

A Second-hand Shoppers' Motivation Scale: Antecedents, Consequences, and Implications for Retailers

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Abstract

In view of growing interest in alternative consumption channels and critiques of conventional retailing, this study proposes a scale of second-hand shopping motivations. After defining the concept, we present the characteristics of second-hand shopping and explain the importance of a motivation-based approach. Through qualitative and quantitative studies and two data collections carried out in France with 708 subjects, we propose a reliable, valid, eight-factor scale that includes motivations related to products and distribution channels. A second-order hierarchical structure supports the tripartite nature (critical, economic, and recreational) of this form of shopping. Furthermore, the measure reveals, through a typological analysis, four consumer segments: “polymorphous enthusiasts”, “thrifty critics”, “nostalgic hedonists”, and “regular specialist shoppers”. We discuss the applications of this new scale and their implications for both research and retailing strategies.

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Why do consumers shop second-hand? This question arises from the rapid growth of such consumption in the past 20 years. In 2000, a survey by Mintel showed that 40% of U.K. consumers had shopped in second-hand markets during the previous 12 months and that 28% had made a purchase in a charity store during this same period (Williams and Paddock 2003). This phenomenon, shared across many countries, also becomes manifest in the proliferation of garage sales, second-order outlets (Solomon and Rabolt 2004), specialist second-hand retail chains, and the rise of Internet auctions. Second-hand shopping also constitutes a system in competition with traditional retail outlets, which implies the existence of retail expectations that traditional channels cannot satisfy. Identifying these expectations and providing some insights into the volatility of consumer behavior, shopping motivations, and their asso-

ciated taxonomies therefore constitutes an important research area for retailing (Arnold and Reynolds 2003; Grewal, Levy, and Lehmann 2004; Lesser and Kamal 1991; Udell 1965; Westbrook and Black 1985). Despite the interest it has aroused though (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Sherry 1990a, 1990b; Soiffer and Herrmann 1987), second-hand shopping remains relatively unstudied, even as it raises crucial issues, including the repeated circulation of used objects among consumers, which prolongs the objects' useful life and thus reduces conventional retailers of a substantial proportion of their revenues (Bauhain-Roux and Guiot 2001).

Second-hand channels clearly satisfy expectations other than simply economic advantages, prompting various authors to describe recreational benefits derived from outlets such as flea markets, swap meets, and garages sales. In a ludic context, they offer opportunities for finding unusual items that are often unavailable in a new goods market (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Gregson and Crewe 1997b; Sherry 1990a; Soiffer and Herrmann 1987).

As our first objective, we explore and measure motivations for second-hand shopping, noting both their antecedents and consequences for consumption behavior. We also empirically test a model to summarize these motivations. Therefore, our study provides retailers with a segmentation tool they can use to identify different shopper profiles. Our contributions are fourfold.

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First, many studies address shoppers' motivations in conventional channels (Arnold and Reynolds 2003; Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Tauber 1972; Westbrook and Black 1985), but few clarify the complex motives that explain why people might turn to alternative shopping channels. Second, our findings expand previous conclusions about the economic–hedonic duality (Bardhi and Arnould 2005) by also including a critical dimension, embodied by this form of shopping. As a key contribution, the concept of second-hand shopping motivations enables predictions of behaviors linked to economic and ecological concerns, such as recycling and avoidance of waste, or those induced by recreational contexts, such as browsing (Leonard-Barton 1981). Third, by addressing second-hand shoppers' motivations, we help clarify the links between product choice and channel preference. Fourth, the proposed typology of shoppers provides a useful action tool for traditional retailers, as well as intermediaries in the second-hand market, that enable them to adapt their retailing mix to different shopper profiles.

We organize this article into four main parts. We first discuss the theoretical framework and previous studies. In addition to hypotheses derived from prior literature, we present a preliminary qualitative study that we used to generate the measurement scale items. We also detail the refinement and validation results for this tool, based on two samples. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings, their limitations, and additional research they suggest in the field of retailing.

