



Old Value: Millennials' knowledge of mending skills and its effect on their clothing consumption

Samantha Meacham and Laura McAndrews, University of Georgia, USA

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The predominance of fast fashion has led to the normative consumer behavior to dispose items that are less than perfect, no matter how superficial or remediable the damage is, since mass produced goods have become so cheap (König, 2013). The result of this disposal mindset has been an increase in both the amount of global textile waste and donations worldwide. The massive influx of donations means large organizations, like Goodwill and Salvation Army, have more clothing than they can resell. For example, of the clothing Goodwill deems unsellable, almost half of the donations, about 45% of it is sold to predominately underdeveloped countries, which research shows to have a negative effect on their economies (Hoang, 2015). As for waste, the EPA estimated in 2009 that about 70 pounds of post-consumer textile waste per person ended up in landfills per year in the U.S., with no indication of it decreasing (Council for Textile Recycling, 2016). This high rate of disposal indicates that the clothing consumption process has shortened (Winakor, 1969).

One relatively small but growing area of research that looks to remedy this high rate of clothing disposal focuses on clothing mending practices. According to Crawford (2009), the items ordinary people once fixed themselves they now replace entirely or hire an expert to repair. Mending plays an active role in creating a truly sustainable fashion industry because both sustainable production and consumption are required to reduce the material flow of clothing (McGrath, 2012). Current quantitative research on mending and clothing consumption has not been focused within the United States. Of the research done in the U.S., Millennials were found to have significantly lower sewing skills than older generations, to continuously accumulate and dispose clothing due to quality or technical issues, and to likely buy less if they were better at repairing (McGrath, 2012).

The loss of mending skills and the way in which Millennials care for their clothing appears to be affecting the frequency at which they dispose of apparel. To fill the research gaps, the study's objectives were (a) to investigate the knowledge of clothing mending skills Millennials had, (b) to investigate what Millennials do with clothing that needs repair, and (c) to discover where Millennials donate their clothing. Thus, the study's hypotheses were (H1) Millennials will be more likely to donate to large organizations over local organizations, (H2) Millennial mending skills will be negatively correlated to having others repair items, whether done by someone they know, a tailor, or paying another, (H3) Millennial's mending skills will have a negative relationship with having someone they know repair a garment for them, and (H4) Millennial's mending skills will have a negative relationship with having their clothes tailored. Data were collected through an online survey, distributed via email and social media to a convenience sample of college students in February 2016. The survey consisted of four main

parts: (a) confidence in performing specific maintenance tasks, (b) likeliness in how they care for apparel items, (c) likeliness of how they maintain apparel items, and (d) likeliness of how they discard. There were 101 useable responses which consisted of participants between 18 and 32 years of age, gender was 82.2 percent female and 15.8 percent male.

The hypotheses were tested through correlation and regression analysis. H1 was statistically supported that holding age constant, every unit in likeliness to donate resulted in a 2.88 change in likeliness to donate to a large organization ($\beta=2.88, p<0.01$). This significant relationship did not happen with small organizations. H2 was statistically supported using a correlation analysis, a significant negative correlation was found between overall mending skills and having another person repair the item ($r=-0.260, p<0.001$), using a tailor ($r=-0.240, p=0.16$), and paying someone to repair ($r=-0.202, p<0.05$). H3 was statistically supported through a regression analysis, by holding age constant, every unit change in mending skills resulted in a -0.128 change in having someone they know repair the item ($\beta=-0.128, p<0.001$). H4 was also supported ($\beta=-0.232, p<0.01$).

The findings indicate opportunities for educators and consumers. Since Millennials are more likely to donate to larger organizations, adding to the overabundance of clothing that may eventually end up in landfills or developing countries, educating them on local organizations may help relieve this problem. Keeping donations local also helps ensure those in need get exactly what they want. It makes sense that as the mending skills of Millennials decrease, they are more likely to have others repair an item for them. Along with this, the significant relationship between mending skill and either giving items to someone they know for repair or going to a tailor are intuitive. Future research should investigate this further to discover who exactly they use (mom versus a friend), how often they actually have another mend or tailor, and what types of items they have others mend or tailor for them.

References

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