Consumer Orientations of Second-Hand Shoppers by Store Type: A Profile Analysis

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Rationale: Recently, the second-hand clothing market has drastically grown with nearly 11% per year, reaching $33 billion by 2021 (Kestenbaum, 2017). Second-hand clothing has long been associated with the used, worn-out, tainted and even odorous, but now consumers believe that used products have quality comparable to new clothes and even some perceive used clothing to be of superior quality than their unworn counterparts (Fitzgerald, 2015). Furthermore, a growing interest in sustainable consumption has led to the growth of second-hand shopping. As such, the second-hand clothing market is growing, and numerous companies are going to start their new product line of second-hand clothing through online and offline (e.g., consignment stores and thrift stores) (Kestenbaum, 2017). Due to these healthy signs of the second-hand market, examining who buy second-hand clothing and where they shop will provide tailored information to specific second-hand clothing retailers.

Previous research suggests several recurring themes of consumer orientations for second-hand clothing shopping. Among the themes are price sensitivity or frugality (Cervellon et al., 2012), environmentalism (Xu et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2015), fashion consciousness (Ferraro et al, 2016), and nostalgia proneness (Guiot & Roux, 2010; Lasaleta et al., 2014). Further research shows that style consumption is positively related to sustainable apparel consumption (Cho et al., 2015), while materialism is negatively related to second-hand consumption (Roux & Guiot, 2008). However, these consumer orientations have not been examined for specific types of second-hand retailers, not providing practical implications to each retailer.

Purpose: This study examines whether consumer orientations differ among frequent shoppers of three second-hand clothing stores (consignment stores, online stores, and thrift stores). Specifically, the purpose of the study is to compare these three groups in their consumer orientations related to second-hand clothing shopping such as frugality, style consciousness, ecological consciousness, dematerialism, nostalgia proneness, and fashion consciousness.

Method: The data were collected via MTurk and consisted of 600 consumers in the US who had purchased second-hand clothing for themselves in the past 12 months. Respondents belonged to one of the three stores where they shopped second-hand clothing most frequently (200 consignment store shoppers, 200 online shoppers, and 200 thrift store shoppers). Participants included both genders (53.2% female); ages of 18-70; Caucasian (75.3%) and African-American (9.0%); and the median income of $50,000-59999.

Six consumer orientations were adapted from previous studies: frugality (e.g., I am careful in how I spend my money on clothes) from Lastovicka et al. (1999); style consciousness (e.g., I buy clothes that emphasize my own style) from Ki et al. (2017); ecological consciousness (e.g., I have switched clothing companies for ecological reasons) from Kim and Damhorst (1998); dematerialism (e.g., I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know) from Richins (2004); nostalgia proneness (e.g., Things used to be better in the good old days) from Holbrook (1993); and fashion consciousness (e.g., I usually have one or more outfits of the new style), from Sproles and Kendall (1986). Reliabilities were satisfactory with Cronbach's alpha generally exceeding .70: frugality (.80), style consciousness (.80), ecological consciousness (.86), dematerialism (.77), nostalgia proneness (.68), and fashion consciousness (.86).

A profile analysis using SAS GLM examined whether the three second-hand consumer groups (consignment, online, and thrift store shoppers) have different means on consumer orientations. The profile analysis entailed using three major tests: parallelism of profiles, overall difference among groups (level), and flatness of profiles (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). A test of parallelism examines whether the three consumer groups have the same patterns of highs and lows on dependent variables. In other words, it tests whether the three consumer groups have the same gaps in consumer orientations. A test of level checks differences in consumer orientations among the three consumer groups. A test of flatness evaluates whether the dependent variables (i.e., consumer orientations) elicit same average responses, independent of consumer groups.

Results: A profile analysis (Figure 1) showed that the profiles of consumer groups in supercenters were not parallel [$F (10, 1186) = 3.68$, $p < .001$], which means that the three consumer groups had different patterns of highs and lows on consumer orientations. In terms of flatness, retail attributes were found to be deviated significantly from flatness [$F (5, 593) = 505.70$, $p < .001$]. Frugality (mean = 4.80) was rated highest, while nostalgia proneness (mean = 2.76) was rated lowest. As for the level test, significant differences were found among the three consumer groups when scores were averaged over all consumer orientations [$F (2, 597) = 4.89$, $p < .001$]. A subsequent ANOVA test (Table 1) showed that the three consumer groups exhibited significant differences in ecological consciousness, dematerialism, nostalgia proneness, and fashion-consciousness. On the contrary, the three groups did not show differences in their consumer orientations in frugality and style-consciousness.
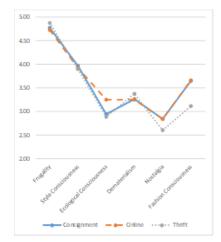
Figure 1. Profile Analysis Result

Table 1. Consumer Orientations by Store Type

	Consignment	Online	Thrift	F
Frugality	4.78	4.73	4.88	1.944
Style Consciousness	4.97	4.92	4.90	.510
Ecological Consciousness	2.95[a]	3.25[b]	2.89[c]	5.45**
Dematerialism	4.12[ab]	3.99[a]	4.27[b]	3.99*
Nostalgia	3.84[a]	3.84[a]	3.61[a]	3.23*
Fashion Consciousness	3.65[a]	3.67[b]	3.12[c]	13.47***

*$p < .05$, **$p < .001$, ***$p < .001$
[a,b,c]Different characters indicate significant differences.

Discussion and Implications: The profile analysis demonstrates that the three retailers have distinct profiles in consumer orientations and thus cannot be lumped together as one group. The results indicate that three consumer groups differ in all consumer orientations except for frugality and style consciousness, both of which were important to all three shopper groups. Ecological consciousness was highest among online shoppers; dematerialism was higher among thrift shoppers; nostalgia was higher among consignment and online shoppers; and fashion consciousness was higher for online and consignment shoppers. The three second-hand retailers can use this information in appealing to their target consumers and making their merchandise and store plan. Future research can develop a new scale of nostalgia proneness because its reliability was relatively low (.68). Regardless, this study is among the firsts comparing different second-hand retailers in who second-hand clothing shoppers are and where they shop.

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