

# Second-hand consumption as a lifestyle choice

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# 1 Introduction to second-hand consumption

In the past 40 years there has been an increase in second-hand consumption among consumers (Guiot and Roux 2010), since the 'shame and stigma associated with second-hand consumption' disappeared and second-hand goods became 'cool' and 'stylish' (Franklin 2011, 156). In Germany, for example, the turnover of goods sold in second-hand retail outlets is expected to increase from €1.902 mio in 2012 to €2.198 mio in 2020 (Statista n.d.). Second-hand consumption is a niche form of consumption and therefore does not correspond to the norm (Crewe and Gregson 2003; Williams and Paddock 2003). Second-hand goods can be distinguished from new goods because they are pre-used and pre-owned (Luchs et al. 2011). They are usually less expensive than new products and have some traces of wear-and-tear (Estelami and Raymond 2012). Several forms of second-hand consumption exist. These range from 'car boot sales, charity shops, auctions, online auctions, seller websites, vintage and other second-hand shops, nearly new sales to bric-a-brac stalls run by charities or non-profit community organisations such as churches and schools' (Waight 2013a, 299). Although these places for second-hand exchange are shaped by both buyers and sellers (Gregson and Crewe 2003, 3), the professionalisation of second-hand charity shops has taken place recently. In particular, professional online platforms such as Ubup have revolutionised the second-hand market. Ubup is a second-hand retailer that buys second-hand clothes, and then checks, photographs and labels the clothes online for a professional customer experience, just as in a regular online shop for new clothes (Ubup, n.d.). Second-hand shops of all forms are increasingly attempting to copy traditional retail practices (Gregson and Crewe 2003, 75).

A study of German second-hand behaviour shows that consumers sold many types of products within the last 12 months of the study. The identified product groups were: books (46%), clothes (44%), CDs (28%), DVDs (28%), textbooks (25%), video games (22%), toys (17%), furniture (17%), jewellery (14%) and mobile phones (12%) (Sempora Consulting 2012). These findings are consistent with Waight (2013a, 1), who identified, in particular, children's clothes as

being popular second-hand buys ‘because kids grow out of things quickly, while the objects themselves still hold a use value’.

These reasons also apply to collectibles, where the object might even gain value over time. Sometimes items are collected and purchased second-hand because they are currently not sold anymore. Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) pointed out that the acquisition of second-hand goods had initially been related to collecting in the literature (e.g. by Belk 2001; and Zonneveld and Biggemann 2014). Emotional attachment and nostalgia could be the main customer motivations here (Zonneveld and Biggemann 2014).

## 2 Modest consumption and lifestyle

In particular, the production methods and consumption patterns of the twenty-first century are responsible for environmental pollution and the depreciation of resources. Consumers have realised the role they play and are becoming more responsible about their excessive lifestyles (Balderjahn 2013, 202). Lifestyle is ‘a pattern of consumption that reflects a person’s choices about how they spend time and money, but in many cases it also refers to the attitudes and values attached to these behavioural patterns’ (Solomon et al. 2016, 197). Second-hand consumption is a non-excessive, modest consumption type, which exists in many forms (Gregson and Crewe 2003; Williams and Paddock 2003). The term modest is defined as ‘not large in size or amount, or not expensive’ (*Oxford Dictionary*, n.d.). Modest consumption could therefore also mean that consumers decide not to buy at all.

It has been suggested that many second-hand shoppers are not necessarily poor but want to shop clever (Gregson and Crewe 2003, 11) by not putting a strain on their wallet and the ecosystem. Consequently, they practise a form of minimalism or anti-consumption, whereby they place more emphasis on personal growth than on social status (Lee and Ahn 2016). Non-consumption is often a form of voluntary simplicity where the consumption of material goods is minimised. Consumers who practise voluntary simplicity in its mild forms tend

to ‘reduce clutter in their life, reduce burdensome time commitments, and create a peaceful personal space to enjoy life’ (Zavestoski, 2002). Anti-consumption is further described as a lifestyle-driven desire to live a simpler life (Lee and Ahn 2016) by consuming less or downshifting (Cherrier and Murray 2007). Intentional non-consumption plays a key role in sustainability (Cherrier, Black and Lee 2011).

