

# Unlocking the motivations behind vintage luxury desire

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Despite the growing popularity of SHVL fashion, there is little empirical focus on the antecedent factors that influence consumers' intention to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion. Drawing on insights from the stimulus–organism–response framework, this paper aims to investigate the motivational factors influencing the consumers' attitudes and their intention to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Primary data was gathered from 232 present customers of SHVL fashion products and analysed using the partial least square structural equation modelling.

**Findings** – Research findings show that eco-consciousness, treasure hunting, status consumption and the need for uniqueness were positively linked to intentions to purchase SHVL fashion through the intervening role of attitude. Attitude was positively linked with purchase intentions, which also positively influenced intention to recommend SHVL fashion.

**Practical implications** – The study findings assist brand managers in understanding how they can cater to the diverse needs of SHVL fashion consumers.

**Originality/value** – This research contributes significantly to the SHVL domain by examining core antecedents that motivate consumers' intention to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion.

**Keywords** Fashion, Luxury, Second-hand, Vintage

**Paper type** Research paper

## Desbloqueando las motivaciones detrás del deseo de lujo vintage

### Resumen

**Objetivo** – A pesar de la creciente popularidad de la moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano (SHVL), hay poco enfoque empírico en los factores antecedentes que influyen en la intención de los consumidores de comprar y recomendar moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano. Basándose en ideas del marco S-O-R, este documento investiga los factores motivacionales que influyen en las actitudes de los consumidores y su intención de comprar y recomendar moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano.

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**Diseño/metodología/enfoque** – Se recopilaron datos primarios de 232 clientes actuales de productos de moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano y se analizaron utilizando el modelado de ecuaciones estructurales de mínimos cuadrados parciales.

**Resultados** – Los hallazgos de la investigación muestran que la conciencia ecológica, la búsqueda de tesoros, el consumo de estatus y la necesidad de unicidad están vinculados positivamente con las intenciones de comprar moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano a través del papel intermediario de la actitud. La actitud se vinculó positivamente con las intenciones de compra, lo que también influyó positivamente en la intención de recomendar moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano.

**Implicaciones prácticas** – Los hallazgos del estudio ayudan a los gerentes de marca a entender cómo pueden atender las diversas necesidades de los consumidores de moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano.

**Originalidad/valor** – Esta investigación contribuye significativamente al dominio de la moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano al examinar los antecedentes clave que motivan la intención de los consumidores de comprar y recomendar moda de lujo vintage de segunda mano.

**Palabras clave** Moda, Lujo, Segunda mano, Vintage

**Tipo de artículo** Trabajo de investigación

解锁复古奢侈品欲望背后的动机

## 摘要

**目的** – 尽管二手复古奢侈品时尚 (SHVL) 日益流行, 但关于影响消费者购买和推荐二手复古奢侈品意图的前因因素的实证研究却很少。基于S-O-R框架的洞察, 本研究探讨了影响消费者态度及其购买和推荐二手复古奢侈品时尚意图的动机因素。

**设计/方法/途径** – 从232名现有二手复古奢侈品时尚产品的顾客中收集了主要数据, 并使用偏最小二乘结构方程模型 (PLS-SEM) 进行了分析。

**研究结果** – 研究发现, 环保意识、寻宝乐趣、地位消费和独特性需求通过态度的中介作用, 与购买二手复古奢侈品的意图正相关。态度与购买意图正相关, 购买意图也正向影响推荐二手复古奢侈品的意图。

**实际意义** – 研究结果帮助品牌经理了解如何满足二手复古奢侈品消费者的多样化需求。

**原创性/价值** – 本研究通过考察核心前因因素对消费者购买和推荐二手复古奢侈品时尚意图的动机的影响, 为二手复古奢侈品领域做出了重要贡献。

**关键词** 时尚, 奢侈品, 二手, 复古

**文章类型** 研究型论文

## 1. Introduction

According to a recent analysis by ThredUp, a popular second-hand clothing sales website, the resale industry is projected to experience significant growth, jumping significantly in value from \$141bn in 2021 to \$350bn by 2028 (ThredUp, 2024). This surge in popularity is indicative of the shifting consumer preferences, particularly among the younger demographics. Vintage styles, which are not just a fleeting trend but a rising preference, are expected to become the new standard in the fashion industry (Newman, 2021).

The growth of the second-hand luxury market is influenced by various factors, including shifting attitudes towards previously used items, sustainability concerns and the desire to access luxury brands that are typically unaffordable (Turunen et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2014). While there has been increasing interest among researchers in this area, previous studies have primarily focused on understanding the motivations behind the consumption of second-hand and vintage luxury. However, it is important to note that while some studies have compared vintage consumption to the purchase of second-hand items and suggested that vintage pieces can be second-hand and vice versa (Ryding et al., 2017), it has also been argued that not all vintage pieces are used and not all second-hand pieces are old.

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The term “second-hand” categorises any item that has been previously used, regardless of its age. Whether an item is considered vintage depends on its age rather than simply whether it has been used (Mortara and Ironico, 2011). While previous research has shed light on consumer motivations in this market, there is still room for further exploration, particularly in understanding the distinctions between second-hand and vintage luxury. While opinions differ on whether second-hand luxury and vintage luxury are distinct or similar, it is worth noting that prominent brands and celebrities have embraced and promoted the use of second-hand vintage luxury (SHVL) items. For instance, in 2001, Julia Roberts and Renee Zellweger’s decision to wear vintage luxury apparel to the prestigious Academy Awards helped bring second-hand luxury fashion into the spotlight, with other celebrities following suit (Sotoodeh and Bamigboye, 2020).

