

# **Sustainable Communication & Green Marketing in Circular Fashion: How Social Media Stimulates Thrift Shopping Practice Across Generations in Indonesia**

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## **Abstract**

Indonesia is the second-largest contributor to global fashion waste, and this fashion waste crisis is growing. Yet, despite the dire state of this environmental burden, awareness and behavioral responses within Indonesian society are limited. This disparity in environmental urgency versus public engagement creates a greater need for an effective sustainability communication strategy, in particular, within the growing circular fashion movement. The extension of the product life-span is perhaps one of the most promising solutions to reduce fashion waste, and in the Indonesian context, thrift shops have emerged as a very key community touch-point that could potentially shape sustainable consumption norms. However, preliminary observations show a big communication gap: many thrift shop owners, marketers, and practitioners are not fully aware of the sustainability value captured by their business model and, therefore, seldom include sustainability messages in their digital marketing strategies. In fact, they have actively used various social media platforms to publish their products, but such communication still leans on transactional, trend-driven communication without explicit sustainability narratives that can elevate their environmental importance.

This paper explores how social media can serve not only as digital marketing tools but also as vehicles of green marketing communication that foster thrift shopping for sustainable lifestyle practice. The research is cross-generational in focus, with social media playing an increasingly pervasive role across age groups in Indonesia. Whereas Generation Z are often described as digitally native and ecologically conscious, older Generation Y, and even Generation X are now deeply implicated within the social media ecosystem. They are continuously exposed to trends and digital consumption practices, often feeling incentivized or pressured to keep pace with algorithmically driven content cycles and online social norms. This makes cross-generational analysis both relevant and necessary: sustainability communication cannot rely solely on young audiences if the nation seeks broader behavioral change. Understanding of how each generation interprets social media messaging about thrift shopping and what motivates them to engage, creates opportunities for more inclusive and resonant sustainability strategies.

To explore these dynamics, this study investigates how Sustainable Communication Theory and Green Marketing Communication are combined to position thrift shops as communicative agents within the circular fashion economy. Sustainability Communication Theory is used to assess how consumers perceive messages related to environmental responsibility, long-term thinking, and collective behavioral change. Green Marketing Communication assesses how thrift businesses communicate ecological value propositions through factors such as information quality, influencer credibility, message framing, and call-to-action strategies on social media. Blending both theoretical perspectives, this study explores not only how social media content is created but also how it convinces, educates, and changes consumer attitudes toward thrift shopping and living sustainably.

This research methodologically employs a large-scale quantitative method distributed across five major cities of Indonesia, namely Bandung, Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Semarang, which are among the largest con-

tributors to fashion waste nationally. In total, 700 respondents from three generations took part in the survey. The questionnaire operationalized dimensions from the sustainable communication and green marketing communication literature, such as information clarity, perceived authenticity, visual storytelling, influencer roles, platform credibility, and perceived alignment between thrift practices and environmental benefits. Descriptive statistics and regression modeling have been performed in order to show generational differences and the key predictors of thrift shopping engagement on social media.

The contributions of this study are two-fold. First, the research improves academic understanding of how sustainability communication works within the circular fashion ecosystem, particularly in developing countries where sustainability narratives are still emerging. Through the analysis of cross-generational responses to sustainability-oriented digital content, this paper illuminates how social media stimulates engagement with environmentally responsible consumption practices. The study also offers practical insights into how thrift shop businesses could reposition their marketing strategies by embedding sustainability as a core communication message rather than just a peripheral or implicit value. Given that thrift shops already contribute to the circular economy through product life extension, amplifying their sustainability communication might greatly enhance public awareness and participation in reducing fashion waste in Indonesia.

The overall implication of this research is that social media are not only permeating the daily life of all generations but also hold the potential to be a transformative tool for digital commerce and sustainable lifestyle promotion. If thrift businesses strategically use social media platforms for green marketing, these businesses could contribute to better, more environmentally informed behaviors across different strata of Indonesian society. This way, thrift shops can be transformed from casual and trend-driven commercial actors to influential communicators at the forefront of Indonesia's sustainability movement.

**Keywords:** Green Marketing, Sustainability Communication, Thrift Shop, Green Economy, Circular Economy.

## 1. Introduction

The fashion business significantly strains the environment by producing lots of textile waste, greenhouse gases, and water pollution during production and use (Das et al., 2026; R. Gupta et al., 2022; Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020). Indonesia faces similar problems, as increasing urbanization, consumer buying power, and changing fashion habits have led to more textile and garment waste. Official stats and reports on the circular economy show that Indonesia created about 2.3 million tons of textile waste in 2021, but only a small part got reused or recycled (ACEBA, 2023; Bui et al., 2025). Predictions suggest that textile waste amounts will keep growing without major circular economy actions, making environmental and waste-management problems in cities even worse (Bui et al., 2025; LCID, 2021)

