

The relationship between the rise of Vintage clothes' market, culture and the new media

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Abstract

In recent years, vintage clothes have caught more and more people's attention. To be specific, in the first-tier city and the new first tier city (such as Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Chongqing, Nanjing), the increases of the number of the vintage shop and the account about vintage in the new media have demonstrated that the vintage market share is growing. The aim of this study is to explore vintage culture and vintage clothing, the emotional connection people have with vintage garments, and how new media social platforms have renewed interest in vintage culture. The study aims to provide cultural and marketing insights for the future development of the vintage clothing market.

Keywords

Vintage clothes; Cultural Revival; New Media Marketing.

1. Introduction

There are now more and more vintage clothing stores opening in first-tier cities. The growth in the number of these stores surely hints at a cultural shift. Increasing numbers of people are turning their shopping preferences towards vintage clothing, which in turn drives the development of the vintage market; as demand increases, so does supply. This study aims to provide marketing and promotional recommendations for the future vintage clothing market, focusing on vintage culture and clothing, the public's emotional connection to vintage clothing, and how new media social platforms can increase exposure for vintage clothing, thereby informing future market directions.

2. Current Research Status

2.1. Domestic Research

The advancement of media technology has significantly shortened the transmission time of fashion, allowing fashion cycles to be completed in a virtual reality world in a very short period. Visual media is the most expressive medium in fashion communication, surpassing any other media in terms of the comprehensive expression of form, movement, sound, and color. A fundamental characteristic of mass media is its deconstruction and decentralization. The invention and widespread use of the internet have greatly increased the speed and extent of fashion dissemination, making its development more egalitarian and widespread (Zhao Zhenxiang, Wei Wu, May 2021). However, the instability of the online and social media environment poses many challenges for fashion brand communication and fashion culture dissemination. Firstly, the transient, overwhelming, and fragmented nature of information in the online and social media environment reduces the effectiveness of brand communication. Secondly, the decentralization of social media conflicts with the hierarchical nature of fashion communication, causing the hierarchy to collapse before it can fully establish itself. Lastly, the characteristics of social media communication—short, small, fast, and dynamic—result in

shallow and limited content layers, leading to unsatisfactory results in conveying fashion's historical background and cultural connotations (Kang Xi, February 2022).

The "trickle-down theory" is the most influential in terms of fashion initiation, suggesting that fashion is initiated by the upper class, such as aristocrats and socialites, while the general public merely imitates and accepts it. However, with the emergence of major social media platforms, "grassroots fashion leaders" have started to appear (Xu Qingchen, July 2022). In the information age, fashion output no longer solely relies on public figures, and the diversified development of communication channels has created a group of lower-level fashion leaders.

In the cross-cultural context, fashion communication paths include cultural adaptation and cultural integration. Cultural adaptation occurs when a culture spreads to another cultural sphere and actively adjusts to fit the fashion models, features, individuality, and styles of that cultural sphere, thereby integrating into the fashion circle. Cultural integration refers to the process where one culture is absorbed, transformed, and internalized into another form of culture, focusing on commonalities through creative transformation and integration to form a new culture.

2.2. International Research

The study of fashion communication and culture has garnered significant attention in recent years, reflecting the dynamic nature of fashion as both an industry and a cultural phenomenon. Scholars have explored various dimensions, including the role of digital media, the impact of globalization, and the intersection of fashion with identity politics. Here is an overview of the current research landscape in these areas.

2.2.1. Digital Media and Fashion Communication

The advent of digital media has revolutionized fashion communication. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest have become crucial channels for brands and influencers to engage with consumers. Studies have shown that these platforms not only democratize fashion by allowing broader participation but also create new forms of branding and consumer interaction (Jin & Phua, 2014; Abidin, 2016). The role of visual content in creating compelling fashion narratives has also been a significant area of interest (Manovich, 2017).

