

## A Study on Online Thrift Stores: An Emerging Trend on Account of Covid-19

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the sectors that has been largely affected due to the pandemic is the Fashion industry. Since 2020 shopping has made a big pivot online. Consequently, Thrifting has become a prevalent trend in fashion. Thrift stores sell second-hand articles at discounted rates.

In the following research, I have made an attempt to comprehend the rationale of E-commerce entrepreneurs running Thrift stores on Instagram. The basic model of their E-commerce business is assessed along with an inquiry of the target market that they focus upon. Each entrepreneur had a unique thought behind their Thrifting venture. While some of the people were doing it for an environmental cause, some of them even did it to squeeze profits from the resale of clothes. Either ways, it leads to a better ecological impact and economic prudence.

Survey method was used in conducting this research. The data collected and analysed is a Basic research with Primary information compiled on Simple Random Sampling basis.

**Keywords: Thrift Stores, Business Trends, Sustainable Fashion, Seller's perspective**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The year 2020 has brought a massive change in the fashion industry when we examine the purchasing behaviour of the consumer on account of Covid-19. As a result, the industry witnessed a sharp increase in the trend of Online Thrifting of articles, especially clothes. Earlier, thrifting took place through Flea Markets, Garage sales and Street shopping. However due to hike in the Covid-19 cases, there has become a void in physical shopping experience; ergo, online thrift stores have become a trend in vogue.

The following research attempts to comprehend the rationale of E-commerce entrepreneurs running Thrift stores on Instagram. The basic model of their business is assessed along with an inquiry of the target market that they focus upon. Importance of various factors such as Customer reviews, Product photoshoot, Third-Party endorsements, Large social media presence and Digital Ads were examined through seller's point of view.

Along with the Primary Data, Secondary data was also used as a methodology to analyse the perspectives of fashion journalists, environmentalists and anthropologists regarding thrift stores and its role in promoting sustainable fashion.

A future research can be carried out on Potential buyer's perspective of Thrift Shopping and factors that makes thrift shopping more appealing as per the target customers of the online Thrift stores. Suggestions recommended by the potential buyers of Thrift stores can be brought to light.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The survey was conducted with a Basic research aim. The research aim was to comprehend the Seller's perspective and rationale behind commencing E-commerce business of Thrifting and factors that play a crucial role in their various business decisions.

A blended approach was used in terms of data collection. Primary data collection was done on the basis of Simple Random Sampling and Secondary data was collected with the aid of various websites and E-newspapers.

This research is exploratory in nature since it is steered to understand the effect of Covid-19 on Emerging E-commerce trend of Thrift Stores.

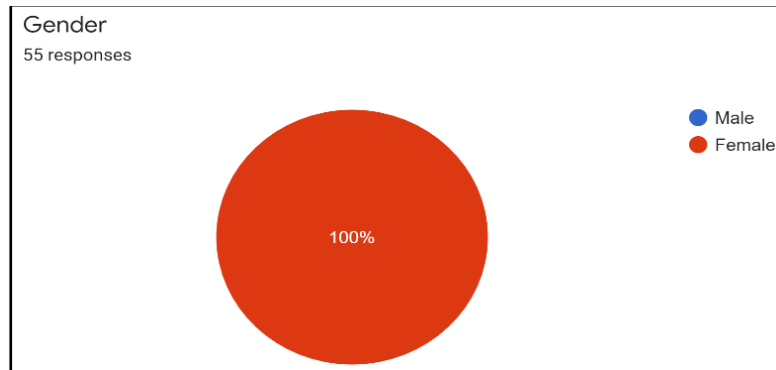
While studying the nature of this topic, it was felt appropriate to go for a quantitative stance of research. Therefore, Data Collection was done through Questionnaire Survey. Keeping the current situation of Covid-19 in mind, the data was collected through an online medium. Google Forms was used as a tool to promulgate the survey questionnaire. Google Forms were circulated amongst various Instagram Handles of Thrift stores. The online questionnaire was accepting responses only for 2 days, i.e., on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2021.