The origins of the second-hand luxury sector can be traced back to the 1300s when second-hand clothing provided a more affordable option for the general population compared to newly produced outfits (Frick, 2005). Second-hand luxury items are typically priced much lower than their first-hand counterparts in designated luxury boutiques. For example, prices of second-hand luxury apparel on platforms such as “Vestiaire Collective” can be 30%–70% lower than the prices of new luxury apparel (Turunen and Pöyry, 2019). Second-hand luxury allows customers to enjoy the benefits associated with using first-hand luxury fashion without breaking the bank. Vintage stores, thrift stores and consignment stores are specialised categories of second-hand retailers in the modern retail landscape, with the vintage category experiencing the most significant growth (ThredUp, 2024).

Vintage luxury has become a growing trend in Western cultures and developing nations over the past decade. The literature often distinguishes between new and authentic vintage, with authentic vintage referring to pre-loved second-hand items that have found a second life. However, in certain cultures, for example, among the Chinese, there has been a negative perception of the connection between vintage luxury and the second-hand movement (Henninger *et al.*, 2018). Initially, Chinese culture did not embrace the idea of purchasing and using pre-owned items, especially clothing (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). However, second-hand luxury consumption has increased in Western and Eastern countries, including China (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2021).

Various studies have explored the motivations behind purchasing second-hand luxury (Strähle and Klatt, 2017; Turunen *et al.*, 2020) and vintage luxury (Amatulli *et al.*, 2018). Cervellon *et al.* (2012) also distinguished the motivations for purchasing vintage and second-hand luxuries. However, despite the growing popularity of SHVL among Chinese consumers (Ki *et al.*, 2024), there is currently no study to the best of the researchers’ knowledge that has investigated the motivations behind their intention to purchase and recommend such items. Hence, owing to the growth of the SHVL market, further empirical investigation is needed to reveal the motivational factors influencing Chinese consumers to purchase and recommend SHVL products.

Purchase intention is often used as a proxy for purchase behaviour (Morwitz *et al.*, 2007). Marketing managers often use purchase intention to predict future demands and make strategic decisions (Peña-García *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, recommendation behaviour is recognised as a major driver of success (Kumar and Umashankar, 2012) because the information shared by experienced customers is highly effective compared to sources created by marketers on the websites (Chen *et al.*, 2018; Šegota *et al.*, 2022). Thus, it is important to understand key antecedents of intentions to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion products.

Therefore, drawing from insights on the S-O-R perspective, we develop a theoretical framework to explicate the association between consumers' motivations and their intentions to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion. Scholars have further revealed that attitude influenced by customer motivations results in positive behaviour intentions (Kwak *et al.*, 2021), indicating that attitude can mediate the relationship between customer motivations and behavioural intentions.

Based on the research gaps identified above, this study aims to expand the understanding of key factors driving willingness to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion products among consumers. Emphasis is placed on the economic, ethical, fashion and status-seeking motivations, which are found to be influential intrinsic factors in the literature that influence second-hand luxury purchases (Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019; Turunen and Pöyry, 2019). The conceptual model proposed in this study provides a deeper understanding of the relationship consumers develop with SHVL fashion retailers and provides retailers with practical implications for increasing SHVL fashion product sales.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Stimulus–Organism–Response framework

This research adopts the S-O-R framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which assumes that environmental cues (stimulus) influence an individual's perceptive and emotional state (organism) and, in turn, affect their behaviours (response). This theory assumes that unique environmental factors influence people's internal feelings and emotions, ultimately determining their actions (Saricam, 2023). For decades, the S-O-R framework has served as a strong guide for numerous studies to investigate how situational environmental cues impact an individual's internal process and behavioural responses (Nam *et al.*, 2021; Zhu *et al.*, 2020).

Extant literature has explored how situational factors and customers' emotional states influence their second-hand shopping experience (Palmgren and Zylfjaj, 2022). Given the increased importance of the SHVL fashion market, this study adopts the S-O-R framework to investigate the influence of consumers' motivations on their attitudes towards shopping and recommending SHVL fashion. Five consumer motivations were identified as the external elements of this study. Consumer attitudes towards SHVL fashion represented the organism for this study. At the same time, the behavioural responses were measured by consumers' intention to purchase and intention to recommend SHVL fashion. The S-O-R framework is useful in this study for two reasons. First, it is a popular theoretical framework for understanding how situational environmental cues impact an individual's internal process and behavioural responses. Second, it has been used within the second-hand luxury fashion contexts (Gabriella *et al.*, 2021; Krikler and Heüveldop, 2017). Hence, it is appropriate within this research context.

### 2.2 Motivations for buying second-hand vintage luxury fashion

The concept of vintage luxury intersects with second-hand luxury, but they are not interchangeable terms (Turunen *et al.*, 2020). In the fashion sector, there is an ongoing debate about the similarities and differences between vintage and second-hand luxury. Some researchers have distinguished the two terms based on conceptual and operational factors (Strähle and Klatt, 2017), while another study considers vintage luxury fashion as a subset of second-hand luxury fashion (Ryding *et al.*, 2017). The term "vintage" refers to a rare and authentic piece that embodies the style of a particular era (Gerval, 2008). Vintage luxury fashion encompasses unique and rare items that reflect specific timelines or fashion trends (Seo and Kim, 2019). The appeal of vintage luxury fashion

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lies in its rarity and uniqueness, attracting consumers who seek exclusivity and timelessness. It can also be defined as luxury apparel manufactured between the 1920s and 1980s (Cornett, 2010).

