

Mindful Consumption of Used Fashion Apparel Among Gen Z on Online Thrift Stores: A Grounded Theory Perspective

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has fueled Gen Z to spend more time online on various social networking sites. This study proposes that *relationship*, as a construct, contributes to *mindful consumption* to measure the *sustainable consumption* of used fashion apparel among Gen Z through web platforms, commonly called online thrifting. Thrifting is a means of shopping at a thrift store, garage sale, or flea market where gently used items, at discounted prices, are obtained. With internet disruption, this business model has scaled to a digital platform with names like the e-commerce market, social networking sites, and omnichannel platforms. This research adopts the definition of *smart living*, to represent any digital platform or application (app) that can be leveraged for seeking reused fashion apparel. *Smart living* moderates the construct *relationship* and affects variable *mindful consumption*. Qualitative research technique, grounded theory, is adopted to gain respondent insights and further theorize the dimension of the *relationship*. Three sets of primary data are collected: focus groups, in-depth interviews, and questionnaire forms. The researchers validated the data independently and with discussions, collated the constructs. The results demonstrate that Gen Z preferred to purchase used apparel in cognizance of the variables of the *relationship* construct and the research further proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the association of variables of the construct *relationship* on *mindful consumption*. This research contributes to practitioners in understanding the importance of *relationship*, as a construct, to measure young cohorts' perception toward reused fashion, and habits toward adopting mindful consumption, leading to sustainable consumption.

Categories: Consumer Behavior, Digital business, Sustainable Marketing

Keywords: qualitative research, circular economy, relationship as a construct, grounded theory, online thrift stores, mindful consumption, used fashion apparels, gen z, environmental sustainability, focus groups

Introduction

Thrift stores are gaining online traction on social media platforms due to their reach, richness, and reliability. Reach, due to the number of Gen Z on social media platforms (Statista, 2024). Richness owing to the images, audio, and video media to present the reused product and reliability, as the social networking sites (SNS) (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) are free digital platforms with high engagement, as interactions are peer-to-peer. SNSs like Instagram act as an intervention to enhance thrifting behavior and therefore fuel sustainable consumption (SC) as an attitude and lifestyle (Lee and Chow, 2020). Further, these digital platforms reinforce the trend of thrifting as now fashion apparel becomes accessible to all classes of society, contributing to the Circular Economy (CE) (Machado et al., 2019). These digital platforms are not only SNS, for example, Instagram is also an online platform where people have access to thrift, pre-owned and upcycled clothing and accessories, among other products and services. This is also routed to other business websites and platforms where customers search or compare product information, or may lead to transactions (Mendini et al., 2022). Instagram thrift stores have become a great medium for people to get interesting pieces (Shrivastava et al., 2021) who might not have access to such stores in their city and shop. Additionally, purchasing used fashion on digital platforms ensures anonymity and therefore leads to SC practices. Conversely, the stigma associated with walking into a physical store cannot be ignored.

Extensive research exists regarding consumer selection of sustainable products, yet there is a paucity of studies focused on motivating society toward sustainable consumption (Lim, 2017). The United Nations website noted that the growth of the world's population and production, combined with unsustainable consumption patterns, is putting increasing pressure on the earth's life-sustaining capacities (UN Report, 1987). Considering sustainable development (SD) to be the end goal of the United Nations' plan for the planet, many countries have agreed to achieve the SD goals (Bexell and Jönsson, 2016). Achieving economic growth and SD requires that we urgently reduce our ecological footprint by changing the way we produce and consume goods and resources, as stated by United Nations Environment Programme. Some alarming shifts in fashion retailing: across all apparel categories, consumers are using clothing for only half the time compared to 15 years ago, when a low-priced garment did not last beyond 7-8 years (Remy et al., 2016). More than ever, we need to make an urgent plea for a co-responsible, balanced, and wise way of living by intervening in postmodern lifestyle and consumer behavior patterns inside modern society (Lubowiecki-Vikuk et al., 2021). The significance of consumer actions in this context is that they are both buyers and sellers of the used fashion (Machado et al., 2019), and therefore reducing the flow of resources and waste and contributing to a CE as a regenerative system. Hence, human action toward urban ecosystems is critical, and consequently, Gen Z's being young citizens, their perspective toward sustainability is a key lens. Gen Z's outlook as young citizens and their perspective on human actions toward the urban ecosystem are critical for the future (Giachino et al., 2022). Gen Z's increased purchasing power, understanding of sustainable living, and desire for a greater quality of life (Su et al., 2019) drive academics to further examine Gen Z's purchasing intention. More importantly, such action from young cohorts (Veleva, 2021) positions that it overcomes the vicious cycle, where the stylish but cheap garment degrades and reduces landfills and makes consumers buy less.

Multiple works of literature exist where SNS research and its intervention are studied in the context of many cohort groups who use SNS and its impact on their well-being, mostly its negative impact. Conversely, digital platforms are a way of life for the digital natives and are raised using these digital tools (Sultan et al., 2023). Used fashion purchase is a virtuous cycle as consumers are motivated

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toward the economic, hedonic, and ethical outcomes that overlap in their decisions toward the purchase (Machado et al., 2019). Consumers in emerging nations have a high awareness of CE and are culturally and socially educated to extend the life of products (Patwa et al., 2021). Through mindfulness, "... individuals are more aware of internal and external stimuli so they can better regulate their minds to stay in the present moment. This allows individuals to make better decisions and not necessarily the decisions that their minds have been conditioned to make (Milne et al., 2020) (pp. 1-2)". Further, their research posits that a mindful consumer therefore makes decisions that are economical and does not overconsume by making impulsive purchases. Gen Z is more aware of environmental issues like climate change and is active in sustainability efforts (Um et al., 2024). Their research, however, points to a "green gap", which means that Gen Z's values mismatch their actions. For example, despite strong environmental awareness, they often buy fast fashion due to limited knowledge and a lack of motivation or access to sustainable alternatives. Hence, this research addresses the following research questions. First, can this mismatch in the actions among Gen Z toward sustainability be measured through *Relationship* as a dimension? Second, what are the operational definitions for Relationship and further propose variables for the constructs of Relationship to measure Young cohorts' Mindful Consumption (MC) of sustainable re-used fashion apparel in an urban ecosystem through online platforms?

In this research context, Gen Z will be the lens as they are the future generation. The proposed research paper is structured as follows: the next sub-section draws from the existing theory or phenomenon called Relationship and describes its constructs. Gen Zs MC of used fashion apparel is studied through the constructs of the dimension, *Relationship*. The research gap briefly describes the reason for this research. The next section, Research Method, describes the qualitative research design, Grounded Theory (GT) and analyzes the primary data obtained through in-depth, focus group (FG) studies and questionnaire surveys and secondary data with the literature review. In the Results section, data are validated by the researchers independently and collated to draw up the findings of the relationship construct and its influence on MC. The Discussion section, synthesizes the research and states the implications of the research for academia and practitioners. Further it describes the limitations of the research. The Conclusion section summarizes the impact of constructs of the dimension Relationship on MC leading to sustainable consumption behavior among Gen Z using social media platforms such as Instagram to purchase reused fashion apparel and recommends future research.

