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**Abstract**

The global textile industry has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, leading to a surge in textile waste that poses a significant environmental threat. Researchers have explored the potential of using second-hand clothes (SHC) as an alternative to new garments to address this issue. Among different customer segments, Generation Y has emerged as a critical group with high purchasing power and contribution to the growth of the SHC market. However, the non-purchasing behaviors of this generation towards SHC remain understudied.

This thesis investigates the internal and external barriers that impede Generation Y's adoption of SHC. The study began with a historical overview of the SHC market and the characterization of Generation Y's shopper profiles, followed by a review of existing literature on consumer behaviors. The qualitative research method used semi-structured questionnaires and thematic analysis of individual interviews. Despite a small sample size, participants came from diverse educational, professional, and cultural backgrounds.

The findings revealed some disparities between Generation Y shoppers and general shoppers in terms of the most frequently cited barriers, including concerns about unseen defects, cleanliness, unknown sources, and specific items, a lack of patience and time, and limited availability of clothes in terms of style, size, and quality. The research contributes to the literature on SHC consumption behavior and generational cohorts. It provides practical recommendations for SHC businesses to tailor their business models and product offerings to different customer segments within Generation Y.

Keywords	Second-hand clothes, barriers, non-purchasing behaviors, millennials, Gen Y past shoppers, Gen Y non-shoppers.
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**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**

Turku School of  
Economics

**EXPLORING THE BARRIERS TO  
GEN Y'S NON-SHOPPING BEHAVIORS  
TOWARD SECOND-HAND CLOTHES.**

Master's Thesis  
in International Business

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

SHC: Second-hand clothing

Gen Y: Generation Y

GDP: Gross Domestic Products

B2C: Business to Consumer

C2C: Consumer to Consumer

P2P: Peer to Peer



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of study

This thesis aims to investigate the obstacles that prevented Gen Y from avoiding used clothing purchases. The introductory section will provide an overview of the expansion of the worldwide clothing industry and its associated environmental concerns. Additionally, it will present the trend of second-hand clothes consumption as a prevalent pattern of sustainable consumption, which can potentially reduce the environmental consequences of clothing production. The section will highlight the crucial role that Generation Y shoppers play in this market.

### 1.1.1 The clothing industry growth and environmental impacts

The global clothing industry holds a substantial position in international trade, generating a revenue of US\$ 1.5 trillion in 2021 (Smith 2023), equivalent to 2% of the world's GDP (Fashion & Textile... n.d.). This industry has played a crucial role in providing employment opportunities, with 3.45 billion people working in the sector in 2021 (Global Fashion Industry Statistics 2021). However, clothing manufacturing is among the most resource-intensive industries (Hur & Cassidy 2019, 208). For example, the production of a T-shirt necessitates 2,700 liters of water, while the production of a pair of jeans may require up to 7,000 liters (Chung 2016). The industry utilized 79 billion cubic meters of water in 2015 (The impact of textile...2022).

The sector is one of the most polluting industries because its dyeing and finishing processes alone account for 20% of the world's clean water pollution (Hur & Cassidy 2019, 208). About 15% of textiles are recycled, and more than two-thirds are sent to landfills (Shirvanimoghaddam et al. 2020, 1). Moreover, the laundering of synthetic clothing could release 500,000 tonnes of microfibers annually, which accounts for 35% of primary microplastics released into the ocean (The impact of textile... 2022). The industry is also responsible for 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than the combined emissions from an international flight and maritime shipping (Fashion Industry Environmental.. n.d.).

The consequences of the clothing industry's negative environmental impact are grave. The textile waste in landfills releases hazardous chemicals into the air, water, and land, posing a threat to human and planetary well-being. An estimated 92 million tonnes

of textile waste are released in landfills annually, equivalent to a full truck of clothes being discarded every second (Beall 2020). Polymer-based clothing, which takes up to 200 years to decompose in landfills, adds to the already severe problem. During the decomposition process, it releases a substantial amount of hazardous chemicals (Brown 2021). The industry's emission is estimated to rise to 2.7 billion tons annually by 2030 if it does not take serious action (Berg et al. 2020). These alarming statistics underscore the need for the industry to take immediate action to address its negative environmental impact. Subsequently, the thesis will expound on the role of second-hand clothing consumption in addressing these environmental concerns.

### 1.1.2 The role of second-hand clothes consumption

The idea of sustainable consumption has recently been developed to maximize resource usage and minimize waste due to the environmental challenges produced by the production and use of garments (Fu & Kim 2019, 221). For instance, the 178 member countries of the United Nations set their 12th Sustainable Development Goal to adopt sustainable consumption and production patterns by 2030 (Transforming our world...2015). Moreover, the European Commission unveiled a specific Action Plan to implement a circular economy model in this sector by 2030 (Circular Economy Action Plan 2020). Second-hand clothing (SHC) consumption has gained popularity across the globe among sustainable consumption patterns, including reusing, recycling, and repurposing (Seo & Kim 2019, 301). It offers a practical alternative to traditional solutions to extend product life and reduce waste (Brace-Govan & Binay 2010, 70).

As a result of this endeavor, there has been a considerable increase in the consumption of SHC on a global scale (Herjanto et al. 2016, 1). For instance, the fashion industry's waste has been significantly reduced by replacing approximately 1 billion new clothing sales with used clothing in 2022. A growing number of individuals are opting to wear used clothing, as evidenced by a 2022 ThredUp survey in which 74% of respondents reported having purchased or been willing to purchase used clothing. (Resale report 2022.)

SHC is no longer perceived as a low-income person's product; rather, they have drawn customers from various socioeconomic groups, such as high-class individuals, well-educated people, and artists (such as actors, costume designers, and choreographers), as well as wealthy people, tourists, expats, and members of the royal family (Hansen 2000, 252; Isla 2013, 232). SHC is widely accessible through both informal channels (like

fairs, flea markets, auctions, garage sales, yard sales, and swap events) and official channels (like thrift shops, second-hand shops, vintage shops, SHC marketplace, online SHC stores, and peer-to-peer platforms) (Herjanto et al. 2016, 3; Padmavathy et al. 2019, 19; Silva et al. 2021, 720).

The growth of SHC has encouraged sustainable consumption to reduce the harmful effects of the fashion industry on the environment (Borusiak et al. 2020, 2). The Waste and Resources Action Programme of the UK reported in 2012 that extending the life of clothing by just nine months could reduce the carbon, water, and waste footprint of one tonne of clothing by 22% (Valuing Our Clothes... 2017). The next section of the thesis will discuss Generation Y, which is the primary driver of the SHC market's expansion.

### 1.1.3 Gen Y shoppers' significance in second-hand consumption

According to Generational Cohort Theory, the population can be divided into segments based on birth years that fall within a 20–25-year period (Strauss & Howe 1991, 342). Since these cohorts have similar attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors due to the common macro-level social, political, and economic events they encounter during their formative years, generational identity is created (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 343).

Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z are the primary generational cohorts in the contemporary consumer study (Roth-Cohen et al. 2022, 762). Different generational cohorts' buying patterns and shopping habits vary (Parment 2013, 189). Therefore, understanding the motivations and values of each generation in the consumer study has become crucial (Smith & Clurman 2010, 72).

There is still disagreement regarding the generation's birth range (Gurău 2012, 103). For example, different researchers have identified slightly different periods for generation Y: 1978–2002 (Kotler & Lee 2015, 587), 1980–2000 (Zemke 2001, 4; Weingarton 2009, 29; Rainer & Rainer 2011, 2; Gurău 2012, 103; Radojka & Filipović 2017, 6), 1981–1996 (Dimock 2019, 2); 1982–2000 (Brosdahl & Carpenter 2011, 549); 1982–2002 (Littman 2008, 74), 1982–2005 (Howe & Strauss 2007, 41). However, the 1980–2000 time period was selected for this study since more researchers agreed to it and because it also fits inside the Generational Cohort theory's 20-year time frame.

Regarding the SHC market, generation Y (also known as the Millennials) is the leading customer group fueling its expansion (Medalla 2020, 1681). Generation Y had grown to 1.8 billion individuals by 2020 (Molenaar 2022) and made up 35% of the labor force (Employment worldwide...2020). This generation has the largest global spending power

of US\$2.5 trillion per year (Molenaar 2022), significantly influencing their families' purchasing decisions (Sethi et al. 2018, 4). In order to draw in more new clients in this market and foster the SHC's expansion, it is crucial to comprehend the obstacles to Generation Y's shopping habits.

## 1.2 Research gap

Several researchers have examined the primary drivers and impediments for general consumers to buy SHC in light of the recent expansion of the second-hand retail industry (e.g., O'Reilly et al. 1984, Roux & Korchia 2006, Laitala & Klepp 2018, Silva et al. 2021). Although it has been discovered that different generations have distinct beliefs and standards regarding the appropriateness of worn clothing, little research has been done on the Gen Y shopper in SHC purchases (Rulikova 2020, 189)

Despite being crucial to the growth of the second-hand clothing (SHC) sector, Generation Y has received limited attention in current research on the use of SHC (Medalla et al. 2020, 1699). Existing studies have focused on Generation Y consumers with green products, fast fashion, ethical fashion, or sustainable apparel (Harris et al. 2016; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019; Ogiemwonyi 2022). While a few studies have explored the primary driving forces of Generation Y (Xu et al. 2014; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019; Medalla et al. 2020), few have specifically examined the barriers preventing this generational group from engaging in this consumption behavior. Liang & Xu (2018) and Wang et al. (2022) have instead examined young consumers' barriers from different perspectives, such as those born in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, which is inconsistent with the definition of the generational cohort.

As per Section 1.1.3, the SHC market growth has been driven primarily by Gen Y consumers (Medalla 2020, 1681). They are more likely than any other demographic to purchase used clothing for ethical or sustainable reasons (Secondhand apparel market...2022). Yet, Gen Y consumers have highly developed shopping preferences (Jackson et al. 2011, 2), and their obstacles to purchasing SHC have not been researched (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 2). It is still not apparent whether barriers facing Gen Y consumers are identical or different from those facing other consumers. For instance, several academics proposed more investigation from the perspective of the generational cohort after failing to confirm the relationship between the environmental attitude and the purchase behavior toward SHC (Yan et al. 2015, 94; Liang & Xu 2017, 122; Silva et al. 2021, 726).

Given this generation's importance to the SHC market, it is essential to examine their purchasing patterns separately. This study seeks to close this knowledge gap by examining the challenges faced by non-shoppers.

### 1.3 Research questions and contributions

To explore the barriers to Gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward SHC, the main research question of this study is "*What are the barriers to Gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes?*". The word "what" denotes the exploratory nature of the study, "second-hand clothes" and "barriers" define the research's scope, and "Gen Y" and "non-shopping behaviors" highlight the informants' selected criteria in this study. The two sub-questions below have been created in order to separate the primary query into the essential ideas of internal and external barriers:

RQ1: What are the internal barriers to Gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes?

RQ2: What are the external barriers to Gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward purchasing second-hand clothes?

The first research question is understanding internal obstacles to SHC's non-shopping behavior (RQ1). Customers' own identity, beliefs, knowledge, and economic, psychological, and cultural expectations are some examples of internal barriers (Connell 2010, 280). The second research question (RQ2) identifies external barriers that prevent SHC from shopping. External barriers include factors like price, product, shop, seller, and channel that are not controlled by customers (Connell 2010, 280).

The thesis could provide SHC businesses with helpful information and practical suggestions for better targeting this customer base to expand the SHC market. The findings of this study might shed some light on theories of Generation Y's shopping habits and SHC literature.

## 2 SECOND-HAND CLOTHES MARKET AND GENERAL SHOPPERS' BARRIERS

This chapter aims to bring together a complete understanding of the background and literature. Beginning with an overview of the SHC market, the chapter explains various SHC terminologies, the market's history, and the current state of the business with its numerous online and offline selling models. The chapter then provides profiles of Generation Y, outlining their usual traits, general buying habits, and attitudes toward new and secondhand clothing. Without studies on Gen Y shoppers' barriers, the chapter evaluates all data regarding general shoppers' difficulties in purchasing SHC to offer some preliminary understanding of the barriers. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a theoretical framework serving as a base for the empirical investigation of this study and connecting it to previous literature.

### 2.1 Second-hand clothes market overview

#### 2.1.1 Different terminologies of second-hand clothes

Several forms of used clothing have different terms defined by academics. Clothing with contemporary or modern styles that have been previously owned or worn by someone else is referred to as "second-hand clothes" (Roux & Korchia 2006, 29; Cervellon et al. 2012, 957). Many articles also use other terminology with the same meaning, such as "recycled clothes", "worn clothes", and "cast-off clothes" (Herjanto et al. 2016, 2).

The phrase "vintage clothes" refers to "a rare and authentic piece that embodies the style of a specific former era or fashion trends" (Gerval 2008<sup>1</sup>, according Cervellon et al. 2012, 957). Current usage of the term "vintage" applies to clothing that "was made between the 1920s and the 1980s," whereas "clothes coming from before the 1920s" is categorized as "antiques", and "clothing produced after the 1980s" is labeled modern worn clothes" (Cervellon et al 2012, 957). As alternatives to the phrases "second-hand" and "vintage," other researchers have used the terms "pre-owned" and "pre-loved," respectively (Veerman 2020, 46; Laitala & Klepp 2018, 8; Athiyaman 2004, 118).

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<sup>1</sup> Gerval, O. (2008), *Fashion: Concept to Catwalk*, Bloomsbury, London.

The main reasons people purchase various sorts of used clothing also vary. Some purchase used clothing primarily for economic and environmental reasons, while others want vintage clothing for hedonic or recreational reasons, such as nostalgia and fashion interest (Cervellon et al. 2012, 969-970).

According to the shoppers' understanding that worn clothing is simply second-hand clothing, the phrase "second-hand clothes" in this study refers to both second-hand and vintage clothing. The study will briefly discuss the used market's history, current development state, and popular business models in the following part.

### 2.1.2 Second-hand clothes market history

It is essential to study the history of the second-hand phenomenon in order to comprehend it fully. The history of second-hand clothing dates back to the fourteenth century (Zander-Seidel 1991, 9). Europe was struggling due to a terrible famine, population growth, political upheavals, and an economic crisis (Plague and Progress...n.d.). Used clothing has become a significant solution for meeting basic needs (Zander-Seidel 1991, 15). Used clothing was purchased by second-hand traders from deceased or indebted individuals' belongings and sold at public auctions or public pawnshops (Fontaine 2008, 17-18).

The secondhand clothes market developed through three stages: (1) shift from scarcity, (2) rising abundance, and (3) industrial prosperity between 1600 and 1850, when Europe underwent significant economic and cultural change (Lemire 2012, 144). During this time, SHC was acquired through deceased family members, indebted individuals, and masters, repaired old family members' clothing, or purchased from SHC merchants (Lemire 2012, 147-154). SHC might be exchanged for another item or received as a donation, commitment, or paycheck (Barahona & Sanchez 2012, 37).

During this time, the prominent people who sold SHC were pawnbrokers, old clothing tailors, remnant vendors, and used clothing dealers. Poor people could obtain cash loans from "pawnbrokers" by using their clothing as collateral, which they would later sell to the public if the borrowers could not repay their loans (Lemire 2012, 147). While "used clothes dealers" bought and sold worn clothing in their businesses without mending or remaking the clothing, "remnants merchants" offered bits and pieces of used textiles for individuals to repair clothing. "Old clothier tailors" purchased cast-off clothes, then repaired and sold them (Barahona & Sanchez 2012, 25). Later, in the eighteenth century, many pawn shops, exchange markets, and auction sites were opened to facilitate low-income people trading their used items (Barahona & Sanchez 2012, 31-34).

### 2.1.3 Second-hand clothes market today

#### 2.1.3.1 *Shopping second-hand clothes trends*

The current SHC trade first arose in the 1990s and quickly gained popularity worldwide, with nearly every nation actively participating in the SHC sector as traders or consumers (Herjanto et al. 2016, 2). The worldwide second-hand market is projected to increase significantly from its sales of US\$ 96 billion in 2021 to US\$ 218 billion in 2026. In the forecast, all parts of the world will experience growth, but North America will lead the way with an eight times greater expansion rate than the global market. (Resale Report 2022).

Several dynamics support this effort and the expansion of the SHC market. First, a growing consumer group is concerned about the impact of clothing manufacturing on their health and the environment and is acting more responsibly when making purchases (Cervellon et al. 2010, 1). Second, a new pattern emerged due to the recent COVID-19 and inflation in 2021. For instance, according to the ThredUp Report 2022, 44% of consumers are reducing their apparel budgets, and 41% of them prioritize second-hand clothing when they shop (Resale Report 2022). Third, some people buy used clothes for social and nostalgic reasons instead of to save money or help the environment (Steffen 2017, 204). Lastly, technological, and social advancements, such as high Internet penetration, urbanization, digital information, and communication technologies, have offered consumers easy access to buy second-hand clothes through online platforms (Kathan et al. 2016, 664).

There are, however, several adverse tendencies in the consumption of SHC. While purchasing SHC is becoming more popular in the West, importing used clothing is prohibited in many African nations (Hansen 2014, 2). Due to social stigma, most Chinese buyers avoid wearing used clothing (Liang & Xu 2018, 127). Finally, generation Y, which makes up most of the SHC market, has a positive view of sustainability, but they only sometimes practice sustainable consumption (Bernardes et al., 2018, 624).

Globally, there are, overall, both positive and negative developments for the SHC market. The following section will discuss the most popular selling models on the market.