Even though the quantity of waste and environmental crisis is clear, most Indonesians don't know much or care about sustainable fashion (Aprianingsih et al., 2023; Ratriyana, 2023). Surveys reveal that knowing about clothing sustainability is common among certain groups like young activists, college students, and specialized communities (Connell & Kozar, 2012; Wallis & Loy, 2021). However, this knowledge does not affect most consumers' shopping decisions (Charista & Paramita, 2023). Studies in Indonesia say that when buying clothes, people often prioritize price, style, and trends over whether the product is sustainable (Charista & Paramita, 2023; Hinduan et al., 2020; Mcneill & Moore, 2015). This difference between what the environment needs and what the public cares about means people are starting

Strategic communication is key to changing what the public cares about. Communication regarding the sustainability of products is important for turning large-scale environmental issues into consumer decisions (Braga et al., 2024). Studies comparing the Global North and South show that sustainability communication in fashion is more advanced and organized in richer countries. In many Southern countries, environmental messages are not as consistent (Bonelli et al., 2024; Braga et al., 2024). This difference is due to a few things: less environmental knowledge among the public in some Southern markets, not much government pressure for companies to share

information, and not enough spending on teaching consumers about the long-term effects of products (Bonelli et al., 2024).

Within the fashion sector specifically, authors have documented a persistent emphasis on trend, novelty, and price over ecological claims, which undermines the uptake of green marketing strategies (Heidenstrøm, 2024). Heidenstrøm's (2024) critical analysis of fashion retailers demonstrates that sustainability claims are frequently underdeveloped or framed in ways that prioritize brand image rather than substantive environmental outcomes. Managerial construal and cognitive distance often determine whether sustainability becomes a strategic communication priority; in many firms in emerging markets, sustainability remains a peripheral consideration in marketing planning (David & Boivin, 2025; Oh et al., 2022). Taken together, these studies indicate that the fashion industry's communication practices often fail to mainstream sustainability messages into consumer-facing promotions—contributing to low public awareness and weak demand for circular consumption practices.

At the same time, the rise of digital platforms provides an opportunity to reframe consumption narratives. Social media is already an established vector for fashion discovery and purchase across generations in Indonesia: research on Indonesian cohorts finds strong associations between social-media exposure and online purchase behavior, particularly among younger cohorts, but with rapidly growing adoption among older cohorts as well (Julia et al., 2024; Putra, 2024). This cross-generational diffusion matters: while Generation Z often leads in adopting sustainability framings, evidence shows that Millennials and members of Generation X are increasingly exposed to and shaped by algorithmic trends, influencer endorsements, and platform affordances that mediate consumption practices (Meiliya & Kusuma, 2025; Putra, 2024). In short, social media is not only a youth phenomenon but a cross-generational arena where sustainability narratives can be amplified—if those narratives are intentionally communicated.

One promising, practice-oriented pathway within the circular fashion movement is the expansion of second-hand markets — thrift shops and digital resale platforms — which extend garment lifespans and reduce pressure for new production (Das et al., 2026; Shamsuzzaman et al., 2025). Empirical work in Indonesia demonstrates that thrift consumption has grown markedly over the past five years, especially among urban youth, driven by social-media trends, influencer culture, and the desire for unique styles at lower cost (Febriyati et al., 2025). Studies using stimulus–organism–response models highlight that online word-of-mouth and content engagement strongly influence mindful second-hand purchase intentions, positioning social media as a principal channel for thrift market expansion (Ilmalhaq et al., 2024; Julia et al., 2024).

Regardless of this growth, many thrift sellers and digital resellers don't intentionally use green marketing that emphasizes the environmental advantages of reuse and long product life (Meiliya & Kusuma, 2025). Instead, their marketing often deals with transactions—centering on price, selection, and appearance—avoiding the promotion of ecological benefits. This overlooks a chance to better connect with consumers; because thrift shops naturally help the circular economy, making sustainability a clear part of their message could make consumers more aware of thrifting as environmentally responsible, raise product credibility, and set themselves apart from competitors (Heidenstrøm, 2024; Shamsuzzaman et al., 2025).

Prior research supports the use of the four communication aspects in this study within social media and green marketing. The amount of time people are shown green messages on social media has been used to measure the degree to which people develop greener attitudes and buying habits (Peters et al., 2013). Studies have revealed that interaction (likes, comments, shares, direct messages) can really get people involved and strengthen support for sustainability claims, changing exposure into a two-way street of influence (Nekmahmud et al., 2021; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Research into influencer support shows that if an influencer seems real and believable, consumers are more apt to trust and be swayed by pro-environment messages (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Studies focused on sustainability have found that influencer endorsements can sway people to buy green products (Ramdan et al., 2023; Suryaputra et al., 2024). Last, when eco-content offers good information—being informative, clear, and helpful—people tend to think about it more and act more sustainably

in the long run (Filiari et al., 2021; Rizomyliotis, 2024; Wu & Long, 2024). Taking these lessons from past studies, we chose exposure, interaction, influencer, and information value as the key social-media aspects to study in Indonesia, related to thrift-shopping habits and green marketing communication.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Sustainability Communication as the Baseline Perspective*

