

An Investigation of the Motivations of Second-hand Clothing Donation and Purchase

Second-hand
Clothing
Donation and
Purchase

Jennifer Bauk Baker · Jennifer Yurchisin*

Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies, University of North Carolina Greensboro, USA
Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies, University of North Carolina Greensboro, USA*
(Received October 15, 2014; Revised November 26, 2014; Accepted December 11, 2014)

Abstract *The purpose of this research was to investigate the motives of second-hand clothing consumers who both purchase from and donate to one retail outlet. Individuals' purchasing and donating motivations were examined using the hedonic/utilitarian framework. Eighteen participants who had donated to and purchased second-hand clothing from a charitable organization's thrift store were purposively selected and interviewed. Themes that emerged during data analysis were used to categorize the participants. The participants' responses suggested that hedonic and utilitarian motives drove both donation and purchase behavior. Academic and practical implications are presented.*

Key words *Second-hand, Clothing, Donation, Purchase*

Introduction

Consumers in the United States have become more price conscious since the 2008 recession (Gulati, Nohria, & Wohlgezogen, 2010; Lasanti, 2010; Piercy, Cravens, & Lane, 2010). The number of second-hand stores, which sell slightly used merchandise at a fraction of the cost, have increased more than 7% over the past two years (NARTS, n.d.). Current annual revenue in the second-hand segment is an estimated \$13 billion (First Research, 2013), with women's clothing comprising approximately 20% of the used merchandise sold (Shim, 2010).

While the recent increase in sales may, in part, be financially driven, some people wear second-hand clothing by choice rather than necessity (Cicolini, 2005; Fitzwater, 2005; Hansen, 2005; Reiley & DeLong, 2011; Roux & Guiot, 2008; Winakor, 1969). Wearing second-hand clothing has become a more acceptable practice, even among those who can afford to purchase new clothing. Rather than being motivated to purchase primarily for utilitarian reasons (e.g., affordable prices), some consumers have been shown to be motivated primarily for hedonic reasons (e.g., the thrill of finding a treasure) (Albinsson & Perera, 2009; Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Bardhi & Arnould, 2005; Guiot & Roux, 2010).

In order for a variety of consumers to be able to purchase second-hand clothing, second-hand clothing retailers, including thrift stores associated with charitable organizations, need to obtain castoff

clothing in order to stock their shelves. Hence, thrift stores have a vested interest in understanding why different people donate clothing so that they can increase their profitability using marketing strategies that appeal to target consumers' motivations for donating (Ratchford, 1987). Researchers (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2008) have found that, like purchase behavior, clothing donation behavior is also motivated by hedonic (e.g., feeling good by being altruistic) and utilitarian (e.g., making space in the closet) aspects.

While the motivations for purchasing and donating second-hand clothing have been examined separately, the motivations that one consumer has for both purchasing from and donating to one retail outlet have not been thoroughly examined. Consequently, academic understanding of second-hand clothing consumption behavior, from acquisition to disposal, remains incomplete (Winakor, 1969). Furthermore, because many charitable organizations rely on the sale of donated clothing to support the community programs they fund (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Parsons, 2000), encouraging each consumer to both donate and purchase from their thrift stores could prove to be a profitable strategy. As a result, understanding the motivations that each consumer has for both donating to and purchasing from one retail outlet has important practical implications, as well.

The purpose of this research was to investigate second-hand clothing consumers' donation and purchase behavior within one retail context. More specifically, the motivations associated with second-hand clothing purchase for one individual at one charitable organization's thrift store were compared to those associated with clothing donation for the same individual at the same store. Little research has been conducted in the area of clothing donation and second-hand clothing purchase, and no research could be located in which both processes were examined in the same study.

The present study was undertaken to address the existing gaps in knowledge. The objectives of this study included: 1) To explore second-hand clothing consumers' motivations (e.g., hedonic, utilitarian) for purchasing clothing from the thrift store associated with one particular charitable organization. 2) To uncover second-hand clothing consumers' motivations (e.g., hedonic, utilitarian) for donating clothing to the thrift store associated with one particular charitable organization. 3) To compare second-hand clothing consumers' motivations (e.g., hedonic, utilitarian) for purchasing from and donating to the thrift store associated with one particular charitable organization.

From a theoretical standpoint, the present study contributes to the academic body of literature. While hedonic and utilitarian motivations for second-hand clothing purchase and donation behavior have been examined separately, consumers' motives for both donating and purchasing second-hand clothing have not yet been investigated together within the same study. The reasons why individual consumers purchase clothing from and donate clothing to one second-hand clothing retailer have not yet been empirically examined. By considering both processes with respect to individual consumers within one second-hand clothing retail context, the present study offers insight about the purchase and disposal stages of the second-hand clothing consumption process (Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1968; Winakor, 1969).