### 2.1.3.2 *Second-hand clothes selling models*

The availability and distribution of second-hand clothing (SHC) have become widespread across various retail types, including thrift stores, second-hand shops, vintage shops (Rucker et al. 1995, 426), consignment shops (Mhango & Niehm 2005, 342), car boot sales, auctions (Steffen 2017, 190), flea markets (Rucker et al. 1995, 426), and online marketplaces (Yrjölä et al. 2021, 765). These popular retail types have distinct selling models, channels, and characteristics, as outlined in Table 1.

To provide a comprehensive overview of these retail channels, the researcher introduces two business models that are relevant to this context. The business-to-consumer model (B2C) involves businesses sourcing and selling second-hand clothing to individual customers. In contrast, the consumer-to-consumer model (C2C, also known as the peer-to-peer platform) involves individual sellers selling their second-hand clothing to other individuals through online marketplaces or social media platforms (Yrjölä et al. 2021, 765-766).

Thrift stores are retail outlets that source gently used items from donors and re-sell them to individual consumers (Montgomery & Mitchell 2014, 1). Their inventory is unpredictable and subject to fluctuations based on donations. They operate under both non-profit and for-profit models (Aaker et al. 2010, 225). Physical and online thrift stores offer a vast selection of used items at low prices. However, the shopping experience may be hindered by the less organized physical store layout or difficulty assessing the quality of products online.

Both offline and online options are available for both second-hand and vintage stores. Unlike thrift stores that rely on donated merchandise, second-hand and vintage shops purchase items to sell to customers. While second-hand shops sell everyday used clothing, vintage shops offer unique apparel that gives consumers a treasure-hunting experience at a lower price point (Best second-hand and vintage...n.d.). Second-hand stores share similar weaknesses with thrift stores in their offline and online characteristics. Conversely, vintage shops curate their merchandise in a visually appealing manner, both online and offline, to improve the shopping experience and facilitate easy customer discovery.

Table 1. Types and characteristics of second-hand retail types

Retail types	Selling models		Selling channels		Retail characteristics								
	B2C	C2C	Offline	Online	Low price	Wide selection of cheap items	Wide selection of unique, high-end items	Well-organized layout	Convenient experience	Less-organized layout	More shopping time & patience	Limited quality check	Potential of frauds
Thrift stores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓ offline	✓ offline	✓ online	
Second-hand shops	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓ offline	✓ offline	✓ online	
Vintage shops	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓				
Consignm ent shop	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓				
Car boot sales		✓	✓		✓					✓	✓		
Garage sale (yard sale)		✓	✓		✓					✓	✓		
Auction	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	
Flea markets		✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Online market places	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓

Consignment stores are physical retail establishments that showcase and sell used clothing on behalf of the original owner, taking a portion of the sale proceeds as a commission (Lebby 2022). These stores offer a diverse selection of products and are meticulously organized to facilitate the shopping experience for customers.

Car boot, garage, and yard sales are physical events where individuals sell their unwanted belongings, often from their cars or garages (Car boot sale n.d.; Garage sale n.d.). These sales offer buyers the opportunity to purchase items at lower prices but require more time and effort to search for desired items and evaluate their quality.

Auctions are public sales of goods or property in which participants compete by offering increasingly higher bids until the highest bidder purchases the item (Auction n.d.). Second-hand auctions may occur in physical locations or online platforms like eBay and Catawiki. Auctions attract buyers seeking designer clothing and unique or rare items (Deals on Designers...n.d.).

Flea markets are open-air markets where non-professional vendors sell second-hand items, including vintage, antique, and handmade goods (Pachenkov & Voronkova 2014, 294). A wide range of cheap merchandise is piled on stands, causing consumers difficulties in looking for desired items and inspecting their quality.

Online marketplaces are websites or applications that connect buyers and sellers and facilitate transactions (Kestenbaum 2017). These platforms may operate on a business-to-consumer (B2C) model, such as Amazon and Shopify, or a consumer-to-consumer (C2C) model, such as Etsy and eBay. Online marketplaces offer convenient shopping experiences, allowing consumers to choose from a wide range of products from various sellers. However, there is a risk of fraud from some sellers, and buyers may face challenges in evaluating products before purchase.

In summary, most retail channels are online and offline, except for car boot and garage sales. Each channel type has advantages and disadvantages that may satisfy or frustrate shoppers depending on their preferences. Therefore, shoppers must carefully evaluate their needs and select the most appropriate retail channel that meets their requirements..

## 2.2 Gen Y's profile

### 2.2.1 Gen Y's typical characteristics

This section examines the typical characteristics and traits attributed to Generation Y, generally understood to be people born between 1980 and 2000 who, in 2022, were between the ages of 22 and 42. These characteristics will serve as the foundation for understanding their shopping behavior in the following section.

The first characteristic of Generation Y is that they are the first generation of "**digital natives**" (Bennett 2008, 783), having grown up in a world where high technology, including the Internet, social media, computers, cell phones, tablets, laptops, text messages, and video games, is ubiquitous (Norum 2003, 60; Omar et al. 2016, 53). Their lives are deeply immersed in the digital environment, with social interactions, friendships, shopping, and hobbies occurring online (Palfrey & Gasser 2011, 15-17). This generation is technologically savvy, adept at adopting new technology, and capable of using multiple devices (Radojka & Filipović 2017, 7).

The second characteristic of Generation Y is that they are recognized as a **highly educated** cohort compared to previous generations at corresponding ages. Evidence from the PEW Research Survey conducted in 2010 shows that 54% of them possess a college degree or higher, as opposed to 49% of Generation X, 36% of Baby Boomers, and 24% of the Silent Generation when they were between the ages of 18 and 28 (Paul & Scott 2010, 41). The survey suggested they have a broader knowledge base in several areas, primarily attributed to their aptitude to effortlessly access vast amounts of information (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski 2001, 38). They heavily rely on technical information and frequently make purchase decisions only after conducting comprehensive research on the subject matter (Rahulan et al. 2015, 87 & 99).

The third characteristic of Generation Y is their **social and environmental consciousness** (Mason et al. 2022, 147). Raised in an era where eco-consciousness is the norm (Liang & Xu 2017, 127), this generation exhibits a heightened awareness of environmental issues (Aarthi, 2014). It demonstrates an increasing concern for the products they purchase (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 1). Research shows that approximately 50% of Generation Y shoppers are willing to pay a premium for socially responsible or sustainable products, which is notably higher than the corresponding percentages for Gen X (34%) and Baby Boomers (23%) (Kim et al. 2021, 1-2). However, it is vital to

note that their environmentally friendly claims and attitudes may not always translate into actual behavior (Bernardes et al. 2018, 4; Muposhi et al. 2015, 226).

The fourth characteristic of Generation Y is their **economic anxiety**, which has been exacerbated by the recession they entered upon entering the workforce (Millennials - Statistics & Facts 2022). They are burdened with debts such as rent, mortgages, and student loans and are increasingly concerned about their financial future, safety, social equality, and environmental sustainability (Millennials n.d., Ogiemwonyi 2022, 2). In countries such as the United States, they have postponed commitments like marriage and opted to live with their parents due to poor economic conditions (Millennials - Statistics & Facts 2022). Also, 55% of Generation Y customers have reported carefully monitoring their spending (Paul & Scott 2010, 48).

The final characteristics of Generation Y include being **open-minded, individualistic, socially connected, materialistic, and status-driven**, as identified by various scholars (Paul & Scott 2010, 1; Williams & Page 2011, 8; Ladhari et al. 2019, 113). This generation values new ideas and is open to change, demonstrating a philosophy of living in the moment and achieving work-life balance (Paul & Scott 2010, 51; Moreno et al. 2017, 141). Social connection is a significant aspect of their lives, as they seek acceptance and affiliation from their peers (Williams & Page 2011, 8). Generation Y also exhibits a high degree of materialism, leading to increased consumption of goods (Medalla et al. 2020, 1686). Furthermore, this cohort is known for being status-driven, prioritizing personal image and selecting products, such as clothing, that express their individual identity (Muposhi et al. 2015, 226).

In conclusion, this generation is characterized by positive traits like digital technology proficiency, high education, environmental consciousness, open-mindedness, and social connectivity. However, they also experience economic uncertainty and tend toward materialism, which may affect how they behave as consumers.

## 2.2.2 Gen Y's shopping behaviors

### 2.2.2.1 *General shopping behaviors*

In general, Generation Y is an influential cohort in terms of shopping behavior. They have the **most significant global spending power** of US\$2.5 trillion in 2020 (Susic 2023) and tend to spend more quickly than previous generations due to their philosophy of balancing work and personal life (Moreno et al. 2017, 138). Gen Y has a high tendency towards

**materialism**, which leads to high product consumption (Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96-97) and **brand consciousness**, as brands serve as status symbols for them (Liao & Wang, 2009, 996; Henninger et al. 2017, 430). However, they are **rational customers** who prioritize **style** and **quality** over price and brand name, and are flexible in purchasing from multiple brand names (Reisenwitz & Iyer 2009, 93; Gurău 2012, 113; Parment 2013, 195).

Generation Y **spends a significant portion of their income on online purchases**, with clothing being one of their top priorities (Moreno et al. 2017, 141). They make purchasing decisions quickly due to their technology competency and access to information (Moreno et al. 2017, 142), but rely heavily on social media and digital technology to search for product information, compare prices, and check reviews and feedback to avoid social risks associated with online shopping (Tripathi 2019, 109; Millennials n.d.). Moreover, they **trust friends, family, and influencers on social media for product recommendations** (Moreno et al. 2017, 141-142).

Despite their common traits, Generation Y is **not a homogeneous group**. However, it has **various sub-segments with different shopping priorities** such as economic orientation, brand value, shopping enjoyment, promotion seeking, and sustainable practices (Ladhari et al. 2019, 116-117, Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 100; Henninger et al. 2017, 430). This complexity poses a significant challenge to understanding and approaching them effectively (Henninger et al. 2017, 423).

#### 2.2.2.2 *Shopping behaviors toward fashion and second-hand clothes*

According to a Pew Research Survey in 2010, clothing is identified as one of the five key components that shape the identity of Generation Y (Paul & Scott 2010, 5). This generation **invests significant money in branded apparel to express their self-identity and social identity** (Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96; Tripathi 2019, 110). Self-identity is the foundation for their attitudes, while brand, style, price, and social identity determine their apparel purchase decisions (Valaei & Nikhashemi 2017, 523).

According to a few studies on second-hand clothing consumption among Gen-Y shoppers, there are **three primary motivations: economic, recreational, and environmental**. Economic motives come from the affordable prices of SHC (Xu et al. 2014, 676; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11; Medalla et al. 2020, 1699). Recreational motives are connected to the thrill of discovering unique and branded apparel that is not widely available (Xu et al. 2014, 676; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11; Wang et

al. 2021, 165). Finally, environmental motives are related to the perceived environmental benefits of purchasing SHC (Liang & Xu 2017, 128; Medalla et al. 2020, 1698). Additionally, prior shopping experience could significantly increase a consumer's future intentions and frequency of purchasing second-hand clothing (Xu et al. 2014, 675; Wang et al. 2022, 165).

However, the contradictory finding regarding environmental motives has been reported in numerous studies (e.g., Cui et al. 2003, 318; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 1; Bernades et al. 2019, 4). Generation Y consumers claim they choose to buy SHC for environmental reasons and are not concerned about the social stigma associated with secondhand products (e.g., poverty, embarrassment) (Paco et al. 2021, 376). They are willing to pay more for sustainable products (Hwang & Griffiths 2017, 147; Lee et al. 2017, 174). However, their values and expectations **do not always align with their behavior**, as they still purchase fast fashion (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 1 & 11) and luxury fashion (Giovannini et al. 2015, 35).

According to the literature, there are **five primary barriers** to purchasing secondhand clothing among Gen-Y shoppers. Firstly, young customers express **concerns about the hygiene and sanitation conditions** of secondhand clothing (Xu et al. 2014, 675; Liang & Xu 2017, 127; Wang et al. 2022, 163). Secondly, they deter purchasing secondhand clothing due to **poor product conditions**, such as being dirty, damaged, outdated, or not providing value for money (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11). Thirdly, the **store environment** can discourage them from shopping due to unpleasant smells and disorganized layouts (Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11). The fourth and fifth barriers are the **association of secondhand clothing poverty**, and the **social stigma** that can impact their public image (Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2017, 127, Wang et al. 2022, 164).

### 2.3 General shoppers' barriers to purchasing second-hand clothes

As stated in Section 1.2, prior research has yet to comprehensively examine the obstacles Generation Y (Gen Y) consumers encounter in SHC. Consequently, this literature review aims to revisit the discoveries regarding the challenges faced by general shoppers, as a basis for comparison with the outcomes of a survey involving Gen Y participants in Section 4. The ensuing section, 2.3, will present two categories of barriers, specifically internal and external, in sub-sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, respectively.

### 2.3.1 Internal barriers

Table 2 summarizes the numerous internal barriers that cause consumers to reject second-hand clothing. The first obstacle stems from the **association of second-hand clothing with poverty**. As discussed in Section 2.1.2, SHC originated as a solution for low-income individuals to satisfy their basic clothing needs (Zander-Seidel 1991, 15). Consequently, second-hand clothing has often been perceived as inferior to new garments due to its association with limited financial resources (Winakor et al. 1971, 261; Norum & Norton 2017, 215) or as clothing primarily intended for the poor (Connell 2009, 2; Rulikova 2020, 182; Wang et al. 2022, 163). This prejudice against second-hand clothing deters consumers from purchasing (Pipyrou 2014, 533).

**Table 2. Internal barriers of general shoppers toward SHC consumption**

Internal barriers	Researchers
Association with poverty	Winakor et al. (1971, 261); Connell (2009, 2); Pipyrou (2014, 533); Norum & Norton (2017, 215); Rulikova (2020, 182); Wang et al. (2022, 164)*.
Concerns of the non-hygiene, smell, contamination, and misfortune transfer	O'Reilly et al. (1984, 59); Ostergaard et al. (1999, 407); Roux & Korchia (2006, 33); Connell (2009, 2); Na'amneh & Al Huban (2012, 618); Xu et al. (2014, 676)*; Yan et al. (2015, 93); Liang & Xu (2017, 127)*; Laitala & Klepp (2018, 13); Hur (2020, 9); Rulikova (2020, 180); Tarai & Shailaja (2020, 161); Silva et al. (2021, 730).
Degraded the sense of self	Roux & Korchia (2006, 33); Hur (2020, 9).
Lack of personal shopping time	Laitala & Klepp (2018, 12); Hur (2020, 9).
Low environmental awareness	Yan et al. (2015, 94); Silva et al. (2021, 728); Wang et al. (2022, 164)*
No demand	Laitala & Klepp (2018, 13).

\*Notes: The studies denoted by asterisks (\*) were conducted on Gen Y consumers.

The second barrier involves **concerns regarding non-hygiene, odors, and contamination** associated with second-hand clothing (Belk 1988<sup>2</sup>, according to Liang & Xu

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<sup>2</sup> Belk, R. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139–168



2017, 121; Rulikova 2020, 180; Silva et al. 2021, 730). Consumers may perceive second-hand clothing as unhygienic, repulsive, and unpleasant since it has been previously worn by someone else (Connell 2009, 2; Yan et al. 2015, 93; Tarai & Shailaja 2020, 161). Non-SHC consumers often associate used clothing with "dirtiness" or "bad odor" even without physically trying it on (Laitala & Klepp 2018, 13; Na'amneh & Al Huban 2012, 618; Hur 2020, 9). Despite washing or sterilization, the fear of contamination remains for certain types of clothing in close contact with the body, such as underwear, sleepwear, and footwear (O'Reilly et al. 1984, 59; Ostergaard et al. 1999, 407). Non-SHC consumers may even worry that **diseases or misfortunes** of the previous owner, including those who may have passed away, could be transmitted to the new owner through their possessions (Groffinan 1971<sup>3</sup>, according to Xu et al. 2014, 670; Roux & Korchia 2006, 33; Na'amneh & Al Huban 2012, 618). However, the aversion to used clothing primarily applies to items acquired from strangers rather than those received from relatives or friends (Lurie 1981<sup>4</sup>, according to Roux & Korchia 2006, 29).

The third barrier is associated with the **sense of self**, which can be degraded through the act of wearing possessions that belonged to others, as it threatens the individual's sense of uniqueness and may imply taking on another person's identity (Erikson 1968<sup>5</sup>, according to Liang & Xu 2012, 121; Roux & Korchia 2006, 33; Hur 2020, 9).

The fourth barrier is the perceived **lack of personal time for shopping** at second-hand sources. Non-shoppers of second-hand clothing often report not having sufficient free time to peruse the variety of options available at second-hand stores, as the layout may be less organized and require significant searching and trying (Laitala & Klepp 2018, 12; Hur 2020, 9).

The fifth potential internal barrier pertains to a **lack of environmental awareness**. Non-shoppers generally exhibit lower environmental consciousness levels than shoppers at second-hand stores (Yan et al. 2015, 94; Silva et al. 2021, 726). Many young customers even think clothes waste does not harm the environment because it could degrade environmentally friendly (Wang et al. 2022, 164). However, these scholars did not establish a clear relationship between environmental attitudes and the frequency of shopping at second-hand clothing stores among their sample of shoppers (Yan et al. 2015, 94; Silva et al. 2021, 726). Moreover, Xu et al. (2014, 675) revealed that despite having a greater

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<sup>3</sup> Groffinan, E. (1971) *Relations in Public*. Basic Books, New York.

<sup>4</sup> Lurie, A. - Sales, T. H. (1981). *The language of clothes* (Vol. 272). Random House, New York.