2.2.2. Globalization and Fashion Culture

Globalization has led to a more interconnected fashion world, where trends and styles transcend geographical boundaries. Researchers have examined how global fashion capitals such as Paris, New York, and Milan influence fashion trends worldwide. Additionally, the rise of emerging fashion markets in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has been a focus, highlighting how local cultures integrate with global fashion trends (Crane, 2012; Kawamura, 2004). The concept of "glocalization" has emerged to describe how global trends are adapted to local contexts.

2.2.3. Identity and Fashion

Fashion is a powerful medium for expressing identity, encompassing aspects such as gender, ethnicity, and social status. The intersection of fashion and identity politics has been a vibrant area of study, especially in the context of contemporary movements advocating for diversity and inclusion in the fashion industry (Tulloch, 2016; Kaiser, 2012). Researchers have also explored how subcultures and countercultures use fashion to challenge mainstream norms and create distinct identities (Hebdige, 1979).

3. Vintage Clothing Content

3.1. Definition of Vintage

The term "vintage" originated in Japan, referring to classic styles from top brands found in second-hand markets. Originally used to describe wine, it suggests that the longer it is stored, the better it tastes. Vintage represents well-preserved era pieces from the 1920s to the 1980s, reflecting the historical culture of a time, highlighting its characteristics, and interpreting the unique style of that period.[1]

In fact, vintage leans more towards the meaning of "second-hand," but it doesn't only include second-hand products; it also encompasses new, unused stock items. Vintage must be clothing produced in the past that cannot be replicated today. Although it originated in second-hand shops, it places great emphasis on brand, production era, preservation completeness, and the complexity of craftsmanship, representing the finest products of the era.

3.2. Difference Between Vintage and Second-Hand

In Japanese terminology, "second-hand" refers to well-preserved second-hand luxury items. The difference from "vintage" is that it does not have strict requirements for conditions and time limits. Therefore, all vintage items are second-hand, but not all second-hand items are vintage.

3.3. People's Current Attitude Towards Vintage Clothing

Using a questionnaire survey method, the author investigated the current purchasing intentions, factors influencing purchasing intentions, and the aspects of vintage clothing that interest people. A total of 300 valid questionnaires were received, with 145 male respondents and 255 female respondents.

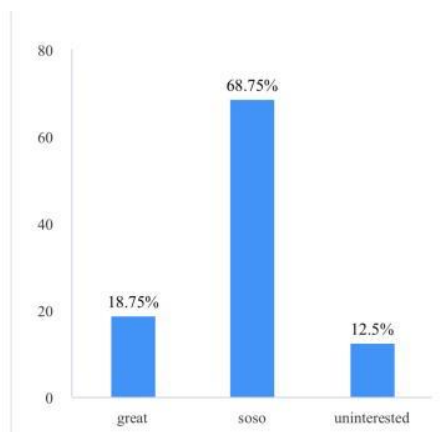


Figure 1 Have you heard Vintage clothes?

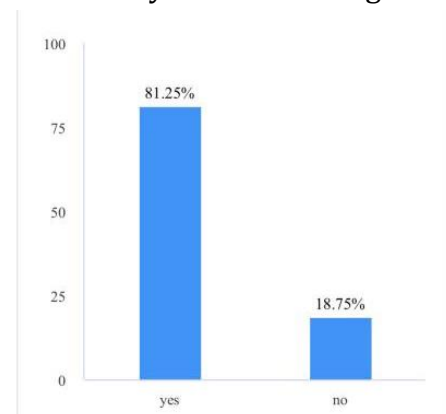


Figure 2 How about your willingness to pay for vintage clothes?

