

Second-hand fashion market: consumer role in circular economy

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of consumer motivation in the context of the circular economy (CE) through the reuse of fashion products.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative approach was employed through ethnographic as well as in-depth interviews with nine consumers who buy used fashion products in thrift stores and street fairs in Brazil.

Findings – The findings are based on interrelationships and overlaps found in the integration between the three-dimensional consumer motivations to buy second-hand fashion cited in the literature. A framework showing a virtuous circle of motivations involving the consumer in an active role in the CE is proposed as a result.

Research limitations/implications – Limitations include participants' selection and a single region data collection. Implications aim to help researchers to more fully understand a new and complex consumer behavior in a CE.

Practical implications – By highlighting consumers' motivations for this kind of commerce, the practical implications of this work are the possibilities to inspire retailers to start second-hand fashion businesses. Also, policy makers can focus on engaging consumers in active roles that foster CE events.

Originality/value – This work is one of the first attempts to show the role of consumers in the CE and their motivations to engage in this active behavior.

Keywords Brazil, Buying behaviour, Economic trends, Second-hand markets

Paper type Research paper

Thrift store is life! It is just washing and passing forward

Introduction

The quote above from one of our interviewees expresses well the spirit of an increasing consumption of second-hand products. As evidence of this, in recent years alone, the resale industry has generated billions of dollars in the USA (NARTS: The Association of Resale Professionals, 2018). Cervellon *et al.* (2012) point out that the vintage fashion trend has spurred consumption of used clothing over the last 10 years. This trend has also been occurring in Brazil, where the number of thrift stores increased by 22 percent in 2015. The rise is a consequence of a more conscious consumer market and less prejudice against second-hand items (Dino, 2017). In addition, street fairs organized by consumers and thrift stores have become more and more popular in several cities around the country. These outdoor events, which often feature music and food trucks, attract thousands of people on weekends (Fofonka, 2018) and, as a consequence, increased consumption of second-hand fashion has caught the attention of researchers (Gopalakrishnan and Matthews, 2018).

The increase of online thrift shops and social media communities, which sell products to individuals of all social classes, reinforces this trend. Consumers from higher social classes buy these products because they want exclusive items, whereas lower social class customers have a financial motivation (Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015).



The second-hand fashion business model is a way of reducing resource use and waste, and has customers as primary partners and suppliers (Gopalakrishnan and Matthews, 2018). In a context of circular economy (CE), it is important to understand the role of consumers in second-hand fashion consumption. Geissdoerfer *et al.* (2017) define CE as a regenerative system in which the flow of resources and waste are minimized by loops of material and energy, and one way to achieve this is through reuse. Second-hand products – and more specifically, used fashion products – are reused items with the consumers as both buyers and sellers. Several studies have investigated the context of buying second-hand products (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Cervellon *et al.*, 2012) and the motivations of second-hand fashion shopping (Ferraro *et al.*, 2016; Guiot and Roux, 2010; Xu *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, the second-hand fashion business model and collaborative consumption (Gopalakrishnan and Matthews, 2018), as well as voluntary disposition in clothing exchange events, (Albinsson and Perera, 2009) have also been subjects of research.

The main motivations for the purchase of used clothes are defined in literature as economic, critical, hedonic and recreational (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Ferraro *et al.*, 2016). However, the categorization presented in the literature shows these motivations as being independent from each other, without any indication of potential relationships that may exist between them. Also, the role played by consumers in promoting product reuse and stimulating alternative markets is unclear. For this reason, the aim of this study is to investigate consumers' motivations in the context of CE through the reuse of fashion products. More specifically, an integrative framework showing a virtuous cycle of motivations that involves consumers in an active role in the CE is proposed as a result. Brazilian thrift stores and street fairs are used as a research context. The following sections present literature, methodology and results, as well as a discussion of the proposed framework and its implications.