Furthermore, the present study is useful to practitioners, especially managers of thrift stores associated with charitable organizations. Because these stores rely upon both donations and purchases for suc-

cess, a more complete understanding of the motivations of donors and purchasers and any differences that impact the motivations that donors and purchasers have can assist managers with efforts to increase revenue and fund community projects.

Literature Review

Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Motivations

When consumers are motivated to shop for hedonic reasons, they enjoy shopping for shopping's sake. They enjoy the social and emotional aspects associated with the experience of shopping (Babin et al., 1994). On the other hand, when consumers shop for utilitarian reasons, they focus primarily on achieving the task and acquiring the clothing products they need to buy during the shopping trip. Utilitarian shoppers tend to behave rationally, not emotionally, in shopping environments (Babin et al., 1994). Hence, making economically sound decisions is fulfilling for utilitarian shoppers. Past research suggests that individuals tend to be motivated to shop for clothing for primarily hedonic reasons or primarily for utilitarian reasons (Park & Sullivan, 2009).

In terms of shopping motivations, researchers have focused attention primarily on the purchase of new clothing, as opposed to second-hand clothing, when investigating hedonic and utilitarian motives (Allard, Babin, & Chebat, 2009; Carpenter, 2008). That is to say, the motivations regarding the purchase of second-hand clothing have not been thoroughly investigated. While many researchers have investigated consumers' motives for purchasing new clothing, only a few researchers, such as Bardhi and Arnould (2005) and Guiot and Roux (2010), have investigated consumers' motives for purchasing second-hand clothing.

Bardhi and Arnould (2005) conducted an ethnographic investigation of thrift store consumers. They found that consumers in thrift stores exhibit both utilitarian and hedonic motives for purchasing second-hand clothing. In terms of utilitarian motives, thrift store consumers purchase second-hand clothing in an effort to save money by behaving in an economically rational manner. For hedonic motives, thrift store consumers achieve emotional satisfaction when they are able to find unanticipated treasures, such as second-hand luxury goods that they would not be able to afford to purchase new. In this way, purchasing second-hand clothing from thrift stores allows these consumers to fulfill fantasies while shopping.

Guiot and Roux (2010) developed a scale to assess the purchase motivations of second-hand store consumers. After surveying second-hand store patrons using their scale, Guiot and Roux (2010) found that, like Bardhi and Arnould (2005), both utilitarian and hedonic motives drive consumers' behavior in second-hand stores. Guiot and Roux's (2010) participants did purchase second-hand clothing because it was priced fairly, thus exhibiting their utilitarian motivations. Consumers in second-hand stores also shopped for hedonic reasons, including the excitement associated with hunting for treasures and the enjoyment of interacting with other store patrons and employees. Based on the findings from Guiot and Roux (2010) and Bardhi and Arnould (2005), it does seem to be the case that individuals shop for and purchase clothing from second-hand stores, such as thrift stores, for both utilitarian and hedonic reasons.

Hedonic and Utilitarian Donation Motivations

In addition to focusing their attention on the purchase of new clothing rather than second-hand clothing, researchers have also investigated the clothing purchasing process more often than the clothing disposal process (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2008). The decision to part with unwanted or unneeded clothing is sometimes driven by economic necessity, particularly when individuals sell their clothing on websites or in consignment stores (Yurchisin & Whitenack, 2007). Yet, the notion that disposal could be an emotional process is not without precedent. Individuals can use disposal to alleviate negative feelings or as a way to pass on positive feelings to new owners (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). Since choice of clothing is often deeply personal and representational of an individual, what an individual chooses to wear, or consequently chooses to dispose of, is given much thought. Clothing that no longer is representational of an individual and does not fit with one's self-concept will not be of value anymore (Solomon, 2004). However, positively or negatively charged meanings are still attached to the clothing. How and where unwanted clothing is disposed of can help individuals part with their possessions.

Researchers who have examined clothing donation behavior have noted motivations for donating that could be classified as hedonic and utilitarian. Birtwistle and Moore (2007) conducted focus group and in-depth interviews with females to better understand consumers' motives for disposing of clothing in various ways, like donating or throwing out. Birtwistle and Moore (2007) found that donating unwanted clothing items to charitable organizations' thrift stores was associated with a positive emotional reaction among donors. In other words, individuals felt good when they donated their second-hand clothing to charitable organizations that could use the money earned by selling the clothing to fund community programs.