Within this study context, SHVL fashion refers to an authentic vintage fashion item that is more than 20 years old and has had a previous owner but possesses symbolic properties that allow users to express and enhance their individual and social identities at a lower price than newly produced vintage luxury fashion. Various studies within the second-hand luxury fashion context suggest that second-hand shopping is driven by economic motivations (i.e. product quality, price and frugality), ethical motivations (i.e. environmental consciousness), hedonic motivations (i.e. nostalgia, novelty, status consumption, need for uniqueness, treasure hunting) (Aycock *et al.*, 2023; Hur, 2020; Lichy *et al.*, 2023). A few studies interviewed consumers to uncover their motivations for purchasing second-hand luxury fashion products (Silva *et al.*, 2022). Although, these studies focused on non-vintage products. Cervellon *et al.* (2012) attributed the consumption of SHVL fashion products to nostalgia, fashion involvement, the need for uniqueness, status consumption and environmental consciousness.

Drawing on the S-O-R framework, this study proposes a theoretical model that investigates the effects of five motivational dimensions (environmental consciousness, treasure hunting, status consumption, product quality and need for uniqueness) on a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion shopping, which may enhance their intention to purchase and recommend SHVL fashion products.

*2.2.1 Eco-consciousness.* An eco-fashion movement has recently gained traction among consumers who are increasingly aware of the negative environmental impact of fast fashion consumption. As a result, they have started to modify their consumption habits for ecological reasons (Zaman *et al.*, 2019). This growing eco-consciousness has given rise to concepts such as reuse, recycling and upcycling within the luxury fashion industry (Yu and Lee, 2019). Existing literature suggests that the consumption of SHVL items is motivated by consumers' heightened awareness of their ecological environment (Xu *et al.*, 2014). Owing to environmental concerns, some consumers recycle or resell their used apparel instead of discarding them (Seo and Kim, 2019). Prior research further suggests that buying SHVL fashion is driven by consumer's environmental consciousness (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Lo *et al.*, 2019; Park *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022).

A positive attitude towards SHVL fashion shopping is positively related to taking a distance from mainstream consumption and supporting ethical concerns (Aycock *et al.*, 2023; Guiot and Roux, 2010). Buying new vintage luxury products is viewed as wasteful and socially divisive, whereas purchasing second-hand products is seen as a way of avoiding conventional consumption and prolonging the lifetime of products that can still be of use (Roux and Guiot, 2008). There is a potential linkage between eco-consciousness and a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion because value judgement can occur in a particular context of making ethical choices like buying used clothing, reusing materials and recycling clothing. Consequently, consumers may develop a positive attitude towards purchasing SHVL fashion products when conscious of ecological issues. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H1a.* Eco-consciousness significantly influences a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion.
- H2a.* Attitude mediates the relationship between eco-consciousness and intention to purchase SHVL fashion.

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2.2.2 *Treasure hunting.* Treasure hunting can be described as the desire to find something rare, valuable and original while shopping. It is often characterised as the process of “unearthing” something special (Guiot and Roux, 2010). For certain customers, the act of purchasing vintage second-hand luxury products can be considered a form of treasure hunting, as it brings them a sense of excitement (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). However, searching for a satisfying vintage second-hand luxury item can be a challenging task, as consumers must invest a significant amount of time in seeking high-quality pieces at affordable prices. Accomplishing this arduous task typically results in excitement and pleasure (Turunen *et al.*, 2019).

Various studies have further suggested that treasure hunting significantly influences a positive attitude towards second-hand luxury vintage fashion (Guzzetti *et al.*, 2021; Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Further research among young consumers has attributed the frequent purchase of second-hand luxury fashion items to the fun of treasure-hunting (Turunen and Pöyry, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion consumption is driven by hunting for a treasure in the form of a unique piece and a bargain. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1b.* Treasure hunting significantly influences a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion.

*H2b.* Attitude mediates the relationship between treasure hunting and intention to purchase SHVL fashion.

2.2.3 *Status consumption.* The need for status, as defined by Eastman *et al.* (1999), refers to the inclination to purchase a brand for the social prestige it bestows upon the owner. Vintage luxury objects possess a certain level of status that appeals to a wider audience. The allure of these vintage items lies not only in their logos but also in their historical value (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). Hence, wealthy consumers with a need for status often opt for new vintage luxury fashion to signal their affiliation with the elite class. On the other hand, consumers who share a high need for status but possess lesser wealth may imitate the purchasing behaviour of the affluent by acquiring SHVL fashion items (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012).

Previous research confirms that second-hand luxury consumption behaviour is tied to conspicuousness and status consumption (Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019). Although used vintage luxuries are more affordable, similar motivations and behaviours relating to the need to improve one’s social standing, have been discovered in extant literature (Turunen *et al.*, 2020). Amatulli *et al.* (2018) discovered that consumers acquire second-hand luxury products to enhance their social status within their peer groups. Kessous and Valette-Florence (2019) also highlighted that the purchase and consumption of SHVL fashion are motivated by status consumption. Compared with first-hand luxury consumers who seek social recognition, SHVL consumers seek status consumption. Hence, SHVL consumers develop a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion because it fulfils their social needs and boosts their self-esteem. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1c.* Status consumption significantly influences a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion.

*H2c.* Attitude mediates the relationship between status consumption and intention to purchase SHVL fashion.