<sup>5</sup> Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. Norton, New York.

concern for the environment regarding used clothing than their American counterparts, young Chinese consumers have fewer experiences and intentions to consume second-hand clothing. In another study by Yan et al. (2015, 93), consumers also reported that they did not shop at second-hand stores out of concern for the environment.

The final overarching reason for rejecting second-hand clothing pertains to **the absence of demand** from consumers. Those who do not engage in second-hand clothing consumption explained that they already possess sufficient clothing and do not require additional acquisitions, or simply prefer new clothing (Laitala & Kleep 2018, 13). Among the six internal barriers, **“the concerns of non-hygiene and contamination”** and **“the association with poverty”** are the most frequently mentioned barriers by researchers in prior studies.

### 2.3.2 External barriers

In Table 3, the external barriers to non-purchasing behaviors at SHC stores, which are beyond customers’ control, will be summarized. Firstly, **unfair pricing** practices dissuade consumers from purchasing SHC, as the prices of used garments at some consignment stores are comparable to those of new clothes at discount stores (Connell 2009, 2) or those of mass-produced new apparel in markets such as China (Liang & Xu 2018, 127; Wang et al. 2022, 164). Non-consumers also assert that second-hand garments are becoming too expensive due to their vintage or branded nature, but they do not perceive them to be value for money (Hur 2020, 9).

**Table 3. External barriers of general shoppers toward SHC consumption**

<b>External barriers</b>	<b>Researchers</b>
Unfair price	Connell (2009, 2), Liang & Xu (2018, 127)*, Wang et al. (2022, 164)*, Hur (2020, 9).
Poor product condition, availability & information	Steinbring & Rucker (2003, 35), Connell (2009, 2), Connell (2010, 282-284); Laitala & Kleep (2018, 13); Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen (2019, 11)*, Hur (2020, 8-9), Wang et al. (2022, 164)
Poor store environment	Steinbring & Rucker (2003, 36), Connell (2009, 2), Connell (2010, 284); Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen (2019, 11)*, Hur (2020, 8-9),

Lack of channel accessibility	Connell (2009, 2); Connell (2010, 283); Z̄urga et al. (2015, 257); Laitala & Kleep (2018, 12-13); Hur (2020, 9 & 14); Silva et al. (2021, 728)
Social stigma	Connell (2009, 2); Na'amneh & Al Huban (2012, 618); Pipyrou (2014, 537 & 543); Xu et al. (2014, 676)*; Liang & Xu (2017, 127)*; Tarai & Shailaja (2020, 162); Hur (2020, 8-9); Rulikova (2020, 184); Silva et al. (2021, 727); Wang et al. (2022, 165)*.

\*Notes: The studies denoted by asterisks (\*) were conducted on Gen Y consumers.

The second external barrier to SHC adoption is **poor product condition, limited availability, and insufficient information**, which create reluctance among consumers to shop for SHC. Scholars have noted that used clothes are often smelly, dirty, damaged, outdated, and come in limited sizes, styles, colors, and materials (Connell 2009, 2; Laitala & Kleep 2018, 13; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 8-9). Furthermore, second-hand stores lack clear product information, such as missing size labels or sanitation labels, and transparency about the previous owners (Connell 2010, 282; Wang et al. 2022, 164). In some markets, such as China, where the second-hand clothing business is unregulated, consumers demand clear information on the origin of SHC (i.e., legal or illegal sources) and proper sanitation treatment to avoid health risks after purchase (Wang et al. 2022, 164).

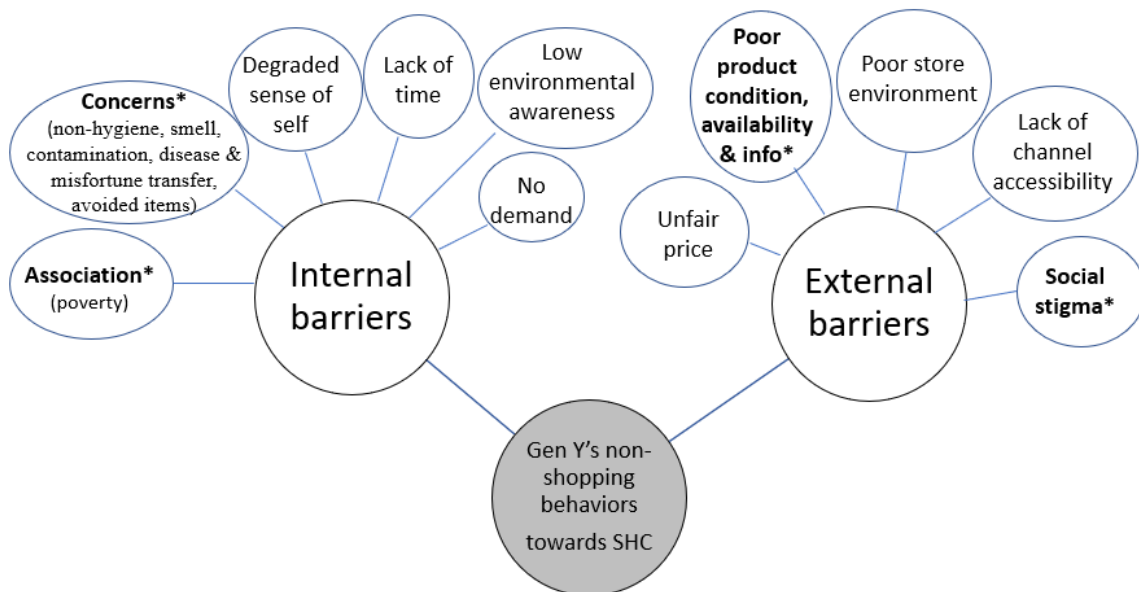
Thirdly, a **poor store environment** prevents customers from purchasing SHC at retail establishments. Due to the unappealing store environment characterized by poor lighting, disorganization, poor visual merchandising, overcrowding, unpleasant odors, and a lack of fitting rooms to evaluate the fit of clothes, non-consumers of SHC were discouraged from shopping at second-hand stores (e.g., Steinbring & Rucker 2003, 36; Connell 2010, 284; Hur 2020, 9;).

Fourthly, the **limited availability of accessible channels** impedes the consumption of SHC. The absence of second-hand sources near their residential areas or a dearth of information about acquiring SHC through online and offline channels deter non-shoppers (e.g., Laitala & Kleep 2018, 12-13; Hur 2020, 9, Silva et al. 2021, 728). Furthermore, the inconvenient opening hours of charity shops create difficulties for customers who are occupied with work during business hours. In certain areas, the limited availability of varied stock of SHC is only found in small shops (Connell 2010, 283; Z̄urga et al. 2015, 257; Hur 2020, 14).

The final obstacle identified is the **social stigma** surrounding the purchase and use of second-hand clothing (SHC). Social stigma refers to the negative attitudes and reactions of others towards individuals who purchase and wear used clothes (Tarai & Shailaja 2020, 162). Studies have shown that individuals who buy SHC may be perceived as unable to afford new clothes or belonging to a lower socioeconomic class (Pipyrou 2014, 537; Rulikova 2020, 184; Silva et al. 2021, 727). Even existing SHC customers may feel embarrassed and conceal the fact that they purchased used clothing, due to fear of negative attitudes and judgments from family and friends (Connell 2009, 2; Na'amneh & Al Huban 2012, 618; Pipyrou 2014, 543;). This social stigma may be particularly amplified in cultures that highly value on public image and social status. The purchase of SHC may create a negative public image of financial deficiency and status inferiority, as society tends to associate the SHC wearer with the lower income class and poverty (Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2018, 127; Wang et al. 2022, 165). In aggregate, of the five external obstacles, "social stigma" and "deficiencies in product quality, availability, and information" have garnered the highest frequency of mentions among scholars in prior research.

## 2.4 Synthesis

In preparation for the forthcoming empirical investigation, it is imperative to consolidate the theoretical discourse into a unified framework, as depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Assumed barriers to Gen Y's purchasing behaviors toward used clothes.**

(Notes: The barriers denoted by asterisks (\*) and boldface are the most frequently mentioned obstacles in the current body of literature pertaining to general shoppers.)

The theoretical framework depicted in Figure 1 encompasses internal and external barriers that may arise during second-hand clothing (SHC) purchasing. In the empirical part, this framework is the foundation for examining the barriers experienced by non-shoppers in Generation Y. The internal barriers identified in Section 2.3.1 include perception, concerns, environmental awareness, self-identity, and demand, which are intrinsic to the customer. Conversely, the external barriers discussed in Section 2.3.2 include product condition, store environment, channel accessibility, and social stigma, which are beyond the customer's control (Connell 2010, 280). Examining these two types of barriers simultaneously allows the researcher to identify which barriers are most concerning and which are not. Then it will provide a solid foundation for making practical recommendations and filling gaps in the literature relevant to SHC.

### 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter aims to provide readers with a comprehensive comprehension of the research decisions related to this study, preceding the discussion of new empirical findings in the subsequent chapter. The research design involves translating research objectives and questions into a project (Saunders et al. 2019, 220). To this end, this chapter outlines the justification for the selected research philosophy, strategy, and approach to the data collection and analysis process. It concludes by presenting measures to ensure quality control and validate the trustworthiness of the research.

#### 3.1 Research philosophy

The term "research philosophy" meant the researcher's underlying beliefs and assumptions concerning knowledge development, which inevitably impacted the design and implementation of their research endeavors (Saunders et al. 2019, 130-131). Of the five primary research philosophies, interpretivism appeared to be the most relevant for this project, as it emphasized that humans created meaning from physical phenomena (Saunders et al. 2019, 148). With interpretivism, researchers could delve into human experiences and perceive the "reality" in the socially constructed meanings (Saunders et al. 2019, 205), allowing them to discover definite and universal "laws" from the diverse social realities that individuals from various cultural backgrounds and circumstances encountered (Saunders et al. 2019, 149).

In Crotty's work (1998, 71), it was identified that there were three schools of thought within interpretivism, namely phenomenologists, hermeneuticists, and symbolic interactionists. Phenomenologists emphasized the recollection and interpretation of lived experiences from the participants' perspectives (Crotty 1998, 79-83). Hermeneuticists understood meanings by examining cultural aspects such as texts, symbols, behavior, art, and images (Crotty 1998, 94-95). Symbolic interactionists translated meaning through the observation and analysis of social interaction between people (Crotty 1998, 63 & 72).

Given the complex nature of SHC consumption related to multiple factors (Herjanto et al. 2016, 10), this study considered all three perspectives when analyzing the insights of non-shoppers. The researcher adopted an empathetic stance to comprehend the social world of the research participants, thereby creating a new and richer understanding of the phenomenon, a crucial requirement of the interpretivism (Saunders et al. 2019, 149).

### **3.2 Research approach**

Interpretive philosophy is typically associated with a qualitative approach, as it facilitates the researcher's comprehension of the subjective and socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon being studied (Saunders et al. 2019, 179). The approach is concerned with answering questions about how social experiences are created and how meanings are attributed to behaviors, values, and beliefs over time (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, 8; Bell et al. 2022, 377).

For this study, a qualitative approach was chosen due to several reasons. Firstly, it allowed the researcher to understand the qualitative description of reality, such as "what," "how," and "why" (Maison 2019, 11). Secondly, this method was appropriate for investigating incompletely understood barriers among generation Y non-shoppers in the complex SHC phenomenon. It helped develop knowledge in poorly understood or complex areas (Fossey et al. 2002, 718). Thirdly, the interpretivism philosophy underpinning the qualitative approach enabled research participants to share their viewpoints freely without imposing prior concepts (Gioia 2013, 17), which was relevant and essential for obtaining fresh insights into this research project. Fourthly, qualitative research considered the phenomenon's cultural, social, institutional, temporal, and individual or interpersonal characteristics (Kozinets et al. 2012, 3), enabling a thorough understanding of the multi-barriers driving non-purchasing behavior in the context of SHC. Lastly, the qualitative approach has frequently been used to explore and understand consumers' attitudes, needs, motives, and barriers in practice (Maison 2019, 16-17). Overall, the qualitative approach was deemed suitable for this study.

### **3.3 Data collection**

Data collection was a critical phase in the research project, and selecting appropriate informants was a crucial criterion. The researchers deliberately chose knowledgeable and well-informed participants about the phenomenon under investigation, as Fossey et al. (2002, 726) emphasized the importance of selecting informants who could provide rich information on the topic. Etikan et al. (2016, 2) also noted the significance of selecting proficient and well-informed research participants.

For this study, the researcher decided to select customers belonging to Generation Y who fell into two categories: non-shoppers and past shoppers of second-hand clothes. To achieve diversity among interviewees, the researcher selected participants based on their

profiles in various aspects, such as education level, education background, gender, living places, marital status, nationality, and profession, as emphasized by Becker et al. (2002, 205) (see Table 4). The researcher asked filter questions before selecting participants to ensure variety in the study population (see Appendix 1). According to Bell et al. (2022, 522), the informant recruitment process continued until the theoretical saturation point, after which new informants could not contribute new data to clarify the concept further.

In addition to information criteria, data collection methods play an essential role. Given that previous literature had not thoroughly examined the barriers faced by Gen Y non-shoppers, the researcher aimed to gather primary data directly through the interview method to uncover their beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and barriers within their life world, as suggested by Malhotra et al. (2017, 207). By conducting interviews, the researcher could encourage participants to reflect on and share their life trajectories from the past to the present and the imagined future, according to Becker et al. (2002, 16).

The non-purchasing behavior of SHC consumption in this study may have been influenced by personal reasons or social pressures that participants may have been hesitant to share in a group setting. Therefore, conducting direct interviews with individual participants provided a comfortable atmosphere for them to express their genuine thoughts and emotions (Malhotra et al. 2017, 216-217). Conducting individual interviews enabled the researcher to discover unexpected insights and uncover unknown factors (Becker et al., 2002, 6).

In qualitative research, interviews can be conducted in three ways: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. The main distinction between these methods is the level of standardization of the questionnaires. The structured interview employs a pre-established set of questions and their order. In contrast, the unstructured interview employs only open-ended questions and allows the interviewee to take the lead and tell their own story (Malhotra et al. 2017, 381-382).



**Table 4. List of interviewees and information of interview process**

No	Interviewees	Year of birth	Age	Education level	Education background	Gender	Living city	Marital Status	Nationality	Profession	Category	Interview date	Interview method	Interview duration (min)	Follow up date	Follow up method
1	Anna	1995	28	Doctoral	Computer Science	Female	Helsinki, Finland	Single	Nigerian	Full-time researcher	Past shopper	24-Nov-2022	Zoom	45	18-Jan-2023	email
2	Samuel	1991	32	Master	Human Neuro Science	Male	Turku, Finland	Single	Finnish	Student	Past shopper	27-Nov-2022	Zoom	40	20-Jan-2023	message
3	Sofia	1992	31	Master	Cyber Secutiry	Female	Turku, Finland	Single	Indian	Student	Past shopper	27-Nov-2022	Zoom	35	17-Jan-2023	email
4	Luke	1987	36	Master	Philosophy and Arts	Male	Turku, Finland	Married	Finnish	Entrepreneur	Non-shopper	28-Nov-2022	Zoom	42	27-Jan-2023	message
5	Lee	1991	32	Master	Information Management	Male	Holland, Netherland	Single	Chinese	Full-time IT staff	Past shopper	4-Dec-2022	Zoom	36	13-Jan-2023	email
6	Phoenix	1991	32	Master	International Business	Female	Turku, Finland	Single	Columbian	Student	Non-shopper	7-Dec-2022	Zoom	30	16-Jan-2023	message
7	Yara	1998	25	Bachelor	Digital Teaching of Basic Education	Female	Helsinki, Finland	Single	Somalian Finnish	Student	Past shopper	20-Dec-2022	Zoom	31	15-Jan-2023	email
8	David	1989	34	Doctoral	Human Neuro Science	Male	Talliinn, Estonia	Married	Estonian	Full-time lecturer	Past shopper	2-Jan-2023	Zoom	30	13-Jan-2023	message
9	Natalia	1987	36	Bachelor	Business Administration	Female	Turku, Finland	Married	American Finnish	Bakery owner	Non-shopper	3-Jan-2023	Zoom	36	19-Jan-2023	email
10	Quinn	1998	25	Master	Information System Science	Female	Turku, Finland	Single	Chinese	Student	Non-shopper	4-Jan-2023	Zoom	32	14-Jan-2023	email

Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. The structured interview increases the generalizability of the findings, but it limits the opportunity to capture rich detail and adjust the topics as needed. On the other hand, the unstructured interview provides rich insights, but there is a high potential for interviewer bias (Qu & Dumay 2011, 244-246).

Another approach is the semi-structured interview, which permits the interviewer and interviewee to explore a particular topic within predetermined themes (structured part) and employs probes to elicit additional insights that emerge during the conversation (unstructured part) (Given, 2008, 811).

The semi-structured interview approach was adopted for this study because it provides a focused yet flexible and conversational format (Fossey et al. 2012, 727). In line with an interpretivism philosophy, this method allowed the researcher to be more flexible in terms of changing the order of the pre-defined themes depending on the flow of the conversation and the shared data (Saunders et al. 2019, 444). This approach enabled informants to provide responses in their own voice and within a broader context, allowing researchers to approach the world from the informants' perspective (Saunders et al. 2019, 445).

An operationalization framework was developed for the study to ensure that the empirical study was conducted within a relevant theoretical framework (refer to Table 5). Additionally, an interview guide was created to accompany the operationalization framework (refer to Appendix 2). The interview guide served to steer the conversation toward the research topic and prevent it from straying off course. The guide was structured to allow discussion themes and topics to flow from general to specific, making the informants comfortable with the topic. The semi-structured interview design used open and closed questions within the guide.