### 3 Motivation for second-hand consumption

Customers today like to get more value from their possessions and sell their goods through different online and offline ‘buy-back’ channels (Trendwatching 2011). Because second-hand trade is gaining popularity, it is necessary for retailers to understand these alternative forms of consumption. Yet, the phenomenon of second-hand consumption has not been investigated much by other researchers in the past (Waight 2013a). To the best of the author’s knowledge, only one book has been published on re-sale culture on the Internet in Germany (Behrendt et al. 2011), but it focuses solely on chances for sustainable consumption through eBay. Other book and paper searches are not particularly extensive, with the exception of, for example, Behrendt et al. (2011), Gregson and Crewe (2003) or Franklin (2011).

Williams and Windebank (2002) suggest that consumers turn to second-hand consumption because they cannot afford new goods and have been excluded from traditional retail channels as ‘excluded consumers’. The researchers call for more alternative retail spaces, for example, formal and non-formal second-hand markets where these excluded consumers can acquire goods. Williams and Windebank (2002) acknowledge that there is little quality control, especially for the electrical household appliances that are traded in. Furthermore, they suggest that these alternative retail forms do not pose a threat to mainstream retailers. Yet, in the meantime the professionalisation of second-hand retailers such as Ubup has taken place, and, since they copy retail

practice, they pose a threat to traditional retailers. Thus, there is a need to investigate this topic further.

After conducting 120 interviews with consumers, Williams (2003) pointed out that there are financial but also rational explanations for participating in informal (e.g. friends and neighbours) and formal second-hand channels (personal advertising, second-hand shops or market stalls). Williams (2003, 105) shows that economic and rational reasons co-exist, for example, when a couple explains that they got a coat from a car boot sale because it was cheaper and because they like to browse around. Further research supports this motivational co-existence. Besides financial motivations, Gregson and Crewe (1997) have shown that there is also a hedonic explanation whereby consumers search for fun and engage with the spaces. They are looking for distinction by buying products that are currently not available on the market. Gregson and Crewe (2003, 103) add that fighting against the consumption system, in addition to income and identity politics, could motivate consumers to buy second-hand. Guiot and Roux (2010, 356) characterise second-hand buying as 'various and unpredictable offerings' in a majority of channels, which may be unavailable in the new goods market; 'visual stimulation'; 'the urge to hunt for bargaining with seller[s]'; as well as feelings of 'affiliation and social interaction' (Guiot and Roux 2010, 356).

Guiot and Roux (2010, 357–360) investigated second-hand shoppers' motivations among French shoppers and found four. First, critical motivations have an ethical and ecological dimension whereby consumers avoid conventional channels by reusing goods and rejecting the standardised appearance usually found on the market. Second, experimental motivation linked to the nature of the offering has an originality component. Consumers try to express uniqueness, nostalgic pleasure, self-expression and congruence. Third, experiential motivations linked to channel characteristics mainly include the discovery of new environments by wandering around and getting into social contact, and involve stimulation and treasure hunting. Finally, the economic motivation is a desire to pay less and includes the search for a fair price. These motivations further consist of bargain hunting and the gratificative role of price. Consumers who primarily have an economic motivation try to satisfy 'needs without depriving them of less essential acquisitions' (Guiot and Roux, 2010, 360). Waight (2013b) adds that the motivation for second-hand consumption is com-

plex, especially when it is done by households that are not considered to be 'excluded consumers'.

In contrast to Guiot and Roux (2010), Waight (2013a, 1) reviews the literature and develops a simpler categorisation. She divides customers into two groups: people 'who enjoy the process or simply want things'; and those 'who are forced to use alternative consumption channels due to financial hardship'. The interviews of 30 English mothers showed that they purchased second-hand baby goods primarily for financial, but also for ethical, reasons (Waight, 2013a). Her research found that mothers were primarily motivated by financial reasons. The two explanations provided were the consequences of the financial crisis and the fact that mothers work less and therefore earn less once they have a child (Waight, 2013a). Gregson and Crewe (2003, 92) also point out that some mothers constantly think about budgeting and fear making a mistake with their finances.

Further evidence for the co-existence of several motivations can be found in a study of Swiss consumers. The results show that these consumers are primarily buying second-hand furniture because of the low price (27%); they find new products boring (20.9%); for environmental reasons (16.8%); since these items cannot be bought new (15.4%); because they find the purchase exciting (5.7%); and for various other reasons (Anibis 2015).