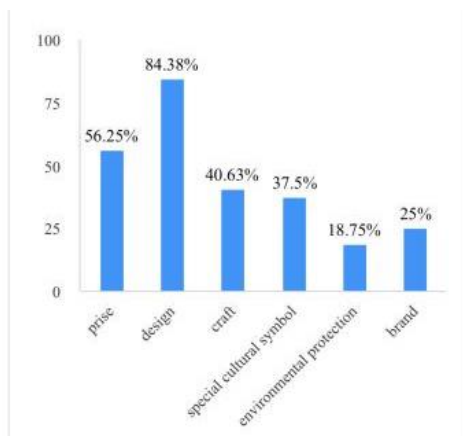


Figure 3 The factors will influence your willingness of payment

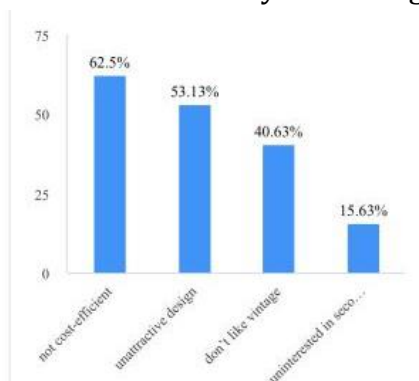


Figure 4 The reason for not buying vintage clothes

Firstly, the author investigated the popularity of vintage clothing. According to the survey results, 80.6% of people had heard of vintage clothing, while 19% had not. This indicates that vintage clothing is relatively popular in everyday life. Secondly, the author investigated the purchasing intentions towards vintage clothing, finding that 67.7% had moderate purchasing intentions, while the number of people with strong purchasing intentions was slightly higher than those not interested, at 19.3% and 12.9%, respectively. Overall, most people are relatively accepting of vintage clothing and have a certain level of purchasing intention.

In the survey of factors influencing purchasing intentions, it was somewhat surprising that price was not the main consideration, accounting for only 58%. Instead, 87.1% of people felt that design was the primary factor influencing their purchasing intentions. Additionally, craftsmanship and unique cultural symbols also influenced the purchasing decisions of most people. The reasons for unwillingness to purchase showed a decreasing trend: the main reason was the low cost-effectiveness of vintage clothing (64.52%), followed by unappealing design (54.84%). Fewer people chose not to like second-hand items or were uninterested in vintage culture. Cost-effectiveness and design attractiveness are the main factors affecting purchasing willingness.

4. The Connection Between Vintage Clothing and Vintage Culture

Vintage culture originated in post-World War II Europe and later reached its peak in Japan. The war, while destroying the original material foundation, also spurred the emergence of new industries and opportunities. Recognizing the devastation caused by the war, the older generation strove to build a solid material foundation for the next generation. Thus, the new generation, growing up in relatively affluent conditions, faced spiritual voids.[1] They began to seek individuality and independence, rebelling against the capitalist consumerism and traditions of the American middle class. Through the hippie movement, they rejected synthetic

fabrics and mass-produced clothing, instead mixing and matching old garments to showcase their unique personalities. As the hippie movement spread and evolved, vintage culture began to shine increasingly.

Additionally, World War II also expanded Japan's second-hand market and popularized the recycling of clothes. Given that Japanese youth had long admired Western culture, vintage culture quickly spread and became popular when it was introduced to Japan. Today, vintage has become a new fashion style integrated into the daily lives of young people. These "rebellious" youths use this style to express their individuality, serving as a form of psychological comfort that allows them to reminisce about the past.

In the late 1960s, "retro fashion" began to trend in fashion styles. Later, businesses capitalized on this trend, gradually transforming it into a "fashion industry." Designers drew inspiration from history, blending it with modern elements to create new garments. However, due to mass production and the use of synthetic fabrics, modern clothes have lost the warmth and exquisite craftsmanship of earlier fabrics.[2] Increasingly, people yearn for the meticulous craftsmanship of past eras and the specific cultural contexts of those times. Sun Difei wrote in "The Art of Reincarnation": "Because of the aversion to chasing fashion, vintage has become a trend. It is a consumption philosophy of No Logo, No Label; it is not a nostalgic regression but an individualistic 'Slow Fashion.' Most vintage clothing, in terms of fabric, texture, cut, and craftsmanship, surpasses modern mass-produced items. Enthusiasm for vintage clothing is not only due to its classic status but also as a tribute to the craftsmanship of the past. Compared to the pace shock brought by today's 'fast fashion' culture, many people are willing to take the time to savor the era's classics left by the slow pace of the past."