**Table 5. Operationalization framework of the research question**

Research questions	Sub-questions	Main themes	Concept in Literature	Interview questions
What are the barriers to gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes?	RQ1: What are the internal barriers to Gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes?	Internal barriers	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.3.1.	2, 3, 4
	RQ2: What are the external barriers to Gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes?	External barriers	2.2.2, 2.3.2, 2.1.2, 2.1.3	3,5

The interview process was conducted with a time limit of forty-five minutes and in an online format that the informants preferred. Audio recordings of the interviews were subsequently transcribed. To prepare for the interviews, the researcher conducted mock interviews with friends to refine questions and familiarize themselves with the interview process. During the interviews, the researcher created a welcoming environment by introducing the principles of a non-judgmental attitude and a commitment to data protection. Additionally, follow-up and probing questions were posed to enable elaboration on issues and points that arose from specific discussion themes, even if they fell outside of the original interview guide.

After the interviews, the content was transcribed and sent to the informants for verification. The interview guide was updated multiple times as data collection and analysis were performed simultaneously. The researcher kept communicating with the informants to elaborate on newly updated questions and clarify any unclear points from the interviews. These steps ensured the accuracy and quality of the data collected for analysis.

In the interview session, the researcher utilized the "projective technique", which allowed the informants to project their feelings onto others instead of attributing them to themselves (Kozinets et al. 2012, 44). As SHC non-consumers often provide vague and open justifications with contextual aspects (Laitala & Klepp 2018, 1), the projective technique played a crucial role in this study as it enabled informants to explain things indirectly and with less self-revelation, especially for sensitive topics or those with socially desirable responses. To address the fact that some informants had never purchased SHC and to check if they faced any social stigma, the researcher utilized the "psychodrama" method, which required participants to act out a particular role in each situation (Kozinets et al. 2012, 44).

The "non-shopping" participants took on the role of SHC shoppers and answered questions about how others might react if they knew they purchased SHC. For instance, the questions posed were "Suppose someday you buy SHC, how will your friends, family members, workmates, or customers react if they know you buy SHC?" instead of asking, "Will you encounter any social stigma from your friends, family members, workmates, or customers for your SHC purchase?". Another example of the projective technique used in this interview involved asking informants how they felt about other SHC buyers and what values they sought. These indirect questions helped the researcher check whether non-shoppers had any prejudices or biases about SHC purchases.

Lastly, in order to ensure adherence to ethical principles in an academic project at a European university, this research project complied with the requirements of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (Ethical review...2021) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679...2016). To achieve this, the researcher created a data management plan and informed consent letters for all informants before the interviews.

A. Data management plan: Before conducting any interviews, the researcher created a data management plan and submitted it to the DMPTuuli tool to inform how and where data would be collected, processed, stored, and destroyed. This plan was strictly followed throughout the project to ensure adherence to research ethics. To protect the anonymity of the informants, the researcher used pseudonyms in this project. The data management plan form is provided in Appendix 3.

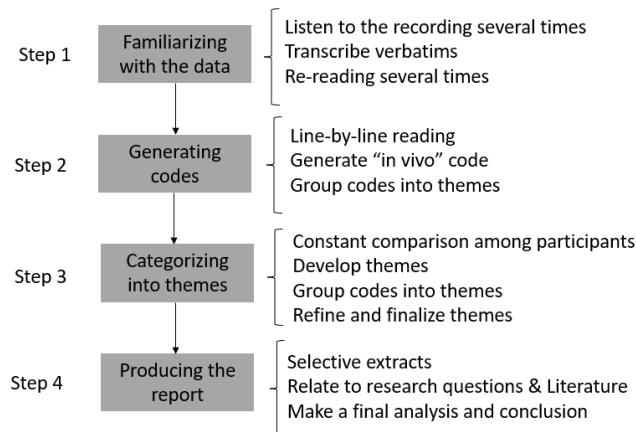
B. Informed consent: Before inviting informants for interviews, the researcher sent informed consent forms to the informants for review and agreement on how their data would be processed and stored. The informed consent letters will include relevant information about the research project, such as its purposes of data collection and usage, the methodology of data storage, and a statement of the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time. This approach will ensure that the ethical principles of the research project are upheld while ensuring the safety and confidentiality of the participant's data. The informed consent form is provided in Appendix 4.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

Data analysis was identified as the final and crucial step in the research project. Thematic analysis was selected for this research as it is commonly used for qualitative research data analysis involving the encoding of data (Boyatzis 1998, 4). Thematic analysis facilitated

the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns of "meanings" with the participants' lived experiences, views, perspectives, behaviors, and practices. This approach aimed to comprehend participants' beliefs, feelings, and actions (Clarke & Braun 2017, 297).

In theory, the thematic analysis process comprises six phases: familiarization with the data, generation of codes, construction of themes, review of potential themes, definition and naming of themes, and report production (Terry et al. 2017, 23). However, in practice, the researcher simplified the process into four stages: familiarization with the data, generation of codes, categorization into themes, and production of the report. The third, fourth, and fifth steps were grouped into the third stage of "categorizing into themes." Figure 2 illustrates the adapted model of this data analysis process.



**Figure 2. Data analysis process**

The initial phase of "data familiarization" aimed to enable the researcher to engage with the data, gain insights, and identify items of interest (Terry et al., 2017, 23). Firstly, the researcher listened to all recorded interviews multiple times, then transcribed them into textual content using Otte.ai. Subsequently, the data cleaning and checking stage followed. To ensure the accuracy of the transcription, the researcher read the transcript while listening to the audio several times to correct potential errors, such as grammar mistakes, unclear sounds, or non-standard English pronunciation from non-native participants. Next, a pseudonymization step was carried out to eliminate all personal identifiers from the dataset. Finally, all transcripts were sent to the informants for rechecking before proceeding to the next step of data analysis.

The second phase of "code generation" involved identifying specific dataset segments relevant to the research questions and creating meaningful labels or codes for these segments (Terry et al. 2017, 26). To accomplish this, the researcher meticulously read the

transcripts line-by-line and generated a set of codes from them. Subsequently, the researcher compared these codes with existing literature and refined them accordingly. Nvivo software was used to facilitate the coding process, making it quicker and easier.

The code generation was an iterative process, where the researcher moved back and forth between the interviews to ensure that the codes were consistently applied throughout the dataset. As data collection and analysis occurred concurrently, the researcher continued to code until reaching the point of theoretical saturation. This saturation point was reached when no new information emerged about the research topic, and there was no further value in reviewing data to see if they fit with the concepts or categories (Bell et al. 2022, 522).

In this project, the researcher employed "in vivo" codes, which involved using the actual words mentioned by the participants as codes (Saunders et al. 2019, 655). This approach allowed the researcher to avoid inferring meanings or making interpretation errors. By the end of this phase, the researcher had developed a list of 70 codes across ten transcripts (refer to Appendix 5).

The third step of "Theme categorization" involved three phases, as outlined by Terry et al. (2017, 23). These steps involved developing, defining, and naming themes. The creation of themes can be achieved through inductive or deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning involves forming themes based on empirical data, while deductive reasoning involves forming themes based on prior research and theory. However, it is possible to combine these strategies (Braun & Clarke 2006, 83). The researcher adapted this approach for this study.

In this vein, the themes were developed by examining all codes and associated data, clustering them into larger, more meaningful themes based on the research question and conceptual framework. The researcher did not limit the analysis to the predetermined framework in Figure 1 but allowed surprising and unexpected findings to emerge from the data. The researcher constantly made comparisons to refine themes throughout the analysis. Thus, the study addressed the main theme of barriers to non-purchasing behavior of second-hand clothing for both "Past shoppers" and "non-shoppers", but additional themes were added to gain a thorough understanding of Gen Y profiles, such as "Profile overview" and "Shopping behavior toward second-hand" (see the list of main themes and sub-themes in Appendix 6).

The final stage of the analysis process is "producing the report". The primary aim of this stage is to produce a high-quality scholarly report of the analysis. The researcher

synthesizes all the main themes to construct a coherent narrative that addresses the research question and advances the conceptual framework (Terry et al. 2017, 31). To ensure the scholarly rigor of the report, the researcher employs a combination of illustrative and analytical writing styles. For key concepts, the researcher uses vivid extracts with analytical commentary, while for less complex information, quotes are utilized as examples to illustrate the main elements of the narrative (Terry et al. 2017, 32).

### 3.5 Trustworthiness of the study

“Trustworthiness” of an academic project pertains to the level of assurance in the quality of a study's data, interpretation, and methods (Cope 2014, 435). To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher employed the criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 294-328), which are widely recognized among qualitative researchers. These criteria encompassed **credibility**, **transferability**, **dependability**, and **confirmability**, with **authenticity** added later by Guba and Lincoln (1994, 114).

**Credibility** pertains to the internal validity of a study and refers to the accuracy of the information and how well the findings reflect reality (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 314-315). Several methods can enhance the credibility of qualitative research, such as member checking or triangulation (Carter et al. 2014, 546). In this project, the researcher employed member checks by sending transcriptions and interpretations to each informant individually, allowing them to verify the accuracy of the analysis.

In addition, the researcher applied theory triangulation by using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data (Patton 1999, 1193). To do this, the researcher invested substantial time reviewing theories from the last 30 years to form the theoretical framework and compare different literature during data analysis. However, due to limited time and budget, this project only employed one individual interview method and recruited purposeful informants from the researcher's network of university students and entrepreneurs living in Finland or their friends in nearby countries such as Estonia and Holland. However, the researcher did not apply other triangulation methods like data triangulation (e.g., combining observational data with interview data), method triangulation (e.g., combining individual interviews with focus groups or fieldwork), or analyst triangulation (e.g., using several interviewers or evaluators during the interview or analysis) as recommended by Patton (1999, 1193).

It is worth noting that the credibility of a qualitative research project heavily depends on the researcher's ability and efforts (Golafshani 2003, 600). Thus, the researcher

practiced mock-up interviews before the official process with the informants and sought external feedback to validate the conclusions. The operationalization table and interview guide ensured a connection between the research problem, theoretical framework, and data collection. Personal identifiers in the database were also replaced with pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy and allow them to freely share their experiences and opinions.

The criterion of **transferability** concerns the extent to which research findings can be applied in other contexts. It requires the researcher to provide sufficient information to enable other researchers to assess the transferability of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985, 291-316) suggested providing a comprehensive description of the study, while Schofield (2011, 10) proposed studying the phenomenon in three domains: what is, what may be, and what could be.

Due to limited time and budget, the researcher focused on enhancing transferability in the project's detailed description, as Lincoln and Guba (1985, 291-316) suggested, and addressed the phenomenon in the "What Is" domain by Schofield (2011, 10). To provide richness in the description, the researcher clearly described the phenomenon context in Chapter 2, the research process, methodology, and informant selection criteria in Chapter 3, and provided appendices of filter questions, an interview guide, and a list of generated codes, themes, and sub-themes in data analysis. For the direction of "What Is," the researcher purposefully chose informants based on typicality rather than a random selection of interviewees. To investigate barriers for those who did not engage in SHC purchases, the researcher carefully selected non-shoppers and past shoppers of diversified educational backgrounds, cultures, and genders. Additionally, the researcher tried to select informants from multiple sites, including three countries: Finland, Estonia, and Holland.

The transferability may be limited in the other two domains of "What May Be" and "What Could Be." The direction of "What May Be" refers to studying the "Leading Edge" of change or considering the life cycle of the phenomenon to enhance the transferability of findings to other later points in time (Schofield 2011, 15-16). The direction of "What Could Be" relates to selecting unusual situations or sites and doing more qualitative comparative methods or meta-ethnography to produce new and more inclusive concepts than those from a particular study (Schofield 2011, 18-24).

The third criterion, **dependability**, refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be replicated in the same context and the extent to which the researcher and the research context may have influenced the findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 300 & 316-317).



Interviews are generally less subjective by nature than other data collection methods because they rely on the interviewing skills of the researcher. As such, the research should be conducted as objectively and factually as possible (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 300 & 316-317).

In this study, the research methodology, interview context, and verbatim transcripts were described in Chapters 3 and 4 to allow readers to assess the reliability of the data. Additionally, the interview guide was provided in the appendices to allow readers to check the nature of the questions and the main themes. However, as the researcher was a novice and needed more experience in social science research, the quality of the results may have been limited to some extent.

**Confirmability**, the fourth criterion of trustworthiness, assesses whether other researchers can confirm the study's findings and interpretations and whether they are linked to the data comprehensibly (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 319). In this study, confirmability was achieved by comprehensively describing the research process and methods used. The interview questions were also displayed to ensure transparency in the data collection process. Furthermore, the data analysis structure, including the themes and codes, was provided in the appendices, which enables other researchers to understand and replicate the data analysis process.

The fifth criterion, authenticity, concerns the degree of fairness of the study, including ontological authenticity (i.e., enlarging personal constructions), educative authenticity (i.e., leading to improved understanding of the constructions of others), catalytic authenticity (i.e., stimulating action), and tactical authenticity (i.e., empowering action) (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 114). In this study, educative authenticity was pursued by providing insights into Gen Y customers' barriers when purchasing SHC. Furthermore, the study proposed catalytic authenticity by offering recommendations for businesses in the SHC market to revise their current approach to better serve this critical customer segment. However, the researcher's limited knowledge and competency in this field hindered the provision of tactical authenticity.

Overall, Chapter 3 provided justifications and an outline of the research methodology to inform readers about how the researcher conducted and managed the quality of the research project. To comprehend the poorly researched phenomenon of Generation Y non-shoppers towards SHC consumption, the researcher adopted an interpretive philosophy, a qualitative approach, the direct interview method, and the thematic analysis process to gain empirical insights and produce a meaningful report. However, due to the

small participant size, the nature of the sole qualitative method, and the researcher's limited experience, the results of the research project may have been insufficient to generalize for theory building.

## 4 GEN Y SHOPPERS' BARIERS TO PURCHASING SECOND-HAND CLOTHES

### 4.1 Gen Y shoppers' profile overview

As outlined in Section 3.4, the research participants were divided into two categories: past shoppers and non-shoppers. For this qualitative research project, there were six past shoppers and four non-shoppers from Generation Y who resided in Finland or nearby countries with diverse cultural, social, and educational backgrounds. Consequently, the analysis was organized into "past shopper", "non-shopper", and "integrative findings" categories. Pseudonymization was implemented in the database, whereby the different participants were assigned false names to protect their privacy.

#### 4.1.1 Past shoppers

The group of past shoppers who were interviewed consisted of single and married individuals, including males and females residing in Turku city, Helsinki (the capital of Finland), Tallinn (the capital of Estonia), and the Holland region of the Netherlands. They possessed university degrees at various levels, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, with diverse backgrounds in neuroscience, education, and IT. The group included a mixture of students, full-time officers, and researchers. Furthermore, they had diverse cultural backgrounds in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

According to the data, all informants exhibited **high environmental awareness**, consistent with previous literature on Generation Y (e.g., Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 1; Mason et al. 2022, 147). The respondents were highly conscious of the green trend and supported it in various ways. Many attempted to minimize their clothing consumption or avoid fast fashion. One participant engaged in DIY to extend the life cycle of their clothing for at least five years. In line with findings on Generation Y's willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products (Kim et al. 2021, 1-2), one interviewee stated that they were willing to pay nearly the price of new clothes for second-hand clothing to support the planet:

*“If I found the right size and style and it's in secondhand shops, I could pay 75% price of the new clothes. I am willing to pay for supporting such things.”* (Samuel, a Finnish male student)

While Liang and Xu (2017, 127) claimed that society had contributed to young people's high level of environmental awareness, the data suggested that it may have come from various sources. Only two interviewees confirmed that the European green movement trend influenced them. Some respondents, like David, an Estonian Ph.D. student, and Samuel, a Finnish bachelor's student, admitted that their environmentally conscious or DIY-styled parents impacted them. Others adopted a frugal lifestyle to avoid environmental issues. For example, Sofia (an Indian student studying in Finland) only used one pair of jeans for a year and did not need to buy more. Yara (a Finnish female student) said she was trying to minimize her shopping.

Remarkably, most participants demonstrated sustainable disposal behaviors, a trait not previously documented in the literature on Generation Y. Only one respondent reported discarding used clothing when it was no longer needed. The remaining participants indicated repurposing unwanted clothing by giving it to siblings and friends, converting it into another use, donating it, or reselling it online. For instance, one interviewee described her approach as follows:

*“Sometimes I just wear it if I'm doing some sports or something more casual, rather than wearing it to work [...] Sometimes I use the unwanted clothes to wipe the kitchen or as curtain material. This is like very much what my mother used to do. [...] If it like super destroyed and no one can make use of it, I will take it to the recycling unit next to our house.”* (Anna, a Nigerian researcher living in Finland).

This evidence of high environmental awareness and sustainable disposal behavior demonstrated that the young generation is consistent in their attitudes and actions, contradicting concerns raised by other scholars (e.g., Bernades et al. 2018, 4; Muposhi et al. 2015, 226).

#### 4.1.2 Non-shoppers

Similar to the interviewed past shoppers, the surveyed non-shoppers were a diverse group in terms of gender, education, profession, marital status, and cultural background, with the commonality of residing in Finland. Contrary to findings by Yan et al. (2015, 94) and Silva et al. (2021, 728), the interviewed non-shoppers exhibited **high environmental consciousness**, supported the green movement, and engaged in various actions to protect the environment. Some respondents even sympathized with the recent increase in second-

hand clothing (SHC) and believed higher prices reflected higher-quality store items. One informant expressed guilt for not purchasing more second-hand clothing and wished she could be more environmentally conscious (Natalia, an American bakery owner living in Finland).

