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Frahm, Lea Becker; Laursen, Linda Nhu; Boks, Casper

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Smells Like Grandparents: Consumers' Barriers and Motivations to Second-hand Shopping

Lea Becker Frahm^(a), Linda Nhu Laursen^(a), Casper Boks^(b)

a) Department of Architecture, Design, and Media Technology, AAU Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

b) Department of Design, NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

Keywords: Consumer barriers; consumer motivation; second-hand shopping; second-hand products; design for a circular economy.

Abstract: Consumers' perspectives on the reuse of products are crucial to understand for supporting and achieving a circular consumption and economy. While second-hand products are still a niche phenomenon (Wilts et al., 2021), second-hand markets validate the consumers' willingness and desire to reuse products (Gregson & Crewe, 2003). To accommodate the call for knowledge on consumer behavior regarding the circular economy, this study investigates consumers' motivations and barriers to shopping in second-hand markets. The research includes 20 semi-structured interviews with a diverse set of informants to ensure rich data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). With the departure in existing knowledge about barriers and motivations to second-hand shopping from literature, the authors have, based on analysis of the interviews, identified, and categorized seven additional barriers and five motivations, which have not yet been described in the literature. The motivations concern aspects such as social-, quality-, and design aspects, whereas the barriers mostly relate to the shopping experience and the social aspects. Thereby this study builds on prior studies and extends the theoretical understanding of the different aspects of second-hand shopping, that can either enhance or worsen the experience.

Introduction

Consumers demand new products at an increasing frequency, resulting in an ever-decreasing lifespan of products (Cooper, 2005). To reverse this trend, one may investigate the model of circular economy, where a central aspect is slowing down consumption loops. Slowing loops means extending or intensifying the use period of products, so resources may remain at their highest value for as long as possible (MacArthur, 2013). E.g., as heirlooms (Frahm et al., 2022) or second-hand products (Gregson & Crewe, 2003).

While design for a circular economy has received an increasing amount of attention in research during the past ten years (van Dam et al., 2020; Boks, 2018), the consumer perspective of sustainable behavior has received proportionally less attention in comparison to e.g., circular production methods (Camacho-Otero et al., 2018; van Dam et al., 2020). However, several researchers emphasize the importance of understanding

user behavior and motivation in the specific context of circular value offerings (Daae et al., 2018). They argue that the circular economy can hardly exist (Hobson & Lynch, 2016; Ackermann, 2018; Jackson, 2005; Bhamra et al., 2011). Current literature covers some consumer motivations (e.g., (Guiot & Roux, 2010)) and barriers (e.g., (Edbring et al., 2016)) to second-hand shopping. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, a comprehensive categorization of motivations and barriers to second-hand shopping is not available in the literature. Thus, this study aims to nuance and develop an understanding of this, by answering the research question: What are consumers' barriers and motivations to second-hand shopping?

Methodology

Two methods have been used: 1) a literature review to collect barriers and motivational factors, and 2) semi-structured interviews to gain additional insights which could

complement and help to further develop existing literature.

To identify consumers' barriers and motivations toward second-hand shopping, keywords for the literature review included "second-hand", "consumer barriers" and "consumer motivation", followed by a snowball search. To complement the literature on consumers' motivations and barriers to second-hand shopping 20 informants were interviewed, including men (n=9) and women (n=11) between the age of 21 to 79. The informants covered five groups: 1) students establishing their first home, living on public welfare, 2) adults with small kids, 3) adults with no kids, 4) adults with teenage/grown-up kids, full-time jobs, and 5) pensioners. The informants included people who have practiced second-hand shopping for decades, people who avoid second-hand shopping, and in between.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as it allows conversations to flow freely and give the interviewee the opportunity to express any feeling toward the topic (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2020). For this purpose, there were neither set limitations on which second-hand markets (online and RL) should be the topic of discussion. For the data analysis, all barriers and motivations were included regardless of the frequency of them being mentioned. Pilot interviews were made to develop the interview guide (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), which covered three themes: second-hand products, second-hand shopping, and self-identity. Each interview lasted 40-60 minutes, was audio recorded, and transcribed to conduct the qualitative content analysis.