Background and literature review

Historically, few studies address second-hand shopping, despite its long tradition in Europe and current expansion in many markets. For example, in France during the past 20 years, various forms of second-hand and used product sales have proliferated (Guiot and Roux 2008). What was once a marginal form of commerce, comprising a few flea markets, second-hand markets, and antique dealers, has become, in both Europe and the United States, a basic trend that makes reselling, recovery, and recycling acceptable. Second-hand shopping consists both of not buying new—a product dimension—, and frequenting channels with distinctive characteristics—a sales dimension. Therefore, we define second-hand shopping as *the acquisition of second-hand objects through methods and places of exchange that are generally distinct from those for new products*.

By adopting a positive orientation toward this form of shopping, we invoke the concept of motivation to identify determinants of a person's actions, including wishes, needs, emotions, feeling, passions, areas of interests, beliefs, life values, fantasies, imaginary representations, personal complexes, conditioning, habits, deep-seated attitudes, opinions, and aspirations. Motivation can support investigations of behavior toward both products (Haire 1950; Webster and Von Pechmann 1970) and retail channels (Tauber 1972). In particular, Westbrook and Black (1985) suggest shopping motivations consist of three dimensions: the wish to acquire a product, the desire to satisfy needs not linked to the product, and the goal of achieving certain ends independent of the actual purchase. In this framework, second-hand shopping motives encourage consumers to prefer the informal, ludic

atmosphere of certain channels and look for unique and original products (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Gregson and Crewe 1997a, 1997b; Sherry 1990a, 1990b).

Prior studies of second-hand shopping cite two reasons for the growth of this market. The economic rationale relates to declines in purchasing power of middle classes since the 1980s (Williams and Paddock 2003). A recreational explanation instead focuses on the characteristics of certain channels as the basis for their appeal. For example, second-hand markets provide various and unpredictable offerings, visual stimulation and excitement due to the plethora of goods, the urge to hunt for bargains, and feelings of affiliation and social interaction (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Gregson and Crewe 1997b; Sherry 1990a; Soiffer and Herrmann 1987; Stone, Horne, and Hibbert 1996).

In general, prior studies provide observations about particular features and advantages of the channels rather than identifying any precise motivations for this form of shopping (Bardhi and Arnould 2005). Nevertheless, they demonstrate that second-hand shoppers' motives are not exclusively financial, that is, i/ that the channels provide sources of direct interest to shoppers, and ii/ that economic and recreational motivations are interwoven.

i/ On the first point, second-hand objects may be sought for their unusual character, rarity, or geographical, biographical, or historical origins (Kopytoff 1986). This finding fits with anthropological conclusions about collections (Belk 2001) and suggests a theoretical framework for the value associated with old objects and their potential for nostalgia. In particular, Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) identify a contamination process by which people make tangible and maintain the sacred character of certain objects through their recollection. A used object does not necessarily invite comparison to an equivalent new product, nor is its appeal solely a matter of price. The affective dimensions associated with acquiring this kind of object instead make a comparison with a new product meaningless to the purchaser.

ii/ With regard to the second point, access to second-hand products comes through various channels that satisfy a wealth of motivations better than can traditional retail channels. For example, some consumers prefer to stroll around outdoors, rummage through bins, hunt for items unavailable in traditional channels, engage in discussions with sellers, bargain, and so on (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Gregson and Crewe 1997a; Sherry 1990b; Stone, Horne, and Hibbert 1996).

Finally, in their qualitative exploration of motives for shopping second-hand, though not validated, Bardhi and Arnould (2005) note the links of hedonic and economic aspects. Some studies suggest that for such shoppers, second-hand acquisitions offer a genuine alternative to conventional channels, sometimes inspired by criticisms of traditional channels (Sherry 1990a; Soiffer and Herrmann 1987; Stone, Horne, and Hibbert 1996; Williams and Paddock 2003). In turn, we attempt to develop and validate a measurement scale of the motivations for second-hand shopping, linked to both the acquisition

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