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**2.2.4 Product quality.** Product quality is usually evaluated based on life span and durability (Niinimäki, 2017). It is believed that luxury products have superior quality to everyday products and, therefore, they have higher levels of durability and authenticity. For this reason, consumers are willing to consider vintage luxury fashion. Although most consumers purchase SHVL because of their lower price, it is worth noting that these purchases represent a good deal because of the authentic nature of these second-hand vintage items. The second is vintage luxury items that are not of low quality or counterfeit (Amatulli *et al.*, 2018). Generally, owing to superior quality and sometimes minor use, SHVL fashion products represent a surplus for potential and actual customers (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012).

Findings from previous studies have associated the purchase and consumption of SHVL items with authentic product quality on the basis that they are “good as new” (Sihvonen and Turunen, 2016). Other studies have confirmed the effect of a positive attitude on SHVL fashion because of its superior quality and heritage (Lou *et al.*, 2022). For instance, Turunen and Pöyry (2019) identified superior quality consciousness as one of the major factors motivating the purchase and consumption of SHVL. Findings from their research further suggested that previously used vintage luxury withstands the test of time and further attests to their high quality. Generally, consumers will have a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion because they believe old-fashioned items were made by hand with superior materials and sophisticated techniques (Amatulli *et al.*, 2018; Machado *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1d.* Product quality significantly influences a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion.

*H2d.* Attitude mediates the relationship between product quality and intention to purchase SHVL fashion.

**2.2.5 Need for uniqueness.** The desire for uniqueness is a characteristic whereby consumers strive to differentiate themselves from others through product choices, usage patterns and disposal behaviours. Within the realm of fashion, uniqueness has been identified as a significant motivation for purchasing vintage luxury items, as they are distinct and exclusive compared to regular luxury fashion offerings (Gladigau, 2008). Additionally, research has shown that the desire to buy unique items that others do not have or that cannot be found in regular stores is one of the most important motivations for SHVL fashion (Guiot and Roux, 2010). The SHVL fashion market offers a range of unique items that are not typically found in the traditional luxury market.

Given that uniqueness is a defining characteristic among vintage luxury consumers who express their individuality through fashion (Zaman *et al.*, 2019), it is no surprise that they are drawn to the SHVL fashion market (Medalla *et al.*, 2020). These consumers consistently choose to purchase from this market, as it aligns with their desire to possess items distinct and reflective of their style.

Various researchers have discovered that the need for uniqueness is in the motivation for purchasing SHVL fashion (Silva *et al.*, 2022; Turunen *et al.*, 2020). Consumers of previously owned vintage fashion products also develop a positive attitude based on distinctiveness and uniqueness emanating from using exclusive vintage pieces (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Ferraro *et al.*, 2016). Kessous and Valette-Florence (2019) further suggest that luxury fashion consumers interested in are more inclined to buy SHVL fashion because they are rare, and they satisfy their need for uniqueness. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H1e.* Need for uniqueness significantly influences a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion.

*H2e.* Attitude mediates the relationship between the need for uniqueness and intention to purchase SHVL fashion.

*2.2.6 Attitude towards second-hand vintage luxury fashion.* An attitude towards purchasing SHVL fashion refers to a consumer's encouraging evaluation of acquiring such items. The stronger a consumer's positive attitude towards a product, the more likely they will purchase it. Therefore, a positive attitude can inspire consumers' intention to purchase SHVL fashion (Seo and Kim, 2019; Zhang and Kim, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3a.* Attitude significantly influences purchase intention towards SHVL fashion.

Similarly, a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion is also likely to foster an intention to recommend it to others (Aycok et al., 2023). For this reason, it is common for consumers to search for online product reviews and customer review comments in the pre-purchase stage (Adjei et al., 2010). When consumers shop for luxury brands, they develop a positive attitude based on satisfaction of financial, functional and social utility, which can facilitate positive word-of-mouth (Park et al., 2021). Findings from the studies of Aycok et al. (2023) and Lo et al. (2019) discovered that a positive attitude towards second-hand fashion positively influences consumers' intention to recommend. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3b.* Attitude significantly influences intention to recommend SHVL fashion.

Furthermore, this study proposes that purchase intention will lead to an intention to recommend SHVL fashion. Marketing literature has recognised recommendation behaviour as a favourable means of interpersonal consumer communication following overall satisfaction with a product or service (Lo et al., 2019). Although extant literature attributes intention to recommend as a post-purchase behaviour that primarily hinges on post-purchase customer experience (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Lundblad and Davies, 2016), other scholars argue that intentions to purchase can influence recommendation behaviour. For instance, Lo et al. (2019) stated that consumers are more likely to share information about the second-hand fashion items they are planning to buy if they perceive economic, ethical and hedonic benefits. Therefore, we argue that purchase intention will lead to an intention to recommend SHVL fashion.

*H4.* Purchase intention significantly influences the intention to recommend SHVL fashion.

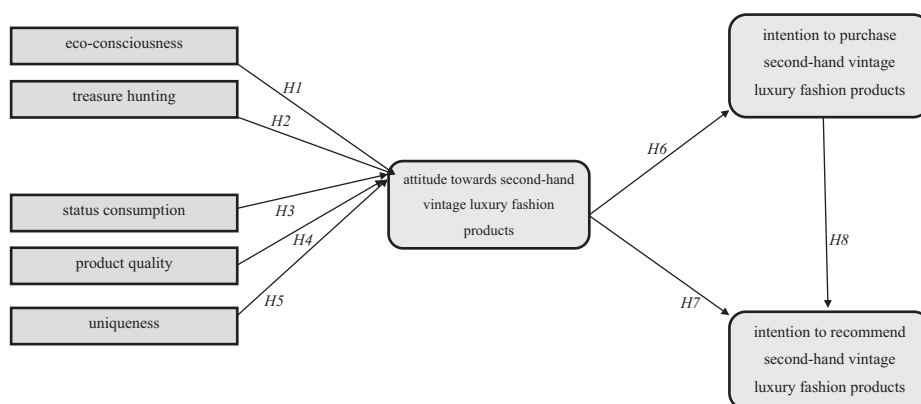
Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model with all the constructs explained in this literature review.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample and data collection

Respondents from mainland China were recruited to participate in the study. An invitation email including information about the study was sent to prospective respondents who were at least 18 years old. This study adopted the purposive sampling technique and targeted consumers who had purchased SHVL products before. An online consumer survey panel was administered to collect data from over 800 respondents, after receiving ethical approval for using human subjects from Curtin University, Australia.