The Questionnaire consisted of 3 Demographic Questions and 12 other Questions which aimed to examine their basic business model, target market, threats and opportunities and several other factors revolving around the business. Due to a lesser number of online Thrift stores, the respondents were limited to a number of 55. An analysis of the Quantitative data collected was performed to deduce the inference.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

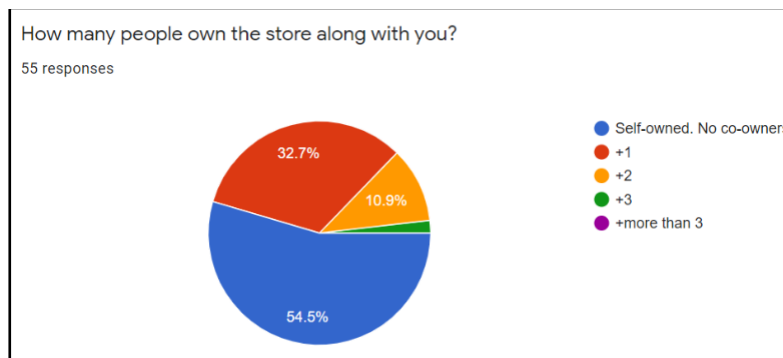
Each respondent was asked MCQ-type questions and open-ended questions in the online questionnaire. The quantitative data collected was then statistically analysed.

Following charts indicate the results of the data collected. Each Question shall now be analysed in-depth.



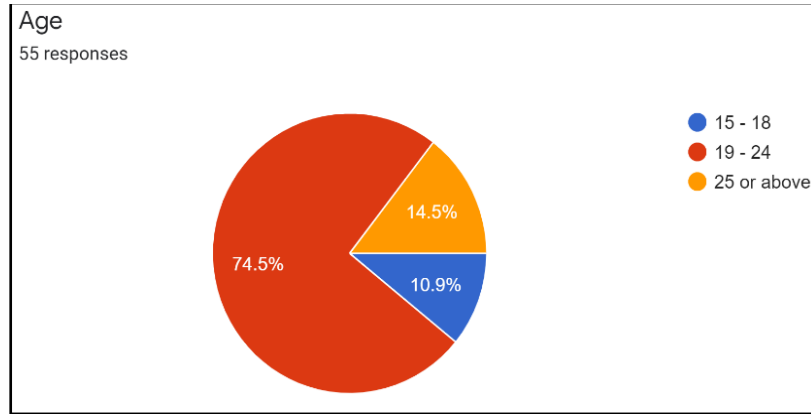
**Figure 1**

This pie chart clearly shows that all the respondent for this survey was female. This suggests that Thrifting is more of a popular practice amongst women than men. Also, please note that in order to make the research free from Gender-Bias, the option for “other” was also provided to the respondents who would not prefer to fall under the binary gender category.



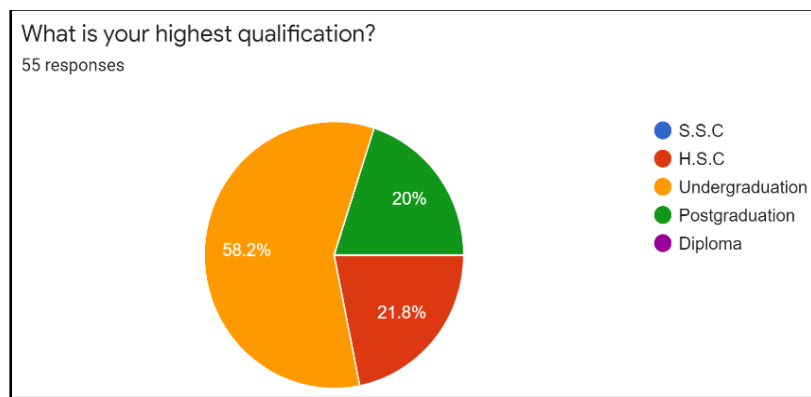
**Figure 2**

This question inquired to know about the average number of people that run one thrift store. It can be deduced from the figure that 54.5% of the respondents ran their store individually. 32.7% of respondents worked in pairs. 10.9% of respondents had 3 owners to their store and the rest had 4 people claiming in the ownership.



