Second-hand, vintage, sustainable – the clothes revolution

Level: Advanced (B1-B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Business topics: sales, retail, customer preferences, sustainability

Business language: useful business vocabulary, vocabulary to describe trends, language for selling

Activities: key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, writing a sales advertisement text

Groups: Whole class, one-to-one, small groups

Overview: This article discusses changes within the clothing retail industry and what drives clothes buying habits across different ages groups

1. Warmer

a. Students write the descriptions of the retail possibilities under the corresponding photos, suggest other words that can be used instead of the ones provided (which are from the article), and say where they usually buy clothes.

Key:
a. thrift store   b. mall   c. online marketplace

b. students discuss the question in pairs or groups or as a whole class.

2. Lead in

a. Students match the demographical groups to their descriptions and say whether they belong to (or identify with) any of the groups. Then they discuss the question before scanning the article to find statistics (e.g., in the final paragraph and paragraph 6)

Key:

1.	Baby boomer	someone who was born between 1946 and 1964.
2.	Millennial	a person who became an adult around the year 2000
3.	Generation X	the people born in the 1960s and 1970s

3. Key words

a. You can turn this into a communicative and collaborative task by diving the students into As and Bs. First, the As should work on the items 1-7, and Bs on 8-14, after which they sit together and share and talk through their answers.

Key:
1. funded
2. racks
3. frown on
4. take off
5. share
6. investor
7. backed
8. revenue
9. apparel
10. consolidating
11. maturing
12. flaming out
13. vouches for
14. capitalise

4. Understanding the article

a. Students read the sentences and tick (✓) the ones that are correct and rewrite the others to make them correct.

Key:
1. *False: They no longer like traditional clothing stores.*
2. *True*
3. *False. Some fast fashion brands are even cheaper. The main reason is environmental awareness.*
4. *True*
5. *False. Most businesses in the fashion industry have a long supply chain involving many people and steps.*
6. *False. H&M from Sweden sells cheap new clothing and collects old clothes for recycling and even reselling.*
7. *False. Younger people are more likely to buy second-hand clothes than older people.*
8. *True*

Intermediate

5. Business language

a. The article contains some examples of language that can be used to describe trends. You could start the task by asking the students to scan the article and circle all the examples they can find (*e.g., fall, grow, rises, etc.*)

Students complete the box with the missing basic trend words and add arrows to show whether they describe an upward trend (↑) or a downward trend (↓).

Key:

verb	noun	Trend direction
To drop	A drop	↓
To grow	A growth	↑
To rise	A rise	↑
To fall	A fall	↓
To improve	An improvement	↑
To reduce	A reduction	↓
To lose	A loss	↓
To increase	An increase	↑

b. Students use the correct form of any of the fitting words above to complete the sentences using words that describe the direction of the trend shown at the end of each sentence. Multiple answers are sometimes possible.

Suggested key:
1. *growth*
2. *fell*
3. *grow / rise*
4. *loss*
5. *increase*
6. *rising / increasing / growing*

c. With a partner, students write further example sentences of their own.

6. Discussion

a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have gone through all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions.

7. Wider business theme – reselling online

a-c. This task includes many business elements such as writing an advertisement, selling a product, and customer satisfaction.

With a partner, students work through the tasks a-c as laid out on the worksheet. They should decide on one outfit which consists of at least 3 items, e.g., a dress, scarf, and bag; or trousers, shirt, and tie. To encourage teamwork and collaboration, tell them to do the task as though one of them attended the wedding and the other is helping them sell the items.

At all times they should not only be trying to make the best sale, but also considering the needs and wishes of potential customers. Encourage them to include all the facts such as size and colour but to also think beyond these and consider cleanliness (e.g., has the item been steam-cleaned? Does it come from a non-smoking household?, etc.). They should consider future customer feedback, reviews and ratings.

Finally, in part c, share or display all the ads so that all students have the chance to read all the ads before holding a group discussion as laid out in the task.

Intermediate