

## Second-hand, vintage, sustainable – the clothes revolution

### 1 Warmer

a. Write the correct captions under the photos.

mall

online marketplace

thrift store



a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_

b. What other words can you use to describe these places?

c. Which of these places do you prefer for buying clothes?

### 2 Lead in

a. Match these demographical groups to their descriptions.

Baby boomer      a person who became an adult around the year 2000

Millennial      the people born in the 1960s and 1970s

Generation X      someone who was born in the years after World War 2, between 1946 and 1964

b. Do you belong to any of these groups? Which group do you think is most likely to buy second-hand clothing? Why? Scan the article to find statistics that back up the answer.

### 3 Key words

- a. Write the words from the box next to the definitions below. Check your answers and your understanding of how the words are used by using the same word to complete the example sentence immediately after each definition.

Then read the complete article to see how each of the key words is used in context.

apparel      browsing      burgeoning      capitalise      courting      flaming out  
frown on      rack      rifling through      scored      soured on      vouches for

1. an idiom that means you stopped liking something that you used to be enthusiastic about

\_\_\_\_\_

*Even though he voted for them at the last election, John has \_\_\_\_\_ the government in the past few months.*

2. an informal expression meaning you obtained something that is difficult to get

\_\_\_\_\_

*Jen \_\_\_\_\_ a great part-time job at the venue, which meant she could see all the bands for free.*

3. objects used for storing things that consist of a row of small shelves, long spaces, or hooks

\_\_\_\_\_

*She flicked through the clothes on the \_\_\_\_\_ hoping to find something suitable to wear to the interview.*

4. disapprove of something \_\_\_\_\_

*The managers \_\_\_\_\_ employees making personal phone calls at work.*

5. growing or developing quickly \_\_\_\_\_

*The \_\_\_\_\_ delivery industry is presenting huge opportunities for enterprise.*

6. an American English word for clothes, used especially in stores or other businesses

\_\_\_\_\_

*It was predicted that self-cleaning fabrics would revolutionize the sport \_\_\_\_\_ industry.*

7. the activity of looking at websites on the internet in no particular order \_\_\_\_\_

*The company discovered that up to half of their employees spend over an hour's work time each day \_\_\_\_\_ the web.*

8. searching quickly through something such as a container or a group of objects in order to find something \_\_\_\_\_

*"Dress to impress" her mentor always said, which is why she was now \_\_\_\_\_ her wardrobe desperate to find the shirt she knew goes perfectly with the trousers she planned to wear to the meeting.*

9. trying to please or impress someone in a way that will bring benefits to yourself

*It's usually more cost-effective to re-sign a former client rather than spend the time and effort \_\_\_\_\_ new ones.*

10. an American English expression for failing badly \_\_\_\_\_

*A few minutes into the negotiation, he realised he was \_\_\_\_\_ and was not likely to get the deal he was hoping for.*

11. say that something is true, correct, or good based on your own knowledge or experience

\_\_\_\_\_ *There's no way we will invest in the company unless he personally \_\_\_\_\_ the safety of its products.*

12. use an event or a situation to help you achieve something or get an advantage

\_\_\_\_\_ *Wishing to \_\_\_\_\_ on the success of his first restaurant, Simon planned to open a second one in the newly trendy part of the city.*

## Second-hand news: online clothing resale is here to stay

*DESPITE A BUMPY 2021, FASHION AND LUXURY BRANDS SEE THE SECTOR'S SUSTAINABILITY ADVANTAGES*

**BROOKE MASTERS**

- 1 Like many members of Gen Z, my children have soured on traditional clothing stores. For both sustainability and cost reasons, they now shop only at thrift stores.
- 2 Dragged along on a recent outing, I funded an update of my daughter's wardrobe and scored some Lucky jeans for myself while spending less than a new pair would have cost at the mall.
- 3 But Christmas presents are going to be a challenge. With the Omicron variant spreading, I have no desire to flip through the racks again, and the kids would frown on brand new items. That leaves the burgeoning online market.
- 4 Clothing resale sites were already starting to take off before the pandemic: consultants BCG said last year that one quarter of global shoppers bought a used item in 2019 and predicted that second-hand fashion's share of the global closet could grow from 21 to 27 per cent by 2023.
- 5 But global lockdowns really juiced investor interest in the sector's potential for growth. This year, US sites ThredUp and Poshmark joined the public markets. In Europe, Gucci owner Kering put money into Vestiaire Collective, crafting marketplace Etsy bought Depop, and private equity group EQT backed a big fundraising for Vinted at triple its prior valuation.
- 6 GlobalData study commissioned by ThredUp optimistically predicted that curated resellers (as opposed to traditional thrift stores) would grow 11 times faster than ordinary clothing retail and the total second-hand market would double in size to \$77bn by 2025. Younger consumers are powering the trend: 42 per cent of Gen Z and millennials shopped for second-hand apparel last year.
- 7 The bloom is now coming off the rose. ThredUp and Poshmark shares are down more than 80 per cent from their peaks earlier this year. Even RealReal, which has been listed for longer, has seen its share price fall by more than half since February.
- 8 Much of the scepticism is warranted. Online clothing resale is getting crowded. Bigger players are elbowing their way in, and the success stories are starting to bump into each other as they expand further. Poshmark, for example, reported slowing revenue growth in the third quarter as it swung to a loss.
- 9 Bricks and mortar competition is also rising now that stores have properly reopened. For shoppers who like the thrill of discovery, online browsing struggles to beat rifling through a thrift shop rack. And department stores such as Selfridges and Neiman Marcus are courting those who seek genuine brand names and vintage pieces.
- 10 Consumers who turn to second-hand for cost reasons also have other options. Fast fashion stores and websites from China's Shein to the UK's Primark are thriving. Sweden's H&M is a triple threat. It not only sells cheap new clothing but also collects old garments for recycling and several of its brands have entered the resale market.
- 11 Despite the challenges, the online resale market is consolidating and maturing rather than flaming out. As sustainability rises as a driver of consumer behaviour, fashion will feel the heat. It accounts for about 10 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions due to long supply chains and heavy use of petroleum-based synthetics.
- 12 That suggests second-hand sales will only become more attractive — to the original makers. There are few better ways to reduce total carbon emissions than to resell the same goods. Customers are also likely to pay more if the manufacturer vouches for their authenticity. Enthusiasts argue that artificial intelligence and blockchain will speed validation and draw in new buyers much as dealer-certified "pre-owned" cars widened the used vehicle market in the 1990s. The ultimate dream is to create a circular market, where loyal customers send back goods they have tired of and receive credit that they use towards buying more.