Results of the literature review

Reviewing the literature resulted in a proposal for a distinction between seven themes of barriers and motivations for second-hand shopping. These themes are used to structure this chapter, and for each theme, a non-exhaustive number of examples are given as found in the literature. Some terms were directly taken from the literature (e.g., contamination (Baxter et al., 2017) and economy (Guiot & Roux, 2010)), while others were chosen by the authors (e.g., social) when it was considered useful to combine several barriers and motivations under one umbrella term where literature did not suggest such a term.

Contamination aspects

Contamination can be positive or negative. For example, Baxter et al. (2017) mention concerns about hygiene as a barrier, as disgust may be evoked by the thought of pathogens. This especially concerns products worn close to the body (Edbring et al., 2016) or food-related products (Mugge et al., 2017). Fear of pests is another barrier (Edbring et al., 2016). In many cases, physical or digital marks can be considered a negative utility, as the functional value (including social-, aesthetic, and economic functions) decreases with usage. Another example is resistance to products used by an unwanted person or undesired environment (referred to as 'negative territory') is a barrier (Baxter et al., 2017). However, contamination may also be perceived as positive. E.g., if a product is previously used or owned by a celebrity (described as 'positive territory' by (Baxter et al., 2017)).

Sustainability aspects

Sustainability, including ethics and ecology, is in literature only described as a motivational aspect (Edbring et al., 2016). For example, purchasing second-hand can provide a feeling of 'escaping' the mainstream consumption system or taking revenge on it, and support a less wasteful lifestyle, which is to some attractive (Guiot & Roux, 2010)

Economic aspects

Economic aspects contain both motivational factors and barriers. For example, some argue the financial benefit is limited, and too little money is saved compared to the effort put into purchasing second-hand (Henseling et al., 2010). This is e.g., found for rather cheap products like hangers, where the price for a new product is already low (Mugge et al., 2017). As an example of the opposite, some feel motivated to buy second-hand because they get more for the same amount of money and are driven by bargains, or simply search for a fairer price (Guiot & Roux, 2010).

Social aspects

Social barriers to second-hand shopping contain for example the perception of second-hand purchasing being unacceptable in one's social cycle (Sandes & Leandro, 2019). Social aspects can also be motivational, for example, some have a desire for uniqueness and products that cannot be found in mainstream stores. Another example is consumers who see

second-hand shopping as a funny social family activity or take great pleasure in talking to strangers in second-hand markets (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Edbring et al., 2016)

Quality aspects

Concerns and expectations of quality also play a role. E.g., some products are considered less desirable to buy second-hand due to concerns about technological obsolescence, e.g., smartphones (Mugge et al., 2017). Yet, some consumers prefer to purchase second-hand and perceive second-hand products as being of higher quality, compared to purchasing new products of lesser quality (Edbring et al., 2016; Henseling et al., 2010).

Shopping experience aspects

The shopping experience is negatively affected by, for example, the lack of warranty, as consumers perceive it as risky to purchase second-hand (Mugge et al., 2017; Guiot & Roux, 2010). This can also be due to inconsistent product information, which awakens fear of dishonest information from the sellers (Akerlof, 1978; Guiot & Roux, 2010). On the other hand, 'treasure hunting' for example is found to be a motivational factor (Guiot & Roux, 2010).

Design aspects

Some consumers are drawn to being the first user, particularly like the smell or look of something new, or simply have not considered the alternative to purchasing new (Edbring et al., 2016). However, purchasing second-hand goods provide some consumers e.g., with nostalgic pleasure, as they are perceived as more authentic, and with history (Guiot & Roux, 2010). Moreover, some products are no longer available on the mainstream market, and thus second-hand become attractive (Edbring et al., 2016).