Like the past shopper group, the non-shopper group also practiced **sustainable disposal behaviors**. One clear statement supporting this finding is as follows:

*“I usually give my jeans a second life by cutting them to be a short short. Then I can easily use 10 years of the jeans as well. Same with the T-shirts. I used them and when the armpits get ruined, I changed them to the tops. So, I try to use everything until I can’t reuse anymore. [...] When my clothes get broken, I even take it to the tailor in Kauppahalli and pay 5 euros to repair and give the pants some extra years. So there is only a small portion of stuff actually goes to Kontti <sup>6</sup>.”* (Luke, a Finnish entrepreneur)

All non-shoppers emphasized that they tried to use their clothing for as long as possible through various means such as repairing, recycling, or repurposing it for another use, similar to the behavior of past shoppers. Previous literature on Generation Y or second-hand purchasing studies has yet to find this emerging data.

#### 4.1.3 Integrated findings

In summary, this study provided numerous new insights that align with and contradict previous theories on the characterization of Generation Y. A comparison of theory and empirical data is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. A comparison of theory and empirical data on Gen Y’s characterization**

Literature on Generation Y’s characterization	Examples of Scholars	Empirical Data from	
		Past Shoppers	Non-Shoppers
Generation Y has high environmental awareness.	Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 1; Mason et al. 2022, 147	All interviewees aligned.	All interviewees aligned.
Generation Y is willing to pay a premium for sustainable products.	Kim et al. 2021, 1-2	Only one interviewee aligned.	Did not mention.
The source of high environmental awareness comes from the society.	Liang & Xu 2017, 127.	Some interviewees aligned,	

<sup>6</sup> Kontti is the name of Finnish Red Cross organization: <https://sprkontti.fi/>. They have an online store and 12 second-hand physical stores in Finland whose sources are donations.

		others came from personal lifestyle and parental influence.	
Generation Y practices sustainable disposal behaviors.	No studies reported.	Almost aligned except one interviewee.	All interviewee aligned.
Generation Y is not consistent in their pro-environmental attitudes and actions.	Muposhi et al. 2015, 226; Bernades et al. 2018, 4	All interviewees contradicted.	Did not ask (as they did not buy SHC).
[General shopper's studies]: Non-shoppers generally exhibit lower levels of environmental consciousness compared to shoppers of second-hand products.	Yan et al. 2015, 94 and Silva et al. 2021, 726.	Did not relate (as this group was past shoppers).	All interviewees contradicted.
Many young customers think that clothes waste does not harm the environment because it could degrade environmentally friendly	Wang et al. 2022, 164	All interviewees were aware that clothes waste harm the environment .	All interviewees were aware that clothes waste harm the environment .

Notably, the findings corroborated existing literature on the pro-environmental awareness and attitudes of Generation Y (e.g., Mason et al. 2022, 147) and expanded our understanding of the sources of ecological consciousness. In addition to societal influence, as noted by Liang and Xu (2017, 127), this study identified other sources of awareness, such as personal frugality or parental influence. Most importantly, the data revealed new knowledge that contradicted previous studies: (1) instead of exhibiting an attitude-behavior gap among Generation Y consumers (e.g., Muposhi et al. 2015, 226; Bernades et al. 2018, 4), the interviewees consistently practiced sustainable disposal behaviors in line with their pro-environmental attitudes; (2) contrary to previous findings that non-shoppers were less environmentally conscious (e.g., Yan et al. 2015, 94; Silva et al. 2021, 726), they demonstrated high ecological awareness. The study also supplements new knowledge that Generation Y practices a lot of sustainable disposal behaviors in their lives, whether they buy or do not buy second-hand clothes. Non-shoppers interviewed in this study exhibited high environmental consciousness, which contradicts the observation

of other scholars in their second-hand shopping studies (e.g., Yan et al. 2015, 94; Silva et al. 2021, 726).

## 4.2 Gen Y shoppers' shopping behaviors and positive attitudes about second-hand clothes

After presenting general information about Generation Y in the previous section, this section will provide an overview of the findings on their shopping behaviors and positive attitudes towards second-hand clothing to enhance our understanding of the participants.

### 4.2.1 Past shoppers

Contrary to Bakewell and Mitchell's (2003, 96-97) report of high materialism among Generation Y consumers, most interviewed Generation Y individuals practiced a **frugal lifestyle** to reduce their consumption of products. One informant described this as follows:

*"I think it's part of my personality to try to find try to consider always what I need not because my economic doesn't allow to buy it. But because I think it's better for the planet that we don't consume that much. I tried to buy less, but I think I could spend more for fun activities or something like this."*

(Samuel, a Finnish student)

The second contradictory finding concerned the high clothing spending that some academics reported (e.g., Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96; Tripathi 2019, 110). The surveyed young people did not allocate a fixed budget for clothing and tried to buy as little clothing as possible. For instance, one informant stated:

*"I tried to make as much use of it and now I'm trying to like to buy as much as I can.[...]. I don't have fixed budget on clothing."* (Anna, a full-time re-

searcher)

The third contrasting result related to the online shopping trend among young people was reported by many scholars (e.g., Moreno et al. 2017, 141; Tripathi 2019, 109). Nearly all young respondents preferred buying clothing at physical stores to check the fit, with only one participant expressing a preference for online shopping.

When asked about the factors influencing their general clothing purchases, the respondents mentioned multiple factors in Table 7. Surprisingly, only one of them cited

checking reviews or recommendations as an important source for making purchasing decisions, as reported by recent studies (Moreno et al. 2017, 141-142).

**Table 7. Past shoppers' considering factors in purchasing clothes**

Participants	Factors to consider purchasing clothes
Anna	Quality* → brand → positive review or rating.
Sofia	Style* → size → price
Samuel	Style* → size
Lee	Size* → price → warranty, color, style, design
Yara	Style* → quality
David	Quality* → style → price

(Notes: The factor denoted by asterisks (\*) is the initial factor in their consideration process).

In line with Reisenwitz and Iyer's (2009, 93) findings, many participants identified style as the primary factor when considering clothing purchases. Two participants cited quality as their top priority, while only one prioritized size. Quality was primarily associated with durability and the expectation that clothing should last for an extended period. The secondary consideration factor varied among respondents, with size being the most popular. Other factors, such as brand, reviews, design, warranty, and color, were each mentioned by only one participant.

Understanding past experiences related to second-hand clothing (SHC) purchases was crucial for this study to determine the motivations for buying SHC and the reasons for discontinuing it. The participants' descriptions of their experiences and reasons for purchasing SHC are summarized in Table 8. Overall, they reported positive and satisfying experiences. Many were pleased with the quality of the products and the service provided by the staff at second-hand stores. One respondent revealed that his purchased T-shirts had not deteriorated, while others praised the SHC staff for being well-mannered and courteous to all customers.

Most of the experiences reported by respondents were **ad-hoc** rather than planned. **Impulse purchases** were made when passing by second-hand stores or to fulfill temporary needs for specific clothing such as winter clothes, carnival costumes, and workout or outdoor clothing. These reasons were **not related to the three main motivations** of



**Table 8. Used clothes' purchasing experience, reasons to buy and stop buying**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Experience description</b>	<b>Reasons for buying</b>	<b>Reasons for discontinuing</b>
Anna	<i>"I got from UFF in Turku one nice jacket at only 10e. I went there because it was next to my workplace".</i>	<i>"Good price &amp; good quality".</i>	<i>"I was shocked that the prices are more expensive than the old days, but the clothes are not at same good quality. For good deals of the designers' thing, they sell very fast, and I don't have time to handle it"</i>
Sofia	<i>"Last winter I bought one thick winter jacket, one winter gear &amp; few sweaters"</i>	<i>"I had demand for winter clothes as it was my first winter in Finland".</i>	<i>"I brought all the necessary casual wear to Finland, so I don't feel the demand to buy more"</i>
Samuel	<i>One year ago, I bought jacket and trousers. That was a really great experience because I didn't expect to find anything at that time</i>	<i>"Good price and nice style".</i>	<i>"I don't have enough time and energy to do check it out every day or week as it is rare to find my style and size".</i>
Lee	<i>"Last time was when I was in Turku. I bought a T-shirt, a few jumpers, a Camouflage for my school carnival".</i>	<i>"They had my size"</i>	<i>"Most of their second-hand casual wear or jackets are too big for me, an average-sized Asian man"</i>
Yara	<i>"I bought some second-hand T-shirt and outside dress for work one year ago".</i>	<i>"...for workout, and outdoor work"</i>	<i>"It was difficult for me to be patient in the second-hand stores"</i>
David	<i>"I bought second-hand T-shirts from a second-hand clothes store in Tallinn, Estonia".</i>	<i>"I was nearby that shop and I wanted to contribute ecological trends. It had my size and good look on me".</i>	<i>"It's not very convenient to buy secondhand because I don't usually find my size, my style".</i>

Generation Y customers researched by some scholars, namely economic, recreational, and environmental motives (Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2017, 128; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11; Wang et al. 2022, 165). Although the theory proposed that prior shopping experience could significantly impact a young consumer's frequency or intentions of purchasing second-hand clothing (Xu et al. 2014, 675; Wang et al. 2022, 163), the empirical data showed that customers **still discontinued their purchases even though they had a positive experience**. The rationale for this lies in their ad-hoc and temporary demand. Therefore, they quickly ceased their second-hand clothing purchases when they no longer needed those specific items or felt that it required too much time and effort to find their preferred style and size. Only one participant deterred her purchasing intention due to the current higher price of second-hand clothing, which she felt was not commensurate with the quality.

In contrast to prior literature on SHC barriers (e.g., Na'amneh & Al Huban 2012, 618; Silva et al., 2021, 727), **none** of the participants expressed any concern about **social stigma** when purchasing SHC. They happily shared with their family and friends that they had bought SHC and all received positive feedback. Some respondents reported that many of their friends also frequently purchased items from second-hand stores, so they did not care whether the items were new or second-hand. For instance, one interviewee remembered:

*“After I bought the clothes on a secondhand shop, I told my international friends and they thought it was a really good thing, sustainable. They thought it was a good deal and they would probably go there as well.”* (Lee, a Chinese IT staff living in Holland)

Additionally, to assess prejudice towards SHC, the researcher employed a projective technique to inquire about the participants' perceptions of individuals who purchase SHC and the values they seek. Surprisingly, the interviewed respondents did **not exhibit any bias** toward SHC customers, as reported by many scholars (e.g., Zander-Seidel 1991,15; Pipyrrou 2014, 533; Wang et al. 2022, 163). On the contrary, they believed that anyone could buy SHC and that those who did so were intelligent or eco-friendly. One interviewee shared:

*““I think everyone goes there. It's a normal type of shopping. They just need to look good. I even saw a female business owner shopping at UFF many times.”* (Sofia, an Indian student living in Finland)

The final observation from the study was **the habit of using second-hand products** among all respondents. Most participants purchased second-hand furniture, board games, electronic equipment, and computers. They bought used furniture because it was easy to decide based on online pictures when the sellers provided dimensions and descriptions. They purchased electronic equipment and computers from refurbished companies to receive repair services when needed. Although these past shoppers no longer purchased SHC, some inherited used clothes from family members.

In summary, the study revealed a significant amount of contrasting knowledge with previous literature on both Generation Y and SHC purchasing habits. Contrary to typical characterizations of Generation Y in studies (e.g., Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96-97; Moreno et al. 2017, 141-142; Tripathi 2019, 109-110), most of the interviewed individuals were not highly materialistic, did not spend large amounts of money on clothing, did not prefer online shopping for clothing and did not consider peer reviews in their clothing purchasing process. In contrast to SHC literature (e.g., Connell 2009, 2; Wang et al. 2022, 163), all surveyed customers did not exhibit any bias towards SHC customers or experience social stigma. Additionally, unlike the three motivations reported by some recent researchers (e.g., Liang & Xu 2017, 127; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11), these customers' motives were ad hoc and temporary, which could explain why they easily discontinued their purchases later. The study also provided new insights into how factors such as style, size, and others were considered in the purchasing process and the habit of using second-hand products among interviewed Generation Y customers.

#### 4.2.2 Non-shoppers

Like interviewed past shoppers, non-shoppers in the study did **not have a fixed frequency or budget** for buying clothes. However, all female participants shopped **online and offline**, while the male participant only shopped offline because he wanted to check the fit. In contrast to the group of past shoppers, many interviewed non-shoppers did **not practice a frugal lifestyle** except for one respondent. This respondent chose a frugal lifestyle after experiencing unstable income during his startup period. He shared his story:

*“When I was working full time, and I had like a fixed salary then I didn't care so much. I bought it just because I wanted something nice [...]. Now, as a starting entrepreneur, I have an unstable income. So, I am very careful of what I buy, and try to go as low with consumption as possible. I realized*

*that I had a lot of clothing that I didn't need at all. So now I only buy what I really need [...] I try to minimize my consumption as much as possible."*

(Luke, a Finnish entrepreneur)

Same as past shopper group, non-shoppers also considered multiple factors when purchasing clothes in general. The list of detailed considering factors is in Table 9.

**Table 9. Non-shoppers' considering factors in purchasing clothes**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Factors to consider purchasing clothes</b>
Quinn	Price* → brand
Natalia	Price* → quality → style and comfort
Luke	Quality* → size → style
Phoenix	Price* → quality

(Notes: The factor denoted by asterisks (\*) is the initial factor in their consideration process).

In contrast to Reisenwitz and Iyer's (2009, 93) findings that generation Y prioritizes style and quality over price and brand name, most participants identified price as the primary factor in their decision-making process, with the exception of one individual who prioritized quality. The secondary factor varied among respondents, with quality being the most selected. The style was identified as the third most popular consideration factor. Notably, comfort was mentioned as a new factor by only one participant.

Concerning store environment, participants preferred boutique shops that provide a pleasant atmosphere, attractive displays, and well-organized categorization of items. This type of shop facilitates the shopping experience and offers a variety of options for customers. In contrast, **traditional second-hand shops** were perceived as **disorganized and cluttered**, with poorly arranged displays and a lack of product categorization. Traditional shops made customers waste time and feel frustrated during shopping.

In contrast to previous shopper groups, some participants did **not express concern about the social stigma** associated with purchasing second-hand clothing (SHC). They reported feeling comfortable sharing their SHC purchases with friends and others, and perceived neutral or positive attitudes towards this behavior. However, other participants mentioned **experiencing social stigma in their home countries**, where SHC is typically associated with limited financial resources. One respondent stated:

*“In Finland, I think it is normal for people to buy secondhand things, not only clothes. But in China, most of my family members, friends or classmates buy new things because the new clothes are not more than 1000 RMB.*

*Only people with limited income must look for second-hand clothes”.*

(Quinn, a Chinese student living in Finland)

Consistent with the observations, some non-shopper interviewees expressed **prejudices towards individuals who purchase second-hand clothing (SHC)**, while others did not. Respondents from China and Colombia reported a perception that individuals who buy SHC in their home countries are typical of lower socioeconomic status. In contrast, other participants argued that SHC customers are motivated by environmental concerns and a desire to extend the lifespan of products rather than waste them. Additionally, one respondent had a neutral opinion, thinking they bought SHC due to a temporary need for clothing that could be used for a short time.

Interestingly, despite not purchasing SHC, these non-shoppers **still engaged in SHC consumption** in other ways. For example, they may have worn used clothing from family members or friends or even purchased SHC for their boyfriends. One respondent reported regularly selling her used clothing, despite not purchasing any SHC from others.

In brief, the non-shopper group provided a distinct perspective compared to the past shopper group. The only two commonalities between the groups were their **flexible clothing budgets** and **engagement with second-hand clothing**. However, the groups held **divergent opinions** regarding the **environment of second-hand shops**, the **social stigma** associated with SHC, and **prejudices towards SHC customers**. Unlike the past shopper group, the non-shopper group did **not adhere to a frugal lifestyle** and **shopped online and offline**. Their decision-making factors also differed; while past shoppers prioritized style and size, non-shoppers considered **price first, followed by quality and style**.

#### 4.2.3 Integrative findings

In conclusion, this study has contributed new insights that both support and challenge existing theories on the shopping behaviors of Generation Y while also providing additional knowledge. A comparison between theoretical and empirical data is in Table 10.

**Table 10. A comparison of theory and empirical data on Gen Y's Shopping Behaviors**

Literature on Generation Y's Shopping Behaviors	Examples of Scholars	Empirical Data From	
		Past Shoppers	Non-Shoppers
Generation Y exhibits a high degree of materialism, leading to high product consumption.	Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96-97.	All interviewees contradicted..	Almost aligned except one interviewee.
Generation Y spends a significant amount of money in branded apparel to express their self-identity and social identity.	Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96; Tripathi 2019, 110.	All interviewees contradicted.	All interviewees contradicted.
Generation Y prefers shopping clothing online.	Moreno et al. 2017, 141.	All interviewees contradicted.	Some interviewees aligned, others did not.
Generation Y relies on checking reviews or recommendations as an important source for making purchasing decisions.	Moreno et al. 2017, 142.	Almost contradicted except one interviewee.	All interviewees contradicted.
Generation Y prioritises style and quality over price and brand name when considering clothing purchases.	Reisenwitz & Iyer 2009, 93.	Almost all aligned with style, and some aligned with quality.	Almost contradicted except one interviewee chose quality.
Generation Y is motivated by one of three main reasons, namely economic, recreational, and environmental motives when purchasing SHC.	Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2017, 128; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11; Wang et al. 2022, 165	All interviewees contradicted.	Did not ask (as they did not buy SHC).
Prior shopping experience could significantly impact a consumer's frequency or intentions of purchasing second-hand clothing.	Xu et al. 2014, 675; Wang et al. 2022, 163	All interviewees contradicted.	Did not ask (as they did not buy SHC).
Gen Y customers concerned about social stigma when purchasing SHC.	Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2017, 128; Wang et al. 2022, 165	All interviewees contradicted.	Some interviewees aligned, others did not.
SHC is associated with poverty or limited financial resources.	Pipyrou 2014, 533; Wang et al. 2022, 163).	All interviewees contradicted.	Some interviewees aligned, others did not
Generation Y has the habit of using second-hand products or engage with second-hand clothes consumption in different ways.	No studies.	Almost expressed except one interviewee.	All interviewees expressed.