Theoretical perspectives: conceptualizing the dimension of relationship from Gen Z's perspective

SC, a solution to SD (Lim, 2017), is shaping and satisfying consumer needs to continuously reduce the negative impact of consumption on the environment and the wider society (Tunn et al., 2019). The consumer demand side is considered in this research over the supply side, as Nayak (Nayak, 2024) argues that the Relationship is a human endeavor and engagement in sustainability stems from the nature and state of relationships. Hence, the premise of this research is drawn on the argument that Relationship as a predictor should be explored from the perspective of end consumers. At the micro level, SC research aims to reduce or refine consumption practices from the demand side (Haider et al., 2022). A micro-level analysis lens for MC expedites a sustainable lifestyle that inspires sustainable consumption and needs to consider the volatile actor, the human, in a central role due to the interdependence of living and non-living (Nayak, 2024).

Relationship as a Dimension

The construct relationship is influenced by measures of "... sense of interdependence, notion of wellbeing, mental construct, morals and values and faith and belief. The five factors of the relationship dimension that address relationships at different levels (Para 2) (Nayak, 2024) (p. 14)". See Table 1 for the definitions of the five predictors of the construct, Relationship. Additionally, this research applies the lens of micro-level analysis of sustainability (Nayak, 2024).

Predictor variables	Definitions
Sense of interdependence	A sense of interdependence is an outcome of the relationship with neighbors and in one's small community, other life and matter in one's ecosystem.
Notion of well-being	The notion of well-being is the overall societal orientation toward what is perceived as capital and wealth.
Mental construct	An outcome of our education, training, and experience.
Morals and values	Morals and values are an outcome of relationships at a family level.
Faith and belief	Faith and belief are at the core of an individual.

TABLE 1: Definition of predictor variables to measure the Relationship as a dimension

Source: (Nayak, 2024) (p. 14).

The following section explores the interlinkages between the measures.

Abundant research has catered to the study of SC from a "rational and scientific perspective" (Nayak, 2024). The author, however, argues for the consideration of values as a foundation that can be a stimulus to sustainability at the micro level. The need to analyze the consumers' morals and beliefs in the context of SC as it necessitates the need for behavioral change (Watkins et al., 2016). The impact of MC proposes broad views, such a consumer could belong to three segments where first the consumer can make conscious consumption decisions, second they are aware of the needs and wants and then make choice decisions rather than impulsive decisions and finally they completely understand the process of the impact of the products on the environment and therefore their MC decisions are all about changing the consumption habits for individual and societal well-being (Milne et al., 2020).

The volatile consumers or actors in this context are Generation Z. "They are born after 1995, and they live

in an era of economic crisis and technological evolution. They have an eight-second attention threshold in which they can decide what is interesting and what is not for them (Gazzola et al., 2020) (p. 8)". Furthermore, they are currently entering the workforce and are smart with the usage of technology (Sultan et al., 2023).

Gen Zs engagement with the community: Sense of interdependence

The growth of the digital landscape and its influence on e-commerce and online purchases and engagement of consumers through digital marketing on SNS (Gazzola et al., 2020) has impacted the fashion and retail industry. One of the key drivers in consumers' purchase of apparel is their attention toward sustainability and CE; however, the growing emergence of fast fashion due to the demand from consumers has led to an impact on the natural ecosystem (Gazzola et al., 2020). The fashion industry contributes to 10% of global carbon emissions and therefore climate change (Um et al., 2024) where the fast fashion industry dries up water resources, pollutes rivers and streams and 85% of textiles end up in landfills (Maiti, 2025).

GenZ as a conscious customer: Notion of well-being

To increase sustainability in lifestyle, it is important to understand well-being based on relations between society, humans, and overall societal orientation, shifting from wealth and capital to the notion of well-being which consumers perceive as considerably more important than wealth (Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015). However, people's orientation toward sustainability drives them to mindful purchases online while caring for themselves, their community, and nature (Zahid et al., 2023).

Gen Z's cognitive influence: Mental construct

Education, training, and experience shape our mental construct. Training enhances Gen Z's to think about their consuming habits, causes and impacts of consumption and explore the ethical aspect of reducing the social and ecological impacts of human activities (Heiss and Marras, 2009) (Huckle and Wals, 2015).

Gen Z's orientation to the Value system: Morals and Values and Faith and belief are the ideas that moral concern has a great impact on clothing purchasing decisions among Gen Z, and they are more motivated to resist desires, which is crucial when making the decisions when moral considerations are activated (Nielsen and Hofmann, 2021). The significance of morality is to encourage more ethical and ecological purchase choices.

Used Fashion Online Thrift Stores Spur Sustainable Consumption: Smart Living

Second-hand shopping intensively supports a sustainable lifestyle. A sustainable lifestyle is more than simple routines and conduct; it is more about the expression of the identified pattern of thinking, being, and acting integrated with sociological realities (Böhme et al., 2022). Smart living is a process where the consumer employs new technology to pursue a stress-free, hassle-free life as part of their integral everyday life (Lubowiecki-Vikuk et al., 2021). Due to this, their access to internet-based information about products and services has led to informed decision-making. Social shopping, a trend in Western and European nations, is gathering awareness and acceptance in emerging nations. Young cohorts on these social platforms are part of virtual groups, have conversations, and are influenced by opinion leaders commonly called influencers, leading to academia referring to this as smart living. By 2025, the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region itself will contribute to a quarter of Gen Z who have come of age and will soon enter the workforce, spending almost six hours on the phone. The environmentally conscious segment will not pay for it, prefer unique branded products, and prefer video content on social media (Kim et al., 2020).

MC is the application of mindfulness to inform the choices consumers make in the world. The application of mindfulness through MC is one approach advocated to change society, the marketplace, and individual well-being. When MC is viewed as a process it requires consumers to pay attention to their bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions with the attitude of acceptance as an ongoing process of inquiry to make consumption choices that are based on one's direct experience of needs, values, and insights (Bahl et al., 2013). If a sustainable lifestyle is the end goal for a consumer, then Dimitrova et al. (Dimitrova et al., 2021) define it as a specific set of practices that the participants attempt to take on and reduce their impacts on the environment and other people. For this mindfulness action, it is important for participants to use goods and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations (Norwegian Ministry of Environment, 2022).

Proposed theoretical model

The theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

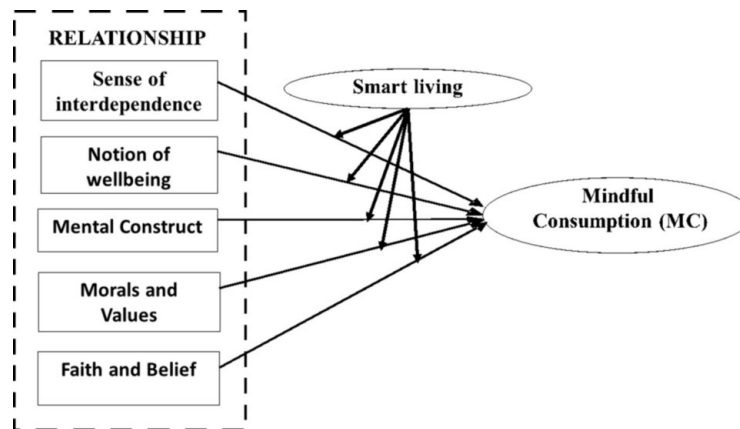


FIGURE 1: A theoretical model to analyze Relationship as a construct on online digital platforms

The dimension Relationship and its predictors are from Nayak (Nayak, 2024).

