

# AVER/10



Aver Insight

## The rise of sustainable fashion: Part 2 – reselling and recycling

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# Recap

- This insight is part of a series exploring the rise of sustainable fashion and the practices brands are adopting in order to be more sustainable
- Part 2 focuses on the re-selling and recycling of clothing, as well as discussing the ethical and environmental challenges the fast fashion industry face and the growing problem of greenwashing
- It also explores how many fast fashion brands are shifting their approach by utilising certain practices to improve their sustainability credentials and encourage consumers to change their habits



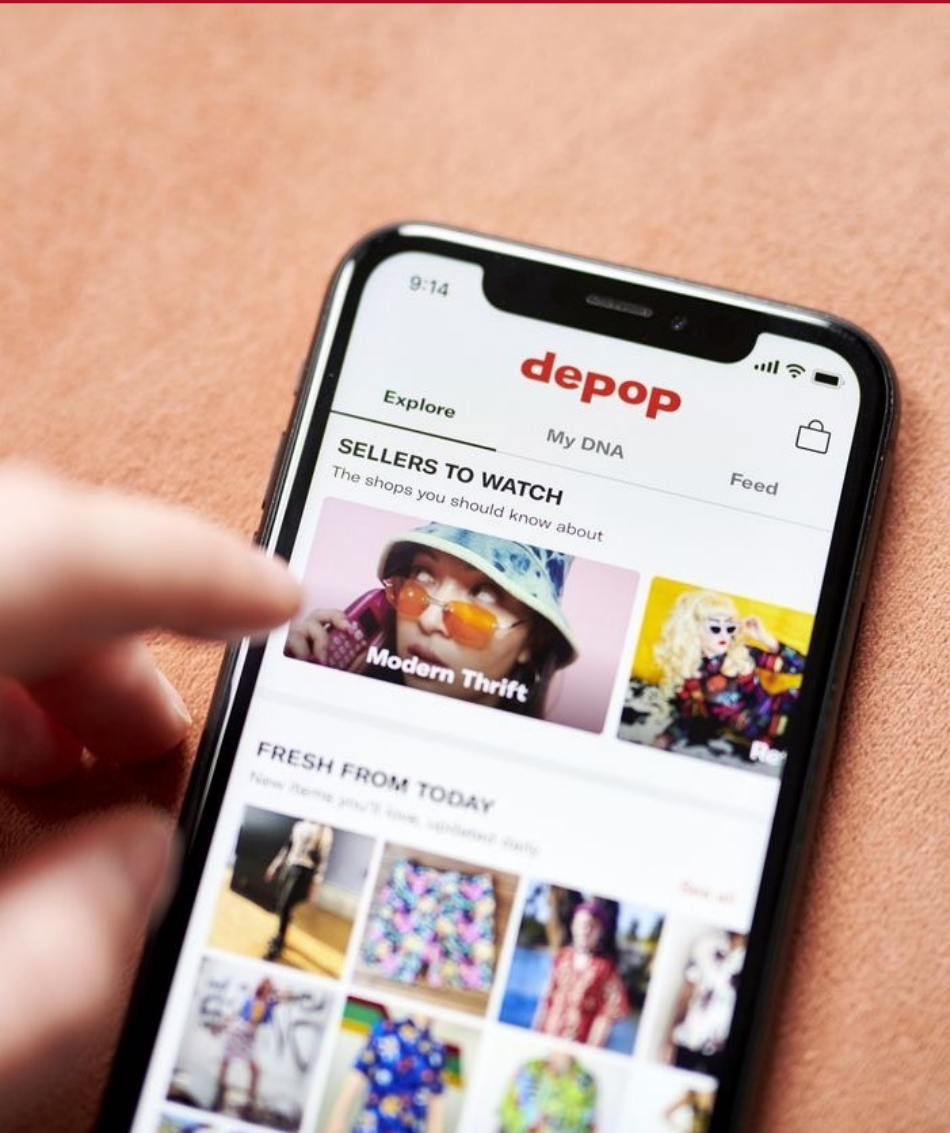


# What is the fast-fashion issue?



- Fast fashion can be defined as cheap, trendy clothing that samples ideas from celebrity culture and catwalk trends to meet consumer demand
- The idea is that consumers can get the latest fashion trends at the height of their popularity, and then discard them after very few wears due to the poor quality
- It leads to a toxic cyclical structure of overproduction and consumption with little regard to the environmental impact it has on the planet, and those at every level of the supply chain
- According to Clothes Aid, **350,000 tonnes** (around **£140 million** worth of used but still wearable clothing) ends up in landfill in the UK every year

