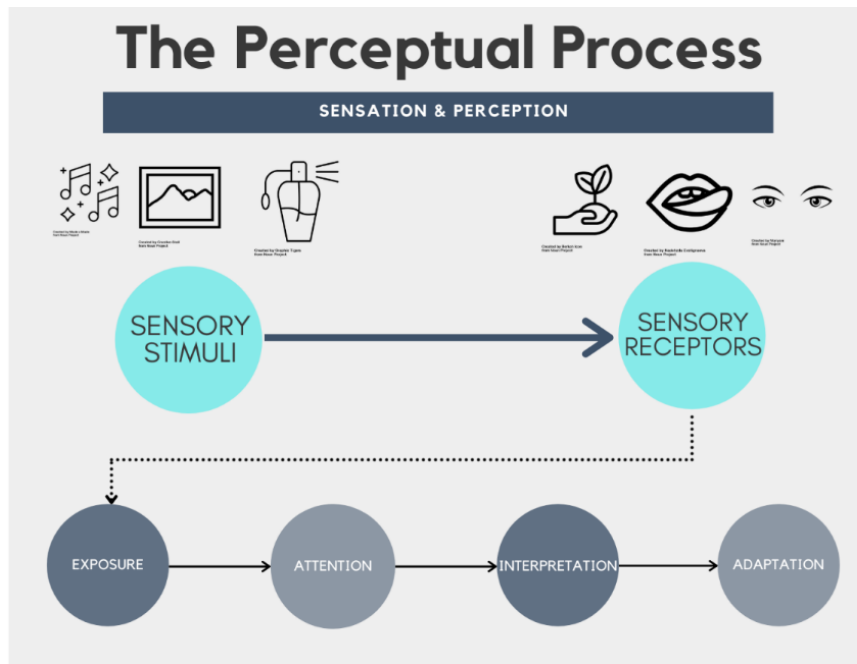


Figure 4. The Perceptual Process (Niosi, 2021)

Motivation

Motivation, in the world of consumer behavior encompasses the internal and external factors driving individuals' actions and choices. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory categorizes human needs into a hierarchical structure, introduced in 1934. At the base physiological and safety needs comes first followed by social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. This theory suggests that people are motivated to fulfil lower-level needs before progressing to higher-level ones. Businesses frequently strive to align their products and services with the specific need levels consumers aim to satisfy.

In the context of second-hand buying the key stages and components of the motivation process:

1. Unmet needs or wants: It begins with consumers experiencing unmet physiological, psychological, or social needs or desires, such as more affordable clothing options.

2. Recognition and awareness: Consumers must identify these needs, often caused by internal cues or external stimuli like advertisement of second-hand stores or discussion of sustainable fashion.
3. Information gathering: After recognizing the needs consumers start an information search. Using personal experiences, word-of-mouth, reviews, and advertisements to explore solutions.
4. Evaluation of options: Consumers evaluate available alternatives. Considering factors like quality, price, brand reputation, and personal preferences.
5. Motivation and decision: Shaped by emotions, attitudes, and values, drives the final purchase decision, that will match the specific need for example of affordability or sustainability. Leading consumer to choosing second-hand clothing. (Solomon, 2020)

Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs are central to consumer behavior. Attitudes reflect consumers' overall judgment of products and influence preferences and choices. Marketers aim to shape these attitudes through strategies like advertising. Beliefs are formed based on personal experiences and influence perceptions and purchase decisions. Positive beliefs about a product help shape attitudes, guiding consumer preferences. In recent years environmental values have gained importance in shaping consumer behavior due to increasing global awareness of issues like climate change and pollution. Consumers with strong environmental values actively seek eco-friendly products, like second-hand clothing, prioritize items with minimal environmental impact, and support companies committed to sustainability (Blythe, 2013, pp. 153-155). These values play a significant role in influencing consumer choices. Demand for eco-conscious products particularly second-hand clothing and encouraging businesses to align with these values.

5.2 External factors

External factors have a big impact on consumer behavior, guiding the decisions consumers make beyond just what they personally like. Social influences are deeply rooted in relationships and social dynamics. Reference groups and societal status influences the buying process. Culture is part of every consumer, it is influenced and shaped by values and beliefs within the upbringing environment. (Solomon, 2020) External influences also include availability and accessibility, which determine how easy it is to acquire desired products or services.

Social influences

People are naturally social beings, and their purchasing decisions are often influenced by the actions, opinions, and recommendations of people around them. One of the most important social factors affecting consumer behavior is reference groups. These are groups or individual people that people recognize themselves in them or aspire to be like. It is based on the idea that individuals evaluate themselves and make choices based on the standards set by these groups (Blythe, 2013, pp. 215-216). People often sort themselves and others into these social groups, it has a big impact on people's self-perception and how they feel emotionally. The way people view these groups' status shapes their confidence and how self-assured they feel about themselves, thus matching their preferences with those of the reference group (Tajfel et al., 1979). For instance, close circle such as family and friends influence in ways as sharing experiences, values and often a similar lifestyle. Outer circle including celebrities and social media influencers have an impact on purchasing decisions. Consumers might look up to celebrities and draw references from them, in the context of fashion, consumers might adopt the looks of those they admire. Social media influencers have emerged as an important reference group, influencing consumers through online platforms.

Culture

Cultural values, beliefs, norms, symbols, rituals, and language all shape how consumers see the world. These cultural elements influence what people consider important, acceptable, and desirable. For example, in cultures where environmental sustainability is important, the consumers prefer eco-friendly products and support green actions. Especially during holidays cultural symbols and rituals assign meaning to products which then influences purchasing decisions. Subgroups within society based on factors like age, religion, ethnicity, or lifestyle show clear consumer behavior patterns. Understanding these subcultures is vital for businesses to tailor their marketing strategies effectively. In the globalized marketplace, businesses must embrace cultural diversity, demonstrate cultural sensitivity, and adapt their messaging and products to connect with various consumer segments. (Blythe, 2013, pp. 183-185)

Availability and Accessibility

Availability means the quantity and what type of products or services are available in the market. It consists of factors such as the variety of options that is offered, seasonal variations, and whether suppliers are ready to meet the demand (Blythe, 2013, pp. 272-273). In the example of second-hand buying, it combines the idea that consumers must have access to a wide variety of second-hand clothing items to make meaningful choices.