Source: Author

Most research papers conceptualize MC with theoretical perspectives that are drawn from behavioral and psychological dimensions. To make the theoretical model more complete, numerous pro-environmental values ought to be incorporated (Yang et al., 2024). However, in the actions toward MC, the role of humans, the consumer who represents the demand side is ignored in the literature. The repercussions of overconsumption and its sustainability implications are most pronounced in the USA and Europe; however, analogous trends are surfacing in China and India (Sheth et al., 2011), necessitating additional research.

Hence, understanding Gen Z's MC of used fashion purchased online with predictor variables of relationship is important. This study conceptualizes the construct relationship through predictor variables: sense of interdependence, notion of well-being, mental construct, morals and values, and faith and belief to understand if consumers' culture leads to mindful and sustainable consumption.

Research Method

"How we understand the world is influenced by our history and the context in which we find ourselves. Our personal philosophy is very important because it defines what we consider to be real and how we can legitimately acquire knowledge about the world (Birks and Mills, 2015) (pp. 1-2)". Hence, this research adopts a qualitative research methodology called the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 2017) as it is the most widely used research methodology for studies examining qualitative phenomena (Birks et al., 2019), theory, and arguments (Charmaz, 2014).

GT methodology is adopted to gain insights and examine the phenomenon of the impact of the dimensional relationship on MC of used fashion apparel by Gen Z (Vollstedt et al., 2019). A micro-level research analysis is conducted using qualitative data to address the key objective of theorizing the construct relationship. The analysis is grounded on Reynolds (Reynolds, 2007) research-to-theory strategy that rests on analyzing the phenomenon, which herein is the Relationship and its impact on the MC of used fashion apparel on digital platforms. Further, this research proposes to ideate the first stage, then conceptualize the construct relationship, and operationalize the predictors of the construct Relationship. The latter stages of confirmation or disconfirmation (Reynolds, 2007) and application (Lynham, 2002) are beyond the scope of this research.

The purposive sampling technique is used to select the respondents for the qualitative study. This sampling technique is adopted by researchers to deliberately include "outliers" to enable the selection of those respondents who may add value and insights (Barbour, 2001). The sample size selection criteria are based on Gen Z respondents from two different levels, educational and qualification criteria. These are selected to use the constant comparative method to enable a comparison between the two cohort groups (Barbour, 2001) (Campbell et al., 2020). The sample size of $n = 75$ (Table 2) is drawn from Gen Z participants. The participants are students and working professionals who belong to Bangalore, a metropolitan city and Tier I cities of the southern part of India. The GT technique is adopted in the exploratory stage of research to gain insights from the respondents and incorporate any other dimension, construct, or variable to be tested further to theorize the dimension of the relationship toward MC of thrift fashion among Gen Z in India.

Qualitative data collected from the research participants included three sets of data: in-depth interviews, online questionnaire forms with open-ended questions and a Focus Group (FG).

Data set	Data collection method	Number of respondents (n)	Student (S)/Employed (E)	Aware of second hand/used fashion apparel		Purchase intention second hand/used fashion apparel		
				Yes	No	Yes	No	May Be
Set-1	In-depth interview (in-person)	12	S	8	4	5	3	4
Set-2	Online Google forms	41	S-31 E-10	28	13	5	15	21
Set-3	Focus Group (FG)	2 groups (10, 12 in each group)	S	22	0	5	14	0
		Total (n) = 75						

TABLE 2: Demographic summary of participants for Grounded Theory qualitative research

Judgmental sampling is used to choose respondents of the study who are aware of online second-hand/used fashion apparel/thrift stores and what their perspectives are toward used fashion apparel purchased online. The preliminary data were collected from undergraduate and graduate students (n = 65) and employed individuals (n = 10). In-depth in-person interviews (n = 12) as the adequate sample size proposed by a large number of articles, books and book chapters are between five and 50 participants for GT (Dworkin, 2012). Additionally, Dworkin (Dworkin, 2012) states that since in-depth interviews are used to understand the how and why of the phenomenon being studied through the participants in different research contexts, the purpose is not to develop hypotheses. Countering this point, there is no precise number of participants, as in the initial stages, the researcher continues to collect data from participants until no new data are obtained from the phenomenon being studied (Cutcliffe, 2000). Among the postgraduate students (PG) of the MBA program, two sets of FG studies are conducted with n = 10 in the first FG and n = 8 respondents in the second FG study. An online questionnaire was sent to participants (n = 41), which collected participants demographic data and it had an open-ended question where the participants were asked to write at least a paragraph of why they will, will not or may purchase second hand or used premium fashion apparel from online thrift stores, e-commerce platform, or SNS. Online approaches are gaining significance in qualitative research as they allow access to a wider, heterogeneous audience at a lower cost (Doyle et al., 2020). It is recommended that in the exploratory GT stage, a non-probability purposive sampling be chosen as these participants can articulate the insights and have sufficient time to participate in the process, and the next stage adopt a theoretical sampling (Cutcliffe, 2000). Hence, the sample considered the condition of heterogeneity while data were collected as illustrated in Table 2.

Results

This GT research adopts content and thematic qualitative data analysis proposed by Doyle et al. (Doyle et al., 2020), which is based on seven characteristics. Though it is proposed by Doyle et al. (Doyle et al., 2020) for qualitative descriptive research, the seven characteristics can be identified as a broad framework for the synthesis of qualitative research. The seven characteristics can be clustered into the three techniques for GT proposed by Corbin and Strauss (Corbin and Strauss, 1990): Open coding, Axial coding, and Selective coding. Open coding is where the text is read to obtain categories, Axial coding is where categories are refined, developed, and related or interconnected, and Selective coding is where the “core category” tied to other categories is identified (Gibbs, 2007). The first five characteristics incorporate the Open and Axial coding techniques of GT to analyze the qualitative data and are detailed in the results section below. The remaining two characteristics integrate the Selective coding GT technique, where the research identifies the core sub-category and draws discussions.

Characteristic 1: Transcribing and sorting the data

As qualitative research is inductive, coding the data is key. Hence, the first cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2021) is also called Initial coding or Open coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in GT. JMP software (Sall et al., 2017) is used to analyze the text, words, and concepts stated by the participants (Gen Z) in this research.

Characteristic 2: Giving codes to the initial data obtained from observation, interviews, documentary analysis and similar sources

The data are collated from the in-depth interviews, and analysis is presented in Figure 2; the two rounds of FG studies and analysis are presented in Figure 3.

