

Effects of Personal Values, Proximity of Clothing to Self, and Self-Esteem on Attitude toward and Intention to Purchase Pre-Loved Luxury Goods: From Gen Z Perspectives

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Keywords: Self-transcendence value, self-enhancement value, proximity of clothing to self, self-esteem, pre-loved luxury goods

Gen Z Consumers and Pre-loved Luxury

Fast fashion has caused significant environmental concerns and is a leading factor in the pollution of the earth. Pre-loved luxury can be a solution for those interested in the sustainable consumption of affordable and authentic luxury goods. As a result, with the popularity of luxury resale within the US and around the world, more people with different socio-economic statuses, including Gen Z college students, are consuming luxury goods (Kim-Vick & Yu, 2022; Islam & Singh 2020). According to the 2023 State of Fashion, the luxury market is around US\$31.1 billion as of 2022 and will reach a 10% increase in sales in 2023 (Business of Fashion, 2022). The luxury goods market is forecasted to be “recession-proof” in 2023, mainly due to Generation Z consumers' interest in luxury consumption (Lin, 2022; Business of Fashion, 2022).

Role of Social Media in Promoting Pre-loved Luxury

The pre-loved luxury goods sector in fashion has become increasingly more common over the past decade due to social media platforms' popularity and accessibility to these items (Turunen & Leskinen, 2015). With the rise of these social media platforms that promote pre-loved luxury goods consumption comes the social pressure to present oneself with a higher status or economic wealth in order to keep up with those seen on social media and inversely, the individuals desire to be unique from their peers and satisfy their hedonic needs (Trung & McColl, 2011; Siepmann, Holthoff, & Kowalczyk, 2021; Cho, Kim, & Yu, 2022).

This study aims to examine Gen Z college-aged consumers' personal values and proximity of clothing to self, and how these factors influence their attitude toward and intention to buy the pre-loved luxury and to understand better what benefits consumers perceive when shopping for pre-loved luxury goods.

Rapid Growth Rate of Pre-loved Luxury Market

The fashion industry faces more backlash from Generation Z about the lack of sustainability initiatives than any generation before. An area of fashion consumption that is a part of helping the sustainability movement is the pre-loved luxury market. The pre-loved luxury market has grown substantially in the past few years due to increased interest in sustainability, affordability, and visibility of luxury items on social media (Wertz, 2022; Mallevays, 2022). Moreover, this market is expected to reach US\$ 51 billion by 2028 (IMARC Group, 2022). It is highly timely to investigate the underpinning reasons of such growth in the pre-loved luxury market.

Self-Transcendence Value and Pre-Loved Luxury

With the importance of sustainability rising among Generation Z, it is crucial to look at what factors a person has when purchasing pre-loved luxury or making sustainable purchases overall. There are connections between sustainable purchasing decisions and social-focused, self-transcendent values (Liu et al., 2021). Some studies find that consumers make sustainable purchases by the drive they receive from individual interest (Jacobs et al., 2018; Davies & Gutsche, 2016; Harris et al., 2016). This could mean enhancing social status, validation from peers, or superiority over others. Others find that consumers' interest in sustainable purchases of clothing is due to self-transcendent values, which are more directed toward the greater good (Jacobs et al., 2018; Do Paço et al., 2013). Both main motivations towards purchasing sustainability are common and main drivers for Generation Z.

Self-Esteem, Self-Enhancement Value, and Pre-loved Luxury

When looking at how pre-loved luxury affects self-esteem among young adults, there is little research to connect those two areas. There has been a lot of research conducted surrounding psychological effects, both positive and negative, regarding the clothing/accessories we choose to wear. Self-esteem is a person's positive or negative feelings toward themselves at any point in time (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem in relation to fashion is defined as the degree to which a person believes about the importance of clothing use in affecting their evaluation of self-worth, self-regard, and self-respect (Legere & Kang, 2020). This is where individuals' self-enhancement values lead their apparel decision-making (Liu et al., 2021). Clothing can greatly impact how one feels about themselves and often results in how one presents themselves to others (Hurtado, 2022). The compensatory consumer behavior model is connected to consumers making purchases not only for their ideal internal self but also for how others perceive them (Mandel et al., 2016). Some factors impacting self-esteem include self-relevant cognition, age, and life experiences (Danielsson & Bengtsson, 2016; Hurtado, 2022).

Generation Z relies heavily on fashion to express themselves and define their worth (Hurtado, 2022). Older generations are more likely to create their self-esteem through inner validation rather than seeking it from peers (Hurtado, 2022., Lee, 2009). Luxury goods consumption has always held a lot of weight with the decision to purchase and the effects the items have on how one feels about themselves (Trung & McColl, 2011). When looking at how clothing can affect how an individual feels about themselves, there is a direct connection between already having high self-esteem and the tendency to purchase luxury products for their quality and self-directed pleasure (Truong & McColl, 2011).

Proximity of Clothing to Self and Pre-loved Luxury

Some reasons Gen Z may want to purchase pre-loved luxury goods could be due to a need to present themselves with a certain status with luxury items that are also affordable. Another reason may be to visibly appear knowledgeable about sustainability and actively participate in the fashion sustainability movement. Both motivations to purchase pre-loved luxury are connected by the concept of the *proximity of clothing to self*, which is defined as the psychological closeness of clothing to oneself (Sontag et al., 2016). This concept has three subdimensions such as how clothing is perceived within oneself, how others may perceive one's clothing, and symbols of one's identity and mood (Sontag et al., 2016). Confidence in communicating self to others through clothing refers to how confident people feel that they will

be choosing clothing that expresses a certain message to others or how they want to present themselves (Legere, K. 2020). Buying pre-loved luxury goods as taking part in slow fashion may provide Generation Z with a sense of community and pride (Legere, Ertekin, & Atik, 2015).

Fulfilling Personal Values through Pre-loved Luxury

If individuals have an interest in sustainability in some capacity (self-transcendent values) and luxury goods (self-enhancement values), pre-loved luxury should benefit them both in terms of how others view them and how they feel about themselves through purchasing decisions. In other words, pre-loved luxury goods purchasing behavior satisfies Gen Z by boosting self-esteem and enhancing one's social status while fulfilling their interest in contributing to the sustainable fashion future. Generation Z, unlike any other generation, has pressure to keep up with the world of social media and faces more pressure from their surroundings regarding social status. Pre-loved luxury not only signifies a sense of more desirable social status through the brand they choose and wear but also can signify the motivation to impact positive change within the fashion industry.

Future Research Direction

This research will benefit both the industry and academia. The outcome of this research would impact the pre-loved luxury sector by providing insights into consumers' motivations behind purchasing such goods from personal values, and psychological underpinning mechanisms from the Gen Z consumers' perspectives. With such empirical evidence, the resale luxury industry can strategize better to market to this consumer segment. In addition, there is a lack of literature investigating the emotional effects of purchasing pre-loved luxury goods on how one sees and feels about oneself. Therefore, the findings would fill that gap in academia and provide a clear understanding of why Generation Z consumers consume the way they do and what the outcomes may be.

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