Accessibility means the easiness for consumers to obtain a service or a product. It relates how easily consumers can physically or digitally access products or services. It includes factors like location, convenience, payment options, digital accessibility, and inclusive practices. Ensuring accessibility means accommodating a wide range of consumer preferences and needs, whether it's through physical proximity to stores, user-friendly online platforms, multiple payment choices, or inclusive design for diverse audiences. (Blythe, 2013, pp. 272-273).

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research design

The author decided to carry out descriptive research approach as the research design, which includes a survey. To get answers to the research questions of the thesis, a survey was determined to be the best option for this study. "... research design is a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to be completed—operationalizing variables so they can be measured, selecting a sample of interest to study, collecting data to be used as a basis for testing hypotheses, and analysing the results" (Kumar, 2019, p.155). The objective of the thesis is to find out young Finn's consumer view and what is their behavior towards second-hand clothing. Why they buy or do not buy clothes second-hand, what are the driven reasons for it, and do research on how second-hand buying is crucial part of circular economy.

6.2 Research method

To address the research objectives, this thesis undertook a quantitative research approach. Quantitative research relies on numerical data and statistical analysis to measure and generalize patterns. Statistical techniques are used to analyze and interpret the collected data based on the use of measurable variables. The data collection methodology used by researchers involves structured techniques, such as surveys, experiments, or observations with predetermined variables. Identifying patterns is often the goal for making predictions or drawing conclusions about a phenomenon in a larger population. While qualitative research focuses on exploring in-depth insights with open-ended questions (Myers et al., 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To address the thesis's objectives a survey employing closed-ended questions and some questions with a possibility to answer more openly, is conducted to find out how young Finns see second-hand buying and what affects their buying behavior. This method, as a quantitative research approach, involves designing a structured set of questions with predetermined response options as well as semi

open-ended questions to gain a deeper understanding of respondents' thoughts, experiences, and perspectives.

6.3 Population and sampling

The study primarily focuses on understanding the perspectives of young individuals in Finland aged between 18 and 30 years regarding their attitudes and behaviors when it comes to purchasing second-hand clothing. This choice of age group as the sample population comes from the author's personal interest in investigating the preferences and behaviors of their own age group.

The entire 18-30 age group in Finland, is what is referred to as "the population" in this study. To determine how many participants are willing to participate in the survey, "sampling" term is used. This research's main objective is to gather a sample that truly reflects 18–30-year-olds in Finland and their secondhand shopping practices. The precision and reliability of the findings are dependent upon the size of the sample population (Lohr, 2021). A target sample size of approximately one hundred respondents has been set. Importantly, the survey will not have a set number of respondents beforehand. Instead, the final sample size will be determined once the survey is sent out.

6.4 Making the survey

The survey was prepared by the author of the thesis. The questions are designed for easy comprehension, and the survey can be completed within a 5-minute timeframe. The questions and answer choices are available in both Finnish and English, making sure that everyone can understand them, no matter their language preference. The survey is centered around investigating the buying behavior of young Finns concerning second-hand clothing. It aims to understand why they choose to buy second-hand clothing and if they are hesitant what makes them uncertain about it. A central objective of the survey is to gain insights into the extent to which Finnish youth consider environmental

factors when buying clothing. In particular, the research is trying to figure out if buying used clothes is seen as an environmentally friendly choice or if there are other reasons behind this decision. This survey also investigates the impact of second-hand shopping on addressing environmental concerns and evaluates whether it will continue to be a key approach for young people to promote sustainable development and contribute to a circular economy.

6.5 Data collection and analysis

To conduct the research for the thesis, the survey made by the author was sent out to young Finnish people in age bracket of 18-30 years of age. The survey was sent out on the February 20, 2024, through the author's own personal social media channels, such as Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, and WhatsApp. The survey was open for a week and a half. The link to the survey was open to anyone who fell into the target group, and the survey could be shared with those belonging to the target group to reach more respondents. Google Forms was used as the tool to collect and analyze the data from the survey. It was selected for its user-friendly platform. Ideal for conducting online surveys as visual graphs created by the platform further simplify data analysis. By analyzing the data, the aim was to find regularities and differences between the respondents.

6.6 Validity and reliability

In the field of survey research, validity and reliability are essential concepts for collecting data. A credible and meaningful survey outcome depends on both of these factors.

Validity means examining if the research study or a survey really measures what it is supposed to. A high level of validity means that the study is effectively measuring the desired characteristics. To demonstrate validity researchers typically use a mix of techniques including careful experimental design, different measurement tools and statistical analyses. In research, especially when

using a questionnaire, people might interpret the questions differently from how they were intended by the researcher. If this happens, the validity of the findings is compromised as they conflict with the researcher's hypothesis and the answers will not truly address the researcher's questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, in the context of a survey about consumer behavior towards second-hand buying, the questions have to be set in a way that it truly asks the right questions and are simple enough to understand about what the reasons are for buying second-hand such as motivations, preferences, and behaviors among the target group. There must be sufficient differentiation between the answer options, to guarantee respondents understanding of the questions so that it aligns with the researcher's intent.

Reliability regards making sure the results are consistent and dependable. It seeks to determine whether the results are consistent when the same measurement is repeated or when different researchers use the same tool to measure the same phenomenon. Ensuring that the research is reliable and consistent is crucial regardless of whether the same measurement is repeated, or different researcher utilizes the same tool, reinforcing the integrity of the data and the overall trustworthiness of the study. The reliability of research measurements is assessed through the use of tests-retests and interrater reliability, among other techniques. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The author can claim survey reliability based on the fact that the sample of approximately 100 respondents demonstrates both a balanced distribution across the targeted age group of 18-30 years old in Finland. This group size helps get a diverse representation of perspectives on the research objective, this way the survey's results are more reliable. The response rate was achieved by distributing the survey through various social media channels, which shows active participation and interest from the target group. The survey was carefully planned and carried out to minimize any mistakes or unfairness, resulting in data that is more trustworthy and consistent. The author used a pilot group of close friends to test the understandability, clarity, and technical functioning of the survey. This was done to ensure that once the survey was distributed for real, the collection of the data would be reliable. The author made sure the research is

reliable by following methodological standards and gathering data in a systematic way.