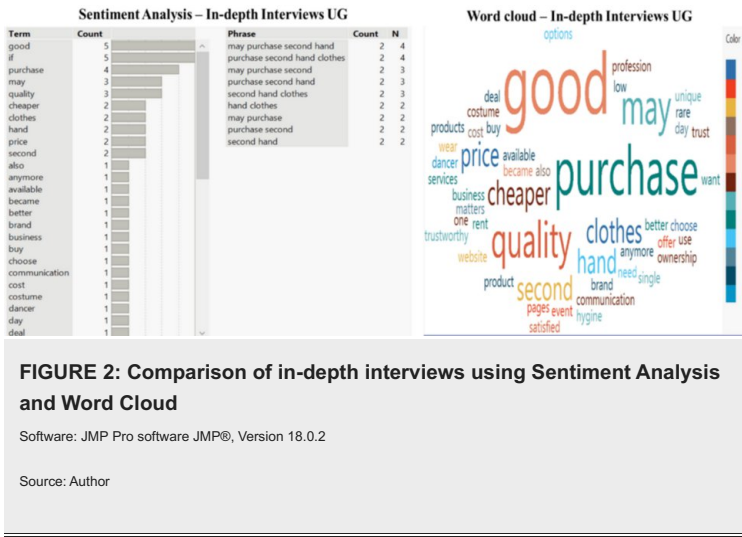


FIGURE 2: Comparison of in-depth interviews using Sentiment Analysis and Word Cloud

Software: JMP Pro software JMP®, Version 18.0.2

Source: Author

The in-depth interviews are conducted among undergraduate students (n = 12) of a private university in Bangalore metropolitan city, India. Among n = 12, nine students were willing to try or had bought or rented used fashion apparel more than once. The sentiment analysis of the top three keywords with the highest count is “may purchase second-hand clothes”, “good”, and “cheaper quality”, and while comparing to the Word Cloud, a similar set of keywords emerges (see Figure 2). The emerging three categories here are as follows:

- (i) Trustworthy website, good services, affordable price, rental
- (ii) Products with quality, hygiene, branded, unique, variety
- (iii) One-time use, occasions, hobbies, events, deals

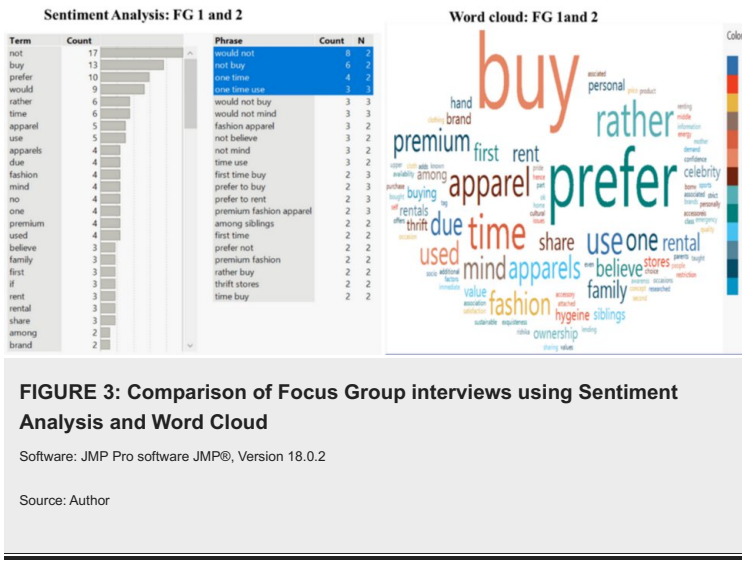


FIGURE 3: Comparison of Focus Group interviews using Sentiment Analysis and Word Cloud

Software: JMP Pro software JMP®, Version 18.0.2

Source: Author

GT method proposes line-by-line coding so that the researcher can pay close attention to what the respondents are saying (Gibbs, 2007). However, Gibbs (Gibbs, 2007) proposes that to avoid simply accepting the world view of the participants and yet remain grounded, the researcher need not accept the respondent data. In this research in Characteristic 2, stage heterogeneous data sets are collected to clarify the codes. Hence, two FG studies were conducted among graduate students of a private university in a metropolitan city, Bangalore. The student participants who attend this graduate course are a mix of metropolitan and Tier II cities of Southern India, with most of them having less than 3 years of work experience. The two sets of data from FG consisted of heterogeneity in the geographic, educational, and work experience data compared to participants from in-depth interviews. The first focus group, FG 1, included n = 10 participants, and the second focus group, FG 2, included n = 12 participants. Among the total n = 22 participants, n = 12 said they would “never buy” used or second-hand fashion apparel online or even from a physical thrift store, while n = 6 are ready to buy for a one-time use when occasions demanded it. Analyzing Figure 3, the sentiment analysis of the top three words are considered “would not buy”, “may buy one time”, and “preferred to rent branded”, which represent the common sentiments. Similarly, the Word Cloud shows larger font sizes for phrases such as “preferred to buy” and “may rent”, from the transcribed FG observations of graduate participants (see Figure 3).

The analyses of Gen Z participants’ data from Figure 3 reflect the themes obtained, and the emerging codes can be classified into three key categories:

- (i) Socio-cultural, values, taught, believe, strict, restriction, borrow, pride, confidence, energy,

occasions, price, hygiene, quality, trust, readiness

(ii) Parents, personal, mother, home, family, siblings, celebrity

(iii) Accessories, sports items, premium apparel, not used apparel, celebrity-tagged apparel

The keywords from this stage can be considered as the initial categories in the open coding stage. The two sets of qualitative data projected divergent views: the younger Gen Z, undergraduate students aged 18-21 years, seemed interested in purchasing or renting and were not hesitant, as they agreed it contributes to MC and sustainability efforts. However, the graduate students, Gen Z aged 22 years and above, showed reluctance toward the online purchase of used fashion apparel.

Characteristic 3: Adding comments/reflections, and memos

In this stage, the research illustrates the comments/reflections (Doyle et al., 2020); memo-writing serves the analytic process (Charmaz, 2006). Memo-writing is meant for the author to reflect upon the data during the data analysis process. While an early memo enables in clarifying the codes through the initial data set, it further provides direction to proceed with the next data collection stage (Charmaz, 2006). In Characteristic 3, we adopt the advanced memo-writing steps proposed by Charmaz (Charmaz, 2006). Some of the pointers chosen are as follows: participant type, geographic context, educational level, and work experience. Our advanced memo-writing, documented by the second author, is entitled "among participants of the same cohort, does geographic context, educational level, work experience and societal belongingness matter?" Among the Gen Z participants, the younger Gen Z seemed to have a macro perspective toward used fashion purchased online, providing clarity on why they would buy or not buy; however, for the older Gen Z participants, family context influences their decisions.

Characteristic 4: Trying to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, and sequences

The memo-writing reflections are analyzed with a third data set collected online, which included an open-ended question sent to the participants, asking them to key in their opinion on used fashion apparel that can be purchased online. These data are illustrated in Table 3. The constant comparison method is adopted to analyze the different participant groups' primary data sets (in-depth, FGs, and online participants) to study the sub-categories obtained and understand whether their perceptions of used fashion bought online result in MC. Applying the GT technique of Axial coding, we identify the sub-categories for each identified code to draw up generalizations in the form of theory, constructs, and so on. The researchers decided that data that were incoherent and data that did not contain more than a line as an answer to the interview question were not considered, as they did not add any value to the data analysis. Table 3 collates codes within the cohort groups, early Gen Z and late Gen Z, based on the memo-writing reflection and analyses of participant data to confirm the categories and sub-categories obtained in Characteristic 2.