Another potential reason that had previously not been considered by other researchers is the purchase of something that one cannot afford new. Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) show that consumers engage in second-hand luxury consumption because it is a sustainable choice, they want to find a real deal or a unique find, they are hunting for pre-loved treasures, or they are making a risky investment.

Although Guiot and Roux (2010) have developed a motivational scale, this study replicates parts of their work by adapting their scale and studying another cultural context. The aim of this study is to investigate consumer motivations for second-hand shopping in Germany, because the German second-hand market is growing steadily (Statista n.d.) and the retail landscape is influenced by these developments. German consumption behaviour is diverse. Small local corner stores that offer high quality, a nostalgic experience and

social interaction co-exist with discount stores, which are mainly price-driven (Logemann 2013). Furthermore, Germans are thought to have a strong ecological motivation because they consciously separate waste and demand waste-avoidance from manufacturers (Halpert 2001). It is therefore expected that German customers are strongly motivated by ecological and economic motives.

## 4 Methodology

An online questionnaire was constructed based on a selection of motivation variables for second-hand consumption by Guiot and Roux (2010). An item concerning discount shopping and the often critiqued production processes was added to the study because many Germans who do not like shopping at discounters for this reason turn to alternative second-hand channels. Some items were excluded when the translated item was too similar to another item or meant exactly the same when it was translated into German. Five items from the original scale (PUIS<sub>13</sub>, CIRC<sub>31</sub>, CIRC<sub>34</sub>, CIRC<sub>13</sub>, OFF<sub>24</sub>) were thus deleted. In sum, the questionnaire asked about the frequency of consumption in different second-hand channels; product groups that are bought online; the consumer motivation for buying used products; about sales channels and the potential risks; as well as socio-demographics. The data was collected over a period of four weeks in February 2015 and the questionnaire was distributed via social media. A 5-point likert scale was used to measure consumer motivation (1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree).

## 5 Analysis

In total, 231 participants completed the online questionnaire. Of those, 73.3 per cent were female and 26.7 per cent male. The respondents' age varied from 16 to 82 years, with a mean age of 32 years (female: 31.3 years; and male: 33.2). Because the link was distributed on social media platforms via a snowball system, perhaps more younger females self-selected to participate in the study than males because young females often have a personal interest in consumption. In addition, females often shop second-hand for the family (Waight 2013a). The sample contained mixed net household income levels where 11.4 per cent of the sample earned below €500, 8.2 per cent earned €500–€999, 22.3 per cent earned €1,000–1,999, 14.7 per cent earned €2,000–2,999, 16.3 per cent earned €3,000–3,999 and 27.2 per cent earned more than €4,000. Altogether, 47 of the 231 participants chose not to reveal their income and were counted as missing. The level of education in the sample was slightly above the average German level, with 39 per cent having a university degree and 2.7 per cent a doctoral degree. In total, 7.3 per cent had either completed secondary modern school or secondary school and 33.6 per cent had earned a university entrance diploma. Altogether, 16.8 per cent had completed vocational training.

The most frequently used purchase channels were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (higher scores mean more frequent usage), as follows: family ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ), private sales ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ), eBay ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ), fairs ( $M = 2.52$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ), other Internet platforms ( $M = 2.3$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ), second-hand shops ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ), Amazon ( $M = 2.23$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ), contacts through online forums ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) and, finally, classified ads in the newspaper ( $M = 1.38$ ,  $SD = .77$ ).

## 6 Exploratory analysis

SPSS 23 was used to conduct a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation to analyse the motivators. The results are provided in Table 1. Based on Field's recommendation, all factor loadings of lower than .5 were suppressed. Loadings of .512 are good enough for samples of between 100 and 200 if there are a few factors with small numbers of variables (Field 2013, 681). Therefore, these recommendations were followed for a sample size of just above 200. The data was found to be suitable for factor analysis (KMO of .856 and Bartlett = .00).