Literature review

Circular economy and second-hand consumption

In the last decade, concern about the impact of industrial production on the environment has increased considerably. As a consequence of this concern, the concept of CE has emerged as a regenerative cycle of production and consumption (Bocken *et al.*, 2016; Geissdoerfer *et al.*, 2017). The traditional linear business model focuses on large-scale production which exploits natural resources, pollutes the environment and generates waste. In contrast, the circular approach aims to sell artifacts and is attentive to the flow of materials and products over time. In this sense, Lieder and Rashid (2016) describe CE company motivations as economic benefits, resource scarcity and environmental impact. The circular business model can reduce the use of resources by reusing products and materials in an economically viable way (Bocken *et al.*, 2016).

Several definitions have appeared over the last ten years concerning the concept of CE (see Prieto-Sandoval *et al.* (2018) for a complete review of previous studies). Among these definitions, the concept of CE as an economic system, based on business models, which seeks to replace the “end-of-life” idea through a change of paradigm in the way that society lives and interrelates with nature is common sense. The measures to prevent the depletion of resources, through reuse, recycling and recovering materials in production/distribution and consumption processes, are advocated by several authors including Prieto-Sandoval *et al.* (2018), Saidani *et al.* (2019) and Kirzherr *et al.* (2017). These authors also point out that CE operates at micro (enterprises and consumers), meso (economic agents integrated in symbiosis) and macro (city, regions and governments) levels. Attaining this circular model requires cyclical and regenerative environmental innovations in the way society legislates, produces and consumes.

One way to operationalize the CE is to extend product life through reuse (Geissdoerfer *et al.*, 2017). Bocken *et al.* (2016) indicate that, within the CE, there are three resource cycles:

slowing, closing and narrowing loops. The business model using the slowing resource loop strategy designs long-life goods and develops ways to extend product life. Through services such as repairs and remanufacturing, a company operationalizes the slowing resource loop.

However, there are other ways to reuse products, and reuse measures are not restricted to business models, consumers are also concerned about the impact of their own consumption. One of these measures is collaborative consumption, which is defined as the consumption of goods and services involving consumers in activities such as rent, loan, trade, barter and exchange of products (Gopalakrishnan and Matthews, 2018). These activities are motivated for sustainable proposals, and reuse is a way to achieve waste reduction (Geissdoerfer *et al.*, 2017). In this context, sustainable fashion consumption emerges as a megatrend that responds to fast fashion cycles and traditional business models. In opposition to big retailers' fast fashion, "slow fashion" has received attention through moving mindsets from quantity to quality (Vehmas *et al.*, 2018).

On the one hand, the fashion industry started looking for alternatives to recycle their products and receive used products, on the other hand, consumers became aware of their own behavior, beginning to pay attention to how to dispose of their used clothes and reduce their fashion consumption. In this sense, CE opens possibilities for a more sustainable closed-loop system in fashion (Vehmas *et al.*, 2018). As a result, the second-hand clothing industry has increased in recent years (Gopalakrishnan and Matthews, 2018; Xu *et al.*, 2014). Some ways to dispose of used clothing are by donating or selling to thrift stores, swapping or giving to close friends and family, recycling, and selling through alternative channels such as garage sales, flea markets and internet platforms (Albinsson and Perera, 2009; Xu *et al.*, 2014). In the Brazilian context, the garage sale is not common. Flea markets not only exist, but they also involve other products, such as furniture, books, pictures and vinyl records. Therefore, the focus of this research is on thrift stores that sell second-hand clothing and on used clothes street fairs.

Second-hand fashion purchase

Second-hand clothing is fashion apparel or an accessory that once belonged to someone else. It may either have already had several years of use or may have been recently produced (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). In Brazil, establishments that sell second-hand clothing are called brechós (thrift stores), and often sell these products below the traditional market price (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005). Although buying second-hand fashion can be seen as environmentally friendly behavior, it can also be motivated by issues beyond ecological, including psychological or material, which would entice the consumer to seek alternative sales channels (Guiot and Roux, 2010). These reasons can also be related to a connection between consumers' self-concept and possessions (Albinsson and Perera, 2009). Based on the literature review we draw from categorization proposed by Ferraro *et al.* (2016) and Guiot and Roux (2010) in economic, critical and hedonic and recreational dimensions, and enrich them with several authors' collaborations on the theme. This proposition is described below and in Table I.