Cohort type (Participant): Early Gen Z (EGZ) Late Gen Z (LGZ)	Evidence from participant data	Axial Coding in vivo (participant statements) to develop sub-categories	Codes	Sub-categories
EGZ (n = 2) LGZ (n = 1)	Age: 15-17 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 23-25 years, aware of thrift stores, will not buy	"I would buy it mostly because it is good for the environment, because at least a portion of the clothes are getting reused, and they don't add to the landfill" "Can find more affordable high-end items. It helps to decrease environmental impact". First time buy and ownership rather than used apparel, do not buy fashion apparel.	Good for the environment, reduces landfills Prefer affordable high-end apparel Buy and own new rather than used apparel Do not buy used apparel	Community level ecosystem consciousness Self-consciousness Family value consciousness
EGZ (n = 2) LGZ (n = 2)	Age: 15-17 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 23-25 years, aware of thrift stores, will not buy	"... quite budget friendly, because the goods are going to be sold at a discounted price, this is a great step towards reducing expenses". "... used premium fashion apparel from digital platforms will be priced lower than the original price tag, so I can save some money and still buy apparel that is from a good brand". "used by people, hence would not buy/rent premium apparel".	Budget-friendly discounted prices Lower compared to the new Save and spend on new branded apparel Used by people already	Economic consciousness Value consciousness
EGZ (n = 2) LGZ (n = 1)	Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 23-25 years, MBA graduate, will not buy, but is fine with renting for occasions	"I would thrift for both saving money and to try out 2000s and 2010s styles (vintage style)". "Also, I have the option of reselling it if I get bored with it". "I prefer not to use premium fashion apparel, but if occasions demand, I would not mind renting from thrift stores to be part of the occasion". "Family and self-taught and researched values of not sharing personal accessories and clothing due to the association of ENERGY with the cloth or accessory".	Save money Purchase vintage apparel and resell once bored with used apparel Not keen on premium fashion apparel Buy or rent for special occasions Learnings from family and self	Conscious experience Conscious learning Conscious training
EGZ (n = 2) LGZ (n = 3)	Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 21-23 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 26-28 years, MBA graduate with work experience, will not buy Age: 23-25 years, MBA graduate, will not buy	"... as it is pre-owned, the feeling of the new product will not be there ...". "Because they don't last for long, and the clothes were used by someone ...". "I prefer to rent for a one-time use rather than purchase because of socio-cultural factors. Prefer to use/share from immediate family". "Will not buy, restriction from parents due to hygiene. Rather buy sustainable fashion apparel from known brands". "I prefer not to buy or share as it is a strict NO by my mother at home."	Used fashion apparel does not have a feeling of newness Not long-lasting, used by someone Prefer to share with my immediate family Restrictions from parents due to hygiene Prefer to buy new sustainable apparel Obey your mother's decision	Personal morals Personal values Family morals Family values
EGZ (n = 2) LGZ (n = 3)	Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 18-20 years, aware of thrift stores, will buy Age: 26-28 years, MBA graduate with work experience, may buy	"Thrift shopping sometimes becomes a game of finding valuable things for cheap". "... and as a student, I cannot spend much on the clothes I want to buy". "I would not buy from Thrift stores as a personal choice, as I do not believe in buying rental apparel, celebrity sports apparel can be bought due to the pride associated with the apparel". "Family and self-taught and researched values of not sharing personal accessories and clothing due to association of ENERGY with the cloth or accessory ...". "... wouldn't mind lending, but personally, as a family value, I would not share or borrow. Would not mind sharing among siblings".	Finding valuable things for cheap feels like a game As a student, constrained in terms of spending Do not buy from thrift stores as a personal choice Celebrity or sports apparel can be bought due to the pride associated with the apparel Family-endorsed beliefs	Personal faith and beliefs Family faith and beliefs

TABLE 3: Axial Coding stage to validate the emergent themes from primary data

Inductive codes obtained through "in vivo" as the researchers analyzed the words detailed by the research participants, and emerging categories are derived (See column 5, Table 3). At the same time, line-by-line coding suggested by grounded theorists is adopted as the categories obtained reflect the participants' real-world reflections, and they are arranged in a hierarchy (Gibbs, 2007). The key objective in this stage is to move away from descriptive coding, implying using the participant's words (See Column 4, Table 3) and descriptive coding undertaken in earlier stages, to conduct theoretical coding to derive more categorical, analytic, and theoretical level of coding (Gibbs, 2007). A summary of the codes is listed.

Categories:

- (i) Ecosystem consciousness, Self-consciousness, Family value consciousness
- (ii) Economic consciousness, Value consciousness
- (iii) Conscious experience, Conscious learning, Conscious training
- (iv) Personal morals, Personal values, Family morals, Family values

(v) Personal faith and beliefs, Family faith and beliefs

Characteristic 5: Taking these patterns, themes to help focus the next wave of data collection

In this stage, the literature is reviewed to compare the emerging themes or categories obtained in Characteristic 4, axial coding conducted on primary data. Literature from previous studies has been recommended by many researchers as a method to build thematic ideas (Gibbs, 2007). Extant texts, as coined by Charmaz (Charmaz, 2006), are applied for Axial coding as our memo-writing at this stage is positioned to examine whether the literature on MC of used fashion apparel contains categories that are a micro perspective. Qualitative researchers use extant texts as supplements along with elicited texts to “shape” data interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). In this stage, Table 4 is illustrated to code and identify the categories.

Secondary data		Sub-categories of secondary literature
Axial Coding of Literature review	Citation	
People reported that their lifestyles' have a great impact on environment because they do more number of environmental practices. "... sustainable consumption to include changes to consumption behaviour that can include socially or ecologically inspired choices to consume (or not to) ...". "Negotiating sustainability at the community level – the level where policies are made".	(Defra, 2007) (Peattie and Collins, 2009) (Goel and Sivam, 2014)	Environment, Consumption choices, Ecological, Community level engagement, Responsible lifestyle
	(Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015) (Mont et. al., 2014)	Eco-system, Socio-technical, Relational, Well-being, Innovation driven
"... motivating more sustainable consumption concerns efforts to communicate with consumers in order to inform them about the social and environmental consequences of their consumption behaviours ...". "The eco-labels concept suggests environmental sustainability through substituting purchases leading to more sustainable consumption". "... (online) communication among consumers themselves, and how this might be an important mechanism to allow new ideas about sustainable lifestyles and consumer citizenship to be developed and disseminated". "... communication to consider how community-orientated campaigns using alternative media (in this case, community news media) can generate understanding about, and support for, sustainable consumption". "... advance learning settings that effectively address both cognitive and affective learning outcomes and promote a reflexive engagement with sustainable consumption challenges".	(Peattie and Collins, 2009) (Horne, 2009) (Peattie and Collins, 2009) (Peattie and Collins, 2009) (Stanszus et. al., 2017)	Communication, Eco-labels, Peer communication, Online learning, Cognitive & Affective learning
"... consumers pursuing a more frugal lifestyle as a reflection of their personal values and search ...". "... values and motivations underpinning frequent sustainable fashion consumption". "... sustainable intention formation is closely linked to altruistic values and long-term perspectives". "... utilitarian values, such as saving money and maximizing utility, are still the dominant factors in consumers' decisions to pursue access-based consumption such as online fashion renting ...".	(Peattie and Collins, 2009) (Lundblad and Davies, 2015) (Bauer et. al., 2018) (Lee and Chow, 2020)	Personal values, Altruistic values, Utilitarian values, Frugal lifestyle, Maximize utility
Some belief that can prevent people from acting in an environmentally responsible manner". "An element of self-consciousness and self- actualization appears to reside within mindful consumption ...".	(Defra, 2007) (Lim, 2017)	Belief, Self consciousness, Self actualization, Mindful consumption, Act responsibly