	Social motivation ( $\alpha = .849$ , $M = 2.74$ )	M	SD	Factor Loadings
CIRC32	I like wandering around second-hand outlets because I always hope I'll come across a real find.	3.35	1.44	.66
CIRC35	In certain second-hand outlets I feel rather like a treasure hunter.	2.94	1.50	.66
CIRC12	I enjoy the social interaction you find in certain second-hand outlets.	2.73	1.44	.86
CIRC12	I like going to second-hand outlets where I can have contact with people and talk to them.	2.66	1.44	.88
CIRC11	In certain second-hand outlets, I like entering into discussion with people even if I don't buy anything.	2.02	1.33	.53

Ecological motivation ( $\alpha = .735$ , $M = 2.70$ )		M	SD	Factor Loadings
ETH11	By buying second-hand I feel I'm helping to fight against waste.	3.16	1.36	.76
DISCNT	I don't like buying at discount stores because of their questionable production processes.	2.95	1.27	.56
ANT11	Buying second-hand enables me to distance myself from the consumer society.	2.68	1.33	.78
PUIS11	Buying second-hand is for me a revenge on the consumption system.	1.99	1.24	.74
Individual motivation ( $\alpha = .624$ , $M = 2.88$ )		M	SD	Factor Loadings
OFF12	I can find products that cannot be bought in mainstream stores.	3.15	1.34	.55
ECO21	By buying second-hand I feel I'm paying a fair price for things.	3.15	1.38	.65
ECO22	I don't want to pay more for a product, just because it is new.	2.79	1.13	.76
OFF23	I like buying second-hand objects because I find them authentic.	2.41	1.20	.53
Nostalgic motivation ( $\alpha = .762$ , $M = 2.65$ )		M	SD	Factor Loadings
OFF22	I am attracted more to old things than new ones.	2.67	1.10	.75
OFF25	I buy second-hand products because they are old and have a history.	2.53	1.26	.70

**Table 1: Factor analysis of shopping motivation**

The cronbach alpha values for the factors were: social (.849), ecological (.735), individual (.624) and nostalgic (.762). Individual motivation with an alpha of .624 is the only scale that does not show high internal reliability, based on the rule of thumb that alpha values above .7 are efficient (Bryman and Bell 2011, 159). Leaving out any one of the items would have further reduced the scale's reliability. The scale mixes the two factors of price and originality by Guiot and Roux (2010), but both factors, especially the pricing items, were perceived to be too important in terms of content—based on the previously reviewed literature—to delete completely. Overall, the motivation model structure of Guiot and Roux (2010) was not replicated identically. Originality as a hedonic or recreational motivation was of little importance in this model. Only item OFF12 from Guiot and Roux's (2010) originality scale loaded on the factor 'individual motivation' (exploratory analysis).

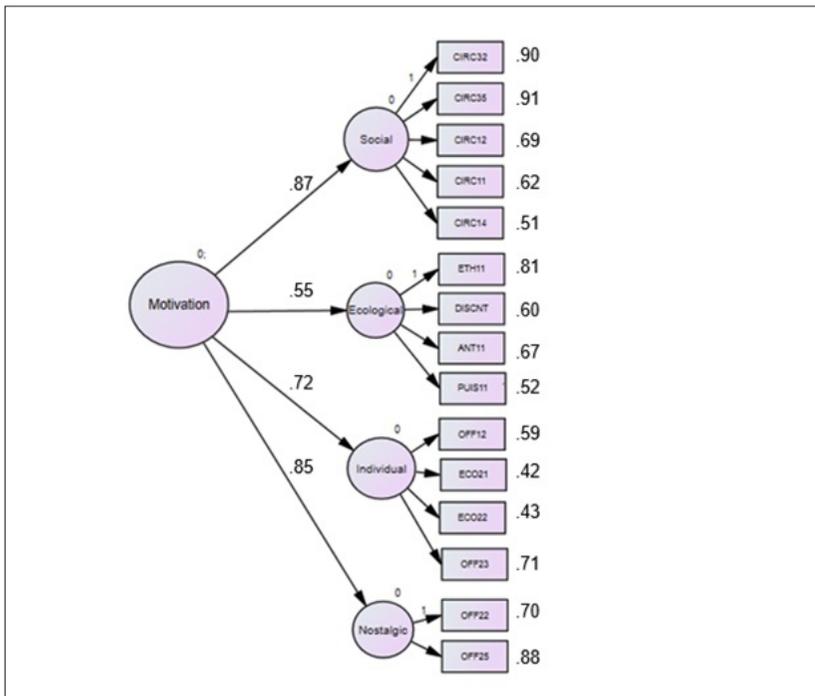


Figure 1: SEM of second-hand shopping motivation. Source: Own illustration.