A similar emotional, hedonic motivation was mentioned by the participants in Ha-Brookshire and Hodges' (2008) study. Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2008) interviewed consumers who were donating clothing to a charitable organization's thrift store. The researchers found that individuals mentioned that they donated clothing to charitable organizations' thrift stores in an effort to relieve feelings of guilt associated with owning too many clothing items. Thus, donating clothing to thrift stores provided consumers with a positive emotional response by relieving their negative feelings. Participants in Ha-Brookshire and Hodges' (2008) study also mentioned that they donated unwanted clothing to make room in the closet. This motivation was not associated with any emotional response. Instead, this motivation was rational in nature. When the closet becomes too full of clothing, donating some of the unwanted clothing to a thrift store provides consumers with more space to hang clothing in the closet. In this way, donating becomes a utilitarian activity. Thus, within one study, both hedonic, emotional reasons as well as utilitarian, rational reasons were cited by individuals as motivations for their clothing donation behavior.

Motivations for Purchasing from and Donating to a Thrift Store: Unexplored Territory

Based on past research, it seems likely that the behavior of both second-hand clothing purchasers and second-hand clothing donors is driven by hedonic and utilitarian motivation. However, individuals' moti-

vations for purchasing from and donating to the thrift store associated with a charitable organization remain unexplored. While individuals may be primarily donors or primarily purchasers, the categories of donation and purchase are not mutually exclusive (Mitchell et al., 2009). One individual can be both a purchaser and a donor of second-hand clothing at one thrift store. Typically, however, the acquisition stages, like purchasing, are typically studied completely separately from the disposal stages, like donating.

One notable exception is Albinsson and Perera (2009) who examined women's behavior at a clothing exchange event. Although a form of clothing donation and acquisition is occurring simultaneously at a clothing exchange event because each attendee can trade her second-hand clothing for another attendee's second-hand clothing, the process of donation and purchase that occurs at the clothing exchange event is different than the process of donation and purchase that occurs at charitable organizations' thrift stores. At thrift stores, donated clothing is not exchanged for other clothing. Instead, money is required to obtain the second-hand clothing available for purchase. Furthermore, Albinsson and Perera (2009) focused primarily on the disposal process and the modes of disposal rather than the acquisition motives of clothing exchange participants. The motives that one individual has for both donating to and purchasing second-hand clothing from one retail context, such as a charitable organization's thrift store, have not been examined.

The current study was undertaken to address this gap in the extant literature. The current study was guided by the following research questions: 1) What motivates the second-hand clothing purchase and donation behavior of individuals within one retail context? 2) What combinations of motivations for purchasing and donating second-hand clothing do individual consumers exhibit within one retail context?

Method

Participant Selection and Data Collection

Eighteen face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants. Participants were recruited on-site at a thrift store in a midsized city in the southeastern United States. Participants were purposively sampled based on their gender and their behavior at the thrift store. The thrift store is open to all but the donors and purchasers of second-hand clothing are predominantly women. While not generalizable to the entire population, focusing on the donation and consumption practices of women allowed the experiences of those most likely to engage in both behaviors to be examined (Gogoi, 2005; Peters, 2003; Underhill, 2009). Female consumers were approached while visiting the thrift store and asked if they had both purchased from and donated to the thrift store during the past six months. Those individuals who qualified for participation were asked to volunteer to be interviewed at a later date.

A total of 18 individuals participated in depth interviews at the time and location of their choice. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were used to uncover information about the clothing donation and second-hand clothing purchase experience of participants. Interviews enabled the researcher to gain a deep understanding of experiences and events from the participants' perspective (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Schouten, 1991; Seidman, 1998).

Open-ended questions were developed so that the participants could divulge as much information about their experiences as possible (Patton, 2002). The interviews followed a semi-structured format. As data collection proceeded, some of the questions were altered or omitted and other questions were added because an emergent intuitive design was used that allowed the data collected during each interview to guide subsequent interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A combination of main questions, follow-up questions, and probes allowed the interviews to be detailed and vivid (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Data collection continued until data saturation occurred and no new information was revealed by the last interview. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 90 minutes and was audio recorded.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed, analyzed, and coded to uncover important themes. Data analysis began immediately after the first interview was completed. Each interview transcript was read in its entirety several times by the researchers to identify key phrases of possible theoretical import (Seidman, 1998). Each subsequent interview was analyzed in the context of previously gathered data and examined for points of similarity or dissimilarity. Once all interviews were completed, the final categories were examined for any potential linkages that existed among them (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Multiple categories that were theoretically linked were expanded into broader, overarching themes. These themes were used to answer the research questions set forth prior to data collection. Disagreements between the researchers were negotiated until agreement in interpretation was achieved.