Additional barriers and motivations

The analysis of 286 sortable quotes from interviews was systematically clustered with respect to existing barriers and motivations, and where that was not possible, new barriers and motivations were formulated. Through this process, seven additional barriers and five motivations were identified, which all could be sorted under the seven previously identifies themes:

Social (barrier)

Among a group of informants, a frequent answer to the question: "*would you call yourself a second-hand shopper?*" was, that they do in fact shop second-hand, but only very limited or specific product categories, and hence they **do not identify as second-hand shoppers**. Some explain that they find the term 'second-hand shopper' related to certain product categories, or a style/expression, which they did not identify with.

"It is not, that I don't buy second-hand, I'm just not a second-hand shopper." – Informant #15

Social (motivations)

Second-hand shopping or simply just looking through second-hand markets (RL and online) has been found to be a **recreational activity**. Informants describe how this time alone is stress-relieving and entertaining:

"I can spend hours in second-hand shops alone! (...) It's like balm to the soul." – Informant #14

"I scroll Facebook Marketplace and DBA [online platform] in the afternoon like other people scroll Instagram" – Informant #7

Showing off own expertise is to some a driver. Informants explain how they advertise second-hand to show others what great things you can get second-hand, and how they like 'bragging' about second-hand bargains and showing off their treasures.

"If people compliment something I bought second-hand, a jacket, for instance, I always say: 'thanks, it was 250dkk charity shop. I want to advertise second-hand.'" – Informant #13

Charity is also a motivation for some informants. One informant tells, how she generally finds it way too complicated to buy things second-hand but has found few exceptions: instead of renting glassware, etc. for larger parties, she buys it second-hand. After the party, she washes everything and donate to a charity shop. She argues that it is cheaper than renting, but also that it is important to her, that the products get donated to charity organizations, which she finds important. Others are not as specific but are motivated by the charity in general.

"My money goes to charity. (...) That means something to me as well." – Informant #13

Quality (motivation)

To some informants the **material value** is very important, hence they seek specific materials, as these have a value beyond the design- or brand value. They become 'amateur experts' in seeing the difference between artificial and real leather, between artificial and fake fur, recognizing silk, memorizing jewelry stamps, etc.

"I would much rather have a pair of leather boots and a fur jacket, than a Louis Vuitton handbag. Buying something in leather, silk, or fur second-hand, you pay for material value. That's worth more, in my opinion." – Informant #2

Shopping experience (barriers)

Lack of exchange service is to some informants a barrier, which causes them to think more thoroughly before purchasing. This is also frequently mentioned as the reason for not buying gifts second-hand. Another informant reports, that she would like the possibility to return products, which did not live up to her expectations or were broken.

"I do so much second-hand shopping, but as my girls grow older, I buy less and less for them. They love second-hand, but when you cannot exchange things, I do it less. You end up wasting a lot of money even if the clothing is only DKK 80." – Informant #13

Few informants mentioned **the smell of shops** as a barrier, which worsens the shopping experience and decreased their willingness to purchase second-hand. However, some said, that it had been a barrier to them, but not anymore, partly because the smell has disappeared in most places during the past years.

"There is just something about charity shops and smell. It smells like old grandparents. It doesn't really enhance the shopping experience" – informant #9

Many informants expressed how some types of **interior designs** can be a big disadvantage. Some expressed that they had favorite types of markets, e.g., preferred shops that were mapped out by product categories like regular

shops, while others also partly enjoyed the more chaotic and mixed product categories e.g., at flea markets and flea supermarkets.

"The second-hand shops get a little messy sometimes. It requires lots of energy to get an overview, if all the product categories are mixed up like in the flea supermarkets." – Informant #5

Especially clothes sorted by color were mentioned by several informants as a reason for frustration, as none of them went second-hand shopping looking for something in a particular color, but rather looking for a function (e.g., jacket, or dress).

"It is a bit weird when all the clothing is sorted by color. I never enter a second-hand shop to buy blue clothing, I look for a t-shirt for instance." – Informant #1

Some informants point towards the **location and opening hours** of second-hand shops as a barrier. Some informants explain that they tend to 'forget' the existence of second-hand shops (both in general and specific shops), as they are not located in the pedestrian street where other shopping is usually taking place. Furthermore, opening hours different from regular shops has also been mentioned as a barrier.