Economic dimension for second-hand fashion purchase. The literature about second-hand purchase focuses its discussion on economic factors which include three main concepts. First, financial reasons motivate second-hand buying because it is a way to obtain a fair price (Guiot and Roux, 2010); furthermore, restricted resources to spend during shopping (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005) and access to branded products with a lower price may also motivate this behavior. Cervellon *et al.* (2012) argue that frugality is also a financial reason, once it motivates the search for low prices and cheap products. Second, a bargain is related to the gratification of price and treasure hunting (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Guiot and Roux, 2010). Consumers who buy second-hand products seek better quality and feel good when they find something special. Finally, quality and durability are characteristics that consumers look for in this type of product (Edbring *et al.*, 2016).

Dimensions	Concepts	References
Economic	Bargain	Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Cervellon <i>et al.</i> (2012), Ferraro <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010)
	Quality and durability	Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016)
	Financial reasons	Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Cervellon <i>et al.</i> (2012), Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ferraro <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010).
Critical	Environmental and ecological awareness	Cervellon <i>et al.</i> (2012), Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ferraro <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010)
	Critical and ethical consumption	Ferraro <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010)
Hedonic and recreational	Personal reasons	Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ferraro <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010)
	Desire to be unique	Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Cervellon <i>et al.</i> (2012), Duffy <i>et al.</i> (2012), Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ferraro <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010)
	Treasure hunting	Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Cervellon <i>et al.</i> (2012), Edbring <i>et al.</i> (2016), Guiot and Roux (2010), Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015)
	Nostalgia	Cervellon <i>et al.</i> (2012), Duffy <i>et al.</i> (2012), Guiot and Roux (2010), Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015)
	Social and familiar relationships	Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Duffy <i>et al.</i> (2012), Guiot and Roux (2010)

Table I.
Dimensions and
concepts in literature

This feature is also true for other types of reused/recycled fashion consumption such as circular garment consumption (Vehmas *et al.*, 2018), and can be associated to the idea of product life extension. These items are made with high-quality materials, such as silk, leather, linen, cotton and wool. The search for these products in stores is also considered a treasure hunt (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005).

Critical dimension for second-hand fashion purchase. The critical dimension includes two concepts. First, the environmental and ecological awareness involves consumers' concerns about the impact on nature of mass production. Reducing the use of natural resources and diminishing the production of garbage can motivate the purchase of second-hand clothing. For environmental reasons, consumers reuse and recycle fashion apparel to extend product life (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Edbring *et al.*, 2016). The eco-fashion movement has brought together consumers concerned with the impact of industrial production on their health, on nature and on society.

Second, critical and ethical consumption includes consumer rejection of mass production and the traditional production chain. For these consumers, second-hand shopping is a way to confront society's consumerism, diminish production and sell off unnecessary goods (Roux and Korchia, 2006). Recycling, combating waste and ethical concerns are motivations for this behavior (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Guiot and Roux, 2010). For Guiot and Roux (2010), anti-ostentation is a deliberate and conscious rejection of large-scale fashion production and the valuing of items despised by other people. For this reason, consumers begin to think about their own buying behavior and look for alternative ways to consume fashion.

Hedonic and recreational dimension for second-hand fashion purchase. Based on the literature review, this study brings further concepts to the dimension previously proposed by Guiot and Roux (2010) and Ferraro *et al.* (2016). First, treasure hunting is a concept related to the pursuit of something that is not available in the market. When consumers find collectible items (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015) or products that are not available in the market (Edbring *et al.*, 2016), they experience emotions of pleasure and amusement.

Second, social and family relationships are a dimension enhanced by thrift stores, as a visit to these places is seen as an enjoyable experience. While shopping, consumers interact

with the shop owners, salespeople and other customers. These relationships increase satisfaction during the customer experience, and it can narrow down a link to the purchase of items (Duffy *et al.*, 2012; Guiot and Roux, 2010). In addition, some consumers have a history of changing clothes between family and friends. These earlier experiences can influence consumer choice for second-hand fashion products (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005).

Third, nostalgia is associated with the emotion that is awakened through some objects and by the admiration of the history of the last owner (Duffy *et al.*, 2012; Guiot and Roux, 2010; Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Nostalgia is defined as the preference for objects that were more common when the individual was young, or as the desire to live in a period of history that has passed (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). Some consumers also believe that old items are of a better quality than those produced in the present, because they were made with superior materials.