TABLE 4: Axial coding to identify the sub-categories from literature

By the constant comparison technique, a key data analysis process is important as GT is not a linear process but an iterative one (Chun Tie et al., 2019), so that the researchers can narrow down the categories, which helps in crystallizing the categories. This iterative process, conducted systematically, is used to identify the final emerging themes. “The application of names to passages of text is not arbitrary, it involves a deliberate and thoughtful process of categorising the content of the text (Gibbs, 2007) (p. 3)”. GT methodology next calls for the Selective coding technique. In the illustration in Table 5, we compare the categories obtained through axial coding that was applied to extant text that is secondary data obtained through the literature and elicited text obtained through primary data from participants. In the selective coding stage, Tables 3 and 4 are collated to develop the final shaped categories. The objective in this stage is to obtain the main categories that contribute to the constructs of the conceptual framework (see Figure 1).

Sense of interdependence			Notion of well-being			Mental construct			Morals and values			Faith and belief	
Literature Review		Primary Research	Literature Review		Primary Research	Literature Review		Primary Research	Literature Review		Primary Research	Literature Review	
Sub-category	Citation	Sub-category	Sub-category	Citation	Sub-category	Sub-category	Citation	Sub-category	Sub-category	Citation	Sub-category	Sub-category	Citation
Environment	(Defra, 2007)	Community-level consciousness	Eco-system	(Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015)	Economic consciousness	Communication	(Peattie and Collins, 2009)	Conscious experience	Personal values	(Peattie and Collins, 2009)	Personal morals & values	Belief	(Defra, 2007)
Consumption choices	(Peattie and Collins, 2009)	Self-consciousness	Socio-technical	(Mont et al., 2014)	Value consciousness	Eco-labels	(Horne, 2009)	Conscious learning	Altruistic values	(Bauer et al., 2018)	Family morals & values	Self-consciousness	(Lim, 2017)
Ecological	(Goel and Sivam, 2014)	Consciousness of family values	Relational	(Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015)	NA	Peer communication	(Stanszus et al., 2017)	Conscious training	Utilitarian values	(Lee and Chow, 2020)	NA	Self actualization	(Lim, 2017)
Community level engagement	(Goel and Sivam, 2014)	NA	Well-being	(Mont et al., 2014)	NA	Online learning	(Stanszus et al., 2017)	NA	Frugal lifestyle	(Peattie and Collins, 2009)	NA	Mindful consumption	(Lim, 2017)
Responsible lifestyle	(Defra, 2007)	NA	Innovation driven	(Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015)	NA	Cognitive and affective learning	(Stanszus et al., 2017)		Maximize utility	(Lee and Chow, 2020)	NA	Act responsibly	(Defra, 2007)

TABLE 5: Selective Coding for validation of themes from Literature Review and Primary Research

This research enhances rigour with supporting themes that emerge from secondary data sources, namely through literature review (see Table 4), thereby ensuring trustworthiness of the findings within the research design. The axial coding analysis identifies the multi-dimensional nature of sustainable consumption, defined by interrelated constructs under relationship concepts such as a sense of interdependence, notion of well-being, mental construct, morals and values, and faith and belief. The consumer comprehends the environmental impacts of their living standards (Defra, 2007), underlining the relevance of community-oriented sustainability efforts (Peattie and Collins, 2009) and socially responsible consumption patterns (Goel and Sivam, 2014). This creates a sense of interdependence in the neighborhood of the consumer. The notion of well-being transcends economic prosperity, embracing socially and environmentally responsible actions, loving social and ecological connections and living a healthy and meaningful life (Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015), whereas Mont et al. (Mont et al., 2014) highlight a socio-technical innovation. Mental constructs emphasize how eco-labels (Horne, 2009), community campaigns and alternative media play a role in promoting sustainability (Peattie and Collins, 2009), and how advanced environmental learning develop cognitive and affective outcomes by contemplative while dealing with sustainability issues (Stanszus et al., 2017). Social and environmental values lead to sustainable lifestyles (Bauer et al., 2018) (Lundblad and Davies, 2015). Further, such intentions are motivated by altruistic concerns for future generations and long-term thinking, while utilitarian motives, such as cost savings, align with sustainability ethics through resource efficiency and waste reduction. Individuals' eco-friendly actions are shaped by belief (Defra, 2007), and similarly, self-actualization and mindfulness influence sustainable actions (Lim, 2017).

The premise for findings is based on Characteristic 6 and Characteristic 7 proposed by Doyle et al. (Doyle et al., 2020). Further, Characteristic 6 discerns the sub-categories that constitute the five predictor variables for the construct Relationship used to analyze the MC of used fashion apparel purchased on SNS or digital platforms. Characteristic 7 states the operational definitions for the predictor variables of the construct Relationship.

Characteristic 6: Gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies you discern in the data

The five predictors consist of categories obtained through selective coding on primary data and literature (secondary data). The sub-categories are clustered to develop the categories for each predictor variable of the construct Relationship proposed by Nayak (Nayak, 2024). The analysis identifies theoretical codes to enable a more refined analytic perspective (Charmaz, 2006) and ties the categories together to build the theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019).

The sub-categories of the five predictors obtained from the results of the analysis are listed below:

- (i) "Consumption choices", "ecological", community level engagement", responsible lifestyle", "community level consciousness", "self-consciousness", "consciousness of family values". Sub-category: Sense of interdependence
- (ii) "Eco-system", "Socio-technical relations", well-being", "innovation-driven", "economic consciousness", "value consciousness". Sub-category: Notion of well-being
- (iii) "Communication", "eco-labels", "peer communication", "online learning", Cognitive and affective learning", "conscious experience", "conscious learning", "conscious training". Sub-category: Mental construct

(iv) “Personal values”, “altruistic values”, “utilitarian values”, “frugal lifestyle”, “maximise utility”, “personal morals & values”, “family morals & values”. Sub-category: Morals & Values

(v) “Belief”, “self-consciousness”, “self-actualisation”, “mindful consumption”, “act responsibly”, “personal faith & beliefs”, “family faith & beliefs”. Sub-category: Faith & Beliefs

It is noted that each of the five sub-categories is illustrated with themes or concepts obtained after analysis, contextually, which is a micro-perspective of Gen Z’s perspective toward MC. Gen Z has a high awareness of the consequences of fast fashion on the ecosystem. As a consequence, their Sense of Interdependence conforms to the stated definition of Nayak (Nayak, 2024). However, Gen Z prefers to engage in conscious consumption practices at a smaller eco-system like for example, within a micro-level community where their consumption choices are responsible. While this is in contrast to Nayak (Nayak, 2024), which proposes consideration of not only the small community but also other life and matter in one’s ecosystem.