7 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The link to the survey was sent through the author's personal social media contacts such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat. Additionally, it was shared on the social media website Reddit, where it was accessible to the public allowing anyone who came across it to answer the survey. The author's close circle also shared the survey within their own contacts. The survey received a total of 150 responses. Age distribution among the respondents was 11,3% in the age group 18-20, 30,7% in the age group 21-23, 34,7% in group 24-26 and 23,3% in the age group of 27-30. While the percentage difference between the age groups over 20 years of age is not extremely big, the largest segment of the respondents belonged to the age group of 24-26. Over half of the respondents, 65,3% identified as female, 31,3% as male and 3,3% as non-binary or another gender. It is important to note that the larger gender distribution among the respondents can have an effect on the responses as it may influence the perspective and experiences leaning towards one gender's viewpoint over the other in the analyse of the survey questions. In addition, the survey focuses solely on second-hand and fast fashion buying behavior. Ecological clothing typically adds a third category in this type of analysis; however, the survey's questions were formed and analysed only from the perspective of second-hand and fast fashion.

The first question after the demographic questions, question 3 "Do you prefer purchasing new or second-hand clothing items?" aims to understand the general background of respondents' buying habits when it comes to new and second-hand clothing. In figure 5, it can be seen that buying new clothing items dominates among the respondents with 42% buying new compared to 21,3% completely buying second-hand. However, buying both equally comes in a

close second with 36,7% of respondents. A significant number of respondents buy both new and second-hand clothing which represents a positive step towards the transformation of buying habits to be more sustainable. In addition, since this question does not specify the type of new clothing that is bought it cannot be established whether the new clothing purchases are ecologically sourced or not.

3. Ostatko mieluummin uusia vai käytettyjä vaatteita? / Do you prefer purchasing new or second-hand clothing items?

N=150

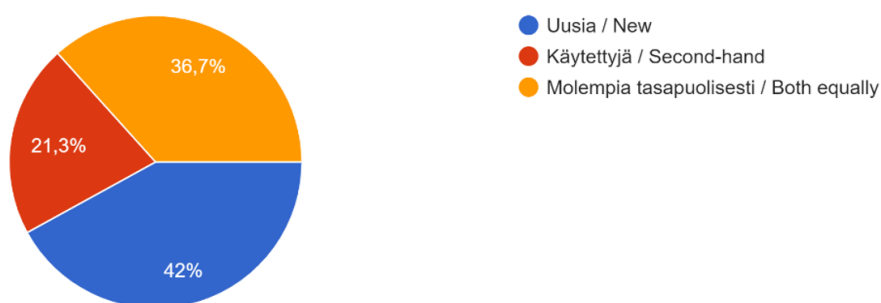


Figure 5. Question 3: Do you prefer purchasing new or second-hand clothing?

Shown in figure 6, the respondents' favor affordability over environmental impact in their buying behavior, with 82% of respondents prioritizing price, which can be seen repeatedly highlighted in many of the survey responses. Environmental concerns rank third with 50,7% after quality that has 76,7% of respondents agreeing. These numbers suggest a growing awareness of sustainability in their buying choices. Many respondents underscored challenges in finding plus-sized clothing second-hand which results in gravitating more towards fast fashion. One respondent stated: "Where on earth do the plus-sized clothes disappear to when you can't find them at thrift stores? ... since the majority of people are over size 44, you'd think there would be plenty of them circulating. Unfortunately, this is why I have to order clothes online." This emphasises the need to elevate second-hand options, making them more accessible to wider range of consumers and to incorporate sustainable buying practices.

7. Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat valintaasi uusien ja käytettyjen vaatteiden välillä?

(Valitse kaikki jotka sopivat) / What factors influence your choice between new and second-hand clothing? (Select all that apply)

N=150

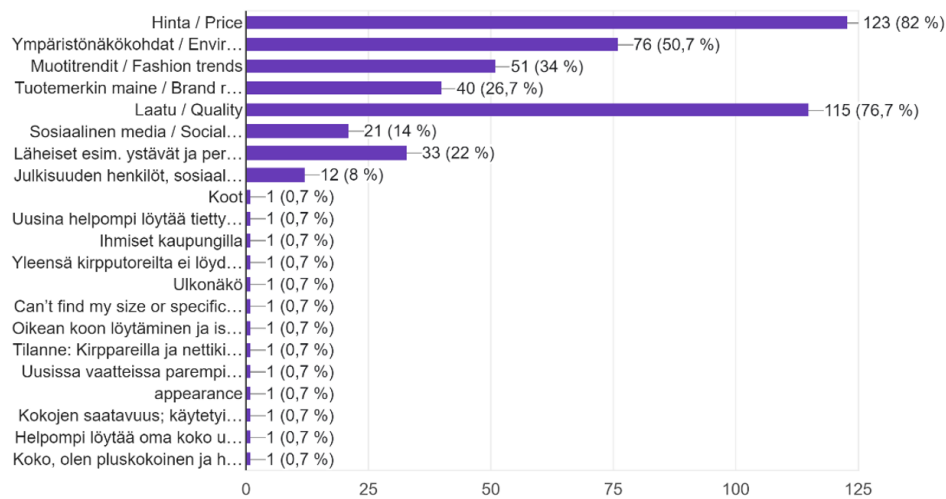


Figure 6. Question 7: What factors influence your choice between new and second-hand clothing?

Examining why the preference for buying new clothing continues to dominate among young Finns, figure 7 illustrates the frequency of buying from fast fashion brands. As the author predicted the majority of respondents, 92,7%, buy clothing once a month or less. Many respondents completed their answer related to this question by stating that they buy clothing much less frequently than once a month, with some indicating they only make purchases a couple times a year. 4,7% buy fast fashion 2-3 times a month and 2,7% more than 3 times a month. One respondent completed their answer by saying: "I feel anxiety about how much I consume". It is possible that this statement reflects the recent trends emphasizing sustainability and conscious consumption. Individuals are increasingly aware of the impact their consumption habits have on the environment and society. A sustainable purchasing habits begin with the realization of the amount one consumes.

5. Kuinka usein ostat vaatteita pikamuotibrändeiltä (esim. H&M, Zara)? / How frequently do you purchase clothing from fast fashion brands (e.g., H&M, Zara)?

