Why Do People Shop Second-Hand? a Second-Hand Shoppers’ Motivation Scale in a French Context

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This article provides a measure of motivations for buying second-hand. After defining this alternative means of supply in the market, we specify the characteristics of the phenomenon in a French context and the motivations they lead to. Following a qualitative study conducted with 15 second-hand purchasers and two data collections from 708 individuals, we present a reliable, 7-dimension valid scale that can be used in a disaggregated or aggregated way to predict behaviors linked to second-hand purchasing as well as economic practices such as recycling and recreational behaviors such as browsing.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/14286/volumes/v36/NA-36

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Despite the marked interest in second-hand markets and thrift shopping (Bardhi and Arnold 2005; Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Sherry 1990; Soiffer and Hermann 1987), no measurement tool has been developed to capture the range of motivations that drive consumers to buy second-hand. In particular, little can be predicted either in term of behavior related to second-hand buying, or of the consequences that stem from it. This study thus offers a measure of second-hand shoppers’ motivations, the types of products they bought and of channels they frequent as well as with other economic or ludic practices such as recycling and browsing.

We first show that second-hand commerce has ancient roots in France and is experiencing comparable growth to Anglo-Saxon contexts: proliferation of garage sales, expansion of specialized second-hand stores, and growing use of the Internet. Then, in line with previous research (Bauhain-Roux and Guiot 2001), we assume that purchasing second-hand consists both of not buying new and of resorting to forms of supply that have their own distinctive characteristics. As Westbrook and Black (1985) contribution on shopping, we assume that motivations toward second-hand buying conform to this combination of reasons that encourage consumers to look for original and less expensive products and to prefer the informal and recreational world of certain places of exchange. The concept of motivation thus appears to be a wide-ranging tool for studying second-hand buying, both in regard to products and distribution channels.

Following Churchill’s (1979) paradigm revised by Rossiter (2002), we develop a measure of motivations toward second-hand buying within a French socio-cultural context. We define motivations for second-hand buying as the psychological and material impulses that orient individuals toward second-hand products and/or channels. As previous research was carried out in Anglo-Saxon contexts and only within specific channels, a preliminary qualitative study was deemed necessary to explore the motivations of French purchasers. We identified six main areas of motivation, broken down into 15 sub-dimensions and 77 items: an economic dimension (I) is reflected by four factors: the search for a fair price (1), bargain hunting (2), the wish to pay less (3), and the allocative aspect of price (4); a recreational dimension appears to be linked both to the second-hand product offering (II)—the originality of the products (5), nostalgia for items from the past (6), self-expression (7), and congruence sought with the items purchased (8)—and also to the characteristics of certain shopping outlets (III) such as social contact (9), stimulation (10), and treasure hunting (11); a power motive (IV) is also revealed by the way purchasers control the power of sellers by means of bargaining (12), and through a wish to escape from conventional channels (13); ethical and ecological motives (V) show concerns of certain purchasers in regard to recycling and avoidance of waste (14); and finally, “anti-ostentation” motives (VI) for some respondents reveal the conscious and voluntary rejection of everything associated with fashion and mass consumption (15).

Two data collections gathered from 708 second-hand buyers enabled us successively to calibrate and replicate the scale. Scale purification was achieved through an initial data collection (224 Parisians), and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. We examined the hierarchical structure of the scale, its reliability, and its convergent and discriminant validity. The findings reveal a hierarchical structure characterized by two second-order factors, one corresponding to economic motives—with 3 subfactors: “fair price”, “ethics and ecology” and “distance from the system”—and the other to recreational motives—with 4 subfactors: “treasure hunting”, “originality”, “social contact” and “nostalgia”. An alternative first-order model comprising 7 correlated sub-factors was tested and rejected in favor of the hierarchical structure hypothesis.

We successfully replicated the hierarchical model on a validation sample of 484 Parisians with the same survey conditions. A measurement model using the 7 dimensions and 21 items remaining after the purification stage provides a satisfactory goodness-of-fit to the data. Reliability was estimated through Jöreskog’s (1971) indices (> .70). Observation of factor contributions (all significant and > .669), application of the Fornell and Larcker (1981) procedure, and comparison of nested structural models indicate that the convergent and discriminant validity conditions are satisfactorily met. The nomological and predictive validities were assessed by testing the relations between second-hand shoppers’ motivations and the types of products bought and channels frequented, as well as behaviors related to economic and recreational motives such as recycling (Leonard-Barton 1981) and browsing (Lombart 2004).

Three types of effect corresponding to the different dimensions of the construct were assumed:

**H1:** Economic motives for second-hand buying are positively linked to recycling behaviors, measured by items included in the voluntary simplicity scale (Leonard-Barton 1981)

**H2:** Recreational motives for second-hand buying are positively linked to browsing behaviors, (defined as wandering around for pleasure and without any specific intention of buying, Lombart 2004).

**H3:** Motivations for buying second-hand are positively linked to the frequency of buying second-hand products and to the number of second-hand product channels visited.

The results confirm the stability of the causal model with significant structural coefficients enabling all the hypotheses to be validated. Additionally, the capacity of the scale to explain the choice of products bought and the second-hand channels frequented was tested by logistic regression, while controlling the effects of age, income and educational level. 10 of the 32 product categories and half the 11 channels proposed showed correct classification percentages by logistic regression. Finally, the scale successfully captures a variety of motives that give rise to a specific form of purchasing. It incorporates motivations toward products and channels and no longer relies on contextualized approaches. It also lends itself to different uses involving a total score corresponding to all dimensions of the aggregated construct, as well as disaggregated scores. It can further be used to explain variables linked either to the economic or recreational dimensions such as preferences toward private labels, sensitivity to brands or perceived market authenticity. New avenues of research are also envisaged on possible links between the second-hand shopping motivations and...
emerging phenomena such as sustainable or socially responsible consumption, dissatisfaction with the market system, and consumer resistance.

REFERENCES


