



## Effect of mindfulness on thrift consumer behaviour

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### Abstract

The study explores the role of mindfulness on consumer thrift shopping behavior in an experimental setting to understand the purchase intention of thrift shopping consumers. The study delineates key factors that contribute to mindful thrifting, key mediators and key ways in which mindful thrifting influence consumer behavior. In addition, we identify conditions in which these factors can trump in enriching consumer mindset, assist retailers in mediating thrift phenomenon towards sustainability and regulators in fostering a climate change behavior among citizens.

**Keywords:** Preference and Choice, Thrifting, Frugality, Purchase Intention, Sustainability

### 1. Introduction

With economic adversity on the rise, increased unemployment, reduced consumer spending and lower disposable income; consumers are moving towards thrift shopping to save money (Gregson and Crewe, 2003; ThredUP, 2020). Sharing economy, environmental concern and technology has made thrift shopping more accessible, trustworthy and cool by erasing the stigma attached to it (Kapner, 2019). Thrift in marketing is deliberated from an economic standpoint, with focus on budgets, transaction costs, money management, careful spending and saving (Lastovicka et al., 1999). Also, marketing literature explored deal-prone consumer and frugal lifestyles in thrift concept (Bardhi, 2003). Thrift is defined as, “short-term sacrifices in current consumption for reaching long-term substantial goals in the future” (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005).

### 2. Literature Review

The asset-light lifestyle or shared economy benefit environmental sustainability through optimized resource allocation, easy access to resources, decreased emission and energy saving (Wu and Zhi, 2016). Thrift shopping is an everyday shopping activity carried out of necessity (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005) and achieving thriftiness is a key consumer goal (Miller, 1998). Despite the growing awareness of online thrifting among consumers, academic literature focusing on 1. Whether consumers moving towards thrifting has enabled sharing of resources in the sharing economy 2. Drivers, heuristics and biases that affect consumption of thrift products 3. Factors influencing consumer decisions on thrift consumption is not widely deliberated (Eckhardt et al., 2019; Park et al., 2020). Our paper addresses this research gap by developing a framework that captures the essence of mindfulness in thrifting by identifying key antecedents and consequences. Also, factors contributing to mindful thrifting and how these factors impact consumer decision whether to be a thrift donor or thrift consumer are outlined.

Mindfulness is central to human experience and have widespread effect on human functioning and behavior (Brown et al., 2007). Key features that distinguish mindfulness from other consciousness theories are clarity and flexibility of awareness, empirical stance toward reality that encourages deferring judgment

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until carefully examining facts and present-oriented consciousness. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model for mindful thrifting. Building on the existing literature on key antecedents and consequences of thrifting, our framework is a three -stage sequential mindful process. The framework delineates key factors that contribute to mindful thrifting as intention based mindful thrift drivers, key mediators that enable mindful thrifting as attention based mindful thrift enablers and key ways in which mindful thrifting influence consumer behavior as attitude based mindful thrift outcome.

The first stage intention based mindful thrift drivers are further categorized into three factors such as consumer, retailer and regulator related factors. First, consumer related factors comprise self-orientation (Park et al., 2020) and frugality (Lastovicka et al., 1999). Second, thrift shopping takes place in a formal retail setting. Product placement, display of refurbished product certification, item categorization and pricing strategies impact customer experience and act as intention based mindful thrift drivers (Bardhi, 2003). Third, illegal recycling of e-waste pose threat to human and cause chronic damage (Needhidasan et al., 2014). As, thrift store are mostly unorganized, regulating bodies and associations play a vital role in providing directives to ensure human and environmental safety (Bhutta et al., 2011). Hence, this model encompasses the aspect of regulation in the framework.

The second stage of mindful thrifting consists of attention based mindful thrift enablers such as situational motivations, social responsibility, policies and incentives. Situational motivation involves engaging in a specific activity (Cadwallader et al., 2010). Consumers may be willing to purchase from thrift store when involved in recycling activities and find meaning through purchase of recycle merchandise (Horne and Maddrell, 2003). Consumers concern towards environment, social consciousness and responsible citizenship contribute to social responsibility. Social responsibility emphasize on group or societal benefits over personal interest (Hofstede, 1980). Economic incentives and policies can motivate consumers and firms shift towards sustainable thrift practices (Schwartz et al., 2019).

The third stage of mindful thrifting consists of attitude based mindful thrift outcome. Attitude based mindful thrift result in adoption of thrift practices, experiential and societal benefits during consumer decision making processes. Thrift practices comprise pre-planning and pre-shopping, minimizing first hand shopping, bargain hunting, recycling, restricted spending of resources (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005). Commonly, consumers believe thrift stores are unique, and have goods that are unavailable in regular retailers and believe they can bargain for money (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005).

### **3. Research Methodology**

An online survey of Indian consumers to understand mindful thrifting will be conducted. Also, respondents will be asked to write 500-750 words about what they think to be a mindful thrift consumer. What is their opinion and views on mindful thrift and sustainable benefits. To analyze the responses, text mining methods will be used to evaluate the 500–750 words that described mindful thrift consumption. Using this analysis, consumer clusters will be identified based on similar pattern of paragraph responses and topic will be extracted based on response. By analyzing the extracted topics based on segmentation structure of mindful thrift views, further categorisation will be done using demographic and behavioral parameters. Natural language processing tools for cluster analysis (Zhai and Massung, 2016) and latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) for topic extraction will be used.

### **4. Conclusion**

Drawing from second hand goods literature, this article provides a comprehensive framework that delineates key drivers that influence mindful thrifting and the ways in which mindful thrifting influence consumer decision making. In this paper, we view thrift shopping as a function of mindfulness and identify a set of key factors that contribute to formation of intention, attention and attitude in thrifting phenomenon. We identify conditions in which these factors can trump in enriching consumer mindset, retailers in mediating thrift phenomenon towards sustainability and regulators in fostering a climate change behavior among citizens.

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