N=150

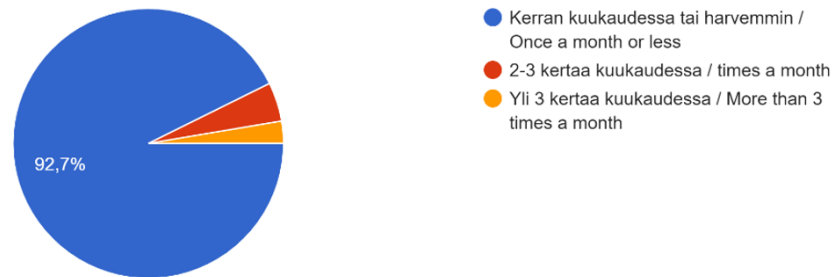


Figure 7. Question 5: How frequently do you purchase clothing from fast fashion brands (e.g., H&M, Zara)?

The reasons behind buying fast fashion can be seen on figure 8. The primary reason being the affordability as indicated by 79,3% of respondents, followed by the convenience it offers with 58% agreeing. The affordability is highlighted particularly considering the limitations of a student budget. 3,5% of respondents noted that they do not buy fast fashion at all, a practice noteworthy for its positive impact on the environment and society. Respondents stated that choosing fast fashion is favored when they cannot find something particular second-hand. Again, respondents state that they experience challenges finding plus-size clothing options second-hand opting for fast fashion, and many noted that socks and underwear are on the whole purchased from fast fashion stores.

6. Mikä motivoi sinua ostamaan vaatteita pikamuotibrändeiltä? (Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / What motivates you to buy clothing from fast fashion brands? (Select all that apply)

N=150

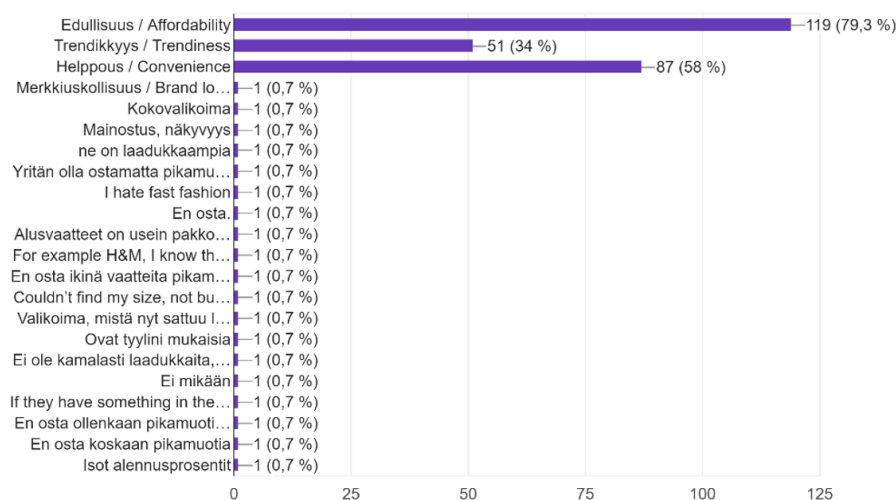


Figure 8. Question 6: What motivates you to buy clothing from fast fashion brands?

A majority, 56% of respondents expressed their interest towards second-hand clothing has increased over the recent years as it can be seen in figure 9. As analysed in chapter 4 and seen in figure 10 the biggest reasons being the rise in the number of second-hand stores, improved selection of second-hand clothing and environmental concerns. The rise of both physical and online second-hand stores has made second-hand shopping more accessible and convenient to a more broader consumer base. Due to the growth, there are more options available, which appeals to more consumers. The environmental concerns are linked to the desire to decrease the negative environmental impact associated with clothing manufacturing. By choosing second-hand clothing consumers can reduce the demand for new production, this aligns with the bigger movement towards more sustainable consumption habits.

Moreover, it can be seen in figure 10, that social influences, including social media, especially influencers and celebrities, as well as friends and close ones, play a role in the increasing interest of the respondents. Social media influencers and celebrities often showcase their fashion choices, and when they advocate for second-hand shopping, they make it trendy and inspire their followers to opt for second-hand options which contributes to the increase in interest. Also, when consumer's close contacts share their positive experiences with second-hand clothing it can influence to consider exploring used clothing. Social validation can reinforce the idea that choosing second-hand clothing is socially acceptable and desirable.

The fact that the second-hand market has increased by an 18% between the beginning of the year 2023 and October (YLE, 2023a) aligns with the increase in interest. This growing popularity agrees with a societal shift towards more environmentally friendly and sustainable behaviors in consuming. There is, among some consumers, potential challenges, or barriers to fully adopt to second-hand clothing, as seen in figure 9, 6% expressed a waning interest and 38% a stable attitude.

12. Kuinka suhtautumisesi käytettyihin vaatteisiin on muuttunut viime vuosina? / How has your attitude towards second-hand clothes changed in recent years?

N=150



Figure 9. Question 12: How has your attitude towards second-hand clothes changed in recent years?

13. Jos kiinnostuksesi on kasvanut, mistä se johtuu? (Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / If your interest has increased, why? (Select all that apply)

N=97

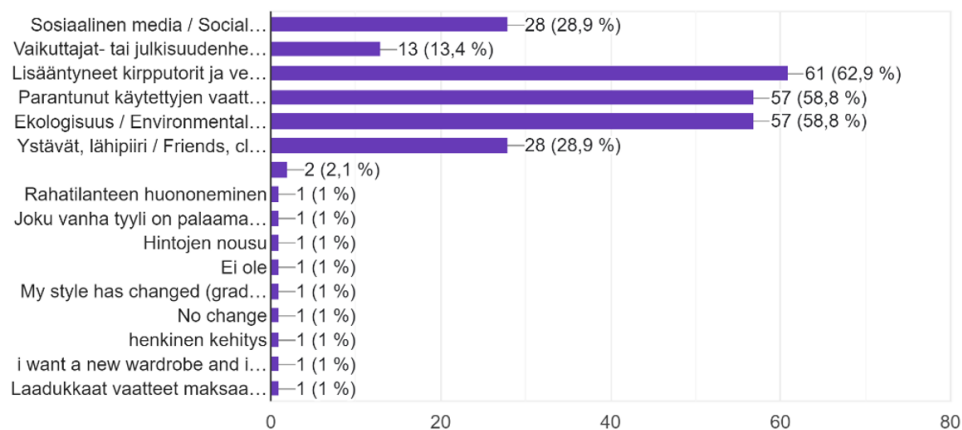


Figure 10. Question 13: If your interest has increased, why?