The sub-category Notion of well-being as indicated through themes such as “economic consciousness”, “well-being”, reflecting that Gen Z is seeking value for the price they pay for the used fashion purchased or rented from digital platforms. They are keen on the savings they get out of such transactions and eagerly search for price discounts and good deals even for used fashion apparel brought from digital platforms of e-commerce stores or SNS. Their interactions on platforms themed “socio-technical” seemed appropriate as they seek good deals on branded, premium or celebrity used apparel sold or rented. This is distinctive to Nayak (Nayak, 2024) construct, which uses the keyword “capital and wealth”, which is a macro-perspective conscious consumption.

This research’s concepts align Nayak (Nayak, 2024) sub-category Mental Construct. Gen Z is highly knowledgeable about online thrift stores to the extent of seeking information from their close network of parents, siblings, family and peers about the details of the product and would prefer rentals, certification of authenticity, and eco-labels as evidence toward their decision making. This research proposes that Gen Z mental construct of information, learning and experiences can be leveraged by the SNS and e-commerce digital platforms to enhance the process of seeking used fashion apparel.

The concepts derived from this research matched the sub-category Morals & Values of Nayak (Nayak, 2024) concerning family values and were a precedent theme for Gen Z. The family decisions impacted their personal decisions. However, the younger Gen Z’s perspective of family morals was altruistic as they were ready to experiment compared to the older Gen Z, who had a utilitarian, frugal and saving money are their perspective toward used fashion. The emphasis on family-oriented values is key in their decisions.

The sub-category Faith & Belief related to the definition stated by Nayak (Nayak, 2024) as “core of the individual” is valid in this research. Further, even though the core belief is personal in that they behave in a “mindful” and “responsible” manner, which is influenced by the family’s faith and beliefs.

Characteristic 7: Linking these generalizations to a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories

This research proposes the operational definitions (refer to Annexure 1, Table 6) as a theory to propose a conceptual framework to analyze MC of the purchase of used fashion on digital platforms. The operational definition proposed in Table 6 is illustrated in bold font in column three. This research identified through its GT analysis that the Sense of interdependence, Notion of well-being, and Mental construct are indeed to be analyzed from a micro-perspective of the user of the product or service, that is, from a demand perspective. Consumers as stakeholders can make MC decisions about used fashion apparel at a narrow societal level, such as community, family, and peers. However, it may be observed that for the predictors Morals & Values and Faith & Belief, this research retains the original definitions.

Discussion

The goal of this research was to provide operational definitions for the constructs of the dimension Relationship. Though Nayak proposes the dimension, constructs, and operational definition for the five constructs (Nayak, 2024), this research article furthers this to identify the variables for each of the five constructs, and through qualitative Grounded Theory research, variables for each construct are identified. Boateng et al. state that content validity is a key step in theorizing a construct (Boateng et al., 2018); in this research, the dimension is Relationship. The authors additionally point out that this allows clear boundaries in the domain knowledge, provides confirmation that the dimension has not been previously defined and sets the boundaries for identifying the variables and items for the scale development stage.

Relationship as a construct, as proposed by Nayak, constitutes one among the eight major dimensions of interconnectedness of an ecosystem (Nayak, 2024). “All Interacting Evolving Systems Science (AIESS) provides an eclectic transdisciplinary and holistic analytical framework to diagnose both degeneration and regeneration in different ecosystems, (Nayak, 2024) (p. 10)”. The AIESS framework is conceptualized for analyzing a regenerative system versus a degenerative natural ecological system. Additionally, this research is grounded on Relationship as a social dimension and its five constructs at levels analyzed from an individual’s interaction with the ecological ecosystem by analyzing their outlook toward the larger ecosystem and the smaller communities the individuals co-exist with, called as Sense of interdependence and Notion of Well-being, respectively. To learn their outlook toward what is perceived by them as resources and wealth, an analysis of an individual’s perspective toward education, training, and experience is key by understanding their Mental Construct. At their core is also a need to understand their perspective of Faith and Belief and Morals and Values, and how these factors influence their perception of the natural ecosystem (Nayak, 2024). Considering the implications of each of the five constructs on MC for used fashion apparel bought or rented on digital platforms, further future empirical examination is the key objective.

Sense of interdependence

The study by Goel and Sivam applies the Social Practice Theory to analyze behavioral perspectives of units of society, the stakeholders’ consumption practices through case studies (Goel and Sivam, 2014). Their research points to examples of “unsustainable” practices adopted by consumers in the goal

toward achieving marketing goals of adopting higher lifestyles, and such behaviors, they say, are “embedded” and “deep-rooted” in individuals. Further, it supports these research findings, which posit community and individuals’ interactions toward responsible lifestyles and conscious engagement toward sustainable practices. However, Sivam and Goel research does not mention the role of family in developing values toward social, economic, and sustainable practices, as the research is set in a Western context (Goel and Sivam, 2014) and hence, individuals’ conscious practices take precedence over family.

Notion of well-being

Pointing to the lack of well-being and relational research, Helne and Hirvilammi position SC within the broader context of well-being, emphasizing its role in shaping how consumers perceive environmental ecosystems and resources, prioritizing relational over purely economic values (Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015). They introduce a well-being framework based on the predictors Loving, Being, and Doing, and propose Having as a construct where consumer needs should be oriented toward value-driven fulfilment rather than overconsumption. This orientation will aim to decrease the unsustainable patterns characteristic of the Anthropocene epoch. However, the contribution of our research goes beyond proposing the operational definition for the Notion of Well-being; it also identifies predictors to measure the construct and is one among the five constructs of Relationship to measure MC of used fashion apparel on digital platforms.

Mental construct

Barcelona proposes the significance of “locus of control”, where personalities who look for internal reinforcements believe their impactful decisions in sustainable consumption can bring changes, and such marketers are important to market green products to bring behavioral change among consumers (Barcelona, 2011). The consumers of today believe in word-of-mouth communication from digital media due to its richness and steer that business take advantage of the richness of media to influence consumers. Helne and Hirvilammi propose having as a construct in their framework for SC which reiterates that consumers and societies should look for goals to fulfil their needs to move away from over consumption to conscious consumption for the well-being (Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015). This research article proposes that consciousness in learning, training, and experience are variables for the Mental Construct, which aligns with earlier research that points to new ways of learning and training through digital media for developing a consumer’s cognitive process of consciousness.

Faith and belief

Barcelona research of respondents from various countries points to the importance of family as a starting point for developing green habits (Barcelona, 2011). They tend to carry these habits to the workplace in terms of their choices toward food and health choices. In current times, Lee and Chow state that consumers seek affirmation of their beliefs for used rental fashion through recommendations from their peers, social networks, and reviews (Lee and Chow, 2020). Their study, set in a Western context, indicates that consumers, though aware of environmental benefits, still seek utilitarian values of saving money and maximizing utility through rental options over ownership of used online fashion. Conversely, our research confirmed the readiness of consumers to try rental over purchasing used fashion only for special occasions. Though the consumers were well aware of apparel ending up in landfills, their learnings of Faith and Belief taught by their family had an impact on their decision-making. In this context, the psychological ownership played a precedence over sustainable practices. This is confirmed by Lee and Chow, who claim that consumers with strong psychological ownership have a negative attitude toward online fashion renting (Lee and Chow, 2020).