Sustainability communication has emerged as a critical theoretical and practical framework for addressing complex environmental and social challenges by shaping how sustainability issues are framed, understood, and acted upon within society. Rather than functioning merely as informational dissemination, sustainability communication emphasizes meaning-making processes, dialogic engagement, and the integration of sustainability values into everyday practices and market exchanges (Pezzullo & Cox, 2006; Pompper, 2019). Within this perspective, communication is not treated as a supplementary activity but as a constitutive force that enables sustainability transitions by influencing public awareness, social norms, and behavioral orientations.

(Pompper, 2019), in *Climate and Sustainability Communication: Global Perspectives*, argues that sustainability challenges cannot be addressed solely through technological or policy interventions without a parallel transformation in communication practices. Sustainability communication must move beyond one-way promotional messaging and instead function as a strategic and culturally sensitive process that embeds sustainability meanings within social and economic systems. This view is particularly relevant for Global South contexts, where sustainability issues often intersect with development priorities, economic vulnerabilities, and contested market structures. In such settings, sustainability communication plays a pivotal role in legitimizing new practices and reframing them as socially valuable rather than economically threatening.

Within the fashion industry, sustainability communication has been identified as a key mechanism for translating abstract environmental concerns—such as textile waste, overconsumption, and resource depletion—into concrete consumer understanding and market behavior (Henninger et al., 2016; Ritch & Schröder, 2012). However, empirical studies consistently show that fashion businesses tend to underutilize sustainability communication, often prioritizing aesthetic appeal, branding, and price competitiveness over environmental value propositions (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022a; Mukendi et al., 2020). This communication gap contributes to limited public awareness of fashion’s environmental impacts and weakens consumers’ ability to associate everyday fashion choices with broader sustainability outcomes.

In the Indonesian context, this challenge is particularly pronounced. Sustainability discourse in fashion remains fragmented and largely confined to niche audiences, such as academic circles, sustainability advocates, or environmentally conscious youth communities. Mainstream fashion communication—especially within small and medium enterprises—rarely foregrounds sustainability as a core value (Charista & Paramita, 2023). Thrift shop businesses exemplify this pattern. Despite their inherent alignment with circular economy principles through extending garment lifespans and reducing textile waste, thrift shops in Indonesia predominantly communicate value through brand labels, price attractiveness, and trend appeal, rather than explicitly articulating their sustainability contribution.

From a sustainability communication perspective, this omission represents a missed strategic opportunity. Sustainability communication enables businesses to reframe their role in society—not merely as market actors, but as contributors to social and environmental well-being (Pezzullo & Cox, 2006; Pompper, 2019). For thrift shops, communicating sustainability value through digital channels—particularly social media, which serves as their primary marketing platform—can reposition second-hand fashion as a legitimate and desirable component of a sustainable lifestyle, rather than a marginal or informal market practice. Prior studies indicate that sustainability-oriented communication increases perceived legitimacy, trust, and moral alignment between businesses and consumers, especially in environmentally sensitive consumption domains (Braga et al., 2024; Du et al., 2010).

This repositioning is also politically and economically significant in Indonesia. Thrift shops have frequently been framed by policymakers and industry stakeholders as a threat to local fashion producers, accused of undermining domestic manufacturing and weakening national creative industries (Amelia & Purnawarman, 2025). Such narratives position thrift businesses as economically problematic rather than environmentally beneficial. Sustainability communication provides an alternative framing by highlighting thrift shops' role in waste reduction, circular consumption, and sustainable urban lifestyles—dimensions that align with national sustainability agendas and global green-economy objectives (Bui et al., 2025; Shamsuzzaman et al., 2025). By articulating these values, thrift shops can strengthen their bargaining position not only with consumers but also within broader policy and regulatory debates.

Accordingly, this research applies sustainability communication as a foundational framing framework that guides the overall perspective and trajectory of analysis. Sustainability communication is used to conceptualize how meanings about sustainability are constructed and circulated through digital platforms, shaping consumer interpretations of thrift shopping practices. Rather than treating sustainability as an auxiliary marketing claim, this framework positions communication as the primary mechanism through which thrift shops' environmental value can be recognized, legitimized, and normalized across generations. Building upon this baseline, the subsequent section introduces green marketing communication as a complementary, more market-oriented framework to examine how sustainability messages are strategically embedded within social-media marketing practices.

