

THREDUP

Ezraelle Lochner

Design & Innovation Management, Education

DSGN-342 Midterm, 2021

ABSTRACT:

ThredUp is an online thrifting startup founded in 2009 that has since gained serious traction, partnering with american actress, Olivia Wilde; and retail giant, Walmart. The company is an online store selling second hand apparel at low prices. ThredUp advertises itself as a leading company in the fashion industry on pushing the world into the future of curricular economy and sustainable fashion. Its platform of reducing textile waste has certainly boosted the company's popularity among the ever more environmentally conscious young generations. ThredUp lives up to its promises as well, creating a popping, colorful platform with affordable, attractive clothes perfect for any financially struggling college student with a taste for style.

KEY WORDS:

1. **Thrifting** — the act of shopping at a thrift store, flea market, garage sale, or a shop of a charitable organization, usually with the intent of finding interesting items at a low price.
2. **Fast Fashion** — inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends.
3. **Textiles** — a type of cloth or woven fabric.
4. **Microplastics** — extremely small pieces of plastic debris in the environment resulting from the disposal and breakdown of consumer products and industrial waste.
5. **Carbon Emissions** — carbon dioxide that planes, cars, factories, etc. produce, thought to be harmful to the environment
6. **Wastewater** — water that has been used in the home, in a business, or as part of an industrial process.
7. **Marketing Campaign** — an organized course of action to promote and sell a product or service.
8. **Competitor** — an organization or country engaged in commercial or economic competition with others.
9. **User Interface** — the means by which the user and a computer system interact, in particular the use of input devices and software.
10. **Filtering** — to organize elements by type such as size, condition, color, brand, etc.
11. **Sorting** — to organize elements by categories such as newest to oldest, lowest price to highest price, etc.

COMPANY DATA:

Introduction:

ThredUp, an apparel company founded in 2009 by young entrepreneur James Reinhart, is now an online retail platform of approximately 5,000 employees and is currently reeling in more than \$500 million in annual revenue as of last year (Indeed.com, n/d.). The company's vision from day one has been to push the global apparel economy towards more sustainable fashion and to popularize "shopping with intention, rejecting throwaway fashion culture, and standing for sustainability" (ThredUp.com, 2021).

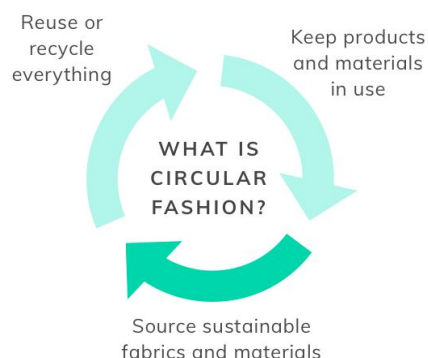
Innovation:

ThredUp's leading innovation is simple: bringing the joy of thrifting forward into the digital world. As an online platform, ThredUp receives, processes, and sells used clothing at reasonable thrifting prices, with the added value of convenience and ease that online shopping offers consumers. Thrifting no longer needs to be a day-trip, checking out all the best local used-retail locations, and tirelessly searching through the thousands of items available there. ThredUp condenses this experience into the simplicity of online shopping, where specific items can be searched for; sizes, colors, and conditions can be filtered; and selling your items is as easy as a few clicks rather than a road trip to the closest donation spot. ThredUp offers a unique shopping experience, joining two worlds: the popularity and joy of thrifting with the ease and convenience of online shopping.