**Figure 1.** Research model

China was selected as an appropriate study context for certain reasons. First, many of the extant studies on SHVL have been in the Western contexts (Turunen *et al.*, 2020; Turunen and Pöyry, 2019), with less emphasis on the Chinese luxury market. Although second-hand luxury consumption was less common in China because of the strong negative stereotypes about second-hand consumption (Wang *et al.*, 2020), SHVL consumption has great developmental potential in China because Chinese consumers are most famous for their luxury consumption (Luo and Park, 2024). The growing trend of luxury resale in China (Ki *et al.*, 2024) further highlights the need to examine the motivations behind SHVL consumption within the Chinese context.

The definition of SHVL fashion and screening questions were placed at the beginning of the survey, and this ensured that participants' responses reflected their experiences of purchasing SHVL fashion products. Next, respondents were asked whether they had purchased and owned SHVL fashion products. If they answered yes, the following question asked about product categories that they have purchased and how many SHVL fashion products they purchased. If they answered no, their responses were screened out. Hence, after data screening, 232 usable responses were processed for data analysis.

### 3.2 Survey instruments

Reliable and valid scale items were adapted from existing literature to ensure content validity, with each scale item modified to the current research context. All scale items except demographic information were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1). Eco-consciousness consisted of three items adapted from Guiot and Roux (2010). Treasure hunting consisted of three items adapted from Roux and Guiot (2008). Status consumption consisted of three items adapted from Eastman *et al.* (1999). Product quality consisted of four items adapted from Grewal *et al.* (1998). The need for uniqueness consisted of four items. Attitude consisted of three items. Intention to purchase consisted of three items adapted from Perugini and Bagozzi (2001). Intention to recommend consisted of three items adapted from Perugini and Bagozzi (2001).

### 3.3 Data analyses procedures

Before data analysis, data screening was carried out by treating out-of-range data, missing values and outliers. IBM SPSS Statistics 27 was used for data screening. After data cleansing, the summed score of the multiple items for each construct was used for descriptive statistical analysis using the same SPSS software. The hypotheses in the proposed research model (see [Figure 1](#)) were tested through the partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique using the SmartPLS 4 software. The PLS-SEM technique was adopted because of its predictive nature and the complexity of the proposed research model within this study ([Hair et al., 2014](#)).

The SEM analysis was conducted following [Anderson and Gerbing's \(1988\)](#) two-step approach: assessing the measurement model and the structural model. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the ten measures was calculated to test the validity and reliability of the constructs in the research model. Values for composite reliability (CR) were also calculated to confirm the internal consistency of each construct ([Hair et al., 2014](#)), whereas the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was calculated to ensure the variance captured by the construct was greater than the variance from measurement error ([Fornell and Larcker, 1981](#)). Additionally, discriminant validity was assessed to ensure that each construct is empirically distinct from the others in the measurement model ([Hair et al., 2017](#)).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Respondents' characteristics

Based on gender distribution, most respondents were females ( $n = 174$ ; 75%). According to age group distribution, most of the respondents fell within the Gen Z and millennial category of between 21 and 29 years ( $n = 189$ ; 81.5%). Concerning annual income, most respondents earned below 50,000 ( $n = 91$ ; 39.2%). While concerning the level of post-secondary school qualification, most respondents were bachelor's degree holders ( $n = 121$ ; 52.2%). The demographic profile of the respondents is represented in [Table 1](#).

### 4.2 Measurement reliability and validity

All standardised factor loadings for each construct were greater than 0.5, thereby exceeding the threshold value and indicating convergent validity of the model ([Hair et al., 2014](#)) (see [Table 2](#)). Each construct also demonstrated a satisfactory level of internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.7, thereby indicating a high level of reliability of each scale item ([Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994](#)). All CR values were also greater than the threshold value of 0.7, confirming convergent validity ([Hair et al., 2014](#)). The AVE values were also greater than 0.5, indicating that the variance captured by the construct was greater than the measurement error ([Fornell and Larcker, 1981](#)). Finally, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) values were less than the 0.85 threshold value, indicating discriminant validity (see [Table 3](#)).

### 4.3 Structural equation modelling and hypothesis testing

[Table 4](#) demonstrates that the  $R^2$  value of attitude, intention to purchase and intention to recommend in the PLS-SEM model are considered acceptable, as their values are above 0.2, which signifies the model's input can explain the observed variation at an acceptable level ([Hair et al., 2021](#)). More specifically, the percentage of variance of attitude explained by the motivations was 23.5% ( $R^2 = 0.235$ ). Attitude accounted for 30.6% of the variance in intention to purchase ( $R^2 = 0.306$ ), while 88.6% of the variation in intention to recommend was explained by attitude and intention ( $R^2 = 0.886$ ).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