# What about re-selling and recycling?



- There is a growing awareness of the environmental impact that the fashion industry, and fast fashion in particular, is having on the planet
- Major platforms like Depop and Vinted are just two sites which encourage consumers to sell on their disused garments, aiming to move consumers away from this toxic fast-fashion cycle
- Over 30 million people are signed up to Depop, with a loyal customer base of 18 to 26 years old's in the UK and US
- While traditional retail went into freefall during the pandemic, the secondhand market experienced fast growth, now forecast to hit \$64 billion in the next five years, set to overtake fast-fashion (according to thredUP)



# The pros and cons



- Re-selling, thrifting and recycling is better for the planet. It keeps textiles out of landfill, and lessens pollution caused by production
- Charity shops, vintage and thrift stores tend to have physical space, making it an accessible option for consumers on a high street level to make more environmentally-conscious decisions
- A downside to re-selling clothing is its lengthy process. Although platforms like Depop and Vinted make it easier, it is still time-consuming, and often means consumers will not be able to re-sell an item at the same price they bought it for

# What is greenwashing?

- Greenwashing is when a company perceives to be environmentally conscious for marketing purposes, but is not making any notable efforts that back up their claims
- Given the prominence of climate change and sustainability within the news agenda, many companies are trying to highlight their sustainability efforts in order to win over consumers
- Greenwashing has been around for decades, but as the world embraces the pursuit of greener practices, corporations and business are more likely to face legal attention



# Case study: PrettyLittleThing

**Fast-fashion brands Boohoo and Pretty Little Thing are getting slammed for greenwashing after critics call sustainability claims misleading**

INSIDER

**Boohoo 'facing modern slavery investigation' after report finds Leicester workers paid as little as £3.50 an hour**



INDEPENDENT

With Kourtney Kardashian As Boohoo's New Sustainability Ambassador, It's Clear That Fashion Is Still Trying To Greenwash Away Its Problems

VOGUE

- PrettyLittleThing (PLT), part of one of the largest fast-fashion groups, Boohoo, has consistently been accused of greenwashing, adopting many marketing techniques to mislead consumers into believing the company is more ethically conscious and active than it really is
- It came under fire for selling items as little as 8p during its Black Friday Sale, as well as facing a modern slavery investigation after receiving claims it was paying below minimum wage to factory workers, and making them work without Covid-19 safety measures during the pandemic



# Case study: PLT Marketplace

- Recently, PLT launched a resale marketplace, in an attempt to move away from its fast fashion reputation
- The marketplace allows users to sell and purchase clothes from both PrettyLittleThing and other Boohoo brands, with the platform set to roll out to international markets by the end of 2022
- The question remains – is this a legitimate move or another case of greenwashing?





# Case Study: PLT greenwashing



- Although PLT Marketplace is providing the opportunity for consumers to 're-sell', 're-wear' and 're-cycle', in the same action they are also enabling room for new purchases from the brand, ultimately not tackling the core issue of fast fashion
- The bigger issues of their poor-quality clothing and questionable ethical standards are not being addressed either
- Rather, some could argue that PLT Marketplace is intentionally being used to detract from or mask the business' questionable environmental and ethical practices

# Case Study: PLT Greenwashing



- In a recent interview with Retail Gazette, PLT's Marketing Director stated that the new venture has already exceeded expectations, reaching #3 in the app store within three days, and welcoming 70,000 sign-ups in the first week alone
- It is encouraging to see that consumers are willing to change their habits, but the real insight we need to know from PLT is not how many people have downloaded the app, but rather how many people use the app and its success in terms of encouraging more sustainable consumer behaviour



# Main takeaways

- The re-selling phenomenon is making strides to help the environment and encourage a more eco-conscious consumer
- Younger generations are more likely to consider buying second-hand clothing, which shows they are considering the ethical and sustainable aspects that come with the fashion industry and making conscious decisions
- Yet greenwashing is real and happening on a widescale. Some fast-fashion brands are making some positive changes, but are only doing so skin deep. This creates the perception they are making positive, fundamental changes, however, dig a little deeper and the core environmental and ethical issues that need to be addressed are not



# Conclusion – rental and re-selling



- Consumers are becoming more aware of sustainable fashion: CACI research highlights nearly three-quarters (74%) of people aged 18-24 are willing to spend more on a brand that aligns with their core values
- If fast fashion brands continue a façade of sustainable actions, there is hope that consumers will disapprove, and purchase clothing via other avenues, such as rental and second-hand platforms
- As shown in part 1, bricks-and-mortar retail is still a popular way to shop, so it may be an effective route for rental platforms to encourage more consumers to shy away from fast fashion
- It is encouraging to see young consumers prioritising the environment, and with the opportunity to rent and re-sell clothing from accessible platforms, there is a glimmer of hope for the future of our planet



# Sources

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