## *2.2 Green Marketing Communication in the Digital and Social Media Era*

Early discussions on ecological marketing and responsible consumption led to the creation of green marketing. At first, it was about product qualities, eco-labels, and green production (Peattie, 2004). The idea has grown from just focusing on products to include communication, branding, and getting consumers involved with environmental values. Present-day green marketing prioritizes the way environmental ethics are conveyed, perceived, and trusted by consumers, instead of only on the offerings presented as ecologically sound (Papadas et al., 2017).

Current research sees green marketing communication as using marketing messages and ways of interacting to show environmental responsibility, encourage sustainable consumption, and change people's intentions to act in an environmentally friendly way (Nekmahmud et al., 2021). This change shows that just making sustainability claims isn't enough. Consumer trust, honesty, and trustworthy messages are key in making green purchase choices. Because of this, green marketing has connected more with communication theory, making digital platforms, like social media, places where green ideas are discussed.

In the fashion business, green marketing communication is very important for dealing with problems like too much production, short product lives, and textile waste. Some experts say that fashion sustainability can't be reached only by using new materials or improving supply chains. Changes in consumer behavior are also needed, which can be done with good marketing communication (Henninger et al., 2016; Mukendi et al., 2020). Green marketing lets fashion companies change their value promises by associating style and identity with environmental responsibility. But, research shows that many fashion businesses find it hard to use green marketing. This is often because they worry about being accused of greenwashing, consumers don't know enough, or they aren't sure if their messages will work (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022b; Khorsand et al., 2023).

The digitalization of marketing has fundamentally transformed how green marketing communication is executed. Social media platforms provide interactive, visual, and algorithm-driven environments that allow sustainability messages to be repeatedly exposed, socially endorsed, and dialogically reinforced. Consequently, recent green marketing research increasingly focuses on social-media-based dimensions, including exposure, interaction, influencer endorsement, and information quality, as key explanatory variables influencing green attitudes and behaviors (Kim & Ko, 2012; Nekmahmud et al., 2021).

In green marketing communication, exposure is how often consumers see environmental messages on digital

platforms. Studies in different areas, like cosmetics, food, tourism, and consumer goods, show that seeing green messages often raises environmental awareness and makes people want to buy green products (Peters et al., 2013; Wu & Long, 2024). On social media, algorithms make this stronger by constantly showing content about sustainability in users' daily online routines, making green consumption easier to think about.

Interaction occurs when consumers engage meaningfully with green marketing content by liking, commenting, sharing, and joining discussions. Interaction has been linked to stronger beliefs and acceptance of sustainability values. It turns green marketing from a one-way sales pitch into a way to build meaning together (Nekmahmud et al., 2021; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). In sustainability, interaction also acts as social proof, supporting rules about responsible consumption.

Influencer endorsement represents a powerful strategy in green marketing communication. Influencers are seen as leaders who turn big sustainability ideas into relatable consumption stories. Studies show that if an influencer is seen as trustworthy, honest, and shares similar values, their green marketing messages work better, especially for younger consumers (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Recent green marketing research says that sustainability messages from influencers positively affect trust, brand attitude, and wanting to buy green products in different areas (Ramdan et al., 2023; Suryaputra et al., 2024).

Information value, meaning the degree of clarity, practical, and believable environmental information is, has been shown to be important for effective green marketing communication. Consumers are more likely to like green messages if they think the information is real, clear, and related to actual environmental results (Filiari et al., 2021; Wu & Long, 2024). In online spaces, high information value lowers doubt and the feeling of greenwashing, which makes consumers more confident in sustainability claims.

Despite the fact that these concepts have been studied across numerous fields, limited investigation exists connecting green marketing communication to thrift shops and second-hand fashion. Current fashion sustainability studies mostly look at big brands, eco-fashion labels, or company sustainability campaigns. Thrift shops are often seen through the views of consumer culture, affordability, or identity, not strategic green marketing (Febriyati et al., 2025; Mukendi et al., 2020). This is a big missing piece, especially since thrift shops naturally follow circular economy ideas by making products last longer and reducing textile waste.

By connecting green marketing communication with things like how often people see messages on social media, how they interact with them, influencer presence, and information value, this study shows that thrift shops are important but not fully explored players in sustainable fashion markets. Using sustainability communication as the overall idea, green marketing communication is used in this study as the practical way to turn sustainability values into convincing digital messages that shape how consumers see and practice thrift shopping across different generations.

### *2.3 Thrift Consumption, Generational Context, and Social Media Diffusion*

Thrift consumption is regarded as a valuable strategy to foster sustainable fashion by extending the life of products and cutting down on textile waste, which fits with the idea of a circular economy (Bui et al., 2025; Shamsuzzaman et al., 2025). Unlike eco-fashion brands that need novel components to produce goods, thrift shops run by reusing items. Therefore their eco-friendly characteristic is a core aspect of their operation, rather than something they need to add through new materials. Lately, thrift consumption in Indonesia isn't just about buying what's needed; it has turned into a lifestyle, especially in cities (Kurniaty et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Studies show that younger buyers, like Generation Z, are more willing to buy second-hand fashion and consider different ways of consuming. They often link thrift shopping to being unique, saving money, and acting ethically (Febriyati et al., 2025). Millennials tend to be more practical, balancing what's cheap with what's sustainable. Older groups, like Generation X, are more likely to thrift if the items are good quality and worth the price (Putra, 2024).