Sustainability:

Sustainability is a large focus of ThredUp's business values. Fighting for a "sustainable fashion future" is at the top of the list of its intentions as a company (ThredUp.com, 2021). The fashion industry, essentially since its very conception, has been infamous for its wastefulness and negligence with the environment. According to an article by Morgan McFall-Johnson, published by Business Insider, more than 85% of all textiles go straight to the dump each year (2019). Fast fashion not only wastes its product, but abuses non-renewable resources as well: annually depositing 500,000 tons of microplastics into the ocean, producing 10% of all global carbon emissions, and consuming the second-largest amount of water resources worldwide (McFall-Johnson, 2019). ThredUp aims to fix any small amount of the many issues the fashion industry increasingly generates. ThredUp's business model, by making used and affordable clothing more accessible, gives perfectly good garments a significantly longer lifespan. This saves them from the trash and decreases the number of new garments being consumed, essentially lowering the demand for fast fashion. In addition, ThredUp spends additional efforts to partner with sustainability brands and designers, such as Zero Waste Daniel, to



create collections of upcycled garments made from secondhand products (ThredUp.com, 2021). The company has also done some intense marketing campaigns; being spotlighted in Vogue, and partnering with popular celebrities in order to get their message, "think secondhand first" out to the world (ThredUp.com, 2021).

While this business model only scratches the surface of the bigger problems that come with garment manufacturing—such as recycling, wastewater, pollution, etc.—and doesn't really stop the problems at its source, it at least is a small step forward in decreasing the toxic environmental impact of fast fashion.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) also has its place in ThredUp's mission. By making used, low-cost clothing more accessible, ThredUp brings it to a wider market of financially unstable families—often minorities—who can benefit from the wide range of pre-owned retail ThredUp offers through their site. With prices as low as \$5 for certain used items, low-income families with growing children can revamp their closets regularly without contributing to waste, while also staying within their budget.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS:

ThredUp's top three competitors are listed below. Each has a stake in the market for thrifting services or cheap fashion. Primary competitors include Goodwill and Poshmark, two companies dealing specifically in second-hand retail and providing very similar services to that of ThredUp. Secondary competitors include large, fast fashion distributors like Amazon.

Poshmark:

Poshmark is the closest runner-up to ThredUp in terms of business model. Poshmark is an online platform taking a similar structure to eBay but specializing in apparel resale. The company's mission is to "put people at the heart of commerce, empowering everyone to thrive" (Poshmark, 2021). The main difference between Poshmark and ThredUp's platforms and positions in the market is that Poshmark is a hosting platform for individuals to sell their items while ThredUp operates more like a traditional thrift store. ThredUp takes donations or buys consumers' items and then those items are resold by the company rather than by the individual. Their stakes in the thrifting market are really similar but their approaches to it are completely different. Given ThredUp's online platform and environmental focus, the company is positioned with a distinct advantage against this particular competitor.





Goodwill:

Goodwill is the second primary competitor, as it is one of the largest brick-and-mortar thrift stores operating in the U.S. and does have a small, but not very well known online selling platform. ThredUp's business model operates much more similarly to Goodwill's traditional thrift-store model: used product comes in, is sorted and processed, and then is sold by the company for profit. That said, ThredUp still has multiple distinct advantages over this competitor. ThredUp is moving thrifting into the digital age. Consumers are more and more interested in online shopping and skipping the inconvenience of driving and meandering around a store for an hour or more. Therefore, ThredUp's online platform is a leg up over Goodwill. Once again, ThredUp's environmental approach to thrifting and retail certainly adds more value as customers also become increasingly more concerned with their environmental footprint and sustainability habits.

Amazon:

Amazon is listed as a secondary competitor because it is a powerhouse of a good provider to many consumers, and apparel is one of those goods. While Amazon is not a thrifting

service it still provides new, fast fashion apparel items from all sorts of brands at low, competitive prices. For this reason, Amazon still makes for a strong competitor against ThredUp's efforts to get the next generation to "think secondhand first" (ThredUp.com, 2021). Again, ThredUp's green mission and niche thrifter-community allow the company to hold on tightly to its market share.