Item	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	50	21.5
Female	174	75
Prefer not to say	8	3.5
Total	232	100
<i>Age</i>		
Below 20 years	14	6
21–29years	189	81.5
30–39years	28	12.1
40 years and above	1	0.4
Total	232	100
<i>Relationship status</i>		
Single	128	55.2
In a relationship	69	29.7
Married	35	15.1
Total	232	100
<i>Annual income (¥RMB)</i>		
Under ¥50,000	91	39.2
¥50,000–¥100,000	48	20.7
¥101,000–¥300,000	61	26.3
¥301,000–¥500,000	17	7.3
Above ¥500,000	15	6.5
Total	232	100
<i>Level of post-secondary school qualification</i>		
College	16	6.9
Bachelors' degree	121	52.2
Masters' degree	81	34.9
Doctorate degree (PhD)	5	2.2
Other qualifications	9	3.9
Total	232	100

Results of the structural model showed that with regards to the association between consumer motivations, attitude, intention to purchase and intention to recommend SHVL fashion (see Table 5): eco-consciousness ( $\beta = 0.236$ ;  $p$ -value  $< 0.001$ ), treasure hunting ( $\beta = 0.205$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.001), status consumption ( $\beta = 0.110$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.032) and need for uniqueness ( $\beta = -0.196$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.035) all significantly influenced attitude, thereby providing empirical support for *H1a*, *H1b*, *H1c* and *H1d*. However, the insignificant effect of product quality ( $\beta = 0.125$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.183) on attitude did not provide empirical support for *H1e*.

Furthermore, attitude significantly influenced intention to purchase ( $\beta = 0.553$ ;  $p$ -value  $< 0.001$ ) but did not influence the intention to recommend ( $\beta = 0.018$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.563). Hence, providing empirical support for *H3a* but not *H3b*. Finally, the intention to purchase significantly influenced the intention to recommend ( $\beta = 0.931$ ;  $p$ -value  $< 0.001$ ), thus providing empirical support for *H4*.

The mediating effects of attitude and intention to purchase were tested using the bootstrapping sample procedure (see Table 6). The results showed the indirect effects of eco-consciousness

**Table 2.** Measurement model

Scale items	Factor loadings
<i>Eco-consciousness</i> ( $\alpha = 0.756$ ) $CR = 0.792$ , $AVE = 0.662$	
Recycling is very important to me personally	0.750
I enjoy buying second-hand because I don't like objects being thrown away that can still be of use	0.863
By buying second-hand, I feel I'm helping to fight against waste	0.824
<i>Treasure Hunting</i> ( $\alpha = 0.871$ ) $CR = 0.877$ , $AVE = 0.794$	
I go to second-hand channels to ferret around and discover something	0.892
I'm often on the look-out for a find when going to some second-hand channels	0.913
In some of these second-hand channels, I feel a bit like I'm treasure hunting	0.868
If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product	0.825
When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of	0.698
If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy	0.597
I like to know which brands and products make good impressions on others	0.859
If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy	0.831
<i>Status Consumption</i> ( $\alpha = 0.678$ ) $CR = 0.821$ , $AVE = 0.604$	
I would buy second-hand luxury just because it had status	0.801
Second-hand luxury is more valuable to me because it has some snob appeal	0.743
<i>Product Quality</i> ( $\alpha = 0.892$ ), $CR = 0.914$ , $AVE = 0.726$	
Luxury products appear to be reliable	0.855
Luxury products appear to be durable	0.854
Luxury products appear to be dependable	0.815
I view luxury brand names positively	0.883
<i>Need for Uniqueness</i> ( $\alpha = 0.942$ ) $CR = 0.956$ , $AVE = 0.845$	
Vintage second-hand luxury products are exclusive	0.896
Vintage second-hand luxury products are precious	0.885
Vintage second-hand luxury products are rare	0.937
Vintage second-hand luxury products are uncommon	0.957
<i>Attitude</i> ( $\alpha = 0.951$ ) $CR = 0.951$ , $AVE = 0.911$	
I am not embarrassed by wearing second-hand luxury	0.936
I am not embarrassed to tell people how much I spend on luxury products	0.957
I justify luxury purchases by buying products second-hand	0.969
<i>Intention to Purchase</i> ( $\alpha = 0.912$ ), $CR = 0.944$ , $AVE = 0.850$	
I intend to buy second-hand luxury products	0.918
I plan to buy second-hand luxury products	0.943
I will expend efforts to buy second-hand luxury products	0.904
<i>Intention to Recommend</i> ( $\alpha = 0.920$ ), $CR = 0.949$ , $AVE = 0.862$	
I intend to recommend second-hand luxury products	0.887
I plan to recommend second-hand luxury products	0.946
I will expend efforts to recommend second-hand luxury products	0.951

( $\beta = 0.145$ ;  $p$ -value  $< 0.001$ ), treasure hunting ( $\beta = 0.113$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.005), status consumption ( $\beta = 0.061$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.037) and need for uniqueness ( $\beta = -0.108$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.037) on intention to purchase, through attitude. These findings further provided empirical support for  $H2a$ ,  $H2b$ ,  $H2c$  and  $H2d$ .