These variations suggest that people of different generations don't all see thrift consumption the same way, and what sustainability means to them can depend on their generation.

The quick growth of thrift culture in Indonesia is closely linked to the widespread use of social media. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have allowed thrift businesses, which used to be small and local, to reach more people by using visuals, working with influencers, and offering ways to buy things online (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kurniaty et al., 2024). Social media makes it easier for shoppers to learn about products, see what others think, and talk to sellers, which makes them more likely to buy second-hand items.

Beyond helping with sales, social media is also a place where people learn about sustainability. Seeing thrift-related content can make second-hand consumption seem normal and bring sustainability into everyday discussions about fashion, even if it's not directly about the environment (Wu & Long, 2024). Since many generations in Indonesia use social media, these platforms are key in shaping how people see and adopt thrift shopping (Putra, 2024).

Even though thrift shops are becoming more visible, there isn't much research on how different generations view thrift practices through social media, especially from a sustainability and green marketing point of view. Most studies focus on why people thrift or how good digital marketing is, but they don't look at how sustainability communication, green marketing, and generational views come together. To address this, this study looks into how different parts of social media communication—like seeing content, interacting, influencer involvement, and information value—influence how people of different generations in Indonesia see thrift shop practices.

#### *2.4 Research Framework and Hypothesis Development*

Based on sustainability communication as a foundational perspective, this study conceptualizes communication not merely as message transmission but as a mechanism through which sustainability meanings are constructed and normalized within market practices. In the context of thrift consumption, sustainability value is not automatically recognized by consumers; rather, it must be articulated, circulated, and legitimized through communication processes, particularly within digital environments where thrift businesses predominantly operate.

To operationalize this perspective at the market level, the study adopts green marketing communication as a complementary framework (Nguyen & Mogaji, 2022; Twum & Yalley, 2021). Green marketing communication emphasizes how environmental values are embedded in persuasive messages that influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. In the digital era, social media functions as a strategic arena where sustainability meanings are repeatedly exposed, socially endorsed, interactively reinforced, and informationally elaborated (McKeown & Shearer, 2019). Accordingly, this study conceptualizes four dimensions of social-media-based green marketing communication which are exposure, influencer endorsement, information value, and interaction as the key explanatory variables shaping thrift shop practices (M. Gupta & Syed, 2022).

Exposure reflects the frequency with which consumers encounter thrift-related content on social media (Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2018). Repeated exposure increases cognitive accessibility and normalizes thrift consumption within everyday digital experiences (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018). Prior research demonstrates that frequent exposure to sustainability-oriented messages enhances environmental awareness and behavioral intention (Agu et al., 2022). Therefore, greater exposure to thrift-related content is expected to strengthen thrift shopping practices.

#### **H1: Social media exposure significantly influences thrift shop practices.**

Influencer endorsement represents the role of digital opinion leaders in translating sustainability narratives into relatable consumption stories (Fakhreddin & Foroudi, 2022; Ha & Yang, 2023). Influencers function as social reference points who shape perceived norms and credibility (Fakhreddin & Foroudi, 2022; Tobon & García-Madariaga, 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that influencer trustworthiness and value congruence enhance consumer responsiveness to green marketing messages (Tobon & García-Madariaga, 2021). Thus, when thrift

shops are promoted or endorsed by influencers, consumers are more likely to adopt thrift practices.

## **H2: Influencer endorsement significantly influences thrift shop practices.**

Information value refers to the perceived clarity, relevance, and credibility of sustainability content communicated through social media (Abunyawah et al., 2020; Kang & Namkung, 2019). High quality information reduces skepticism and enhances perceived legitimacy, particularly in markets where sustainability claims may be contested (Kang & Namkung, 2019; Lee et al., 2018). In the thrift context, detailed information regarding product condition, sourcing, and environmental contribution can strengthen consumer confidence and behavioral commitment.

## **H3: Information value significantly influences thrift shop practices.**

Interaction captures the degree of consumer engagement with thrift-related content, including liking, commenting, sharing, and participating in discussions (Adiyani & Khusyairi, 2025). Interaction transforms communication from a one-way promotional activity into a dialogic process that reinforces social norms and collective meaning-making (Lane & Kent, 2018; Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2018). Engaged consumers are more likely to internalize sustainability values and translate them into behavioral practices (Pilgrimieni et al., 2020).