The responses regarding the frequency of buying second-hand clothing closely resemble responses about the buying habits of fast fashion, in figure 11 with 88% buying second-hand clothing once a month or less. Interestingly a larger percentage, 10,7% buy second-hand clothing 2-3 times a month compared to fast fashion. This could be explained with the previously mentioned affordability factor and sustainable concerns. However, there is a lurking negative aspect which possibly is connected to the higher frequency of purchases. Because used clothing is often more affordable than new ones, some consumers may be tempted to buy more than they need or to replace their belongings more frequently as a result of the lower cost. Some people may think that purchasing used goods is entirely sustainable and that they can increase their

purchases without having a negative effect on the environment. Some respondents expressed their concerns about a trend in their close circles where people buy clothing very often but feel relieved of guilt by mainly buying and donating second-hand clothes, it raises the problem of continuously indulging in the cycle of constant consumption and disposal. Another noteworthy point, as also discussed in chapter 4, is the observation that with the increasing fast fashion platforms such as Shein has led to an overflow of low-quality clothing which are now disposed to second-hand stores. This trend is the result of consumers frequently updating their wardrobe which contributes to significant waste creation.

It emerged from the survey that young Finnish people primarily buy second-hand clothing from physical second-hand stores, 77,3% agreeing. The main factors influencing their choice of store were the selection, variety, and affordability, consistent with previous responses related to their buying habits. Location merged also as an important consideration to the respondents.

8. Kuinka usein ostat KÄYTETTYJÄ vaatteita tavallisen kuukauden aikana? / How often do you shop for SECOND-HAND clothing in a typical month?

N=150

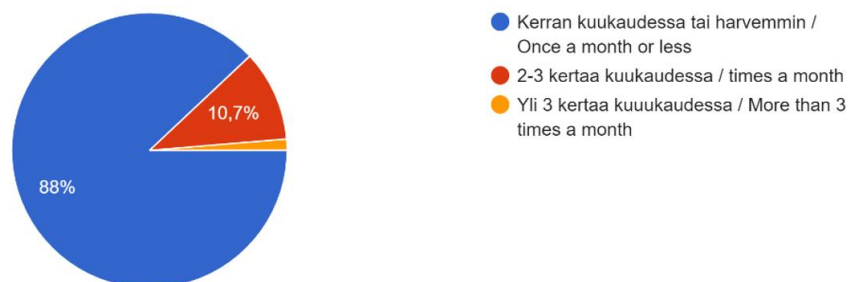


Figure 11. Question 8: How often do you shop for SECOND-HAND clothing in a typical month?

To understand what challenges consumer's face, if any, when buying second-hand clothing can be seen in figure 12, respondents cited several issues. The majority 79,5% expressed difficulty in finding their own size, while 58,2% reported limited style options. Concerns about the quality of the clothing were mentioned by 39,7% and 35,6% worried about the hygiene of the garments. The recurrence of these reasons throughout the survey makes their

prominence clearer. Additionally, one respondent pointed out: “For men buying used clothing can be difficult because men do not sell their old clothes in second-hand stores to the same extent as women”. It suggests a potential area for improvement in the second-hand market, ultimately promoting more sustainable buying habits across genders and all around.

11. Mitä haasteita kohtaat käytettyjä vaatteita ostaessasi? (Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / What challenges, if any, do you face when shopping for second-hand clothing? (Select all that apply)

N=146

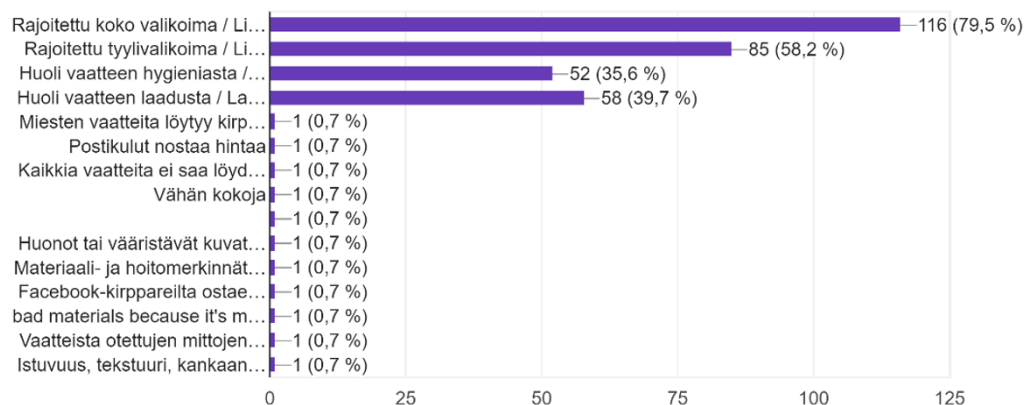


Figure 12. Question 11: What challenges, if any, do you face when shopping for second-hand clothing?

Survey questions 14 and 16 delve deeper into how the respondents see fast fashion and second-hand clothing in the context of circular economy. The question: “Are you concerned about the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry?”, in figure 13 shows that a significant number of respondents are concerned about fast fashion industry and the negative environmental impacts the industry has. Specifically, 48% were very concerned and 45,3% somewhat concerned. These numbers show a promising level of understanding among young Finns regarding the problematics associated with fast fashion industry. In figure 14 it can be seen that with 41,3% of respondents strongly agreed and 42% agreed with the statement that buying second-hand clothing aligns with the principles of circular economy. This suggests that there is a strong advocacy of second-hand clothing as a sustainable practice among young Finns.

14. Oletko huolissasi pikamuotiteollisuuden ympäristövaikutuksista? / Are you concerned about the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry?