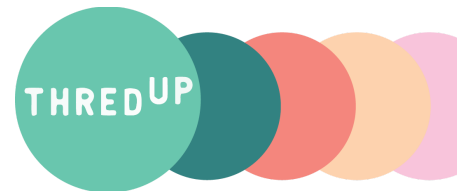
COMPETITOR PROFILE				
Company Name	ThredUp	Goodwill	Amazon	Poshmark
Type of Competitor (i.e. primary or secondary)	—	Primary	Secondary	Primary
Website	https://www.thredup.com/	https://www.shopgoodwill.com/	https://www.amazon.com/	https://poshmark.com/
Additional Value/Features	Online platform, high-quality brands as well as affordable brands, clothing specific, filtered searches, sustainability focus, sold through the company and not through individuals	Brick and mortar/try on in-store capabilities, more affordable prices	New clothes, affordable prices, filtered searches, reviews, free/fast shipping	Online platform, high-quality brands, clothing specific, filtered
Cost	\$10-\$150	\$7-50	\$15-\$60	\$30-\$150
Visuals, Branding, etc.				
Noticeable Weaknesses	Cannot see the item in-person/try on, No reviews	No product filtering, quality is not always assured	Not clothing-focused, hard to find high-quality brands at low prices, no sustainability element	Expensive brands only, cannot see item in-person/try on, no reviews, sold by individuals and not through the company

DESIGN ANALYSIS:

Current, Positive Design Elements:

What's working for ThredUp right now in terms of marketing and design include the branding, sustainability marketing campaign, and appeal to the youth.

The colors, shapes, composition and other elements of the company's branding are very well put together. It is clear that its web design and graphic design teams are very talented. The bright, teal color that is used as the branding focus along with the complementary pastels gives the company's entire website a peppy, fresh, fun atmosphere. The teal circles often included in the company's logo, packaging, and other marketing materials has become iconic to the ThredUp name. It also continues the sensation of newness and brightness in the brand despite it selling a series of products that are pre-owned. From this, it is clear that ThredUp is trying to appeal to a young adult audience, likely women in their mid- to late twenties, which seems to work well for the thrifting business.



Since sustainability is the main marketing drive of the company, it makes sense that a sustainability-focus in ThredUp's marketing campaign would be well-developed. The company has partnered with a variety of influences from celebrities like Olivia Wilde to its most recent partnership with Walmart, according to Chris Walton of Forbes Magazine (2020). The company has taken every stride possible to boost the reach of its go-green message and inspire other companies to follow suit. Most unique of these is ThredUp's *Shop Her Closet* campaign, in which ThredUp customers can shop the donated clothing of specific celebrities (Thredup.com, 2021). At the moment, the company's pool of famous fashions is a bit small, but it is certainly an interesting marketing approach and capitalizes on the power the online influencer has accumulated and that has grown so strong in the last decade. This campaign further reinforces ThredUp's target market towards young women, who would be the most interested in wearing clothes pre-owned by their favorite Instagram models or influencers.

It has been shown again and again that the upcoming generations are becoming more concerned with environmental impacts and creating a better climate future for the generations that succeed them. One such study published by Gallup, shows that individuals ages 18-29 are nearly 20% more likely to be concerned with global warming and environmental issues and three-times less likely to be skeptics (Saad, 2019). Women are also nearly 10% more likely to be concerned than men (Saad, 2019). For this reason, ThredUp's marketing towards a younger, female audience is a smart move. It ensures that their go-green message has the greatest impact and meaning on their market. By establishing their popularity with the growing demographic of environmentally-concerned young adults, ThredUp also ensures their company's future success. The design elements and structural features of their company are clearly intentional and well thought out.

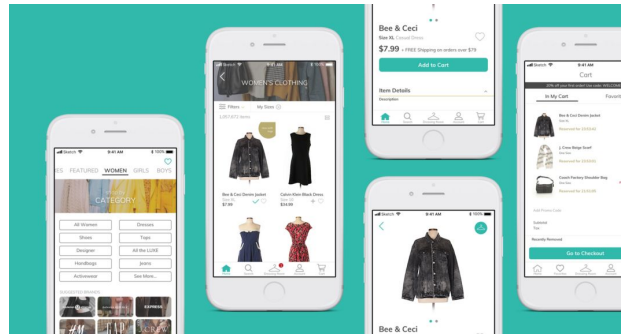
Opportunities For Improvement:

Most of the problematic design elements implicated with ThredUp have to do with the company's mobile app. Specifically regarding UI, filtering, and sorting.