The global fit indices of the unbiased structural equation model (see Figure 1 for standard estimates) indicate a good fit with the data. The requirements specified based on Byrne's (2001) recommendations were considered ( $\chi^2/df < 5$ , CFI  $> 0.9$  and RMSEA  $< 0.08$ ). The following fit indicators were produced by the model:  $\chi^2/df = 2.149$ , CFI = 0.918, RMSEA = 0.071,  $p = .000$ ). Although items ECO22 and ECO23 scored rather low, they were not deleted, because economic motivations were found to be so important in previous studies (Guiot and Roux 2010; Williams and Paddock 2003; and Waight 2013a).

## 7 Confirmatory analysis of Guiot and Roux (2010)

A confirmatory analysis of the factor structure and the provided model only partly confirmed the work of Guiot and Roux (2010). Internal reliability was not acceptable for all factors with the following cronbach alpha scores: fair price (.47), gratificative role of price (.83), distance from the system (.721), ethics and ecology (.57), treasure hunting (.69), originality (.53), social contact (.87) and nostalgic pleasure (.71). Overall, the model fit indicators were  $\chi^2/df = 1.997$ , CFI = 0.917, RMSEA = 0.066,  $p = .000$ . To test the comparative strength of the three factors, the original CFA model was restructured into a second-order model (see Figure 2). The factor strengths in the model were economic motivation (.72), critical motivation (.80) and hedonic motivation (.79).

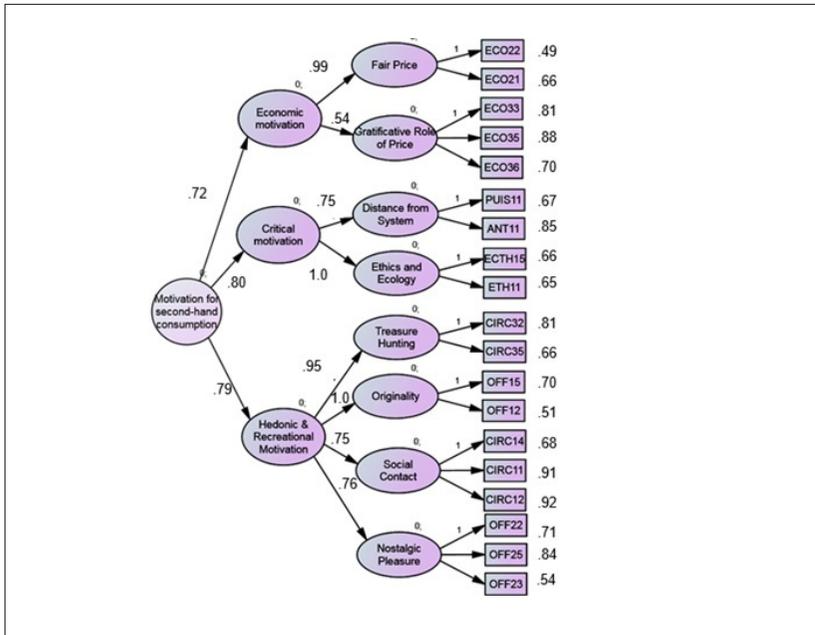


Figure 2: SEM of second-hand shopping motivation (confirmatory). Source: Own illustration.

## 8 Discussion

The results suggest that second-hand shopping is mostly done for non-economic reasons in the German context. Because social and nostalgic motives prevail in the study, it can be concluded that German consumers buy second-hand because they want to live a certain lifestyle.