N=150

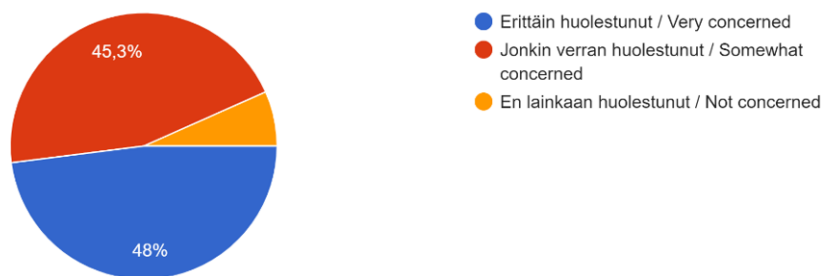


Figure 13. Question 14: Are you concerned about the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry?

16. Arvio asteikolla 1-5: "Käytettyjen vaatteiden ostaminen on kiertotalouden periaatteiden mukaista" (eli jätteen vähentämistä, tuotteiden käyttöiän pidentämistä) / Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Buying used clothes is in accordance with the principles of the circular economy" (i.e., reducing waste, extending the life of products)

Kopioi

N=150

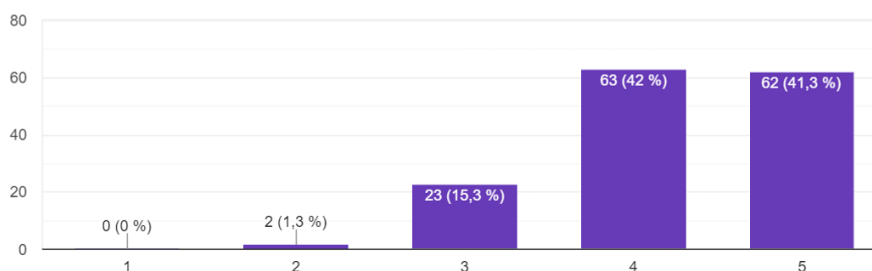


Figure 14. Question 16: Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Buying used clothes is in accordance with the principles of the circular economy" (i.e., reducing waste, extending the life of products)

Despite the significant concern expressed towards environmental impact of the fast fashion industry and the strong agreement of seeing second-hand buying as a sustainable practice, the respondents still continue to buy fast fashion. In figure 15, 34% were neutral or undecided regarding how likely they are to buy second-hand clothing as a means of reducing their own environmental footprint. 18,7% replied that it is a very likely practice of them and 13,3% said it is very unlikely of them. This inconsistency between attitudes and behavior indicates that although consumers are becoming more aware of the issues and open to adopting more sustainable options, there might still be obstacles on the way preventing fully aligning their buying habits with their values. Some reasons for this gap can be seen in the previous responses

where problems such as size, limited style variety and concerns about the hygiene and quality of the clothing discourages respondents from purchasing second-hand clothing despite acknowledging their potential positive environmental impact.

17. Arvio asteikolla 1-5, kuinka todennäköisemmin ostat käytettyjä vaatteita uusien vaatteiden sijaan, vähentääksesi omaa ympäristöjalanjälkeäsi. / On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate how likely you are to choose second-hand clothing as a means of reducing your personal environmental footprint compared to buying new clothing

N=150

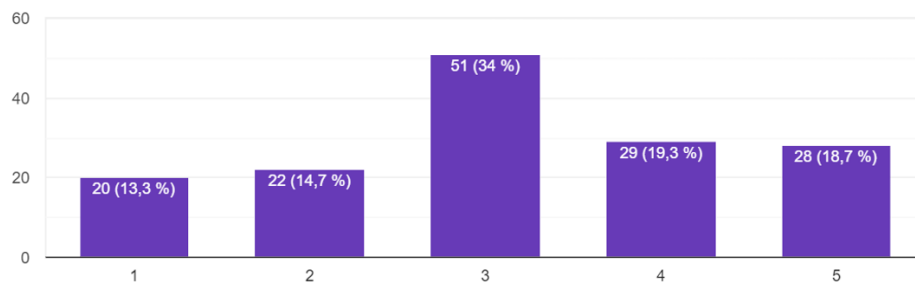


Figure 15. Question 17: On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate how likely you are to choose second-hand clothing as a means of reducing your personal environmental footprint compared to buying new clothing

The last question of the survey, question 18, gave the respondents a chance to complete their answers or share their thoughts freely related to the topic. The comments reflected various perspectives of the consumer behavior of young Finns towards second-hand clothing, aligning closely with the findings of the survey responses. Some of the respondents relied on family hand-me-downs and expressed concerns about the environmental impact of fast fashion, leading to more selective buying behavior and preference for higher-quality and long-lasting clothing. Therefore, many stated that they prioritized quality over quantity, choosing brands that are known for durability and ethical production. Others noted the positive and negative influence of social media and celebrities in promoting both fast fashion and second-hand clothing. Their concerns revolved around Shein and other fast fashion brands highlighting their promotion of continuous consumption. On a positive note, many expressed the belief that influencers that advocate for sustainability would encourage people to be more mindful when making purchases. As seen in the previous answers, several respondents expressed a preference for second-hand clothing due to its sustainability, affordability, and the satisfaction of using already existing

clothing efficiently. The biggest barriers mentioned for choosing second-hand clothing were the lack of plus-sized clothing and a gender disparity in the available clothing in the second-hand market, with less options for men compared to women, these concerns were noticeable throughout the survey answers of the respondents. The comments highlighted the fact that young Finns embrace second-hand shopping as a conscious choice but there are still some challenges that make some young Finns hesitant towards used clothing.

To conclude, the survey revealed several key insights. Regarding buying preferences there is a gap between attitudes and buying behavior in young Finns, even though the growing interest of sustainability. Many respondents prioritize price over environmental concerns, which can sound controversial as used clothing tends to be more affordable, but the convenience of fast fashion was a close second influencing buying behavior. Challenges such as limited size availability and concerns about hygiene and quality act as a barrier to adopt more second-hand buying habits. Addressing these barriers promotes buying habits that are more sustainable in the long run. The survey could act as a tool to help share important information about the topic, one respondent said: “the survey served as a good reminder on the topic and prompted the thought that in the future, I could expand my clothing purchases to include second-hand stores”.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The summary concludes the thesis findings by summarizing the theoretical aspects and the descriptive research results of the survey. It provides a summary of the objectives and thesis questions.