Participant Demographic Characteristics

Participants’ ages ranged from 24 to 64. They had all graduated from college, and some had completed graduate school. Three quarters of the participants were married and nearly half had children under the age of 18 living at home. All but one of the participants indicated earning personal income with a median income from \$60,000-\$79,999 annually. The number of years spent shopping and donating to the thrift store ranged from one to thirteen with a mean of five and a half years. See Table 1 for profiles of the participants.

Table 1.
Profiles of Participants

Name	Age	Income	Children	Clothing Donated	Clothing Purchased	Years Shopping & Donating
Anita	28	\$40,000-\$59,000	0	Assorted clothes	Skirts for work	1
Belle	52	Over \$80,000	1	Children’s clothes	Vintage dress	1
Claire	30	Over \$80,000	0	Own clothes	Clothes for self	5
Danielle	24	\$20,000-\$39,000	0	Assorted clothes	Designer clothes	1

Ellie	30	\$0 (Husband employed)	1	Family's and own clothes	Children's clothes	5
Fran	33	Over \$80,000	2	Children's and own clothes	Designer dress	6
Gwynne	31	\$40,000-\$59,000	2	Assorted clothes	Clothes for children	5
Hannah	64	Over \$80,000	0	Assorted clothes	Dress for self	10
Ivy	28	\$60,000-\$79,000	0	Family members' clothes	Fur stole	3
Julie	26	\$40,000-\$59,000	0	Own clothes	Clothes for self	6
Kristen	34	\$20,000-\$39,000	2	Assorted clothes	Clothes for self and children	5
Lauren	35	Over \$80,000	2	Children's and own clothes	Children's clothes	12
Mary	50	Over \$80,000	0	Assorted clothes	Clothes for self and nephews	13
Nicole	38	Less than \$20,000	2	Children's and own clothes	Clothes for self	6
Olivia	41	\$60,000-\$79,000	0	Assorted clothes	Clothes for self	4
Piper	24	\$20,000-\$39,000	0	Own clothes	Designer clothes	2
Rachel	31	\$60,000-\$79,000	0	Own clothes	Suits for self	7
Sam	39	\$40,000-\$59,000	2	Assorted clothes	Children's clothes	7

Second-hand
Clothing
Donation and
Purchase

Note. All names used in this table are pseudonyms.

Thematic Interpretation

The responses of the women suggested that they both donated to and purchased from the thrift store for both hedonic and utilitarian reasons. Categories were created based on participants' motivations for purchasing and donating.

Hedonic Purchasers and Donors—Treat Seekers

Treat seekers are characterized as those individuals who were both hedonic purchasers and donors. An example of a treat seeker is Fran (all participants were given pseudonyms) who mentioned the emotional aspects of shopping at the thrift store. Fran discussed how much enjoyment she had shopping at the thrift store for herself and her two children. When asked if she went to the store looking for anything in particular, she stated,

Well, I always just like to look. Because there is always something that is fun that I just really want. (Fran)

Later, Fran mentioned that she purchased “a couple of things” for herself, including a Diane von Furstenberg dress that she described as “great.” Fran seems to receive pleasure from the act of shopping, itself, as well as from the items she eventually does purchase for herself and her children.

Danielle, another treat seeker, discussed how excited she got while shopping at the thrift store. Currently, Danielle is trying to be more fiscally responsible because she is young and is just starting out on her own. However, she admitted that when she sees all of the merchandise, she cannot control herself. She recounted a story about a time she spent shopping at the thrift store:

It was during a week when I was like, “You need to watch your money if you’re going to buy something. Instead of buying a bunch of little purchases, you should save up for something nice. Stop eating out all the time.” I think I was feeling guilty about all of those lifestyle purchases so I said, “Don’t go nuts at the [thrift store name].” But then I got there and I saw how discounted everything was and, of course, I walked out with five things. (Danielle)

As the quote illustrates, although Danielle is trying to follow a budget and be more organized and careful about her clothing purchases, the excitement she feels when seeing all of the merchandise makes her behave in an unplanned manner.

The hedonic purchasers and donors experienced positive emotional reactions when shopping for second-hand clothing at the thrift store. The positive emotional experiences could occur while they were shopping alone or shopping with others. Treat seekers, like Fran, Anita, and Piper, mentioned that they enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with others while shopping for clothing at the thrift store. According to these women, it is “nice” to get other shoppers’ opinions about particular items (Fran), and it is “fun” to shop with friends and family members (Anita and Piper). The treat seekers experience pleasure whether they find clothing for themselves to purchase or if they help their shopping companions locate clothing to purchase.

Similarly, treat seekers also mentioned that they experienced positive emotional reactions while donating their second-hand clothing to the thrift store. For example, Anita stated,

I feel like I did a good thing. And, in my mind, I am imagining someone less fortunate wearing my clothes. (Anita)

From Anita’s quote, it seems that donating clothing to the thrift store uplifts her spirit because she imagines that her clothes are going to help the less fortunate members of her community.