Scholars have emphasized that Generation Y exhibits high levels of materialism, leading to high consumption and a preference for spending large amounts of money on clothing, particularly online (e.g., Bakewell & Mitchell 2003, 96-97; Moreno et al. 2017, 141-142; Tripathi 2019, 109-110). However, the empirical data contradicted this, with nearly all participants reporting frugal lifestyles, a preference for physical shopping channels, and minimized spending on clothing, except for a few interviewees. Furthermore, interviewed Generation Y individuals did not rely on checking reviews and peer recommendations for their product purchases as the theory suggested (Moreno et al. 2017, 142). During the clothing purchasing process, not all prioritized style and quality over price, contradicting the theory of Reisenwitz & Iyer (2009, 93). Indeed, some informants considered price as their initial deciding factor.

The motivation of informants towards second-hand clothing was ad-hoc and did not relate to the three studied reasons reported by some researchers (e.g., Liang & Xu 2017, 127; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11; Wang et al., 2022, 165). If social stigma and poverty association are often highlighted in many studies (Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2017, 128; Wang et al. 2022, 165), only a few young informants were concerned. Their positive experience did not impact their future intention, as Xu et al. (2014, 675) proposed.

After exploring Generation Y's profile, attitude, and shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothing, the researcher continued to elaborate on the main findings of the barriers that prevent them from consuming second-hand clothing in the following section.

### **4.3 Gen Y shoppers' barriers toward purchasing second-hand clothes**

#### **4.3.1 Internal barriers**

As explained in Section 1.3, internal barriers relate to customers themselves, including personal identity, belief, knowledge, and their own economic, psychological, and cultural aspects (Connell 2010, 280). Following the division of this chapter, the findings were arranged into "Past shoppers," "non-shoppers," and "Integrative findings".

##### **4.3.1.1 *Past shoppers***

Different from the findings from other research (e.g., Pipyrrou 2014, 533, Winakor et al. 1971, 261) about the association with poverty, past shoppers did not persist in this perception. Instead, one past shopper showed her **negative association with lousy quality because** she believed other people's unwanted clothes might have some quality problems. The prevalent barrier among past shoppers was their concern related to **unseen defects**, which was not mentioned in previous research, and concerns related to **certain types of clothing** close to the body, which was consistent with prior literature (O'Reilly et al. 1984, 59; Ostergaard et al. 1999, 407). Particularly, some informants thought there might be some stains or defects they could not see from the online picture or from afar when they were in the shop. Like previous studies, these young customers also avoided items that directly touched their skin, such as underwear, socks, scarves, or shoes, due to concerns about health-related issues and low quality.

As other researchers have noted (Laitala & Klepp 2018, 12; Hur 2020, 9), most previous shoppers reported **a lack of patience and time** to look for and try second-hand clothing. Some respondents reported needing time to check for fit and unseen defects carefully. Some explained that they had to be attentive and patient to find the correct size, style, and quality. Below is one respondent's description of her effort and patience during searching for second-hand clothing:

*"I think that to find something you must be patient and search because if you don't find your size, you should slowly and calmly look. I think it's difficult for me to be patient in stores [...]. It really takes time and patience to search for my size, my style. And when I find something looks good, I go and look, then there are some issues that I didn't see from far, like stains or holes. [...] For the designer's thing, they often sell very fast when they offer good bargains. I usually do not have time to handle it. "* (Anna, a Nigerian researcher living in Finland)

The last internal barrier reported in this group was **a lack of demand** for second-hand clothing, which is in line with the research of Laitala & Klepp (2018, 13). Some respondents stated they already had enough clothing, such as winter clothes and outside dresses. They did not need to acquire more casual wear as they tried to minimize their shopping. One informant revealed that the Nike outlet in his neighborhood satisfied his clothing needs, while there were only a few second-hand stores in his city.



#### 4.3.1.2 *Non-shoppers*

Moving to the non-shopper group, they had more **negative perceptions about second-hand clothing**. Many felt it was dirty or had an old smell, even though they knew it did not. They still associated second-hand clothing with poverty because only people with limited income or resources looked for second-hand clothing, which has been reflected in previous studies (e.g., Winakor et al. 1971, 261; Norum & Norton 2017, 215). One informant explained that her parents never bought used clothes for them when they were small, so she became accustomed to that perception.

Similar to the past-shopper group, interviewed non-shoppers expressed **concerns regarding unseen defects**. They were **biased towards specific items** such as underwear, socks, and shoes. In addition, some non-shoppers from developing countries, such as China and Columbia, expressed unease about cleanliness and unknown sources that may transmit diseases, as reported in previous literature (e.g., Xu et al. 2014, 676; Rulikova 2020, 180). One participant articulated her concerns as follows:

*“It is ok to get second hand from family and friends. But I feel unacceptable to get from an unknown source. Because I don’t know if they have any kind of disease that can transfer to me via clothes.”* (Phoenix, a Columbian student living in Finland)

Consistent with previous research on shoppers, the majority of non-shoppers also demonstrated **a lack of patience and time** when searching for second-hand clothing (Laitala & Kleep 2018, 13; Hur 2020, 9-15). Many reported feelings exhausted from spending hours sifting through racks in stores or visiting multiple second-hand sources, hoping to find the desired item. Luke, a Finnish entrepreneur, stated that when people find something they like in a second-hand store, they take it immediately, and he needs more time and patience to check stores like that frequently.

The final barrier, consistent with that identified in the past-shopper group, was **a lack of demand**, which corroborated previous studies (e.g., Laitala & Kleep 2018, 13). However, only a few informants mentioned they had sufficient clothing or did not consider second-hand options when purchasing clothing. One interviewee claimed:

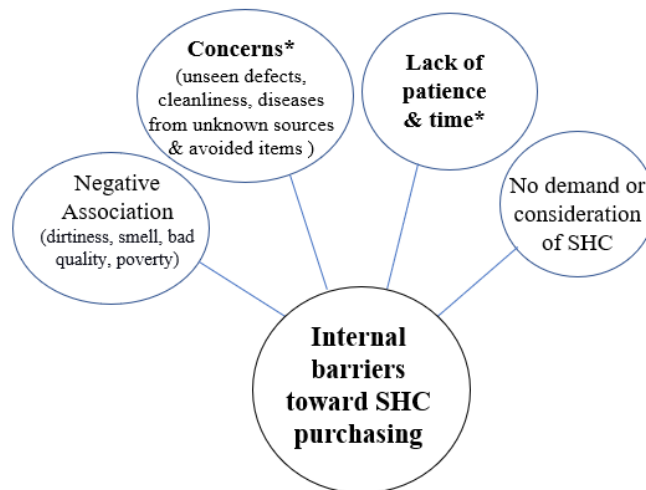
*“I have an income, so I just go and buy new ones. When I need some sets for work, I don’t think of second-hand clothes as my first option. I just go to*

*New Yorker because I know their prices are very affordable.*” (Phoenix, a Columbian student living in Finland)

During the follow-up process, the researcher identified several reasons for this lack of demand. Firstly, some individuals had a personal frugal lifestyle and aimed to minimize their clothing consumption. Secondly, family influence played a role as their parents never purchased used clothes for them when they were young. Lastly, they recognized that the price of fast fashion was very close to that of second-hand items, tempting them to buy first-hand.

#### 4.3.1.3 *Integrative findings*

In short, four internal barriers were reported by the interviewed past shoppers and non-shoppers, as illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Internal barriers of Generation Y's past shoppers and non-shoppers**

(Notes: The internal barriers denoted by asterisks (\*) and boldface are the most frequently mentioned by Generation Y's interviewed past shoppers and non-shoppers in the study.)

Compared to previous literature, the empirical data provided fewer internal barriers. None of the informants in this study mentioned the barriers of degraded self-sense and low environmental awareness reported by other scholars. The most frequently cited obstacles differed between theory and data. According to theories, many researchers have identified associations with poverty and concerns about second-hand clothing as the most frequently cited obstacles (see Table 2). Although many informants still expressed concerns related to second-hand clothing (SHC), they frequently reported a lack of patience and time at second-hand sources as an obstacle, which was not mentioned much in the

theories. This disparity suggests that either general shoppers have different perspectives than Gen Y shoppers or that barriers may change over time or across geographical areas.

Even the concerns about second-hand clothing (SHC) had slight differences. The informants from developing countries still expressed worries about the cleanliness and the risks of transferring diseases and misfortune from previous owners, as mentioned by many scholars (e.g., Roux & Korchia 2006, 33; Rulikova 2020, 180) while the others did not. However, all raised new concerns about unseen defects that they could not recognize from online pictures or limited checking time at second-hand sources.

#### 4.3.2 External barriers

In contrast to internal barriers, which originated within customers, external barriers were external forces such as price, product, store, seller, and channel (Connell, 2010, p. 280). This section discussed the findings of external barriers from past shoppers and non-shoppers and presented a general conclusion for both groups.

##### 4.3.2.1 *Past shoppers*

Like general shoppers in previous research (e.g., Liang & Xu 2018, 127; Wang et al. 2022, 164), Generation Y customers also reported that the current second-hand clothing (SHC) **prices were not cheap**. Some respondents discovered that the prices of SHC were close to those of brand-new clothes in fast fashion stores such as New Yorker or brand outlets. The prices of SHC in capital cities like Helsinki were even higher than those in smaller cities like Turku. One respondent revealed:

*“I felt shocked by the current price of SHC in Helsinki. I bought a jacket at 10 euros in Turku, but in Helsinki, it was like 35 or 45 euros. This price is too much for it.”* (Anna, a Nigerian researcher living in Finland)

Only one informant said they would pay a high price to support the green trend. The remaining respondents thought that the current high price of SHC was too much compared to the past and was unacceptable. One interviewee pondered that some people took advantage of the green trend for their benefit.

The main complaint among all past shoppers was the **limited availability of clothing**. As presented in Section 4.2.1, the style was the initial consideration for Generation Y customers when purchasing clothes, a finding that is supported by scholars (e.g., Reisenwitz & Iyer 2009, 93; Gurău 2012, 113; Parment 2013, 195). However, the participants

found it difficult to find their preferred **style** in second-hand shops. One female informant reported that the clothes did not align with her fashion sense because she could not find anything in pastel colors. Another female informant complained that she never found long dresses in the modest fashion style that Muslim women often wear daily. Similarly, most male respondents could not find their preferred styles, simple and without symbols or brand logos, because the options looked like old grandpa's clothes or teenagers' styles.

Regarding the second consideration of “**size**,” most participants reported that they did not usually find their sizes at second-hand sources. One emerging data point that has not been reported in previous literature is the limited availability of men's clothing in second-hand stores. All male respondents expressed frustration about the poor selection of men's clothing. For example, one participant shared:

*“There is no place to buy men's clothes. Usually there is only clothes for women. There might be some small sections but because the sections are too small, or there's so little options to choose. The options don't look appealing to me. [...] I have a feeling that there's almost nothing for men... I can't find men's slim jeans from the secondhand shops”* (David, an Estonian lecturer)

Only one out of six past shoppers mentioned the third external barrier, the **store environment, and facility**. This interviewee brought up the issue of overcrowding and a lack of sufficient changing rooms. She pointed out that because there was no rule limiting the number of clothes to try at once, she had seen some ladies bringing four or five items of clothing inside the changing room and spending an infinite amount of time there while other people were suffering. This overcrowded environment and lack of fitting rooms were aligned with previous studies (e.g., Steinbring & Rucker 2003, 36). However, scholars (e.g., Connell 2009, 2; Hur 2020, 9) mentioned other complaints, such as poor lighting, disorganization, poor visual merchandising, and unpleasant odors, which did not come up in this study. Some respondents mentioned the messy organization in traditional second-hand stores but did not mention it as a barrier because they did not visit traditional stores.

Only male participants reported the fourth barrier, which related to **channel accessibility**. It was due to the absence of secondhand shops near their residential areas or a lack of information about acquiring SHC online and offline channels (e.g., Connell 2009, 2; Hur 2020, 9; Silva et al. 2021, 728). However, a surprising fact occurred during the

project. When the researcher found a menswear secondhand store named Black Spot Merch in the city center and informed a male informant living in that city, he expressed surprise that he was unaware of that store despite having been looking for secondhand stores for men's clothes. The researcher interviewed the shop owner and discovered that although the shop had been available offline and online through channels such as Facebook and Instagram since 2019, they had not invested any budget in advertising and mainly relied on word-of-mouth and the organic reach of their digital content. It might explain why they did not have awareness among some potential customers in the area.

The final barrier was **social stigma**. Although most past shoppers were not concerned about social stigma (see Section 4.2.1), some still cared about other people's adverse reactions, especially when they were full-time employed or bought certain types of clothes. One past shopper shared her opinion:

*“It depends on the type of clothes. If I tell my friends that I bought my under-wear from second-hand, they will ask: ‘Oh my god, are you okay? Are you surviving?’ Like I am broke, or I don't have money to buy new ones. But it also depends on you as a person. Because I'm full-time employed, my friends might think: why is she doing that? She has a salary to buy new ones.”* (Anna, a Nigerian researcher living in Finland)

During the follow-up discussion, the researcher discovered that social stigma originated among respondents from specific cultures, such as Nigeria and Somalia. This finding was consistent with the literature of some scholars (e.g., Xu et al. 2014, 676; Liang & Xu 2018, 127; Wang et al. 2022, 165) who found that social stigma was more prevalent in collectivist cultures where public image and social status were given greater importance.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Non-shoppers*

Consistent with feedback from past shoppers and the theory proposed by Connell (2009, 2), some non-shoppers interviewed also felt that the current **price** of secondhand clothing (SHC) was **unfair** and quite close to that of firsthand clothes. Like the past shopper group, only one participant was supportive of the high price of SHC and believed that this price was due to the rise in quality and brand products currently available. One respondent from China revealed that the price of new clothes in her country was very low, providing little motivation to purchase SHC, which is in line with what other scholars have reported

(Liang & Xu 2018, 127; Wang et al. 2022, 164). As noted by Hur (2020, 9), informants also expressed dissatisfaction with the price of SHC and did not perceive them to be value for money. One interviewed non-shopper said:

*“Sometimes in these markets, they're charging quite a lot for like, it's not always like the best quality and I feel like I can get something new for almost the same price. I think in Finland secondhand clothes are almost as expensive as buying new clothes online or in US.”* (Natalia, one American bakery owner living in Finland)

Identical to the past shopper group, **clothes availability** was the most common complaint among non-shoppers for not purchasing secondhand clothing (SHC), as has been mentioned in prior literature (Connell 2009, 2; Laitala & Kleep 2018, 13; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 8-9). Young customers continued to provide feedback that they could not find their styles because the current offerings were either for older people or for teenagers. One non-shopper described his frustration as follows:

*“I don't feel like it is suitable for my style, young professional look. Either it's for teenagers or it's for grandpas, and nothing in between. The colors are so colorful, or the patterns look so cheap. Only old jackets, old pants or cardigans and stuff like that, that it's just not for me. I can't find my size either and most of the stuff is for women and children. So that's always my disappointment. I want to support secondhand things, but I never find anything for me. I tried but I had to give up.”* (Luke, a Finnish entrepreneur)

In addition, respondents also claimed that the clothes conditions in the marketplace were **messy** and not of **good quality**, while those in boutique stores were in good condition. Other issues reported in the literature (e.g., Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 8-9; Connell 2010, 282) did not arise in this study, such as smelly and damaged clothes, a lack of clear product information, missing size labels, or sanitation labels.

Similarly, in the non-shopper group, only one male participant encountered issues with **channel accessibility**. This customer was unaware of a menswear secondhand store established for four years, despite having lived in the city for 14 years. Complaints about channel accessibility came only from male informants and not from any females. Again, this finding showed two facts: (1) secondhand shops do not invest much in advertising their store's awareness to reach potential customers, and (2) men do not actively search for clothing shops.

As shared in Section 4.2.2, some respondents encountered social stigma in the form of other people's reactions towards those who bought or wore secondhand clothing. One informant ceased her intentions of buying SHC when her father felt unhappy and insisted she buy new clothes. Another interviewee reported that people who bought secondhand casual wear in China also faced negative judgment regarding financial difficulties. In line with the theory of some academics (e.g., Xu et al. 2014, 676; Wang et al. 2022, 165), people in collectivist communities tended to associate SHC with poverty and often showed negative attitudes towards secondhand wearers. Therefore, the researcher would like to rename this barrier a cultural rather than a social one because it was observed in specific cultures, not all.

#### 4.3.2.3 *Integrative findings*

In brief, five external barriers were reported by the interviewed past shoppers and non-shoppers, as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. External barriers of Generation Y's past shoppers and non-shoppers.**

(Notes: The external barriers denoted by asterisks (\*) and boldface are the most frequently mentioned by Generation Y's interviewed past shoppers and non-shoppers in the study).