## **H4: Social media interaction significantly influences thrift shop practices.**

Although the conceptual framework positions social media dimensions as direct predictors of thrift shop practices, prior literature suggests that generational cohorts differ in how they interpret digital communication and sustainability narratives. Generational experiences shape technological familiarity, value orientation, and responsiveness to social influence (Calvo-Porrall & Viejo-Fernández, 2024; Mason et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this study further explores whether the predictive patterns of social-media-based green marketing communication vary across Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation X. Rather than presuming uniform effects across age cohorts, the analysis examines generational variations in the strength and significance of relationships between exposure, influencer endorsement, information value, interaction, and thrift shop practices.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative and explanatory research design to examine how sustainable communication and green marketing practices on social media influence thrift shopping behavior within the context of circular fashion in Indonesia (Creswell, 2017; Haynes-Brown, 2023). The quantitative approach enables the operationalization of theoretical constructs into measurable indicators and allows statistical testing of predictive relationships among variables. The study also seeks to clarify how and why social media based sustainable communication shapes consumer behavioral responses rather than merely describing consumption patterns. A cross-sectional design was employed, with data collected at a single point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020). The unit of analysis is individual consumers, and the study compares structural relationships across three generations which were Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z to identify potential differences in behavioral mechanisms.

The research was conducted across five major Indonesian cities: Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Semarang. These cities were selected due to their significant levels of textile consumption, urban waste generation, retail activity, and high internet penetration (Fatimah et al., 2020; Prayuda & Sembiring, 2023). Jakarta represents the largest consumption and retail hub in Indonesia, making it central to both fast fashion and secondhand clothing markets (Dewi, 2023). Bandung is widely recognized as a fashion-oriented city with a strong creative and independent fashion ecosystem (A'yuni et al., 2025; Priscillia et al., 2024). Surabaya, as the largest metropolitan area in Eastern Indonesia, reflects a growing middle-class consumer base with expanding retail and resale markets (Katherina & Indraprahasta, 2019). Yogyakarta represents a prominent student city with a strong youth

demographic, where thrift shopping has shown increasing popularity (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Zhukruffa et al., 2024). Semarang illustrates consumption dynamics in developing urban centers with growing digital commerce participation. The high social media usage across these cities provides an appropriate empirical context to examine how digital sustainable communication influences thrift shopping practices.

A cross-generational design was incorporated because sustainability perceptions, digital engagement patterns, and purchasing motivations vary across age cohorts (Calvo-Porrall & Viejo-Fernández, 2024). Generational cohort theory suggests that individuals shaped by similar socio-economic and technological contexts develop distinct values and consumption behaviors. Generation Z is often characterized by higher environmental awareness and strong responsiveness to sustainability narratives communicated via digital platforms (Parzonko et al., 2021; Varga & Csiszarik-Kocsir, 2024). Millennials tend to balance ethical considerations with practicality and affordability (Madinga et al., 2025; Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018), while Generation X increasingly engages with digital media and sustainability discourse despite historically being less associated with green consumption trends (Varga & Csiszarik-Kocsir, 2024). Examining these cohorts comparatively allows the study to determine whether sustainable messaging functions as a central motivational driver or merely as a peripheral influence across generations.

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents possessed relevant experience with thrift shopping practices (Etikan et al., 2016; Etikan & Bala, 2017). Based on the a priori power analysis conducted using G\*Power 3.1 (F tests, linear multiple regression – fixed model, R<sup>2</sup> deviation from zero; f<sup>2</sup> = 0.15;  $\alpha$  = 0.05; power = 0.95; four predictors), the minimum required sample size was 129 respondents (Faul et al., 2007, 2009). The final sample of 700 respondents substantially exceeds this minimum threshold. Therefore, the study demonstrates adequate statistical power to detect medium effect sizes and sufficient sensitivity to identify interaction effects in the moderation analysis across generational cohorts. The large sample size further enhances the precision of parameter estimates, reduces standard error, and strengthens the robustness and generalizability of the empirical findings (Maxwell et al., 2008).

The target population consisted of Indonesian consumers who had previously purchased secondhand fashion items, particularly through social media platforms or online marketplaces. Individuals without thrift shopping experience were excluded to ensure that responses reflected actual behavioral engagement rather than hypothetical intention. Inclusion criteria required respondents to (1) belong to Generation X, Millennials, or Generation Z; (2) reside in one of the five selected cities; and (3) have prior thrift shopping experience. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed between May 2025 to July 2025. The online format ensured geographic reach and alignment with the study's focus on social media communication. The survey was anonymous to reduce social desirability bias, and screening questions were included to verify eligibility. Prior to analysis, data underwent cleaning procedures, including missing value checks and outlier screening.