**Table 3.** HTMT coefficient values

Variable	ATT	ECO	INT	SNI	QUAL	REC	SC	TH	UNI
ATT									
ECO	0.444								
INT	0.593	0.552							
SNI	0.082	0.170	0.217						
QUAL	0.152	0.261	0.267	0.573					
REC	0.570	0.505	1.027	0.204	0.268				
SC	0.245	0.254	0.260	0.115	0.154	0.237			
TH	0.418	0.616	0.616	0.246	0.252	0.567	0.302		
UNI	0.036	0.174	0.133	0.484	0.524	0.120	0.181	0.166	

**Notes:** Eco-consciousness (ECO); treasure hunting (TH); susceptibility to normative and informative influence (SNI); status consumption (SC); product quality (QUAL); uniqueness (UNI); attitude (ATT); intention to purchase (INT); intention to recommend (REC)

**Table 4.** Results of  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$

Latent variables	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$
Attitude (ATT)	0.236	0.212
Intention to purchase (INT)	0.306	0.303
Intention to recommend (REC)	0.886	0.885

**Table 5.** Structural model estimation

Paths	Beta	SD	t-value	p-values	decision
H1. ECO → ATT	0.263	0.060	4.356	0.000***	supported
H2. TH → ATT	0.205	0.062	3.275	0.001***	supported
H3. SNI → ATT	0.013	0.122	0.111	0.912	Not supported
H4. SC → ATT	0.110	0.051	2.144	0.032*	supported
H5. QUAL → ATT	0.125	0.094	1.332	0.183	Not supported
H6. UNI → ATT	-0.196	0.093	2.104	0.035*	supported
H7. ATT → INT	0.553	0.057	9.661	0.000***	supported
H8. ATT → REC	0.018	0.032	0.578	0.563	Not supported
H9. INT → REC	0.931	0.021	44.693	0.000***	supported

**Notes:** \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; eco-consciousness (ECO); treasure hunting (TH); susceptibility to normative and informative influence (SNI); status consumption (SC); product quality (QUAL); uniqueness (UNI); attitude (ATT); intention to purchase (INT); intention to recommend (REC)

## 5. Discussions, implications and limitations

This study contributes to the existing luxury fashion literature by investigating young adult consumers' motivations for purchasing and recommending SHVL fashion products. Hence, the results of this study reveal some interesting findings. First, the results show that eco-consciousness, treasure hunting, status consumption and the need for uniqueness significantly influence consumers' intentions to purchase SHVL fashion products, through the mediating role of attitude.

**Table 6.** Mediation effects

Path/effects	Beta	SD	t-values	p-values	95% CI
ECO → ATT → INT	0.145	0.040	3.625	0.000***	0.067, 0.225
TH → ATT → INT	0.113	0.041	2.788	0.005**	0.037, 0.196
SNI → ATT → INT	0.007	0.067	0.112	0.911	-0.141, 0.105
SC → ATT → INT	0.061	0.029	2.081	0.037*	0.013, 0.127
QUAL → ATT → INT	0.069	0.051	1.355	0.175	-0.045, 0.163
UNI → ATT → INT	-0.108	0.052	2.087	0.037*	-0.185, 0.021
ATT → INT → REC	0.515	0.055	9.308	0.000***	0.402, 0.618

**Notes:** \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; CI = 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval; eco-consciousness (ECO); treasure hunting (TH); susceptibility to normative and informative influence (SNI); status consumption (SC); product quality (QUAL); attitude (ATT); intention to purchase (INT); intention to recommend (REC)

These findings are consistent with various literature findings. For instance, findings from [Aycock et al. \(2023\)](#), [Park et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Silva et al. \(2022\)](#) suggest that buying SHVL fashion is driven by environmental consciousness and a need to take a distance from mainstream consumption and support ethical concerns. These results further support the notion that younger consumers are driven by their commitment to sustainability and, therefore, may be inclined to purchase SHVL fashion to enable less wasteful shopping. Also, these research findings are consistent with that of various studies which have suggested that treasure hunting significantly influences a positive attitude towards SHVL fashion ([Guzzetti et al., 2021](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#)). There is further alignment with literature suggestions that consumers seek second-hand shopping because they take delight in searching for hidden “treasures” that are scarce and distinctive ([Guiot and Roux, 2010](#)).

Furthermore, the positive impact of status consumption on consumers’ attitudes towards SHVL fashion is consistent with that of various studies which highlighted that second-hand luxury purchase and usage behaviour is tied to status consumption and conspicuousness ([Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019](#); [Lou et al., 2022](#)). This finding further supports literature suggestions that the motivation behind second-hand vintage fashion consumption is an enhancement of social status within one’s reference group ([Amatulli et al., 2018](#)). The positive impact of need for uniqueness on consumers’ attitudes towards SHVL fashion is consistent with that of various studies which discovered that consumers have a positive attitude towards second-hand vintage fashion based on the idea of uniqueness emanating from the purchase and usage of exclusive vintage pieces ([Cervellon et al., 2012](#); [Ferraro et al., 2016](#); [Turunen et al., 2020](#)).

Second, study findings demonstrate that consumers’ attitude influenced their intention to purchase SHVL fashion. This finding is consistent with that of extant literature that discovered the significant impact of attitude on consumers’ intention to purchase SHVL fashion ([Seo and Kim, 2019](#); [Zhang and Kim, 2013](#)). Finally, findings from this research revealed that purchase intention directly and positively influenced intentions to recommend SHVL fashion. This finding is also consistent with that of [Lo et al. \(2019\)](#), which suggested that consumers are more likely to share information about the second-hand fashion items they are planning to buy.

### 5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes significantly to the literature on consumer motivations for buying and recommending SHVL fashion. Various studies have explored the motivations behind

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purchasing second-hand luxury (Turunen *et al.*, 2019; Strähle and Klatt, 2017) and vintage luxury (Amatulli *et al.*, 2018). Cervellon *et al.* (2012) also distinguished the motivations for purchasing vintage luxury versus second-hand luxury. However, despite the growing popularity of SHVL, there was currently no study to the best of the researchers' knowledge investigating the motivations behind their intention to purchase and recommend such items. Hence, owing to the growth of the SHVL market, further empirical investigation was needed to reveal the motivational factors influencing young adults to purchase and recommend SHVL products. Hence, this study provides insight into consumers' motivation for buying and recommending SHVL fashion from the S-O-R framework perspective.