Compared to previous literature, the empirical data provided the same five external barriers with slight differences in the most frequently cited obstacle and complaints about product condition. The most frequently cited obstacle in the data referred to product availability, while the theory also included social stigma. Regarding product availability, respondents mainly complained about limited style, size, and quality while not mentioning

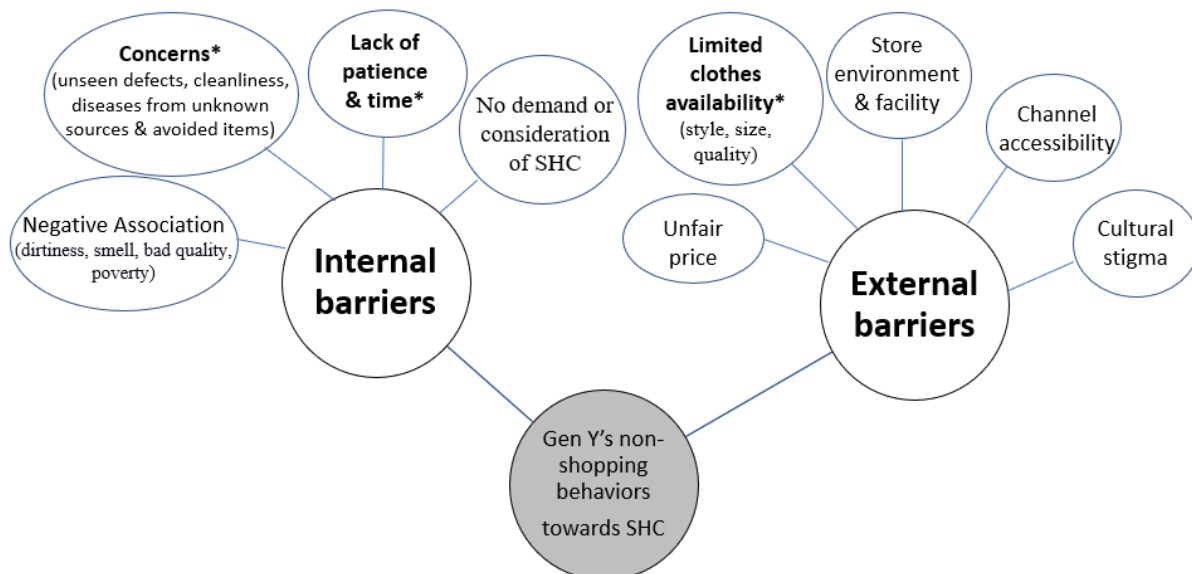
other concerns about poor product conditions and insufficient product information raised by previous researchers (Connell 2010, 282; Wang et al. 2022, 164).

One interesting finding is that the issue of channel accessibility, raised by some academics (e.g., Laitala & Kleep 2018, 12-13; Hur 2020, 9), was reported only by male participants in this project and not by any female interviewees. However, the evidence from the project showed that the reason for the lack of channel accessibility came from both the shop and the customers. The shops did not advertise for customers, and customers did not actively search for shops. Similarly, complaints about the store environment and facility were raised by only one informant and were less common than reported in previous literature (e.g., Steinbring & Rucker 2003, 36; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019, 11).

Social stigma appears to be less of a problem for young respondents than previous literature (e.g., Pipyrrou 2014, 543; Tarai & Shailaja 2020, 162) suggests, despite this study reporting that unfair pricing remains a barrier to purchasing SHC. Only participants from collectivist cultures in Asia, South America, or Africa encountered this discrimination. Other interviewees did not experience any social stigma in their communities in Europe. Thus, this barrier was renamed a "cultural" rather than a "social" stigma.

#### 4.4 Bridge the findings of general shoppers and Gen Y shoppers

This section summarized the findings of barriers to Gen Y shoppers and compared them with the literature in Chapter 2 for a final synthesis. Figure 5 presented an updated framework based on the new findings on Gen Y shoppers in this project.



**Figure 5. Actual barriers to Gen Y's purchasing behaviors towards used clothes**

(Notes: \* are the barriers that mentioned most by both past shoppers and non-shoppers)



The list of barriers to Gen Y shoppers indicated similar barriers to those of general shoppers. However, some distinctive differences were further elaborated.

Firstly, for Gen Y shoppers, the barriers of a ‘degraded sense of self’ (Roux & Korchia 2006, 33) and ‘low environmental awareness’ did not impact their decision to purchase second-hand clothing (SHC) as they did for general shoppers mentioned in some studies (Yan et al. 2015, 94; Silva et al. 2021, 728). Gen Y shoppers prioritized expressing their style and supporting the green movement through their purchases, regardless of whether the clothing was first-hand or second-hand.

Secondly, when mentioning concerns relating to SHC, Gen Y shoppers mostly worried about **unseen defects** in the clothing due to their limited time in physical shops or their picture reviews on online websites. Some Gen Y customers from developing countries still had concerns about **cleanliness and transferring diseases** and misfortune from previous owners, as reflected by O’Reilly et al. (1984, 59); Yan et al. (2015, 93), and other scholars.

Thirdly, some external barriers occurred with specific Gen Y respondents. Channel accessibility was only a problem for male customers, contradicting the literature on general shoppers (e.g., Connell 2009, 2; Silva et al. 2021, 727). Poor store environments and a lack of facilities were not as familiar as prior arguments suggested (e.g., Steinbring & Rucker 2003, 36; Hur 2020, 8-9). On the other hand, social stigma was a concern for individuals from developing countries with typical collectivist cultures, aligning with the theory studied by Xu et al. 2014 (676), Wang et al. (2022, 165), and others.

Finally, although Generation Y had fewer internal barriers, they remained the same external barriers as those that general shopper faced. More external obstacles indicate that Generation Y faced more challenges beyond their control while purchasing SHC. Furthermore, the shift in the most frequently cited obstacles compared to general shoppers supports this proposition. The surveyed Generation Y participants primarily encountered limited clothing availability, leading to a lack of patience and time to address concerns about unseen defects in SHC. These were the most common reasons for discontinuing shopping at used clothing stores.

From these similarities and disparities in the barriers between general and Gen Y shoppers, it can be concluded that they possess different behaviors towards second-hand clothes. Therefore, it is crucial to have more separate studies on the Gen Y segment like this one.

Furthermore, when compared to four recent studies of Generation Y on SHC purchases (Xu et al. 2014; Liang & Xu 2017; Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen 2019; Wang et al. 2022), all five barriers to hygiene concerns, poverty association, poor product condition, poor store environment, and social stigma remain. However, only a few informants mentioned these barriers. Instead, the surveyed individuals were most concerned about unseen defects in used clothes and the limited availability of clothes in their desired styles and sizes, which made them need more patience and time to search for second-hand sources. Even within Generation Y studies, this discrepancy indicates that this cohort is heterogeneous. The previous four studies by Xu et al. (2014), Liang & Xu (2017), Sorensen & Johnson Jorgensen (2019), and Wang et al. (2022) were conducted in the USA and China, while this study was in Finland. It suggests that Generation Y individuals from different countries may behave differently towards second-hand clothing.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This research addresses a significant gap in the literature and relevant managerial issues by being the first study to understand the barriers faced by Generation Y non-shoppers. This section presents empirical research findings concerning the theoretical framework and managerial implications. The theoretical contribution compares the empirical results with the theoretical framework of assumed barriers affecting non-purchasing behaviors among Generation Y and presents an updated version of the framework. The managerial implications present vital strategies for business models and product portfolios for SHC businesses to attract Gen Y customers. Finally, this section discusses the limitations of this study and provides suggestions for future research.

### 5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study aims to contribute to the literature on second-hand clothing consumption and generational cohorts. To begin with, regarding SHC consumption literature, this research sheds light on the complexity of understanding consumer behaviors in a particular commodity like used clothing. Although young customers of Generation Y shared some common barriers with general shoppers, they had different consideration factors. For example, they looked for needed style, size, quality, and convenience during shopping rather than contamination and social stigma when wearing SHC, like general shoppers had raised. This finding is interesting because it contrasts with other research highlighting that young customers mainly look for recreational fun while hunting for second-hand clothing (Wang et al. 2022, 165). It corroborates extant literature about cultural influences on young customers' attitudes and behaviors towards SHC (Xu et al. 2014, 676).

More precisely, participants from collectivist cultures (e.g., Somalian, Chinese, Indian, Colombian) in this project were more worried about social stigma, while others from individualist cultures (e.g., Finnish, Estonian, American) did not care. Moreover, the disparities between general and Gen Y shoppers support previous research findings that different generations hold different values and norms regarding the acceptability of used garments (Rulikova 2020, 189). These findings highlight the complex nature of SHC consumption and the need to investigate specific customer sub-segments in Generation Y instead of studying them as a whole.

Next, concerning generational cohort literature, this research found consistent facts about Generation Y, such as their high environmental awareness (Mason et al. 2022, 147)

and their willingness to pay a higher price for green products (Kim et al. 2021, 1-2). This exploratory research also demonstrated that the young generation is consistent in their attitudes and actions by practicing sustainable disposal behaviors or engaging with SHC consumption in various ways. This data contradicts the arguments of other scholars about the Gen Y attitude-behavior gap in consuming sustainable or green products (e.g., Muposhi et al. 2015, 226; Bernardes et al. 2018, 4). Furthermore, it provided one justification for the current non-purchasing behaviors of Generation Y, who exhibit other sustainable actions. These behaviors were due to external factors outside of their control. They belonged to the sellers' issues in providing limited clothing that did not have their desired style, size, or quality.

Finally, this study contributes to the theory that generational cohorts are not homogenous but rather divided into sub-clusters (Ladhari et al. 2019, 115-116; Kaur & Anand 2018, 393-394). In this case, the study divided the participants into four sub-groups with different consideration factors towards SHC purchases, which can be named as environmental, economical, conservative, and temporary shoppers (as shown in Table 11).

**Table 11. Different sub-segments of Gen Y shoppers toward second-hand clothing**

Sub-segments	Representatives	Description
Environmental shoppers	Samuel, Luke, David.	Willing to pay more to support environmental and sustainable products if they can get their desired styles, sizes, and quality with less effort and time.
Economical shoppers	Lee, Sofia.	Emphasize low prices and do not accept if SHC pricing is too close to new clothes in fast fashion or brand outlets.
Conservative shoppers	Anna, Yara, Phoenix.	Worried about social stigma when buying used clothes in physical stores and letting people know that they wear used clothes.
Temporary shoppers	Natalia, Quinn.	Do not think of SHC as their first option for daily wear and may consider them only for temporary needs like Halloween costumes or one-time usage.

Environmental shoppers are willing to pay more to support environmental and sustainable products like SHC if they can obtain their desired styles, sizes, and quality with less effort and time. Economical shoppers are primarily interested in low prices and do not accept SHC if their pricing is too close to those of new clothes in fast fashion or brand outlets. Conservative shoppers are concerned about the social stigma of buying used clothes in physical stores and letting people know that they wear used clothes. Temporary shoppers do not consider SHC as their first option and may want to know the previous

owners before purchasing SHC only for temporary needs like Halloween costumes or one-time usage.

## 5.2 Practical implications

This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of a burgeoning target demographic rather than generalize its findings. As such, Table 12 summarizes all sub-segments with their respective consideration factors and proposes suitable business strategies for SHC stores to attract these customers.

Firstly, environmental shoppers are customers who value the style, size, quality, and convenience of clothing. The appropriate SHC business model for this demographic is a boutique physical store combined with an online catalog. These stores should have a chic appearance and can sell their products at a high price. As such, they should be in the city center and have a well-organized layout with products categorized by size and style for easy browsing. To attract these busy customers, stores should be active on digital channels such as Facebook and Instagram and frequently update their latest collections. They should offer various categories, including business attire, sportswear, young and modern styles, and men's clothing. An example of this model is the Maanantaimarket in Turku.

Secondly, economic shoppers are price sensitive. For instance, in Finland, when considering second-hand clothing, they expect prices to be a few euros or at least under 10 euros. If second-hand clothing prices are much higher, they may opt to purchase sale items from fast fashion stores instead. Therefore, a suitable business model for this demographic is a second-hand store such as UFF. These stores should have a clean and tidy appearance with multiple fitting rooms and fixed rules for the quantity of clothing that can be tried at once (e.g., a maximum of 4 items). To compete with fast fashion stores, the managers of SHC businesses can organize promotional campaigns such as UFF's "Tasarahalla kaikki max" campaign, where they sell everything in the store at one price. The price starts at 8 euros for the first three days and decreases by one euro every three days until it reaches one euro on the last day of the campaign. This campaign effectively cleared UFF's stock by attracting many young shoppers in Turku from February 20th to March 4th, 2023.

Table 12. Recommendations of business strategies for second-hand clothing shops

Shopper Type	Consideration Factor	Store Strategies				
		Business Model	Product Portfolio	Display Section	Marketing	Examples of Stores
Environmental shoppers	The style, size, quality, and convenience	- B2C selling model including boutique physical s (product display and fitting room) combined with online catalogues (introducing new arrivals). - Location: at the city center	- Diversified categories in types and styles (dresses, jackets, business attire, sportswear, young & modern styles, men's clothes). - Can sell at high prices	-chic and cozy atmosphere -well-organized categorization by size, style with big tags	-active on digital channels. -always-on e-catalogue to customers	Maanantaimarket, Turku
Economic shoppers	Low prices	-B2C selling model including physical shops with well-organized categorization.	-Casual wear & popular items in that country -Sell at cheap price, that much lower than the first-hand clothes	-nice & tidy layout. -more fitting rooms - fixed rules of quantity to check fit each time (i.e., not more than 4 items per time)	Promotional campaigns. E.g., "everything at 8euros" for first 3 days, then reduce to "everything at 7 euros" for the next 3 days until "everything at 1 euro" in the last 3 days.	UFF second-hand shop
Conservative shoppers	Social stigma	- B2C or C2C with options for rental, subscription, auction, or swapping.	-expensive clothing and accessories for one-time usage. -designer clothes. -Special clothing style: Modest fashion of Muslim women	Online ecommerce platform with full customer review or ratings about the products and services	- online campaigns only - offer different rental package: one-time rental or one week rental. - offer different rental subscription package: fixed quantity of items per month, chosen designers' brands, etc.	1.B2C rental model & subscription model: Rent the runway: 2. C2C or P2P selling model: ThredUp, rental model: rentle.io, auction:catawiki.com; swapping: regain-app.com
Temporary shoppers	Temporary need	-B2C & C2C model with options for physical or online shops -consider this segment as supplementary to main targets	Unique costumes for carnivals or Halloween parties.	-Have one corner of unique costumes in their shop.	- festival campaign	-Offline: UFF -Online: ThredUp

Thirdly, conservative shoppers are concerned about social stigma and may not want others to know they purchase used clothing. The appropriate SHC business model for this demographic is an online model, either B2C or C2C, with options for rental, subscription, auction, or swapping. Marketing campaigns should be conducted online and offer a variety of packages from which the customers can select. The products offered should include expensive items that may only be necessary for one-time use, such as party dresses, gowns, gold accessories, designer clothing, or unique cultural attire, such as modest fashion for Muslim women.

Finally, temporary shoppers may not initially consider SHC as their first option and may only require SHC for temporary events such as carnivals. Stores should view this demographic as a supplementary segment in addition to their primary target audience. They can organize a section of unique costumes for events such as carnivals or Halloween and advertise them before the festival.

In summary, SHC businesses must understand the insights and concerns of their target audience to offer appropriate business models and products that meet their needs and lifestyles. In addition to product offerings, SHC marketing managers should engage with Generation Y shoppers through their preferred communication channels, such as social media, to increase awareness of their stores among this demographic.

### **5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research**

The study's credibility and applicability are two of its limitations. This project used theory-based triangulation and member checks regarding credibility. Future researchers can add additional triangulations involving data, methodology, and analysis. Future studies may compare data from the same non-shoppers over time, across different geographies (such as developing and developed countries), different cultures (such as collectivist and individualistic cultures), and different viewpoints (such as well-educated respondents versus less-educated respondents), to perform data triangulation. Researchers can simultaneously combine one-on-one interviews and focus groups, or one at a time, to perform methodology triangulation. The researcher can invite additional interviewers and observers to the interview or fieldwork and additional scholars to analyze or evaluate the results to perform analyst triangulation.

Regarding transferability to other contexts, future research should address different approaches. One approach could be to study more multi-sites that were not covered in this project, such as rural areas or developing countries. Another approach could be to

investigate the phenomena in the domains of “What May Be” and “What Could Be” that this project missed. Potential academics should observe the phenomenon over a more extended period and study applications that are now in their infancy, such as the sharing economy (e.g., swapping, subscription, or rental business models), to predict future trends in the SHC industry. Moreover, scholars can include unusual situations of SHC consumption and aggregate many informants to produce more inclusive conclusions.

Hopefully, this initial project can inspire further research to continue investigating Gen Y customers and the SHC industry. Consequently, it can help SHC businesses attract more young customers effectively and promote the circular economy to mitigate the environmental impacts of the current fashion industry.



## 6 SUMMARY

The global clothing industry significantly contributes to international trade, generates substantial revenue, and provides employment opportunities. However, it is also one of the most resource-intensive and polluting industries. The consequences of the industry's negative impact on the environment are severe. The concept of sustainable consumption has been developed to maximize resource usage and minimize waste in the clothing industry. Second-hand clothing consumption has gained popularity as a practical alternative to traditional solutions. Generation Y is the primary customer group fueling the expansion of the second-hand clothing market. Several researchers have examined the primary drivers and impediments for consumers to buy second-hand clothing. However, little research has focused on Generation Y shoppers purchasing second-hand clothing. This study seeks to close this knowledge gap by examining the challenges faced by non-shoppers in Generation Y, which is crucial to expanding the second-hand clothing market.