For some treat seekers, being able to help others now through their donations makes them feel especially good because it represents a chance to give back to those who helped them in the past.

Donating clothing to the charitable organization's thrift store reminds Piper of perhaps a not-so-pleasant time from her past. By donating now, Piper experiences positive emotions because she has the chance to help others out. Piper reminisces about a time when she and her husband did not have much money to spend so they relied on the thrift store for clothing. She said,

So we shopped at [thrift store name]. So we've been through that time when we needed nice and kind-of trendy things and we couldn't afford it, so we would go to [thrift store name]. So it's like we are giving back to it now. (Piper)

As the quotes from the treat seekers demonstrate, both purchasing from and donating to the thrift store evoke positive emotional responses. In this way, treat seekers differ from utilitarian purchasers and donors.

Utilitarian Purchasers and Donors—Planners

The utilitarian purchasers and donors exhibited a very high degree of organization in their consumption and donation behavior which is why they are referred to as *planners*. Gwynne seemed to be utilitarian in her approach to shopping at the thrift store. Gwynne has two young boys and she indicated that she often purchases many items for them at the thrift store. She does not, however, purchase many items for herself because, as she stated, "that ladies clothing department is just overwhelming to me." Gwynne's remarks suggest that she does not particularly enjoy being surrounded by clothing that she would have to spend time rummaging through in order to find a garment she could purchase for her own personal use. She does not seem to find the experience of shopping as exciting as some of the other respondents do. Gwynne plans what she wants to purchase before she goes to the thrift store and is satisfied when she achieves this goal, particularly when she can save money while doing so. As she mentions about shopping for her children's clothing:

I just kind of, I know what size they are going to be for the next school year, and I plan their play clothes. I'll get maybe 5 - 10 pairs of shorts and pants and then maybe 10 short sleeved shirts, long-sleeved shirts, a mix. And then I know I'm kind of set for the next year. For preschool. (Gwynne)

Gwynne's donation behavior is also utilitarian. She states,

I have a bag in a closet that's there all the time. And if I put something on and it's not fitting good or I feel like the color has faded, or the cotton is getting kind of nubby and it's not soft, and it doesn't look good anymore, I'll just toss it into that bag and it goes to the [thrift store name]. (Gwynne)

Unlike the hedonic donors, Gwynne's statement does not suggest that her clothing donations to the

thrift store are motivated by emotional needs. Gwynne's approach to donation is very systematic and rational, suggesting that she is a utilitarian donor.

For Claire, donating her clothing to the thrift store is also a rational act. When she and her family moved from one house to another house, she donated her unwanted clothing to the thrift store because it was easier and cheaper to donate them rather than move them to the new house. She said she "wasn't going to pay to store them and to move them." While Claire did want her unwanted clothing to go to someone else who could use the clothing rather than into the trash, she did not mention that she participated in clothing donation as a way to feel good. Instead, Claire's descriptions of her actions suggest that she is mainly rational and utilitarian in her donations to the thrift store. Donating second-hand clothing provides Claire with an organized closet rather than a warm heart.

Hedonic Purchasers and Utilitarian Donors—Reward Seekers

The consumption and donation behavior of those who were hedonic purchasers and utilitarian donors was rather self-serving. For this reason they are referred to as *reward seekers*. The reward seekers, like the treat seekers, enjoyed shopping at the thrift store as a pleasure-seeking behavior, whether by themselves or with others. As Ivy mentioned, she loves to shop at the thrift store. She receives emotional benefits from the act of shopping. Similarly, Rachel mentioned that she and her family members "kind-of piddle around" and "roam around" the thrift store together. The social aspect of shopping with her family members seemed to be more important than the actual act of purchasing items.

For reward seekers, donating was a matter of fact and a way to cull out unwanted goods. As Ivy said,

No, I'm not very attached to physical things or material things. So if it's at a point where I'm ready to get rid of it, I just give it to [thrift store name] because I don't have a lot of [extra clothing to donate]. (Ivy).

Similarly, it is not difficult for Rachel to discard items. She removes unwanted items throughout the year. She said, "I try not to be too pack-ratty" (Rachel). The reward seekers discard unwanted items in an organized fashion on a continuous basis throughout the year. These individuals discard clothing when it no longer serves a rational purpose for them. For *reward seekers*, the process of donating clothing is simply a means of removing unwanted items from their closets. These individuals do not consider the greater impact that their donations may have on themselves emotionally or on others who may be helped by their actions, as do the *rational helpers*.