Consumer behavior towards second-hand clothing

This thesis aimed to better understand the buying behavior of young Finns when it comes to second-hand clothing and fast fashion, within the framework of circular economy. In a global context the theoretical findings of the thesis suggest that second-hand clothing is in the principles of circular economy, which contributes to decreasing the environmental challenges associated with the fast fashion industry, the world's second most polluting industry. The second-hand market plays a role in reducing waste generation, by facilitating recycling, reusing, and repurposing of clothes that already exist.

The author was curious to explore if the second-hand trend represents a sustainable option for young Finns, addressing the main objective of the thesis: what is the consumer behavior amongst young Finns towards second-hand clothing? The author carried out an online survey to delve deeper into the buying habits of the target group. The theoretical findings suggest that there is a significant growth in the second-hand market, driven by increasing awareness of environmental issues and growing emphasis on sustainability. Within the theoretical framework of consumer behavior, the thesis examines how various factors influence buying decisions. These decisions are influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors such as personal factors, including age and gender influence the varying levels of awareness and attitudes towards sustainability. In terms of other internal factors as perception, motivation, attitudes and beliefs, affordability especially in the limitations of student budget, and sustainability to some extent rises as the most dominant factor in the survey responses. Externally, affordability and accessibility rose as the number one factor influencing buying behavior, overshadowing sustainable considerations. However, nothing is without challenges, both theoretical findings and survey responses highlight concerns if the second-hand trend encourages excessive consumption and contributes to dumping more clothing into the donation bins.

The attitudes – behavior gap

The survey results indicate a positive attitude towards sustainability in buying habits with increased interest in second-hand clothing. However, the buying behavior itself differ from the attitudes among the respondents. The findings reveal a driving preference for buying new clothing despite the growing awareness of sustainability, the convenience and affordability of fast fashion remains strong, as highlighted by the respondents' buying motives. One significant challenge identified with second-hand clothing is limited size variety, which hinders its adoption. The survey reveals a strong desire to embrace more sustainable buying habits but there still is barriers and obstacles, and as of now affordability dominates over sustainability concerns. This survey sheds light on to the reasons behind why this gap between the attitudes and behavior exists, providing valuable insights into the consumer decision making process.

Based on the findings of the thesis there are recommendations of strategies to close the gap between the positive attitudes towards sustainability and the actual buying behavior of young Finns. Efforts should be made to increase the accessibility and variety of second-hand clothing selection. This means that there needs to be initiatives to raise the awareness of the environmental benefits of choosing second-hand clothing over fast fashion. As more people of diverse styles, genders and sizes donate or sell clothing, the variety of the second-hand market expands, ensuring there is something for everyone. This amplification of options not only accommodates a wide range of consumer preferences but also encourages culture of sustainable fashion. Also, ongoing research and monitoring of consumer trends and preferences should be carried out to ensure that initiatives to promote circular economy principles in the fashion industry remain relevant and effective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey results reveal a disparity between the attitudes and behavior of young Finns regarding sustainable buying habits. These findings provide a guideline for addressing these challenges in the second-hand

market, to promote more buying habits that are in the principles of circular economy. Through the analysis of the theoretical data and survey responses, the author can better understand the consumer behavior of young Finns when it comes to second-hand clothing, recognizing both the positive aspects and the limitations of what the market has to offer and how the buying behavior affects the buying decisions. Ultimately, this study contributes to a better understanding of how consumer behavior in the context of second-hand clothing and fast fashion, influences the economy and the environment, leading the way to a more sustainable and resilient economy for the future generations to come.

9 FINAL WORDS

The author's intention when starting the research and writing process was to improve her knowledge on the subject. The theme of the thesis was chosen to align with the author's interests and passion. The research itself motivated the author to write, as it was something she was keen on learning more of and finding the answers to her thesis questions. The author worked hard to conduct an independent research and self-directed study.

The most challenging part of the research for the author was the conducting of the survey questions, to carefully word the questions in a way that it matches the intention of the thesis, it is objective and that it is easy for the respondents to understand. The author researched previous studies and surveys in the same field to draw conclusions of how the survey should be structured. The close circle of the author acted as a test group for the survey, to make sure of the relevance of the questions. The survey was successfully executed and the analysis of it provides valuable insight.

The author's approach to the research has been taking the initiative in every stage of the process, from researching theoretical information to collection of

data and drawing conclusions. When in need the author actively sought for advice and feedback from her supervisor, as it is important for improving the overall quality of the work and strengthening the writing process. Throughout the thesis the author demonstrated the relevance of the research findings, by connecting them with existing information to address the importance of sustainability concerns in fashion. The author recognizes a need to keep improving her writing process by adopting better planning techniques. Even though the author has shown strong initiative, the author realizes by setting daily writing goals into practice, the author will be more efficient and productive.

In conclusion this thesis represents the author's dedication and hard work invested in the research process to shed light on the objective of the thesis on consumer behavior of young Finns considering second-hand clothing and fast fashion. The author is excited to see the ongoing growth of second-hand clothing as a sustainable alternative and the further integration of circular economy principles in the future.

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Consumer Behavior of Young Finns Towards Second-Hand Clothing - Survey

Teen opinnäytetyötä siitä, millaista on suomalaisten 18-30-vuotiaiden ostokäyttäytyminen heidän ostaessaan käytettyjä vaatteita. Olisin kiitollinen, jos voisit vastata oheiseen kyselyyn; vastaukset ovat anonyymejä. Kiitos! /

I am conducting a thesis survey on the buying behavior of young Finns aged 18-30 towards second-hand clothing. Please take a few minutes to fill out the form; responses are anonymous. Thank you!

Kyselyn pituus / Duration of the survey: 5-10 minutes.

