

# Is Gen Z Ending Outfit Repeating?

Word Count: XXX

By Bella Stryker

## **H1: The Rise of Rental Fashion**

### **Subhead: From Last-Minute Panic to On-Demand Style**

It is the evening before a sorority formal.

Upstairs in the sorority house bedroom, hangers scrape against a metal closet rod. A black dress is tried on, examined in a full-length mirror, and rejected. Another follows. Then a red one. Then a green one. Back to black. All dresses previously worn. Nothing feels right.

The formal starts in three hours.

Then, the girl's phone buzzes. A notification is on her screen: your package has been delivered.

Inside is a structured dress rented for the weekend — far nicer than anything she would have bought outright. It fits.

For a growing number of college students, the question before an event is no longer what to buy — but what to borrow.

## **H2: Why Students Are Renting — And What They're Renting**

### **Subhead: The Social Pressure Behind Event Dressing**

Avery Manning, a Delta Gamma at the University of Mississippi, finds herself attending date parties and formals almost every other week. Rather than purchasing a new dress for each event, she turns to clothing rental companies.

“I normally rent dresses for events about once a month, depending on how many events we have,” Manning said.

For her, the motivation to rent is largely social. “My biggest reason for renting instead of buying is not wanting to repeat outfits,” she said. “If I know I might not want to re-wear it, why buy it?”

### **Subhead: Renting as a Daily Wardrobe Strategy**

SMU sophomore Gianna Palmieri first tried renting for a bachelorette trip. What began as a one-time event solution quickly expanded into routine behavior. She now rents for weddings, greek life formals and everyday outfits for class.

“I can get 10 items a month for \$100 instead of buying just one or two things for \$100,” she said.

For Palmieri, what began as event dressing has become a wardrobe system. The subscription allows her to rotate through trend-driven pieces without committing closet space or absorbing full retail costs. Ownership, in this case, feels optional.

### **H3: U.S. vs. Global Rental Trends**

### **Subhead: Two Different Systems, Same Behavior Shift**

In Australia, renting is not a novelty — it’s the standard for occasion wear.

“I don’t think I know one girl over there that hasn’t rented at least one time,” SMU student Harley Pickett said.

Rental often operates through Instagram-based businesses or small storefronts run out of private homes. Dresses are tried on in person, returns are simple and the model is event-driven and localized. By contrast, in the U.S., platforms rely on subscription memberships and warehouse logistics. The scale is larger and the interface polished. Despite the differences in scale, behavior is shifting for both groups as renting becomes more common.

### **Subhead: Rental as a Niche — Not a Replacement**

While consumer behavior is shifting, Dr. Pratyusha Kiran, a sustainability researcher at SMU who studies global fashion systems, doesn’t predict that clothing rental is the future of fashion retail.

“Rental is not a main regime — it’s still a niche,” she said. “Think of rentals as the EV [electronic vehicle] market. Not everyone has an EV, so it has not been incorporated 100%. But it’s still part of the landscape.”

Rental is growing — but it is not replacing ownership.

The closet is no longer a fixed archive of past purchases.

For a generation raised on subscriptions, streaming and shared access, fashion is beginning to reflect the same logic. The closet is becoming a revolving door of temporary solutions.