Utilitarian Purchasers and Hedonic Donors—Rational Helpers

When making clothing purchases at the thrift store, *rational helpers* behaved in a utilitarian fashion. These shoppers were rationally motivated by the low prices that often appeared on brand-name

merchandise. As Lauren explained, the ability “to get higher quality things for a lot cheaper price” motivates rational helpers. Olivia recounted some of the items she has purchased at a discounted price.

I found a great pair of Naturalizer shoes for \$7 and they had hardly been worn. I bought a Coach handbag before. That was kind-of my first. I’m very brand oriented when I go in. (Olivia)

Like Olivia, Julie also mentioned the discounted prices available on second-hand clothing:

You’re going to find a pair of Lily Pulitzer shorts for \$25 versus \$250. Go for it. That’s just kind-of cool. I like to play golf and I don’t really want to play golf in the Lily Pulitzer skort that I spent \$200 on. I’d rather play golf and get it dirty if I spent \$20 on it. That kind-of stuff. (Julie)

The importance of the price and figuring out the savings is a factor when Julie shops for clothing at the thrift store.

When donating clothing, however, emotions came into play. As Kristen explains:

I feel good. I’m willing to give my stuff away as long as I know it’s for a good cause and people will use it and appreciate it. (Kristen)

The rational helpers donated because they wanted to help others who they perceived to be less fortunate in some way. They also donated their clothing to help the thrift store succeed, and they acknowledged that their donations are an integral part of the success. For Sam, supporting the charitable organization made her feel good. So she is indirectly supporting others through the support of the organization.

Well, I donate because I certainly want to support [the charitable organization]. And the donations are crucial to the success of the [thrift store name] because if [they] don’t have good quality donations… I mean, that is really how [they] are making [their] money… But it feels good because I am supporting a group that I feel very strongly about. (Sam)

Julie said that she liked donating to the thrift store because she got to help people through her donations. She related a story about a customer she saw shopping for a wedding dress at the thrift store to reinforce her ideas about the ways in which her donations might help people in need.

In the boutique section, we were standing there, and she had just had a baby, obviously, and was getting married to the baby’s father. And it was a situation that was different from my own, just really was a sweet girl. And she didn’t have any money but she wanted a wedding

dress and wanted to feel pretty like everybody does when they get married. It was really sweet. (Julie)

Julie remembers how good it felt to see this one customer purchasing donated clothing from the thrift store, and this emotion drives her donation behavior.

Discussion

Second-hand Clothing Purchasers' Motivations

The women who were categorized as hedonic purchasers mentioned that shopping at the thrift store was a fun, social experience. In this way, the interviewees' comments support the work of Babin et al. (1994) who found that hedonic purchasers tend to shop with others and to enjoy the social interactions while shopping. The hedonic women also discussed the enjoyment they felt when they spent time searching through the various departments at the thrift store to find unique items. The process seems to be as enjoyable if not more enjoyable than the actual product acquisition. This relates to the "thrill of the hunt" experience wherein the experience of finding something is actually just as much fun as what is found (Bardhi & Arnould, 2005).

The utilitarian purchasers at the thrift store discussed looking for and purchasing specific clothing items. They tended to have a mental shopping list from which they did not tend to deviate when they shopped at the event. These women also tended to be price conscious, which supports the work of Guiot and Roux (2010). They did not enjoy browsing aimlessly through the departments. They had a certain goal in mind, and they were most satisfied with their time spent shopping at the thrift store if they were able to locate and purchase the desired items. In this way, the findings support the research on utilitarian shopping by Babin et al. (1994).

Second-hand Clothing Donors' Motivations

Those participants who donated hedonically experienced positive emotions while thinking about other individuals purchasing their donated goods. Knowing that individuals in need might benefit from their donations seemed to make the donors feel good about giving their unwanted items to the charitable organization. In this way, the present study supports the work of Birtwistle and Moore (2007), who also found that individuals donated items to thrift stores in an effort to make themselves feel good by helping others in need.

The comments made by utilitarian donors in the present study support the work of Ha-Brookshire and Hodges (2009), who found that some individuals donate their unwanted clothing to make room in their closets. The utilitarian donors in the present study seemed to make rational decisions concerning the items they wished to donate. They were organized in their donation process and did not indicate that they felt positive emotions associated with the donation process.

Academic Implications

The results of the present study lend support for the notion that consumers are motivated to purchase second-hand clothing for both utilitarian and hedonic reasons. In this way, the purchase of second-hand clothing is theoretically associated with the purchase of new clothing. Similarly, the participants in the present study indicated that they donated clothing for both utilitarian and hedonic reasons. This finding suggests that disposal of unwanted clothing, at least with respect to donation of unwanted clothing to a charitable organization's thrift store, is driven by motivations similar to those associated with the purchase of clothing. Thus, the present study corroborates Hanson's (1980) proposition that the disposal process mirrors the acquisition process.