"If they were open and located so that one walked past them when shopping on the pedestrian street, one would buy more second-hand, because the need for something would occur" – Informant #9

As second-hand shopping can be a **time-consuming** activity if seeking a very specific product, some informants see it as a barrier. Related to the product portfolio, they do not expect they can get what they want in the second-hand markets.

"It is time-consuming, and I cannot be sure to get what I'm looking for." – Informant #16

Design (motivation)

Some explain that the wear-and-tear of second-hand products can be positive, as they feel less afraid of breaking them, thus **easing ownership**. A number of interviewees explained how they prefer to buy second-hand products, that already had some wear and tear, for situations where they preferred not to

expose their pre-owned, more expensive products to situations which they could not fully control, like wine glasses for everyday use, or duvets used by guests in a summerhouse.

"It didn't matter if they [cups] had shards. (...) To be honest, I think I like it when something

looks a little worn. It makes me less afraid of breaking my belongings" – Informant #4

Summary of analysis

In total the analysis adds seven barriers and five motivations to the existing literature (indicated in bold font in Table 1).

Themes	Barriers	Motivations
Contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hygiene (Baxter et al., 2017; Edbring et al., 2016) Negative utility (Baxter et al., 2017; Mugge et al., 2017) Negative territory (Baxter et al., 2017) Pests (Edbring et al., 2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive utility (Baxter et al., 2017) Positive territory (Baxter et al., 2017)
Sustainability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance from the system (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Edbring et al., 2016) Ethics and ecology (Guiot & Roux, 2010)
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal financial benefit (Mugge et al., 2017; Henseling et al., 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gratificate role of price (Guiot & Roux, 2010) Search for a fair price (Guiot & Roux, 2010)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socially unacceptable (Sandes & Leandro, 2019) Does not identify as a second-hand shopper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originality (Guiot & Roux, 2010) Fun activity (Edbring et al., 2016) Social contact (Guiot & Roux, 2010) Recreational activity Showing off own expertise Charity
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technological obsolescence (Mugge et al., 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better quality/durability (Henseling et al., 2010; Edbring et al., 2016) Material value
Shopping experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of warranty (Mugge et al., 2017; Guiot & Roux, 2010) Inconsistent product information (Akerlof, 1978; Guiot & Roux, 2010) Lack of exchange service The smell of shops Interior design Location of shops Opening hours of shops Time-consuming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treasure hunting (Guiot & Roux, 2010)
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire for new products (Edbring et al., 2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability (Edbring et al., 2016) Nostalgic pleasure (Guiot & Roux, 2010) Easy ownership

Table 1: Summary of consumers' motivation and barriers to second-hand shopping. The use of bold font indicates additional barriers and motivations found in this study.

Discussion and conclusion

Based on a qualitative content analysis of 20 interviews, this study contributes by adding five motivational factors and seven barriers to second-hand shopping (Table 1). In particular 'the shopping experience' several new barriers were identified, which suggests that this area lacks research. Due to the method of data collection, the informants were not asked about

each motivation and barrier one by one, as the aim was to broadly explore the informants' experiences. Hence some barriers and motivations are only mentioned by 1-2 informants, while others had greater consent among several informants. Thus, based on this study alone, the weight and order of the motivations and barriers cannot be determined. To explore the hierarchy of barriers and



motivations of second-hand consumption, the authors hence suggest a quantitative study systematically collecting the frequency of the barriers and motivations identified in Table 1. Furthermore, analyzing the interview data suggested that certain combinations of barriers and motivations were more often mentioned by informants than other combinations (e.g., the two motivations 'positive utility' and 'easy ownership' were mentioned together, as well as the barrier 'minimal financial benefit' in combination with the barrier 'time-consuming'). This suggests that a larger dataset and further research on this topic could enlighten the archetypes of second-hand consumers, hence a combination of barriers and motivations per archetype.

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