Morals and values

Barcelona points to the impact of nationality and residency on sustainable consumption practices, and developed markets show a greater predisposition (Barcelona, 2011). Additionally, the author states that while marketers believe that consumers are altruistic and will go beyond their means to pay a premium to choose green products the results are not as in situational contexts like pandemic or economic downturns, consumers tend to overlook the fact of sustainability over cost effective propositions and this is common across nationalities (Barcelona, 2011). In our research, Morals and Values are an outcome of Faith and Belief, as close-knit family members influence the core of an individual in this context, the consumer. Hence, Gen Z displayed more aversion and reluctance rather than readiness towards used online fashion apparel.

In all a challenge that GT researchers face is whether the research phenomenon has been studied before; the previous research may lead to bias (Backman and Kyngäs, 1999), which can be a limitation of this research too. Hence, as GT researchers, it is important to “bracket”, meaning to suspend what the author already knows, termed as bracketing (Backman and Kyngäs, 1999). Furthermore, the authors state that though previous research in the literature is a social phenomenon, data should be used to understand the implicit phenomenon being studied. One among the key elements for validation of GT research is that the analyses of data into categories should not result in the same terms obtained as data, implying that the author is unable to determine concrete new data to conceptualize into theory (Backman and Kyngäs, 1999). Hence, future research can test the categories obtained in other research contexts to design the scales.

Implications

To academia, this research contributes to understanding the buying behavior of the future generation, the Gen Z and theorizes Relationship as a dimension and validates the factors of the concept Relationship using GT qualitative research. Hardly any research has proposed Relationship as a dimension to measure the effect variable, MC.

To practitioners, an understanding of Gen Z buying habits enables them to design policies in conformance with the UNSDG, such as designing policies for businesses operating in the reused and sustainable fashion business sector on SNS and online. They can develop strict quality policy measures for fashion retailers selling fast fashion brands on digital platforms. Further practitioners of small businesses and used fashion platforms will find insights into MC among Gen Z, their market segment, and be able to design marketing plans for online used fashion.

Limitations

This exploratory research has considered a phenomenon called Relationship to measure a single product category: used fashion apparel brought by Gen Z on SNS. To confirm the sub-categories, further research in other contexts is essential for other product categories, cohort groups, cultural background of the cohort group.

Conclusions

This research proposes that the Relationship as a construct contributes to MC and contributes to the sustainability goal of the CE. The qualitative research method, GT, is applied to gain respondent insights and further theorize the dimension of the Relationship. GT is used to analyze the data obtained through primary data sources such as in-depth interviews, FG studies, and online open-ended questions. The data collection rested on the perspective of Gen Z toward MC of used fashion apparel purchased online through SNS and web platforms. GT is adopted to gain respondents' insights and further theorize the dimension of the relationship. Three sets of primary data are collected: focus groups, in-depth interviews, and online questionnaire forms. The researchers validated the data independently and, through discussions, collated the constructs. The results demonstrate that Gen Z preferred to purchase used apparel in cognisance with the variables of the relationship construct, and the research further proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the association of variables of the construct relationship on MC.

This research is probably the first to propose Relationship as a construct to measure MC with Smart Living, a technological intervention as a moderator. In this research, the Smart Living technological intervention is a digital platform. On the other hand, this research contributes to the body of knowledge by proposing three operational definitions for the predictors: Sense of interdependence, Notion of well-being, and Mental construct. Additionally, this research identifies the key concepts for each of the five sub-categories. Though Gen Z in a lot of societies and cultures celebrate and show their readiness toward MC of reused fashion apparel, the results of this research have a divergent perspective. Hence, we propose the conceptual framework with recommended operational definitions for further research.

Further research agenda

The concept of relationship is theorized, and its factors are validated using qualitative research. The results obtained through analysis are consistent with the primary data. An exploratory conceptual model is proposed and operationalized using GT, qualitative research, which will be confirmed in future through empirical research.

Since the research is exploratory, adopting GT, only the initial stages of GT, that is, the proposal of operational definitions and identification of variables of the theory Relationship, is conducted. Further research can test the Relationship in multiple contexts to be confirmed, called the confirmation, disconfirmation, and application stages

The research proposes to use mixed-method research and further test the proposed framework with an empirical study. Future research can use Millennials as respondents, as Millennials and Gen Z are custodians of green in fashion.

Appendices

Predictors (Nayak, 2024)	Definitions (Nayak, 2024)	Proposed operational definitions for sub-categories (Authors work)
Sense of interdependence	A sense of interdependence is an outcome of the relationship with neighbors and in one's small community, other life and matter in one's ecosystem	A sense of interdependence is an outcome of the relationship with one's close-knit small community ecosystem.
Notion of well-being	The notion of well-being is the overall societal orientation toward what is perceived as capital and wealth	The notion of well-being is the overall close knit community orientation toward what is perceived as benefit due to the intervention of Socio technical systems.
Mental construct	An outcome of our education, training, and experience	An outcome of our enhanced education, training, and experience due to Socio-technical intervention.
Morals and values	Morals and values are an outcome of relationships at a family level	Personal morals and values as an outcome of relationships at a family level.
Faith and belief	Faith and belief are at the core of an individual.	Personal faith and belief are at the core of an individual with family influence.

TABLE 6: Proposed operational definitions of predictor variables of Mindful Consumption of used fashion apparels

Sources: Author

Questionnaire used for the study (Table 7)

Rent or Purchase of Used fashion apparels on thrift stores among Gen Z

Dear participant,

I am currently doing a research on "Rent or Purchase of Used fashion apparels on thrift stores among Gen Z " to understand consumers awareness and behaviour with regards to purchase second hand / used fashion apparel.

Please spare 15 minutes to complete this form. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact me by email. Appreciate your support in completing the form.

Regards,

Ms. Rasmita Panda, Research Scholar,

FOMS, PES University. rasmitapanda@pesu.pes.edu

Section	Prompt	Response Options
Basic Info	I am a student / work as *	Student: ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Post Graduate, Working: ☐ Government ☐ Private ☐ Professional ☐ Other
	Which city in India do you belong to? *	(Name the city)
	My age is *	(Please write your age)
Awareness	Are you aware of online second-hand / thrift fashion apparel stores on Instagram? *	☐ Yes ☐ No
Attitude	Will you purchase second-hand / premium used fashion apparel from digital platforms? *	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ May be
Perspective	Describe in at least 10 lines your thoughts on renting or purchasing used fashion apparel *	Write your response below:

TABLE 7: Questionnaire

Additional Information

Author Contributions

All authors have reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

- Concept and design: [Jessy Nair](#)
- Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data: [Jessy Nair](#), [Rasmita Panda](#)
- Drafting of the manuscript: [Jessy Nair](#), [Rasmita Panda](#)
- Critical review of the manuscript for important intellectual content: [Jessy Nair](#)
- Supervision: [Jessy Nair](#)

Disclosures

Human subjects: Consent was obtained or waived by all participants in this study. **Animal subjects:** All authors have confirmed that this study did not involve animal subjects or tissue. **Conflicts of interest:** In compliance with the ICMJE uniform disclosure form, all authors declare the following: **Payment/services info:** All authors have declared that no financial support was received from any organization for the submitted work. **Financial relationships:** All authors have declared that they have no financial relationships at present or within the previous three years with any organizations that might have an interest in the submitted work. **Other relationships:** All authors have declared that there are no other relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

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