

NEW RESEARCH BY FARA CHARITY SHOPS REVEALS GEN Z AND ALPHA ARE STRUGGLING AS THEIR FAST FASHION CHOICES CLASH WITH SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS

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THE SOLUTION? CHANNEL THE “PLEASURE ACTIVISM”¹ OF CHARITY RETAIL TO REVIVE OUR AILING HIGH STREET

LONDON – A new report, “The Devil is in the Retail: Generation Dread - why modern-day fashion choices are so fraught”, published by FARA Charity Shops, concludes that British youth are in flux over shopping culture: craving self-expression and still addicted to the thrill of uninhibited consumerism on one hand, while simultaneously crippled with climate change anxiety and worry that their habits are toxic and unsustainable, due to waste, resource depletion and unethical trading practices, on the other. In light of this trend, the Charity Retail sector can play a vital role in helping the future consumer make planet-positive choices by providing “joyful” shopping experiences and stimulating a long-awaited revival of the high street.

Charity Retail has never been more relevant, particularly in the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. The new report emphasises just how important charity shops will need to become in educating and empowering young people, reconciling them with a more sustainable way of shopping and self-presentation. The sector will assist younger generations to reject concepts like “single wear clothing” and reward sustainable choices. But, to survive and thrive, the Charity Retail sector must jettison its earnest solemnity and provide a more fun and enjoyable shopping experience, whilst exploiting sophisticated marketing techniques as well as ‘influencer (and de-influencer)’ culture in its quest.

The research and survey results expose a trend amongst the Generations Z and Alpha that demonstrates a stark contradiction between their attitude and behaviour towards protecting the planet and their incontinent shopping habits - which Charity Retail is best-placed to correct. Not only are charity shops critical to reducing items sent to landfill and tempting shoppers away from fast fashion, but they are also critical in providing relatively low-cost goods, acting as community hubs that can empower marginalised groups, encourage skills development and bring social cohesion. They can also provide a much deeper and more satisfying shopping experience when compared to the short-lived high of buying new goods online.

What our research found:

Charity Retail can offer Gen Z and Gen Alpha a version of consumerism more closely aligned to their values and outlook.

Feel Good Shopping: Respondents ranked the altruistic benefit of charity shops as the best thing about Charity Retail, followed by sustainability.

Greenwashing Won’t Wash: Half (51%) of Gen Z and Millennials say the clothes they choose to wear represent their views and attitudes on sustainability.

The Power of Campaigning: 45% of Gen Z and Millennials say they will buy more second-hand clothing in the near future.

Social Media’s Triple-Edged Sword: 67% of young people say social media impacts their shopping habits due to wanting to express themselves more through fashion, shopping more, but also becoming aware of sustainable fashion practices.

Background industry data highlighted in the report:

84% of 16-25 year-olds are moderately to extremely worried about climate change.

82% of consumers say they feel a positive emotion after buying a second-hand item.

96% of young people say charity shops are relevant in the pre-loved fashion industry.

A 2020 European Commission study found that a quarter of misleading environmental claims came from the fashion industry.

96% of green claims in fashion could be false.

95% of Gen Z and Millennials feel the fashion industry is not doing enough to be sustainable.

52% of Millennials and 46% of Gen Z have sold clothing on resale platforms.

Libby Gordon, CEO, of the FARA Foundation says:

“Our report emphasises the critical need to further elevate the role of charity shops within communities, so that we not only provide sustainable goods and raise much-needed funds, but also become hubs for inspiring events and social interaction. This is an area FARA Charity Shops intend to focus on. We recently launched our Autumn Campaign, “We are FARA Family”, by showcasing a series of short films all featuring an inspiring member of the FARA community. This campaign emphasizes we’re here to serve and engage our wider family, building spirit and encouraging more people to donate goods, shop with us, or consider working/volunteering in our shops.”

“What the research indicates is that to address the conflict between consumerism and sustainable living head-on, the charity sector has work to do and there is a real opportunity to lead the way in inspiring the next generation of consumers. It must use some of the clever marketing practices employed by traditional retail. These include ensuring high standards in the way goods are curated, and the use of innovative technologies (apps, platforms) to personalise the shopping experience and reward sustainable choices.

“To lure Gen Z and Gen Alpha to a more sustainable way of shopping will require a rejuvenation of Charity Retail in which the feel-good buzz of a new purchase can be maintained, but with the added satisfaction of making planet-positive choices. Social media will have its role here too, with influencers (and de-influencers) sharing facts and moulding retail habits.”

1 “Pleasure Activism” is the sense of satisfaction gained by making environmentally sound choices, the feel-good buzz of changed behaviour creates a greater sense of well-being, empathy and social inclusion. The term Pleasure Activism was coined by Adrienne Maree Brown, writer, activist and facilitator.

- ENDS -

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The full Report “The Devil is in the Retail: Generation Dread - why modern-day fashion choices are so fraught” is produced by In-Truth, and all research findings can be found in the Report.

Libby Gordon, CEO, of the FARA Foundation and Emma Steele, Founder of In-Truth, are available for interview.

Methodology:

Research was conducted by a multi-method process, exploring secondary and primary research spaces over the course of five months from August 2022 to January 2023.

Quantitative:

- 227 FARA shoppers surveyed in-store
- 102 Gen Z and Young Millennials surveyed online

Qualitative:

- Extensive literature review and desk research
- An online panel of tween and teen advisors (Gen Alpha and Young Gen Z)
- Online semi-structured video interviews with 4 FARA store managers
- Semi-structured interviews with 16 industry experts

About FARA:

The FARA Foundation was started in 1991 by Jane Nicholson, MBE, to raise money for projects in Romania, rescuing hundreds of abandoned orphans suffering in appalling conditions at state-run institutions. The first FARA store opened in 1992, and it has grown to a cutting-edge retailer, operating 40 shops, serving 26 London communities. FARA's rapidly expanding online presence also sells on eBay and Amazon. The money raised by the charity shops, ecommerce ventures, donations and fundraising has enabled The FARA Foundation to support 11,000 of Romania's most disadvantaged children, young adults and their families over 32 years.

*FARA Charity Shops are located right across London and Surrey including:

Balham, Barnes, Battersea, Belsize Park, Chiswick, Clapham, Ealing, Earlsfield, East Molesey, East Sheen, Fulham, Greenford, Islington (flagship), Kensington, New Malden, Notting Hill, Pimlico, Primrose Hill, Richmond, Shepherd's Bush, Southfields, Streatham, Surbiton, Teddington and Retromania London in Victoria.

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