This study expands the literature on consumer motivation for purchasing and recommending SHVL fashion products by providing empirical support for applying the S-O-R framework. Drawing on the S-O-R framework, the current study advances the vintage luxury fashion market domain by identifying stimulus factors (eco-consciousness, treasure hunting, status consumption and need for uniqueness) on consumers' attitudes, intention to purchase and intention to recommend SHVL fashion. Prior to this study, there was limited empirical focus on the adoption of the S-O-R theoretical framework to investigate SHVL fashion consumption, even though extant literature has suggested its applicability within this study context (Gabriella *et al.*, 2021; Krikler and Heüveldop, 2017; Palmgren and Zylfijaj, 2022).

### 5.2 Practical implications

The findings of this study provide practical insights for online and offline SHVL fashion retailers and policymakers. First, the results of this study align with the shifting consumer preferences, primarily among millennial and Gen Z consumers who have become more sustainability conscious. Furthermore, to cater to young fashion-forward consumers' preferences, SHVL fashion retailers can tailor their marketing communication strategies to focus on promoting consumer attitudes towards sustainability, treasure hunting, uniqueness and status consumption. They can further position their products appropriately to suit consumers' diverse needs. For instance, emphasising the environmental friendliness and uniqueness of their products could be appealing (Aycock *et al.*, 2023).

More specifically, to satisfy consumers' uniqueness, retailers can achieve this by curating a diverse collection of unique and rare vintage items from various luxury brands, eras and styles. Retailers can further highlight limited-edition vintage items. These items, like rare runway pieces or unique colour variations, attract customers seeking uniqueness. Second, SHVL retailers can provide personalised shopping experiences, such as personal shopping appointments, dedicated stylists and tailored product recommendations, to make customers feel valued and special. They can also create exclusive membership or loyalty programs for dedicated customers by offering early access to new arrivals, discounts, or exclusive events to make these customers feel part of an elite club.

Third, SHVL retailers can appeal to consumers' treasure-hunting needs by regularly introducing new items through inventory rotation. This would encourage customers to visit their stores and websites frequently, as they never know what hidden gems they might discover. Also, by building a sense of community among customers, they would be encouraged to share their treasure finds on social media, write reviews, or participate in online forums or groups dedicated to vintage fashion hunting (Wang *et al.*, 2022). By also introducing an auction or bidding system for their rare or highly sought-after items, they could add an element of competition and excitement to customers' shopping experiences.

Fourth, SHVL retailers can satisfy their customers' need for eco-consciousness by clearly communicating their commitment to sustainability. For instance, using labels or tags to

highlight eco-friendly practices, such as items made from sustainable materials or items that are part of a circular fashion system. Retailers can also use eco-friendly packaging materials such as recycled paper or reusable and biodegradable packaging, encouraging customers to reuse or recycle the packaging they receive. By also showcasing upcycled or repurposed items (Phau *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b), retailers can highlight creativity and environmental responsibility in their production process. Table 7 further summarises the research conclusions and implications.

### 5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

While this study contributes valuable insights into the motivations of young adult consumers for purchasing and recommending SHVL fashion products, it is important to acknowledge several limitations worthy of future research. First, this study specifically focused on Chinese young adult consumers. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to other age groups or cultural contexts. Future research should consider including a more diverse sample to enhance the external validity of the results. Comparative research across different consumer demographics (e.g. age groups, income levels) and cultural contexts can provide a more comprehensive understanding of motivations for purchasing SHVL fashion products. Furthermore, this study did not extensively explore contextual factors influencing consumer motivations, such as regional variations within China, economic conditions, or specific cultural nuances. Future research could delve deeper into these contextual elements to provide a more nuanced understanding.

Second, this research did not differentiate between different luxury brands or product categories within the vintage luxury fashion market. Different brands may evoke distinct motivations in consumers. Future research could therefore explore brand-specific influences on consumer attitudes and behaviours. Third, study participants may have provided responses that they believed were socially desirable, particularly concerning eco-consciousness. Future studies could consider employing alternative methods, such as observational research or experimental designs, to mitigate potential biases.

Future research could also investigate the environmental impact of purchasing SHVL fashion products compared to buying new luxury items. This could provide empirical

**Table 7.** Conclusions and theoretical and managerial implications

Conclusions	Theoretical and managerial implications
Eco-consciousness, treasure hunting, status consumption and need for uniqueness have direct positive impacts on consumers' attitudes towards SHVL fashion products	SHVL retailers should pay attention to the unique needs of their consumers and develop and implement specific marketing communication strategies to address these needs
Attitude mediates the positive relationship between consumer motivations to purchase SHVL and purchase intentions	SHVL retailers should tailor their marketing strategies to focus on promoting consumer attitudes towards status consumption, sustainability, uniqueness and treasure hunting
Purchase intention has a direct positive impact on consumers' intention to recommend SHVL fashion products	SHVL retailers should focus on enhancing consumers' purchase experiences through exceptional customer service, loyalty programs and community building, to encourage them to recommend the products to others



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evidence supporting the sustainability benefits of second-hand shopping. As the SHVL Spanish Journal of fashion market evolves, research could focus on emerging trends, technological innovations and consumer preferences that may impact purchasing behaviour. Exploring the emotional and psychological aspects of consumer behaviour, such as the satisfaction derived from treasure hunting or the sense of accomplishment in finding unique pieces, could also provide deeper insights into consumer motivations. Marketing - ESIC

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