The literature on Generation Y describes this cohort as having many positive characteristics, such as being digitally native, highly educated, socially and environmentally conscious, open-minded, and socially connected. However, theories also suggest that they are highly materialistic and status-driven, leading to high product consumption and a preference for investing in clothing to express their identity. Scholars have noted an attitude-behavior gap among Generation Y customers towards sustainable products. A few studies on Generation Y have identified their three main motivations for buying second-hand clothing (SHC) as economic, recreational, and environmental. At the same time, their barriers are hygiene concerns, poverty associations, poor product conditions, a poor store environment, and the social stigma.

The initial theoretical framework was constructed from existing literature on barriers to SHC purchases by general shoppers, as it covered all barriers mentioned by a few studies on Generation Y shoppers. All reported barriers are classified into two categories: internal and external. The six internal barriers are poverty association, hygiene concerns, a degraded sense of self, a lack of time, low environmental awareness, and no demand. The five external barriers are unfair prices, poor product conditions, a poor store environment, a lack of channel accessibility, and social stigma. Among these barriers, poverty association, hygiene concerns, poor product conditions, and social stigma are the most frequently cited reasons.

This study investigated the obstacles to Generation Y's non-purchasing behaviors toward second-hand clothing. Empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews based on a preliminary theoretical framework using a qualitative research method. Ten Generation Y participants from diverse backgrounds and cultures were selected to discuss their barriers to purchasing second-hand clothing. Six participants had previously purchased second-hand clothing, while four had not. The interviews were recorded and transcribed with the assistance of the Otter.ai application. The data analysis used Nvivo software in conjunction with thematic analysis. The researcher considered themes from the operationalization table during the analysis and incorporated new findings from the data.

In general, the empirical research supported existing findings to some extent but also provided new insights into both Generation Y and second-hand clothing (SHC) purchasing literature. Results revealed that the interviewed Generation Y individuals had more barriers than those found in earlier studies on this cohort in the context of SHC. However, they had fewer internal barriers than general shoppers, and their most frequently cited obstacles differed from those found in prior studies on Generation Y and general shoppers. They were more concerned about the limited availability of clothing and its unseen defects than poverty associations, hygiene concerns, poor product conditions, or social stigma. Most of the interviewed customers demonstrated typical Generation Y traits, except for a frugal lifestyle, limited clothing spending budget, and neglect of peer review when buying clothing. The results also showed that Generation Y customers' attitudes and behaviors towards used clothing are consistent. They supported SHC with various sustainable actions or engaged in SHC consumption in other ways besides purchasing.

In the literature contribution, the research findings also shed some light on the literature on SHC consumption and generational cohorts. The results offer new insights into the different barriers Gen Y shoppers face and the specific social stigma concerns of participants from specific cultures. In addition, it provides an initial segmentation of Gen Y shoppers into four sub-groups: environmental shoppers, economical shoppers, conservative shoppers, and temporary shoppers. This fact implies that the behavior of Generation Y individuals towards second-hand clothing may vary across different countries.

In managerial approaches, the study proposes four different business strategies to offer products and services to four recognized sub-segments of Gen Y shoppers: boutique shops for environmental shoppers, promotional campaigns for economical shoppers,

different online models for conservative shoppers, and unique costumes for temporary shoppers.

While some limitations exist within this study, future research could address a more extensive and diverse sample of SHC past shoppers and non-shoppers in different locales in developing and underdeveloped countries to update the list of barriers, check the most influential factors, or validate the segmentation profiles. The author hopes this exploratory project will open fruitful avenues for researchers studying Generation Y consumers' attitudes toward second-hand clothing consumption.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Filter questions

Filter questions	Review & Decision
Q1. What's your birth year?	If the birth year is within 1980-2000, continue Q2
Q2. Have you ever bought any second-hand clothes to wear?	If the answer is "yes", continue to check Q3. If it is "no", categorize them in "non-shopper" and ask Q4- Q8
Q3. Do you still buy second-hand clothes now?	If the answer is "yes", say thank you and hope to cooperate with them in future research as this study focuses on non-shopper of second-hand clothes. If the answer is "no", categorize them in "past-shopper" and ask Q4-Q8
Q4. What is your education background (major study and level)?	Note their education background and ensure that there are not more than 2 participants with the same education major
Q5. Which city are you living now?	Note their city and country to ensure that there are residents from at least 3 different countries
Q6. Are you single or married?	Note their marital status to ensure that there are both single and married participants in this study
Q7. What is your cultural origin and nationality?	Note their cultural origin and nationality and ensure that there are not more than 2 participants from the cultural origin. It is acceptable to have immigrant Finnish and local Finnish, but the immigrant Finnish participants should have various cultural origin (i.e. originate from different countries)
Q8. What is your profession?	Note their profession and try to recruit both student, full-time professionals, and business owners.

## Appendix 2. Interview guide

Interview themes	Interview Questions
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks a lot for your willingness to support me in this project. My name is Loan, and I am a master's degree student at the University of Turku. I am doing this thesis to understand the barriers to generation Y's customers toward buying SHC. When presenting the data in the thesis, your personal data will not be mentioned as I commit to follow the requirement of the Finnish You can freely share your opinion because your answers will not be judged. The true answers will help my thesis identify the correct problems for SHC non-consumption issues.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Demographic information/personality exploration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me briefly about yourself? (Check their age, education, cultural origins, and family status if they don't mention them).</li> <li>• Are you studying or working now?</li> <li>• What is your profession or education level?</li> <li>• Is your job temporary, part-time, or full-time?</li> <li>• Do you need to consider much when purchasing clothes?</li> <li>• (Or) Do you set a fixed budget to buy clothes regularly?</li> <li>• What factors do you consider buying clothes in general?</li> <li>• What factors do you consider buying second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What do you usually do with your used clothes if you don't want to use them anymore?</li> </ul>
<b>3. General exploration of barriers:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why don't you buying second-hand clothes now?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Internal barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever bought any second-hand clothes? Can you tell me about that experience?</li> <li>• What are your personal barriers to buying second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What kind of feelings do you have about second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What kind of association do you have with second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What types of people usually buy second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What types of values do they seek from second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What are your concerns about buying second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• Are there any specific clothing items you will never buy from second-hand sources? Why?</li> </ul>
<b>5. External barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your social barriers to buying second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• What are your cultural barriers to buying second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• How will your friends react if they know you buy second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• How will your families react if they know you buy second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• How will your workmates react if they know you buy second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• How will your customers react if they know you buy second-hand clothes?</li> <li>• Do you have any other barriers that you haven't mentioned yet?</li> <li>• What do you think about second-hand stores in your areas?</li> <li>• What kind of store environments are they?</li> <li>• What types of assortments do they often sell?</li> <li>• What conditions of second-hand clothes in their stores?</li> </ul>
<b>6. Additional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you can recommend second-hand clothes businesses or the government, what should they do to encourage people like you to buy second-hand clothes?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3. Data management plan

### Exploring the barriers to gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes.

#### Research data

List of research data:

Research data type	Contains personal details/ information	I will gather/produce the data myself	Other notes
Interview (recorded video/voice last 30-45 minutes per participant, which are then transcribed into texts for analysis)	x	x	I will remove the participant's name in my analysis

#### Processing personal data in research

Does your data contain personal data?

- My data contains personal data

My interview data contains minimal personal identifiers, such as name, age, cultural origin, educational background, and purchasing history related to second-hand clothes. Such personal data collected are to understand possible factors that affect their purchasing behaviors toward second-hand clothes. I will prepare Data Protection Notice for the research participants to comply with the EU's GDPR and Finnish Data Protection Act.

Who is the data controller?

- Student

I am solely responsible for controlling data related to this research.

#### Permissions and rights related to the use of data

Who has collected the data you use in your research?

- I have collected the data

Primary data are collected and used by me (without sharing with any other third parties). Data will be removed from the personal data identifiers before publishing as part of the thesis report and will be made available to the public audience. The permission and rights related to the use of the interview data are approved from the research participants via the informed data consent and data protection notice.

If you use data that you have collected by yourself you may need separate permissions to use the data you collect or produce, both in research and in publishing the results. If you are archiving your data, remember to ask the research participants for the necessary permissions for archiving and further use of the data. Also, find out if the repository/archive you have selected requires written permissions from the participants.

Research data type	Acquired data via	Permission from research participants
Interview	Internet-assisted meeting (Zoom or other online tools)	By written email

If you use data that someone else has collected: do you have the necessary permissions to use the data in your research and to publish the results? Are there copyright or licencing issues involved in the use of the data? Note, for example, that you may need permission to use the images or graphs you have found in publications.

I don't use data that someone else has collected

#### Storing the data during the research process

Where will you store your data during the research process?

- In the university-provided Seafille Cloud Service

All data are stored in Seafille Cloud Service.

Further, for the purpose of data analysis, data are stored and converted to texts, using Otter's cloud-based software and Nvivo's software. These are programs authorized to be used in research and are operating in line with GDPR requirements. All research data including edited ones are auto-saved into this selected location.

If you don't use University's data storage services tell, where are you going to store your data and specify how you will ensure data security and file backups?

Besides using the university-provided Seafille Cloud Service, collected data are possibly stored in my personal Dell laptop. To ensure data security, my Dell laptop is constantly updated with the latest anti-virus program. The data stored in my laptop is backed-up in One-Drive cloud service.

#### Documenting the data and metadata

Can you describe what has happened to your research data during the research process? Data documentation is essential when you try to track any changes made to the data.

- To document the data, I will use A separate document where I will record the main points of the data, such as changes made, phases of analysis, and significance of variables

I will adopt the research process to document the data in a way that allows me to track any changes made

**If you don't use any of the above mentioned, describe, how you document your research process?**

Question not answered.

**How will you keep your data in order and intact, as well as prevent any accidental changes to it?**

- Version control: I will plan before starting the research how I will name the different data versions and I will adhere to the plan consistently
- I will keep the original data files separate from the data I am using in the research process, so that I can always revert back to the original, if need be

**Metadata is a description of you research data. Based on metadata someone unfamiliar with your data will understand what it consists of. Metadata should include, among others, the file name, location, file size, and information about the producer of the data. Will you require metadata?**

- I will save my data into an archive or a repository that will take care of the metadata for me.

## Data after completing the research

**What happens to your research data, when the research is completed?**

I will store all data for five years and I will destroy all data upon the expiry date.

**If you will store the data, please identify where and for how long?**

All data are stored in the university's Seafire Cloud Service and I am responsible for destroying data as it is no longer relevant to my research project.

## Appendix 4. Informed consent

1 (2)



**Concerns:** Consent for the Collection, Storage, and Use of Data

**Research Topic:** Exploring the barriers to gen Y's non-shopping behaviors toward second-hand clothes.

**Responsible researcher:** Cam Loan Tran

Turku School of Economics, University of Turku, Finland

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you for your interest in the details pertaining to this research and the subsequent interviews that you are participating in as part of the research.

**Collection and Use of Data:** The data you are providing serves a number of purposes, which include:

- (1) The researcher will use data from the interviews for further processing/ analysis to gain an understanding of what financing challenges and/or opportunities social enterprises serving the vulnerable communities (aka. the base of the pyramid) would face and how these organizations can integrate and exploit different sources of funding to survive and sustain their business.
- (2) The insights gained from the analysis are primarily used for the master's thesis and may be used for future publications in scientific journals, as applicable. Step one in the processing of data is the anonymization of all data. After this step is completed, no individual information can be traced back directly to any individual. The main research interests relate to how these social enterprises deal with financing matters.

**Storage of Data:**

- (1) Storage during data collection: during the collection of data, comprising several interviews, data is stored by the researcher. Data is stored securely in the university-provided Seafile Cloud Service and in the university's network drive and transcribed into texts using authorized research software. Specific data retrieval for the collected data is only directly accessible by the researcher.



- (2) Storage after data collection: upon collection and during the analysis stage, data is extracted in anonymized form and stored in various formats to suit the analysis. All formats of data are stored securely in university-provided locations, and only the researcher has access to the data storage.
- (3) Duration of data storage: the data collected is stored maximum 10 years upon collection to serve the analysis and reporting of the master's thesis as well as possible subsequent research on the respective topic. Data will be securely destroyed after this date.

**Consent acknowledgment:**

By receiving this informed consent and participating in the interviews, you authorize the collection, and processing of personal data in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation and the Finnish Data Protection Act (1050/2018). You can revoke your consent with effect for the future.

**Withdrawal at a later stage:**

Each participant can demand the exclusion of their own data for further use beyond the purpose(s) of the thesis in which they are participating. This is possible regardless of whether you have granted permission to use your data at the onset of data collection. If you choose to withdraw from your data to be used for or after the thesis, please send an email with this request to [loan.c.tran@utu.fi](mailto:loan.c.tran@utu.fi) by the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2023 at the latest. After that date, data will be anonymized, and such a request cannot be fulfilled anymore as it is unable to identify your individual responses.

The collection, storage, and use of data is in line with the recommendation of the ethics at the University of Turku, Finland.

Privacy Notice <https://www.utu.fi/en/privacy/notice>

Data Security description of University of Turku

<https://www.utu.fi/en/privacy/data-security-description>

If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact [loan.c.tran@utu.fi](mailto:loan.c.tran@utu.fi).

## Appendix 5. List of generated codes in data analysis

Name	Files	References
Alternative consumption ways_renting	1	1
Barrier_not have time to check, try, hunt	5	10
barrier_store environment	5	6
barrier_avoided items of SHC	4	4
barrier_cleanliness concern	1	1
barrier_defect concern	3	3
barrier_family impact on my non_purchase	1	1
barrier_Few changing rooms	1	1
barrier_lack my size	1	1
barrier_limited channel access	3	3
barrier_limited men's clothes	3	5
barrier_no demand	4	4
barrier_no store awareness	2	2
barrier_non active shopper and not aware all SHC shops in the city	1	1
barrier_not align with my size and fashion sense	1	2
barrier_not enough patience or active	3	3
barrier_not have my size	4	7
barrier_not having my style	5	11
barrier_not having SHC option in mind	3	3
Barrier_unfair prices	7	18
Barrier_unknown source	1	4
budget for clothes purchasing_unstable	1	1
Cultural impact on SHC purchase	1	2
family influences on ecological mindset	3	4
Favorite shops	2	2
Green trend	3	3
guilty feelings of not buying SHC, but actually not buy	1	1
high ecological awareness or anticonsumerism	5	7
I don't buy SHC but I use SHC from my friends. family member	3	4
I don't use SHC but I can shop SHC for my boyfriend	1	1
male shopper's special durable ways of using their clothes	2	3
new business opportunity	7	8
new clothes in Northern Europe is quite expensive	2	2
No SHC culture in my home country	2	3
past experience_can't remember the store name	1	1
past experience_channel access	3	3
past experience_need	2	3
past experience_positive	6	10
people who buy SHC	9	12
people with high eco awarenss seems to empathic wt high price of SHC (es	2	3
Perception about SHC_negative	3	5
Perception about SHC_positive	1	1
reason to buy clothes_brand	1	1
reason to buy clothes_combination	3	3
reason to buy clothes_quality	5	6
reason to buy clothes_style	3	3
reasons to buy clothes_ its high review	1	1
reasons to buy clothes_its material composition	1	1
reasons to buy clothes_price	5	5
Recommendations to SHC business	9	13
sell a lot of used clothes but not buying	1	1
SHC conditions	4	5
SHC generational inheritance in my home country	2	3
SHC stores_positive points	5	6
shopping channel_mixed	4	5
shopping channel_offline	3	3
shopping channel_online	1	1
shopping frequency	3	5
shopping style_buy less. minimize, cautious on spending	4	7
shopping style_stay away from fast fashion (high price_low quality)	1	1
Social stigma	1	1
Social stigma_no concern	7	7
Social_different reactions from different people	3	4
unwanted clothes_donate	5	6
unwanted clothes_convert to another use	2	4
unwanted clothes_give to friends. family members	4	4
unwanted clothes_sell to SHC business or other customers	2	2
unwanted clothes_take to recycling unit	2	2
unwanted clothes_throw away	4	4
use a lot of other second-hand things, not clothes	3	4

## Appendix 6. List of themes and sub-themes in data analysis

Name	Files	References
A PAST SHOPPERS	6	182
1. PROFILE	6	24
Ecological awareness or actions	5	10
Sustainable disposal behaviors	5	12
2. SHOPPING BEHAVIOR TOWARD SECOND-HAND	6	59
Unfixed budget	6	6
Shopping channel	6	6
Shopping style	4	7
Purchasing factors	6	10
Past experience	6	22
Positive points about SHC	6	30
Second hand consumption	3	7
No concern about social stigma	4	4
Perception about people who buy SHC	5	8
3. BARRIERS	6	62
Internal	6	17
External	6	45
B. NON-SHOPPERS	4	102
1. PROFILE	4	17
Ecological awareness or actions	3	5
Sustainable disposal behaviors	4	10
2. SHOPPING BEHAVIOR TOWARD SECOND-HAND	4	31
Unfixed budget/frequency	4	4
Shopping channel	4	4
Shopping style	4	4
Positive points about SHC	4	12
Purchasing factors	4	10
Second hand consumption	3	6
3. BARRIERS	4	45
Internal	4	21
External	4	24