The motivation for second-hand consumption appears to be different for German consumers than for UK consumers (Williams and Paddock 2003; Waight 2013a) or French consumers (Guiot and Roux 2010). Whereas many consumers in the UK have to buy second-hand in order not to be excluded from society

(Williams and Windebank 2002), or to survive because of financial hardship (Williams and Paddock 2003; Waight 2013), the results of this paper indicate that German consumers are not primarily influenced by economic motivations. Germans are not primarily driven by cheap prices when buying second-hand. Payment-related explanations (ECO21 and ECO23) were the weakest motivational estimates in the structural equation model. In addition, German consumers don't want to take revenge on the consumption system. Furthermore, it doesn't appear that they feel the need to distance themselves from a consumer society. A much better explanation is provided by social factors (especially browsing behaviour (CIRC32 and CIRC35) and nostalgia (OFF22 and OFF25)). The dominance of social and nostalgic motives suggest that German second-hand purchases are made for lifestyle purposes, for example, when older cult products are purchased to demonstrate a certain lifestyle. These findings partly confirm those of William and Paddock (2003). Whereas the researchers suggest that economic necessity is the principal motive for lower income consumers, other consumers choose alternative forms for fun, for social reasons or because of their desire for uniqueness.

The timing and economic situation of the countries at the time of the study could also explain the motivational differences, as the data for Waight's study (2013) and Guiot and Roux's (2010) study were collected in the UK and in France during or shortly after the financial crisis. When there is economic pressure, consumers are perhaps more motivated to buy second-hand than if the economy is doing well.

A further explanation for these different findings could be cultural differences. Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015) also put limitations on their own work by stating that the need for uniqueness might differ in more individualistic Western cultures compared to more collective Eastern cultures. Individual, social and nostalgic motivations could therefore be explained by cultural differences. This is in line with Zonneveld and Biggemann (2014, 932), who concluded in regard to collectables that 'local culture remains a central influence on consumer behaviour and individual identity'. Witkowski and Reddy (2010) found evidence for the influence of culture on ethical consumption behaviour by studying young German and US consumers.

A final explanation, and a limitation of this study, could be the sample characteristics. Guiot and Roux (2010) had a much larger sample and Waight (2013a) collected qualitative data. Based on the findings of Witkowski and Reddy (2010), the large proportion of females in this sample is not likely to have influenced the results. In their study there were no gender differences concerning ethical consumption. Yet, a replication of this study with a larger, more representative sample should be conducted to validate the findings.

## 9 Managerial implications and future research

Primarily, these findings have implications for formal and informal second-hand-channel providers. An understanding of the motivational drivers helps fair organisers, second-hand shop managers and individuals who sell in informal channels. Understanding the hedonic motivation could lead second-hand retailers to further focus on nostalgic and social factors, for example, by setting up small areas with benches where interaction between consumers can take place or by explaining to stall owners the importance of social interaction.

The findings show that ‘treasure hunting’ and ‘coming across a real find’ motivate consumers to make second-hand purchases. These drivers could also be relevant for retailers in traditional retail settings. Hollister has, for example, used this unique experimental treasure-hunting approach by minimising the light (Ashley et al. 2010) and placing spotlights on products. Providing a unique customer experience, which includes social interaction, for example, an informative discussion with sales people or other customers, could motivate consumers to keep buying in conventional retail channels instead of turning to alternative forms of consumption. An assortment or store layout that contains nostalgic elements could motivate customers to keep visiting traditional retail channels. Based on the measured items in the questionnaire,

retailers could satisfy ecological motivations by offering products with certified eco-labels.

The results stimulate several further research questions. Are customers with low incomes buying second-hand products for economic reasons, and well-off customers because they are searching for unique products and experiences? A further research direction would be the investigation of minimalism and non-consumption and second-hand purchases. Are people who live a minimalist lifestyle more inclined to purchase second-hand? As outlined above, the cultural, individual and economic situation of the participant should be given attention in future research. Future research could therefore investigate participants' lifestyles, anti-consumption tendencies, personal financial well-being and material value tendencies to better explain the motivation for second-hand shopping. A cross-cultural study, which takes into account the economic climate of the country in which the research is conducted, could also explain motivational differences.

## 10 Conclusion

There has been an increase in second-hand consumption in various formal and informal distribution channels. In contrast to previously published studies, there is evidence that German consumers are not predominantly driven by economic motives and do not seem to be driven by ecological motives either. The findings suggest that German consumers are more motivated to engage in second-hand consumption for social and nostalgic reasons, which implies that lifestyle plays a significant role in the decision to purchase second-hand. The results have implications for second-hand retailers and fair organisers, as well as traditional retailers, who can use this information to create an atmosphere in which these two motivators are supported.

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