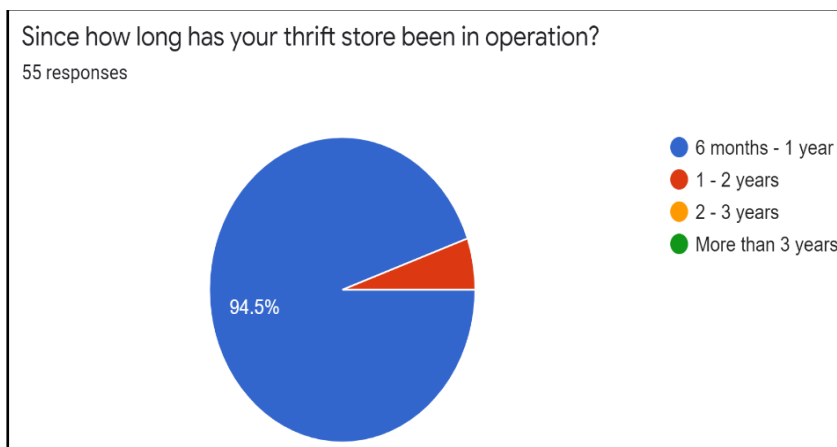
**Figure 3**

In this pie chart, we can see that majority of thrift store holders (85.5%) fell into the age category of Generation Z (15 – 24 years old). This remarks that Online Thrifting is a new age trend, more evidently practiced amongst Gen Z. 14.5% belonged to the Generation of Millennials. Thus, from these responses, we can say that the practice of online thrifting is apparently negligible amongst Generation Y.



**Figure 4**

In this figure, it can be understood that more than half of the respondents (58.2%) are students who are pursuing Under-graduation. Around 20% of them are pursuing Post-graduation. Roughly 21.8% people have just completed their School education. This explains that formal education is not a pre-requisite to successfully run an online thrift store.



**Figure 5**

This question aims to interrogate about the Thrift store’s duration of the operations. It can be deduced from the data that majority of the stores (94.5%) have been commenced amidst the pandemic. Earlier, thrifting took place through Flea Markets and Street shopping. However due to hike in the Covid-19 cases, there has become a void in physical shopping experience and so, online thrift stores have become a trend. Only 5.5% of the Thrift stores were in practice for more than 1 year.



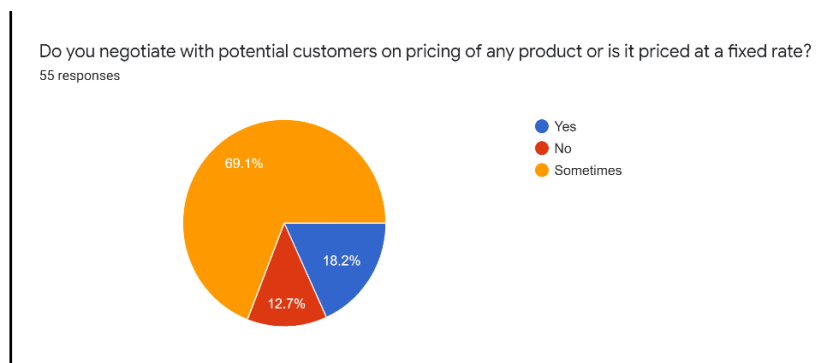
**Figure 6**

58.2% of participants offered free shipping of articles while others did not.



**Figure 7**

Almost all the respondents (98.2%) did not offer returns/exchange of products sold.



**Figure 8**

18.2% of respondents negotiates with potential buyers, 69.1% respondents negotiate sometimes and only 12.7% of them were rigid against bargaining.