The findings from the present study further our understanding of the entire clothing consumption process, from acquisition to use to disposal (Winakor, 1969), by examining the applicability of the utilitarian/hedonic dichotomy (Babin et al., 1994) to additional phases of the consumer decision-making model (Engel et al., 1995). What remains unknown is the theoretical structure of the clothing consumption process. It is not clear whether the disposal process represents a separate, parallel process to the acquisition process or represents additional stages of one larger consumption process. Continued examination of a variety of clothing-related consumption activities will provide further insight that may aid in the development of a comprehensive theory of clothing consumption.

Practical Implications

The present study offers insight to charitable organizations that rely on thrift stores for financial support. Encouraging donors to purchase and purchasers to donate can be a successful strategy for increasing traffic among current consumers. Understanding the motivations of individuals who currently donate and purchase from the same thrift store can help charitable organizations design marketing materials to promote donating and purchasing to those consumers who are currently either exclusively purchasing or donating from the store, respectively. Donors could be informed of the positive benefits in the community that can be achieved when individuals purchase gently-used apparel from the thrift store. Purchasers could be encouraged to donate on a regular basis using similar promotional messages that emphasized the positive emotional benefits that occur when individuals donate to the organization. Loyalty to one charitable organization's thrift store in terms of purchasing and donating could also be encouraged by rewarding consumers with product discounts on purchases when they donate items to the thrift store.

Limitations and Future Research

With this research, an attempt was made to identify the motivations of individuals who purchased clothing from and donated clothing to the thrift store associated with one charitable organization. Because all of the participants were females, the findings may not necessarily be generalized to other populations. The present study may be skewed in favor of hedonic purchasing and donating, particularly because the

focus of the present study was second-hand clothing. Women tend to be more hedonic than men, and clothing is considered a hedonic product category (Solomon, 2004). Additionally, Albinsson and Perera (2009) found that the emotional aspect associated with hedonic donating seems to be a feminine characteristic. Furthermore, women tend to be more involved with clothing. If a different product category, such as electronics, were under investigation, the women may have been categorized differently. Moreover, if male consumers had been interviewed regarding their purchasing and donating behavior at the thrift store, different themes would most likely have emerged.

Another limitation of the present study is the fact that it focused specifically on one group of women at one particular thrift store in the United States. It remains unknown whether women at another thrift store or another type of second-hand clothing retail outlet, such as a consignment store, would exhibit similar motivations for purchasing and donating second-hand clothing. Additionally, it is not known whether the motivations expressed by the participants in the present study are static or dynamic or vary based on retail outlet. While McCabe, Rosenbaum, and Yurchisin (2007) found that shopping motivation can vary in different retail contexts, it may be the case that these women were hedonic shoppers at thrift stores as well as other types of clothing stores. Interestingly, the hedonic and utilitarian motivations were not always consistent within one individual, such that a hedonic purchaser could be a utilitarian donor and vice versa. While clothing purchasers may tend to be either hedonic or utilitarian (Park & Sullivan, 2009), these motivations may differ based on the stage of the clothing consumption process in which the individuals find themselves. Further research is needed to better understand these processes.

The fact that participants were asked to recall their experiences with second-hand clothing donation and purchase represents another potential limitation of the study. Because interviews took place with participants after their purchasing and donating experiences, participants may not have recalled their motivations with accuracy. Hopefully the responses were not affected by the break in time between the actual behavior and the interviews. "Shadowing" participants or conducting interviews immediately following may be advisable to eliminate this type of issue in the future.

Researchers who are interested in investigating the motivations of donors and purchasers of clothing could repeat this study with a different sample to see if the findings from this current study are applicable in other settings. Because many other product categories besides clothing can be purchased from and donated to thrift stores associated with charitable organizations, interviews could be conducted with donors and purchasers of other types of products to compare the motivations associated with clothing donation and purchase to the motivations associated with the donation and purchase of other types of products. A cross-cultural comparison of motivations for purchasing and donating second-hand clothing could also be conducted to extend the theoretical framework into a global context.

The current study utilized a qualitative methodology as a beginning stage to explore second-hand clothing purchase and donation behavior at the same retail outlet. The findings from the current study seem to support the findings from past endeavors utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies as well as those studies exploring purchase and donation behavior individually. The next step that could be taken would be to investigate purchase and donation behavior from the same retail outlet using a

quantitative methodology in an effort to increase the generalizability of the findings.