1. Ikäryhmäsi / Your age group *

- 18-20
- 21-23
- 24-26
- 27-30

2. Sukupuoli / Gender *

- Nainen / Female
- Mies / Male
- Muu / Other

3. Ostatko mieluummin uusia vai käytettyjä vaatteita? / Do you prefer purchasing new or second-hand clothing items? *

- Uusia / New
- Käytettyjä / Second-hand
- Molempia tasapuolisesti / Both equally

4. Kuinka kauan arvelet yhden vaatekappaleen keskimäärin kestävän säännöllisessä käytössäsi? / On average, how long do you think one piece of clothing will last in your regular use? *

- Vähemmän kuin 3 kuukautta / Less than 3 months
- 3 - 6 kuukautta / months
- 6 kuukaudesta vuoteen / 6 months to a year
- Yli vuoden / More than 1 year

5. Kuinka usein ostat vaatteita pikamuotibrändeiltä (esim. H&M, Zara)? / How frequently do you purchase clothing from fast fashion brands (e.g., H&M, Zara)? *

- Kerran kuukaudessa tai harvemmin / Once a month or less
- 2-3 kertaa kuukaudessa / times a month
- Yli 3 kertaa kuukaudessa / More than 3 times a month

6. Mikä motivoi sinua ostamaan vaatteita pikamuotibrändeiltä? (Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / What motivates you to buy clothing from fast fashion brands? (Select all that apply) *

- Edullisuus / Affordability
- Trendikkyys / Trendiness
- Helppous / Convenience
- Merkkiuskollisuus / Brand loyalty
- Muu: _____

7. Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat valintaasi uusien ja käytettyjen vaatteiden välillä? *
(Valitse kaikki jotka sopivat) / What factors influence your choice between new and second-hand clothing? (Select all that apply)

- Hinta / Price
- Ympäristönäkökohdat / Environmental concerns
- Muotitrendit / Fashion trends
- Tuotemerkin maine / Brand reputation
- Laatu / Quality
- Sosiaalinen media / Social media
- Läheiset esim. ystävät ja perhe / Close circle e.g., friends and family
- Julkisuuden henkilöt, sosiaalisen median vaikuttajat / Celebrities, social media influencers
- Muu: _____

8. Kuinka usein ostat KÄYTETTYJÄ vaatteita tavallisen kuukauden aikana? / How often do you shop for SECOND-HAND clothing in a typical month? *

- Kerran kuukaudessa tai harvemmin / Once a month or less
- 2-3 kertaa kuukaudessa / times a month
- Yli 3 kertaa kuukaudessa / More than 3 times a month

9. Mistä ensisijaisesti ostat käytettyjä vaatteita? *
(Valitse kaikki jotka sopivat) / What source do you primarily use for purchasing second-hand clothing? (Select all that apply)

- Kirpputorit, Second-hand putiikit / Thrift stores, Second-hand boutiques
- Verkkoalustat (esim. Tori.fi, Emmy) / Online platforms (e.g., Tori.fi, Emmy)
- Sosiaalinen media (esim. Instagram kirpparit) / Social media (e.g., Instagram thrift shops)
- Vaihto ystävien tai perheen kanssa / Swapping with friends or family
- En osta käytettyjä vaatteita / I don't purchase second-hand clothing

10. Mitkä tekijät ovat sinulle tärkeimpiä valitessasi kirpputoria tai verkkoalustaa *
käytettyjen vaatteiden ostoon? (Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / What factors are
most important to you when choosing a second-hand clothing store or platform
for making purchases? (Select all that apply)

- Hinta / Price
- Valikoima ja monipuolisuus / Selection and variety
- Käyttäjien arvostelut / User reviews and ratings
- Helppokäyttöisyys / Ease of use
- Sijainti / Location

11. Mitä haasteita kohtaat käytettyjä vaatteita ostaessasi?
(Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / What challenges, if any, do you face when shopping
for second-hand clothing? (Select all that apply)

- Rajoitettu koko valikoima / Limited size availability
- Rajoitettu tyylivalikoima / Limited style variety
- Huoli vaateen hygieniasta / Concerns about hygiene
- Huoli vaateen laadusta / Lack of trust in the quality
- Muu: _____

12. Kuinka suhtautumisesi käytettyihin vaatteisiin on muuttunut viime vuosina? *
/How has your attitude towards second-hand clothes changed in recent years?

- Kiinnostukseni on kasvanut / My interest has grown
- Kiinnostukseni on laantunut / My interest has waned
- Muutosta ei ole tapahtunut / There has been no change

13.

*

Jos kiinnostuksesi on kasvanut, mistä se johtuu? (Valitse kaikki, jotka sopivat) / If your interest has increased, why? (Select all that apply)

- Sosiaalinen media / Social media
- Vaikuttajat- tai julkisuudenhenkilöt / Influencer or celebrity endorsement
- Lisääntyneet kirpputorit ja verkkoalustat käytetyille vaatteille / Increased availability of second-hand stores and online platforms
- Parantunut käytettyjen vaatteiden valikoima / Improved selection of second-hand clothes
- Ekologisuus / Environmental issues
- Ystävät, lähipiiri / Friends, close ones
- Muu: _____

14. Oletko huolissasi pikamuotiteollisuuden ympäristövaikutuksista? / Are you concerned about the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry? *

*

- Erittäin huolestunut / Very concerned
- Jonkin verran huolestunut / Somewhat concerned
- En lainkaan huolestunut / Not concerned

15. Kuinka hyvin tunnet käsitteen kiertotalous, pikamuotiteollisuuteen liittyen? / How familiar are you with the concept of a circular economy in the context of the fast fashion industry? *

*

- Hyvin tuttu käsite / Very familiar
- Jokseenkin tuttu käsite / Somewhat familiar
- Ei ollenkaan tuttu käsite / Not familiar at all

16. Arvio asteikolla 1-5: "Käytettyjen vaatteiden ostaminen on kiertotalouden periaatteiden mukaista" (eli jätteen vähentämistä, tuotteiden käyttöiän pidentämistä) / Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Buying used clothes is in accordance with the principles of the circular economy" (i.e., reducing waste, extending the life of products) *

1 2 3 4 5

täysin eri mieltä / strongly disagree täysin samaa mieltä / strongly agree

17. Arvio asteikolla 1-5, kuinka todennäköisemmin ostat käytettyjä vaatteita uusien vaatteiden sijaan, vähentääksesi omaa ympäristöjalanjälkeäsi. / On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate how likely you are to choose second-hand clothing as a means of reducing your personal environmental footprint compared to buying new clothing *

1 2 3 4 5

hyvin epätodennäköistä / very unlikely hyvin todennäköistä / very likely

18. Voit halutessasi täydentää vastauksiasi tai vapaasti jakaa ajatuksiasi aiheesta (Jos haluat täydentää vastauksen tiettyyn kysymykseen, merkitsethän kysymyksen numeron) / If you wish, you can complete your answers here or freely share your thoughts related to the topic. (If you want to complete the answer to a specific question, please note the number of the question.)

Oma vastauksesi