The ThredUp mobile application looks well put together on the surface and holds well to the company's branding guidelines in terms of color, shapes, and texts. That said, the user

interface (UI) of the application is tricky to navigate. In short, it is pretty but also a bit clunky. Given that the company is marketing to a young-adult audience of women, it could benefit their UI design to adapt it to mimic that of the more popular social media and shopping sites such as Instagram, Pinterest, etc. By adopting some of the elements of interfaces consumers are familiar with, ThredUp could enhance the usability of its own mobile interface.

The second issue with the mobile application is filtering capabilities. While attempting to filter by item, size, or condition, the application—simply put—just doesn't do it well. Things like dresses would appear when searching for boots. This is a big problem and should not be taken lightly. A large portion of ThredUp's business foundation is bringing the joy of thrifting to the convenience of online shopping. If that online shopping experience isn't convenient, then half of their value is gone. Implementing a system of tags for items could help improve the quality and accuracy of the in-app search engine, therefore making the mobile shopping experience much more pleasant and a lot less confusing.



The last opportunity for improvement within the mobile application has to do with sorting. Sorting is a separate organizing function from filtering used in UI design. Sorting usually allows users the affordance to sort not only what they'd *like* to see but what they'd like to see *first*. For instance, lowest to highest price, newest to oldest additions, etc. Similarly to the filtering function, ThredUp's sorting is also not done extremely well. While it is possible to sort newest to oldest, the application does not do this by garment but by when the garment was uploaded to the database. Since the company is trying to appeal to young-adult women who would otherwise be interested in fast fashion if not for its environmental impacts, ThredUp should be showing new *styles* first rather than newly added garments. This is where a tagging/hashtag system could greatly benefit the search engine optimization within the app. By tagging garments by what year the style is estimated to be from or by tagging it based on present popularity, ThredUp's online database could do a significantly better job of putting its best products forward and connecting them to consumers that actually want them.

REFERENCES

General Sources:

- Indeed.com. (n/d.). Thredup Careers and Employment. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Thredup>
- McFall-Johnsen, M. (2019, October 21). The fashion industry emits more carbon than international flights and maritime shipping combined. Here are the biggest ways it impacts the planet. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.businessinsider.com/fast-fashion-environmental-impact-pollution-emissions-waste-water-2019-10>
- N/a. (2021, February 8). Annual report On Thredup's revenue, Growth, SWOT analysis & competitor intelligence. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://incfact.com/company/thredup-sanfrancisco-ca/>
- Reinhart, J. (2019). *ThredUp: 2019 Resale Report* [PDF]. ThredUp.com. https://cf-assets-tup.thredup.com/resale_report/2019/thredUP-resaleReport2019.pdf
- Segran, E. (2020, March 07). The Future Of Clothes: These 3 startups help you rent or RESELL everyday items. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.fastcompany.com/90457489/caastle-thredup-trove-most-innovative-companies-220>
- ThredUp.com. (2021). Our Impact. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.thredup.com/impact>
- Walton, C. (2020, June 23). Walmart's ThredUp Partnership is a Brilliant Strategy Move. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherwalton/2020/06/05/walmarts-thredup-partnership-is-the-best-digital-move-walmart-has-made-in-the-last-3-years/?sh=6493a0b62172>

Image Sources:

- ThredUp bag: <https://www.couponsuck.com/thredup-promo-code/>
- Recycle Symbol: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/59/d2/c7/59d2c7190ca4037b076649b73c857a2c.gif>
- ThredUP User Interface: https://miro.medium.com/max/1200/1*mO5M9bFjw-oNHLqgRc2EVQ.png

Ezraelle Lochner

Design & Innovation Management

DSGN-342, 100

Midterm, 2021

Miranda July

After scrolling through various interviews offered by Debbie Millman's *Design Matters* site, I ended up deciding to listen to her interview with Miranda July (2020). Miranda July is a performance artist, fiction writer, and filmmaker (Millman, 2020). I decided to listen to this podcast because I have a personal interest in creative writing and filmmaking.