Measurement items were adapted from established scales in green marketing and sustainable communication related literatures, using a Likert-scale format to capture respondent perceptions. To address the research objectives, multiple regression analysis was used to test predictive relationships between exposure, influencer, information and interaction to thrift shopping practices while moderated by generation. This analytical approach allows for the estimation of the strength and direction of influence of independent variables on consumer behavior while controlling for generational grouping effects. Reliability and validity assessments were conducted prior to hypothesis testing to ensure the robustness of the measurement model.

### **3. Result**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the 700 survey participants from Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z. On a five-point scale, the average scores for every item ranged from 3.37 to 3.77. The scores indicate a moderately positive attitude toward both shopping at thrift stores and exposure to sustainability-related content on social media.

**Table 1** Statistic Descriptive of Each Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Exposure	700	1	5	3.450571	0.714943
Influencer	700	1	5	3.379714	0.768545
Information	700	1	5	3.772286	0.675064
Interaction	700	1	5	3.586571	0.714287
Thrift Shop Practice	700	1	5	3.450476	0.668815

Among the four communication dimensions, informational content records the highest mean score ( $M = 3.77$ ). This suggests that respondents place slightly greater emphasis on substantive sustainability information compared to other communicative dimensions. However, all variables have a relatively narrow range that indicates no single dimension overwhelmingly dominates user perception. Building upon this baseline, Tables 2 and 3 further examine whether variation in the four dimensions significantly predict thrift shopping practices and whether these relationships differ across generational cohorts.

**Table 2** Model Summary and ANOVA Test

Model	Adj. R-Squared	F-Test	P-Value ANOVA
Millennials	54.20%	106.673	0.0001
Gen Z	51.20%	47.922	0.0001
Gen X	69.20%	86.781	0.0001

Table 2 reports the regression model summary and ANOVA results for each generation. All three models are statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the set of social media communication variables collectively explain a substantial proportion of variance in thrift shopping practices. However, the explanatory power of the model varies across cohorts. Generation X has the highest adjusted  $R^2$  (69.2%), meaning that social media communication explains more of the behavior variance in thrift shopping behavior in this group. In comparison, the adjusted  $R^2$  for Millennials (54.2%) and Generation Z (51.2%) remain considerable but comparatively lower. Even though the model strength differs slightly, all three models explain more than half of the variance in thrift shopping practice – which is relatively high for behavioral research. This suggests that social media communication plays a consistently important role across generations, albeit with varying strength.

**Table 3** Regression Analysis

Variables	Millennials		Generation Z		Generation X	
	Beta	P-Value	Beta	P-Value	Beta	P-Value
(Constant)	0.674	0.0001*	0.872	0.0001*	0.012	0.951
Exposure	0.352	0.0001*	0.322	0.0001*	0.371	0.0001*
Influencer	0.085	0.063	0.215	0.001*	0.216	0.0001*
Information	0.073	0.178	0.147	0.067	0.119	0.089
Interaction	0.279	0.0001*	0.052	0.495	0.268	0.0001*

Table 3 provides a more detailed look at the individual predictors within each generation, which helps us understand how these generational differences come about. Exposure emerges as a significant predictor across all generations (Millennials:  $\beta = 0.352$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; Generation Z:  $\beta = 0.322$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; and Generation X:  $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). This consistent pattern indicates that repeated visibility and message frequency play a central role in normalizing thrift consumption across Millennials. This means that the more frequently people see thrift content on social media, the more likely they are to engage in thrift shopping practices. The frequent exposure contributes to the normalization of thrift consumption across demographic groups.

The role of influencer endorsement varies by generation. It is significant for Generation Z ( $\beta = 0.215$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Generation X ( $\beta = 0.216$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), but not for Millennials. This suggests that social proof and endorsement are particularly influential for Gen Z and, to a lesser extent, Gen X, whereas Millennials may rely more on alternative forms of engagement. Similarly, interaction significantly predicts behavior among Millennials ( $\beta =$

0.279,  $p < 0.0001$ ) and Generation X ( $\beta = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), but not for Generation Z. The results indicate that participatory engagement is more impactful for Millennials, while Gen Z may perceive interaction as a routine aspect of social media use rather than a driver of behavioral change. Interestingly, informational content, despite having the highest descriptive mean, does not significantly predict thrift shopping behavior across any generation at the 0.05 level. It shows that while sustainability information is appreciated, it is insufficient on its own to translate awareness into action.

Overall, while exposure serves as a universal driver, the impact of endorsements and interaction varies depending on the generation. This reflects the difference in how each generation processes and responds to social media communication. It highlights the importance of tailoring communication strategies to specific demographic segments rather than adopting a uniform approach.

#### **4. Discussion**

The descriptive findings indicate that respondents generally perceive sustainability-related communication as an integrated part of their social media experience, whether through exposure, influencer endorsement, interaction, or informational content. The relatively small differences in mean scores suggest that individuals do not rely on a single dominant source but instead encounter thrift-related messages through multiple channels simultaneously. Furthermore, the moderate standard deviation values for each item indicate limited dispersion in perceptions among respondents, suggesting a shared baseline perception of sustainability messaging. This consistency implies that thrift shopping and sustainability communication are broadly normalized across the sample, providing a stable foundation for further analysis.