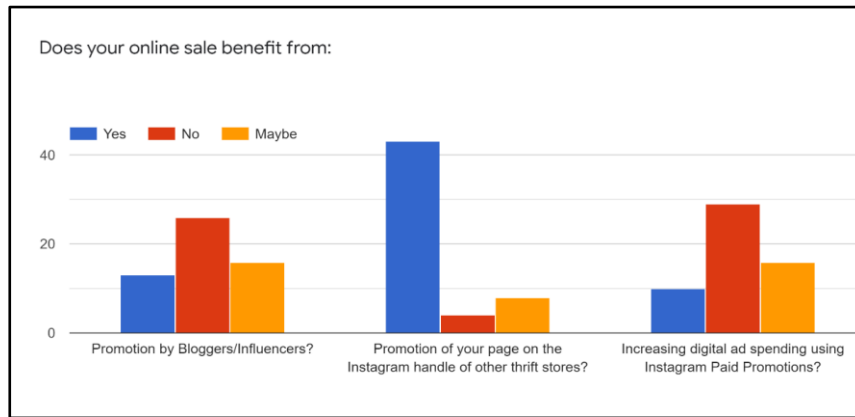


Figure 9

**3 aspects are covered in this question:**

Promotion of the online thrift store by bloggers and influencers is not seen much crucial as 26 respondents out of 55 denied the sale benefit, 16 of them were unsure and only 13 could see a sale benefit from it.

Cross pollination on social media was a commonly witnessed practice on Instagram. And evidently, 43 respondents could see a sale benefit from it, 8 of them were skeptical and 4 could not yield any benefit through that practice.

Digital ads were also an equally unappealing way to promote sales as 29 respondents found it not useful, 16 of them were unsure and only 10 could realize a sale benefit through it.

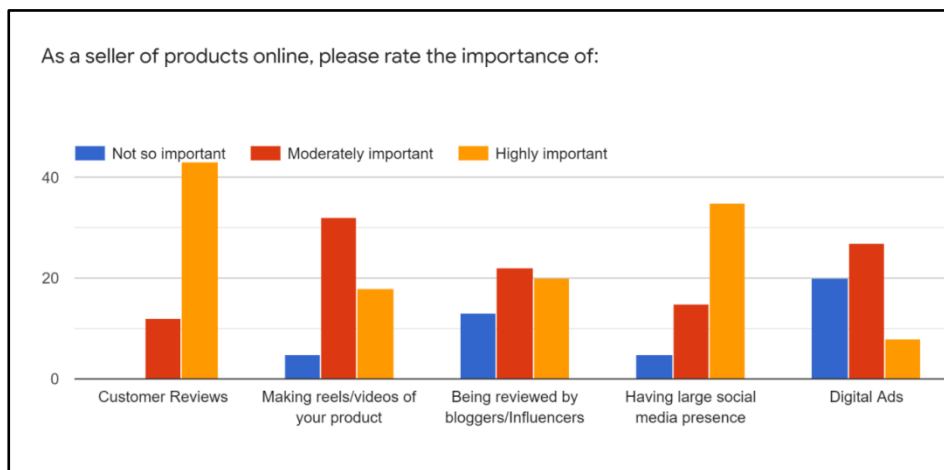


Figure 10

On being asked about the importance of various aspects, it can be deduced from the data that Customer review is highly valued followed by having a large social media presence. Making appealing videos and reels of the product and being reviewed by influencers were moderately important. However, Digital ads seemed to be least important aspect among the majority of respondents.

**CONCLUSION**

To sum up, it is observed that the trend of online thrifting has been stimulated by social media and it has encouraged the youth to take a leap towards Sustainable Fashion and frugal purchases. The lack of physical shopping experience amidst the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged people to make economic purchases through a virtual medium. The respondents felt that running an online thrift store has helped them to strike new connections on social media, maximise their potential of dealing in business, achieve a sense of contributing to sustainable development, create an aesthetic appeal of pre-loved articles and normalise the former clandestine affair of buying second-hand articles and clothes.

To conclude, here is a quote from anthropologist and fashion journalist Phyllida Jay, (Gurung, 2021)

*“These stores (thrift stores) add a kind of delight and unexpectedness to shopping, they give young consumers a way to shop on a budget. Buying from these stores can be part of a more conscious approach to shopping.”*

### **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

Future research can be conducted with statistical methods to examine the Potential buyer's perspective of Thrift Shopping and factors that makes thrift shopping more appealing as per the target customers of the online Thrift stores. Suggestions recommended by the potential buyers for the online business model of Thrift stores can be brought to light.

In addition to that, on the basis of this research paper, further studies can be carried out, on a larger size of respondents from different regions and how they cater to varying needs of their customers as per their taste conforming to that particular demography.

### **References**

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