One of the main themes of her life that July describes is loneliness and this sensation of longing. She describes having made cassette recordings of herself speaking with blank replies so that she could then listen to it and have a conversation with herself. Going on to talk about her early adult life, July remembers having had a habit for shoplifting, having had multiple run-ins with it. I thought this transitioned well into her talking about her most recent movie release, *Kajillionaire*, which is about a young woman and her small-time, con-artist parents. July describes the movie as deeply personal to her despite not being autobiographical.

At the end of the podcast, I felt there wasn't as much that I could take away from it as I had expected going into it. One quote, however, stuck out to me tremendously. Near the end of the podcast, as she is talking about *Kajillionaire*, "The trick always is to find the story, the fiction, that can hold all of [my] feelings and it has to be a fiction because I have to be somewhat unaware of the story I'm telling, and in that way it can come from the depths, it's free, it's not self-conscious, it can be smarter than me in a way" (Millman, 2020). I found this to be really inspiring and something I definitely could relate to. I had never really thought about creative writing that way until she said it out loud.

The final thing that I took away from the podcast, that she did not explicitly state, is just to think and be freely. Millman comments multiple times that July just seems so comfortable with herself and even I could sense it simply in the tone of her voice and the openness with which she spoke about things. I was honestly very inspired by that, I'd like to be more comfortable with who I am, I think it would make me a better creator and designer.

Source:

Millman, D. (2020). Miranda July. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.designmattersmedia.com/podcast/2020/Miranda-July>

Ezraelle Lochner

Design & Innovation Management

DSGN-342, 100

Midterm, 2021

The Radical Power of Listening in Times of Crisis

After perusing IDEO's website and available articles, I stumbled upon this one by Becky Bermont & Deirdre Cerminaro titled, *The Radical Power of Listening in Times of Crisis* (2020). What a title! I chose this one because I had already been thinking lately about the importance of listening.

The core of the article follows the efforts of Lakeland Community College to become "radically student-centered" and how the rest of the world should also lean into this moment and discover new opportunities to redesign centuries-old systems for the better--especially in education--rather than itching to get 'back to normal' (Bermont & Cerminaro, 2020).

One way the college is doing this is by implementing the "Enlightened Witness" approach to develop a better student support program (Bermont & Cerminaro, 2020). This approach, typically used in healthcare, is an integrative approach to patient care in which *all* elements of the patient's life are taken into consideration rather than just their ailment (Bermont & Cerminaro, 2020). Morris Beverage, president of Lakeland Community College, has taken this approach to a different application. In order to gain better insights into the lives of students and to design a support program that could reach all of them, Beverage sent out an email and video message to the student body with his personal email and an invitation for feedback (Bermont & Cerminaro, 2020). Within just five days, the new student support program, titled *The Enlightened Navigator Program*, was up and running and already showing results! Over 130 faculty members have signed up to be 'navigators' and have helped an even greater number of students continue to succeed in their college experience (Bermont & Cerminaro, 2020).

As a future educator and designer, I definitely enjoyed reading this article. It was quite inspiring and heartwarming to read the various ways people are adapting to the pandemic circumstances to help students succeed. The main takeaway I got from the article is not only to listen but to be constantly reaching for empathy, true empathy, with the people around you. In addition, *cultivate* opportunities for others to engage in empathy. Lakeland Community College does exactly that, and is a true inspiration of the kind of design and innovation I hope to see more of.

Source:

Bermont, B., & Cerminaro, D. (2020, July 8). The Radical Power of Listening in Times of Crisis. Retrieved February 18, 2021, from <https://www.ideo.com/journal/the-radical-power-of-listening-in-times-of-crisis>