Generational differences can be interpreted by analyzing consumer segmentation and how media usage patterns. Prior research highlights that different age cohorts vary in their trust formation, how they use media, and their responsiveness to digital content (Kotler, 2012; Parment, 2013). The present finding aligns with this perspective. Study by Lou & Yuan (2019) shows that Generation Z rely their decision to purchase based on what is famous online, reflecting their reliance on social validation and digital role models. Millennials, in contrast, respond more to interactive content, suggesting a preference for participatory and community-oriented engagement. Generation X appears to integrate multiple cues, such as exposure, endorsement, and interaction, indicating a more holistic evaluation process.

In the context of thrift consumption, various forms of social media content (influencer narratives, sustainability information, circular production storytelling, and interactive campaign) are likely to spark different responses across generational groups. Understanding how each generation interprets and engages with sustainability-related messages is essential for developing more effective communication strategies. Such strategies should extend beyond simple promotion, aiming more to shape consumer perceptions and foster deeper commitment through tailored digital touchpoints.

Outcomes in multiple generations sharpen the sustainability communication framework by highlighting the role of generational digital cultures. The findings suggest that the manner in which members of the community construct meaning related to sustainability depends on their generational digital cultures (Bode et al., 2020; Pompper, 2019). Although across Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation X mere hearing about something predicts thrifty habits, the important interaction and endorsements from influencers are varied by generation. Millennials react better to involvement, which shows that conversation helps them accept ideas into their actions. Generation Z is more swayed by influencer endorsements, underscoring the importance of social validation in digital environments. In contrast, Generation X reacts to a combination of exposure, endorsements, and involvement, reflecting a more integrative decision-making process.

From a green marketing perspective, it's important to target different generations in different ways when marketing

sustainable products (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017). Green marketing isn't merely about marketing eco-friendly items but also about making sure people see the environmental benefits as something that sets a product apart from its competitors. Effective sustainability communication should align with the preferred communication styles of each target group.

Thrift stores inherently embody circular economy principles by extending product lifecycles and reducing waste. However, these sustainable aspects are often not utilized enough in their marketing strategies. Instead, most of thrift stores emphasizes on low prices or unique brands. This study shows that communicating the value of sustainability requires strategic adaptation. It needs to match how each generation likes to get their information. Generation Z seems to respond better to tailored content from influencers, while Millennials like interactive and community-based activities. Generation X seems to be open to various types of messages, so they might need a mix of clear information and social proof.

In the Indonesian context, where the thrift industry often deals with unclear regulations and doubts about its economic effects, green marketing offers an opportunity to reposition the sector. By clearly communicating environmental contributions, thrift industry can build trust and support national sustainability goals. Being open about sustainability, sharing stories about the impact of the circular economy, and positioning the brand as environmentally conscious can foster stronger trust and loyalty from customers. This aligns with studies that shows green marketing leads to people buying products more often and for a longer time (Nekmahmud et al., 2021; Peattie & Crane, 2005). The use of green marketing will attract more customer and also alter public perception on thrift industry. Rather than just being viewed as informal resellers, they could transform into significant players to the nation's growing green economy.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study examines how diverse forms of communication on social media influence how Generations X, Y (Millennials), and Z approach thrift shopping practices. Drawing on sustainability communication and green marketing frameworks, the findings demonstrate that digital communication plays a significant role in shaping sustainable consumption behavior. Across all generations, exposure emerges as the most consistent predictor, indicating that repeated visibility is fundamental in normalizing thrift shopping. However, the effectiveness of other communication dimensions varies by cohort. Millennials tend to get more into it when they can talk back and forth with brands. Generation Z listens more to influencers, and Generation X reacts to a mix of seeing ads, speaking directly with brands, and hearing endorsements. These differences highlight the necessity of adopting generation-specific communication strategies.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on sustainability communication. It shows that observation of others' behavior, not solely strong beliefs, encourages people to adopt sustainable actions. The research furthers green marketing studies by confirming that presenting details on the circular economy in fashion needs to be customized for each generation since one method does not fit all. By examining these generations, this study addresses a gap in prior studies, which often address these topics in isolation or without generational groupings.

From a practical perspective, particularly in Indonesia, the findings suggest that thrift business should move beyond price-based positioning and start practicing green marketing strategies that set their inherent sustainability at the front. Highlighting the environmental benefits and aligning messaging strategies with generational preferences can strengthen consumer engagement, build trust, and enhance their role within the emerging green economy.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal interpretation. Future research could employ a longer period or with experiments approaches to better understand what causes sustainability communication to work. Additionally, further studies may explore broader contextual factors, such as regional differences or policy influences, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the thrift industry ecosystem.

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