*Continued on next page*

13 Kate Fletcher, a professor of sustainability design at the London College of Fashion, doubts that clothing resale will solve the sustainability problem. "The industry is trying to maintain a fundamentally high-impact model by substituting second-hand goods," she says. "People's wardrobes are becoming engorged."

14 That hasn't stopped groups such as online luxury retailer Farfetch from trying to capitalise. Last week it acquired Luxclusif, a resale platform that provides technology to brands that want to get into online reselling.

15 Last year, 32 per cent of Gen Xers and 16 per cent of boomers bought second-hand clothing, according to GlobalData. If luxury and fashion companies can convince more of us to follow the kids, there is a lot of money to be made.

FT

Brooke Masters December 14 2021

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## 4 Understanding the article

### a. Choose the best sentence ending according to the information in the article.

1. Brooke Masters plans to buy her children's Christmas presents...
  - a. in thrift stores.
  - b. in traditional clothing stores at the mall.
  - c. on second-hand clothes retail sites.
2. The fashion industry is responsible for about 10 per cent of...
  - a. sales to the baby boomer generation.
  - b. greenhouse gas emissions.
  - c. the second-hand market.
3. The Covid pandemic helped...
  - a. consumers to stop buying new clothes.
  - b. investors to see the potential for the second-hand clothing market.
  - c. online retailers to send clothes to all parts of the world.
4. Some high-end department stores have...
  - a. opened up recycling departments.
  - b. stopped selling brand names with long supply chains.
  - c. opened new sections selling pre-owned items of quality clothing.
5. Growth in the clothing resale market is...
  - a. falling.
  - b. levelling off.
  - c. increasing.
6. Original clothing retailers are...
  - a. taking legal action on second-hand sales.
  - b. looking into the potential of reselling their products.
  - c. closing their high-street stores and moving online.

## 5 Business language

a. Find two and three-word expressions and phrases in the article that match the meanings below. The section numbers are given to help you.

1. In \_\_\_\_\_, companies sell shares to the general population, who can then buy, sell, or trade those shares on a stock exchange. (section 5)
2. influencing or leading to change or development that produces a particular result (section 6)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. larger organizations that influence a situation, especially in business (section 8)  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. an increase in income from business activities (section 8)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ business is a traditional business that does not operate on the internet. (section 9)
6. making the power, position, or achievements you already have stronger or more effective so that they are likely to continue and bring financial rewards (section 11)  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. a way of selling that delivers value to both customers and stakeholders while minimising ecological and social costs (section 12) \_\_\_\_\_
8. a type of business that uses a lot of resources and has far-reaching effects (section 13)  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Now use the ones that are going to be useful for you in multiple sentences of your own.

## 6 Discussion questions

### a. Discuss these questions

- What types of things would you be happy to buy second-hand?
- What would you never buy second-hand? Why?
- How have your shopping habits changed in the past 2 – 3 years?
- What do you usually do with clothes that you no longer wear but are still in good condition?

## 7 Wider business theme – reselling online

### Situation:

You spent a lot of money on clothes and accessories that you wore to a friend's wedding.

Your friend posted and shared many photos of their wedding, and everyone has seen you wearing the outfit. Because of this, you feel that you can't really wear the same items to the next wedding you've been invited to and that you need to buy another outfit.

Life is expensive, and in order to buy yet another outfit, you need to sell the one you have already worn.

### a. Decide what the outfit consists of (at least 4 items):

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### b. You've found an online marketplace that you'd like to sell the items on. You want to ensure the (future) buyer is happy, as reviews on this site are important and, with all the weddings coming up, you are quite likely to have to buy and sell outfits again.

### Discuss:

- the steps involved in selling clothes online
  - the information that buyers will want to know
  - how you will show the items
  - the logistics involved in selling online
  - payment options, packaging, and delivery
  - returns, refunds, insurance
- c. There are other items of this kind on the reselling site, so your text must be better than the others. How are you going to grab potential buyers' attention and make a quick sale? Write texts for each item (possibility - find images of items that could be used either in a magazine or online) that make your items stand out.