References

- Albinsson, P. A., & Perera, B. Y. (2009). From trash to treasure and beyond: The meaning of voluntary disposition. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8, 340-353.
- Allard, T., Babin, B. J., & Chebat, J.-C. (2009). When income matters: Customers evaluation of shopping malls' hedonic and utilitarian orientations. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 16(1), 40-49.
- Arnold, M. J., & Reynolds, K. E. (2003). Hedonic shopping motivations. *Journal of Retailing*, 79(2), 77-95.
- Babin, B., Darden, W., & Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or fun. Measuring hedonic and utilitarian shopping values. *Journal of Consumer Research* 20(4), 645-655.
- Bardhi, F., & Arnould, E. J. (2005). Thrift shopping: Combining utilitarian thrift and hedonic treat benefits. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4(4), 223-233.
- Birtwistle, G., & Moore, C. M. (2007). Fashion clothing—Where does it all end up? *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 35(3), 210-216.
- Carpenter, J. (2008). Consumer shopping value, satisfaction, and loyalty in discount retailing. *Journal of Retail and Consumer Services*. 15(5), 358-363.
- Cicolini, A. (2005). Vintage fashion. In V. Steele (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of clothing and fashion* (Vol. 3, pp. 398-400). Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Engel, J. E., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (1995). *Consumer behavior* (8th Ed.). Chicago, IL: The Dryden Press.
- Engel, J. E., Kollat, D. T., & Blackwell, R. D. (1968). *Consumer behavior*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- First Research (2013). Used merchandise stores industry profile. Retrieved from <http://www.firstresearch.com/Industry-Research/Used-Merchandise-Stores.html>
- Fitzwater, L. (2005). History of secondhand clothes. In V. Steele (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of clothing and fashion* (Vol. 3). Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Gogoi, P. (2005, February 14). I am woman, hear me shop. *Bloomberg Businessweek* [Online]. Retrieved from http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/feb2005/nf20050214_9413_db_082.htm
- Guiot, D., & Roux, D. (2010). A second-hand shoppers' motivation scale: Antecedents, consequences, and implications for retailers. *Journal of Retailing*, 86(4), 355- 371.
- Ha-Brookshire, J. E., & Hodges, N. N. (2009). Socially responsible consumer behavior? Exploring used clothing donation behavior. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 27(3), 179-196.
- Hansen, K. T. (2005). Anthropology of secondhand clothes. In V. Steele (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of clothing and fashion* (Vol. 3). Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Hanson, J. W. (1980). A proposed paradigm for consumer product disposition processes. *The Journal of*

- Consumer Affairs*, 14(1), 49-67.
- Holloway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Lastovicka, J.L. & Fernandez, K.V. (2005). Three paths to disposition: The movement of meaningful possessions to strangers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31, 813-823.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCabe, D. B., Rosenbaum, M. S., & Yurchisin, J. (2007). Perceived service quality and shopping motivations. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 29(1), 1-21.
- Mitchell, M., Montgomery, R., & Rauch, D. (2009). Toward an understanding of thrift store donors. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 14, 255-269.
- NARTS: The Association of Resale Professionals. (n.d.) *Industry statistics and trends*. Retrieved from <http://www.narts.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3285>
- Park, H.-H., & Sullivan, P. (2009). Market segmentation with respect to university students' clothing benefits sought: Shopping orientation, clothing attribute evaluation, and brand repatronage. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 37(2), 182-20.
- Parsons, L. (2000). New goods, old records and second-hand suits: Charity shopping in South-West England. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 5(2), 141-151.
- Patton, S-E. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peters, T. (2003). *Re-imagine! Business excellence in a disruptive age*. London, UK: Dorling, Kindersley Limited.
- Ratchford, B. T. (1987). New insights about the FCB grid. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 27, 24-38.
- Reiley, K., & DeLong, M. R. (2011). A consumer vision for sustainable fashion practice. *Fashion Practice*, 3(1), 63-84.
- Roux, D., & Guiot, D. (2008). Measuring second-hand shopping motives, antecedents and consequences. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 23(4), 63-94.
- Rubin, H. L., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schouten, J. W. (1991). Selves in transition: Symbolic consumption in personal rites of passage and identity re-construction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(March), 412-425.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shim, J. (2010). IBIS world industry report: Used goods stores in the U.S. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:4148/industryus/default.aspx?indid=1101>
- Solomon, M. R. (2004). *Consumer behavior: Buying, having, and being*. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Underhill, P. (2009) *Why we buy*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Winakor, G. (1969). The process of clothing consumption. *Journal of Home Economics*, 61(8), 629-634.

Yurchisin, J., & Whitenack, K. (2007, November). *From engagement to eBay: Why brides sell their wedding gowns on eBay*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Textiles and Apparel Association, Los Angeles, CA.

Second-hand
Clothing
Donation and
Purchase