

Thrifting

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'The thrill of the hunt' for thrift content creators

While influencers on social media platforms are not new, people are now dedicating their content specifically to thrifting. Those content creators are now bringing viewers along with them as they rummage through racks of clothes, letting them experience the finds virtually.

For 23-year-old content creator Lilly Claire, who posts under @lillianclairee to her over 2 million followers on TikTok, thrifting means business that goes beyond just walking into a secondhand store and searching for purchases. Her series on TikTok, "Thrifting Thursdays" entails an all-day affair of hunting through local stores for the best items, sometimes spending over four hours inside.

In Lilly Claire's experience, people are obsessed with thrifting videos because there's a consistent freshness to them. The stores' inventory changes and so do the videos, which sometimes eclipse a million views, she told USA TODAY.

"I think it's one of those series that it just doesn't get old because there's something new every single video," she said. "Compared to a Get Ready With Me [video], I film those too, but it's me doing the same makeup routine every single day and it can get kind of just plateaued in a way, where [with] thrifting, I'm always finding new things. I feel like it's exciting to watch every video because you never know what's going to pop up."

Lilly Claire's hope is that her videos not only inspire people to get into thrifting and find fun in the activity, but also to shop sustainably while doing so.

"There's so many clothes that are just being filled in landfills and ruining so many things about the environment, so it is a very positive thing to shop secondhand instead of the fast-fashion brands ... it's one of my goals to make it appealing to people," she said.

As USA TODAY previously reported, people are turning to secondhand shopping and away from fast fashion and mass-produced materials as a way to save money and the environment. For 32-year-old thrifting content creator Marissa Trafton, whose TikTok account @marthrifths has over 79,000 followers, thrifting allows people to get new items while not "adding to the environmental crisis that we may be turning into," she told USA TODAY.

While Trafton hopes her videos inspire others to buy secondhand, she recognizes that overconsumption can still happen during that shopping, especially when people see others thrift great things constantly on social media.

"We want what other people have. We're inspired, for good or bad, to go buy something that someone else has or try to go find some things," Trafton said. "But I think in the world of overconsumption, especially on social media ... I think thrifting is doing its best to kind of combat that, so we aren't all going and spending money on new items that end up in the landfill."

Overall, Trafton said a big part of thrifting's appeal is the individuality it can give people. Sometimes consumers do not want to have the same things as their friends, and thrifting allows people to pick items that stand out, she added.

"It's the thrill of the hunt. You always have this checklist in your head of, I need to find this, I will die if I find a vintage Coach purse or something like that," Trafton said. "It's an activity ... you can go find anything and that's what's so exciting about it. Like I can go today and I can find nothing or I can go today and I can find a Cartier dish. And, like, that type of thing is so cool, I think, and exciting. It makes it more interesting than just kind of your regular shopping."



A customer looks through toys and clothes at a Goodwill Retail Store and Donation Center in Gainesville, Florida. VOLEER THOMAS/THE GAINESVILLE SUN

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Steve Dool
Depop's Brand + Creative senior director

Thrift store chains feel the impact of social media

The appeal of thrifting is not exclusive to social media. Stores are seeing the culture shift around thrifting firsthand, and it's translating numerically.

At popular thrift-store chain Goodwill, donations, foot traffic and sales are up, Onney Crawley, chief marketing officer of Goodwill Industries International, told USA TODAY. With over 150 individual organizations collectively operating over 3,400 retail stores and outlet centers, revenue across the Goodwill network was up a record \$7 billion last year, roughly a 7% increase from the previous year, she said.

The effect extends to other stores as well. At Salvation Army, regional thrift store websites saw as much as a 55% year-over-year increase in their website visitors on both their search pages and monthly loyalty coupon pages, and a 50% year-over-year increase in the month of January for online sales in certain regions, the company told USA TODAY.

These increases point to a new attitude around thrifting, Crawley said. A decade ago, thrifting and secondhand shopping were somewhat correlated with necessity, she said. Now, it's a more of a celebrated choice driven by people's values that signals their individuality and their support of sustainability.

"It was almost like [something you] had to do versus get to do, and so you never told anyone that your clothes were secondhand. Whereas now it's almost a badge of honor," Crawley said. "This idea of being loud and proud about the fact that you are keeping things in circulation, that you are being eco-conscious."

Crawley partially credits the jump in popularity to social media,

which she said has brought different demographics into the stores, including resellers – customers who purchase items from a thrift store to then sell them for profit. Reselling isn't a new phenomenon, and both resellers and core Goodwill shoppers are helping people to choose secondhand by promoting thrifting, she said.

"There's so many platforms out there today that make it easier for people to sell, whether it's a live auction or other platforms that let them just make some cash from things that they don't need. And I think from the standpoint of Goodwill, we see that as just being part of the broader circular economy ecosystem," Crawley said.

Resale sites see thrifting craze shift culture

One of those platforms is Depop, an online marketplace where people resell clothing and other items, that has also felt the force of the cultural shift, the company's senior director of Brand + Creative Steve Dool wrote in an email to USA TODAY. People are turning to sites like Depop to shop secondhand without going to the store, which Dool also credited to a customer desire to be sustainable.

Over three in five purchases on the site displaces a new purchase elsewhere, and most buyers say they'd rather keep searching secondhand or skip the purchase entirely than buy something new, he added. Beyond that, reselling allows some to cover expenses like bills, Dool wrote, with purchases directly connecting users to consumers while still supporting secondhand.

"In-person and online thrifting are complementary habits, not competing. The members of our community who own thrift stores or work at them tell us that they often receive more secondhand inventory than they can realistically sell-through," Dool wrote. "So, providing more options to bring more people into a secondhand-first mindset – whether it's online or [in real life] – is a net win toward our goal of making fashion circular."

While Goodwill's Crawley acknowledged that some consumers are not thrilled about more eyes searching for the best secondhand items, the shift remains a positive, no matter the reason people are shopping.

"I think what's nice about it is that it's really expanding the awareness of thrift overall, right?" Crawley said. "Because when you've got these resellers or influencers who are either selling online or highlighting their thrift finds online and talking about how they thrifted it, not only does it normalize thrift, but it almost glamorizes it as a new core approach to how we shop today."