5. The Role of New Media in the Rise of the Vintage Clothing Market

Through a questionnaire survey, the author investigated the role of new media in boosting the vintage clothing market. First, 80.65% of respondents believed that the online frequency of vintage clothing has increased in recent years, indicating that new media has indeed helped spread vintage clothing, allowing more people to encounter this content more frequently. Additionally, 54% of respondents felt that this increased frequency would encourage them to learn about or purchase vintage clothing, slightly higher than those who would not change their behavior. This suggests that online platforms' increased exposure and reach for vintage clothing can indeed enhance people's purchasing intentions. Businesses and enterprises could further intensify their new media marketing efforts to increase potential customers and boost sales.

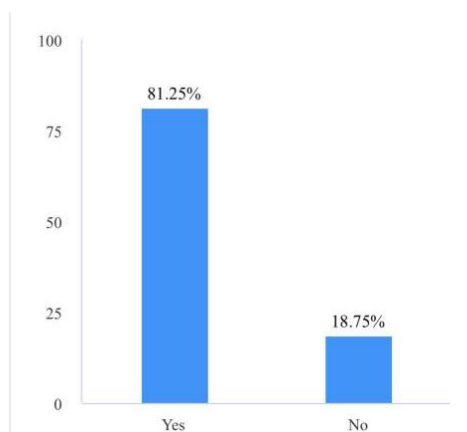


Figure 5 Do you think the appearance of Vintage clothes' content is becoming more regular?

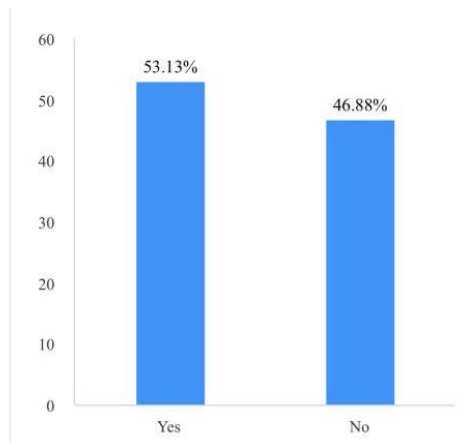


Figure 6 If the frequency becomes higher, will it stimulate your interest in buying/learning more about vintage clothing?

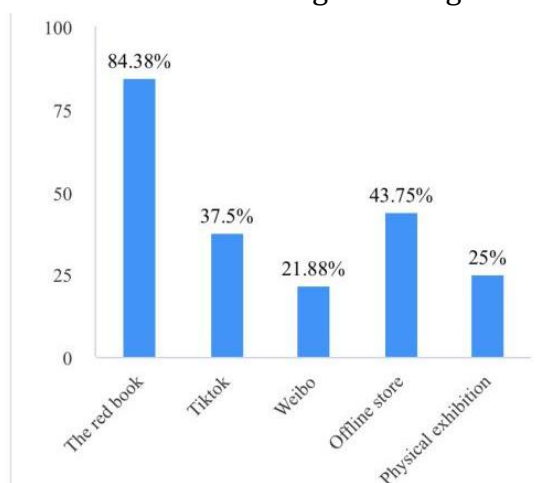


Figure 7 Where did you learn about vintage clothing?

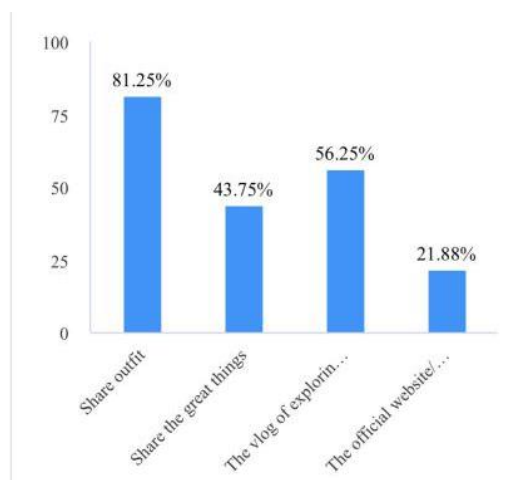


Figure 8 What kind of new media content is more likely to stimulate your interest in vintage clothing?

Regarding the channels through which people encounter vintage clothing content, the survey results showed that the main channels were Xiaohongshu (87.1%) and offline stores (45.16%). TikTok's share was significantly higher than Weibo, and physical exhibitions also had a higher-than-expected share. In summary, online channels reach more people, and compared to traditional online media like Weibo, people now browse new media like Xiaohongshu and

TikTok more. Offline stores and physical exhibitions also have a larger-than-expected share, indicating significant potential for future channel development.

In terms of the content that promotes vintage clothing, the most effective in stimulating public interest are outfit sharing posts, which visually impact viewers by showcasing different designs and styles. Secondly, offline store exploration vlogs and unboxing videos, which offer immersive experiences by presenting unique styles and close-up views of fabric and design while explaining the design, history, and special craftsmanship of vintage clothing, also attract viewers. In short, visually impactful outfit sharing content and immersive store exploration vlogs can pique viewers' interest and purchasing desire, usually having a strong promotional effect.

6. Future Development Suggestions for the Vintage Clothing Industry

6.1. Diversified Channel Expansion

As online new media marketing becomes the primary marketing method, delivery channels should still focus on Xiaohongshu and TikTok. Content directions can include outfit sharing, immersive store exploration vlogs, and unboxing videos to increase exposure and sales channels. Offline marketing also has enormous development potential, emphasizing the unique design, craftsmanship, and cultural symbolism of vintage clothing in product promotions. It's important to tell customers the unique history and style of each vintage garment.

6.2. Branded Operations

By uncovering the historical stories and cultural backgrounds of each vintage item, brands can create emotional resonance with customers.

6.3. Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development

Businesses and enterprises can use new media to highlight the environmental value of vintage clothing, catering to customers increasingly focused on sustainability. Additionally, establishing a recycling and reuse system for old clothes can promote the development of a circular economy model.

6.4. Future Marketing Content

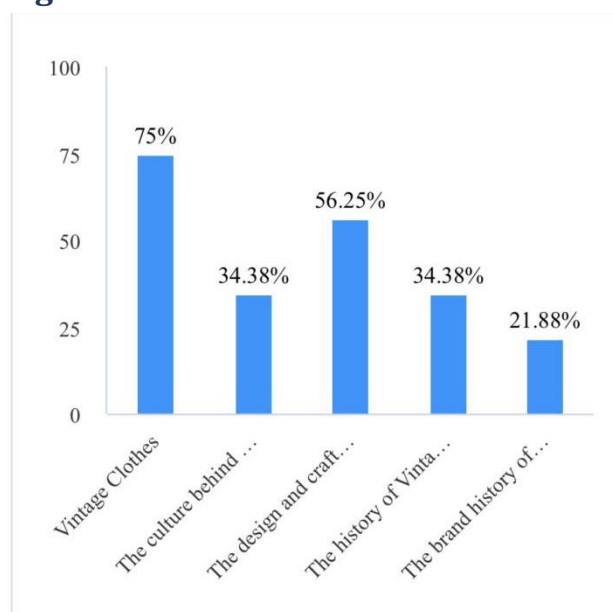


Figure 9 What do you want to learn more about Vintage in the future?

According to the survey results, vintage clothing remains the most interesting content for everyone. Therefore, businesses and brands can produce more content focused on vintage clothing displays, such as outfit aesthetic enhancements and vintage clothing appreciation in text and images, or dynamic clothing detail displays in videos. Moreover, people are also very interested in the design and craftsmanship of vintage clothing, product history, and brand cultural history. Thus, brands can use official WeChat accounts or influencers to share the special craftsmanship of vintage clothing and the history behind each piece, cultivating people's understanding and interest in vintage clothing, ultimately converting this interest into increased transaction volume.

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