Fourth, a desire to be unique is related to originality, the pursuit of luxury products, involvement with fashion and the purchase of vintage clothing (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Duffy *et al.*, 2012; Guiot and Roux, 2010). This need for differentiation is related to the creation of the style itself, seeking originality and acceptance in a social group. We include the purchase of vintage products with a desire to be unique, because it is a way of distinguishing ourselves from others (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). Products which were produced between the decades of the 1920s and the 1980s, with specific characteristics of an age style, and which belonged to other people, are valued for their age and condition (Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Consumers who purchase these items seek esthetics, style and fashion (Duffy *et al.*, 2012). However, in some cases, vintage clothes are more expensive than those currently produced, because they are unique and rare (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). This literature review allows integrating concepts related to the three dimensions regarding second-hand clothes purchase. Table I summarizes this review.

Method

An exploratory qualitative approach is used in order to understand the role of consumers' motivations in the context of the CE through the reuse of fashion products. As well as traditional in-depth interviews with consumers and sellers (Arsel, 2017), our research methodology includes ethnographic interviews conducted during participant observation on street fairs and thrift stores. Using both approaches, nine consumers who visited thrift stores and street fairs in Brazil were interviewed between October 25 and November 8, 2016. Drawing from motivations identified in the literature for second-hand buying in CE, and summarized in Table I; a data collection instrument was developed.

Participants were selected through the snowball technique (Flick, 2009). The interviews were recorded through audiovisual resources, allowing the interpretation of the word and environment conjointly. In order to preserve anonymity, interviewees' names have been changed. Data that could identify the participants, such as the names of the events they organize, have also been changed. Our participants' basic biodata are: Emily, female, 21 years old, high school degree, student; Emma, female, 59 years old, college degree, retired; Doug, male, 28 years old, high school degree, visual merchandising; Parker, male, 27 years old, high school degree, style assistant; Chloe, female, 23 years old, college degree, startup employee; Frances, female, 23 years old, college degree, operational consultant; Monica, female, 24 years old, college degree, operational consultant; Nicole, female, 33 years old, college degree, thrift fair producer; and Linda, female, 58 years old, college degree, lawyer.

Audio transcripts were included in NVivo software to analyze the content of the interviews. Data analysis followed a three-step process. First, all interviews were transcribed and analyzed, totaling 4.5 h of filmed interviews, generating 47 single-spaced pages of text using 12-sized Times New Roman font. The interviews were organized in nine

different files, one for each respondent. In the second step, each interview was cross-examined by the team of researchers having as a baseline, the concepts and dimensions previously identified in the literature, as presented in Table I. Several excerpts from the interviewees were coded with more than one code, demonstrating the interrelationships between concepts that belong to different dimensions. Finally, a thematic analysis following the process outlined by Lofland and Lofland (1995) was used. This involved a coding process where key emergent codes were identified across the different data sources (videos and interviews) to create congruency. These codes were then organized individually to identify axial connections (themes). A peer-coding system, in which the different researchers codified and exchanged ideas, was used to achieve a unified code system which would ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the themes emerging from the data analysis. The researchers agreed to the multiple coding of the excerpts, evidencing the interrelation between the dimensions, which highlights the motivational dimensions interrelation for second-hand fashion purchase in a CE.

Consumer role in circular economy

The analysis shows the interrelations between economic, critical and hedonic/recreational motivational dimensions, identified in the literature through the aspects that emerged from the data. We now present the interrelationship between the motivations consumers have in order to play an active role in a CE, and from this, we propose an integrative framework to visualize the concepts and their overlaps that motivate the consumer.

Critical and economic overlap

The results show the relationship between the critical and economic dimensions for second-hand clothing purchase in thrift stores. Consumers are motivated by critical and ethical consumption when buying such products. Also, there are financial reasons for buying clothing in thrift stores because consumers want quality items at low prices. Although the literature points to ecological consciousness (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012), few interviewees mentioned it. One possible explanation for this is that environmental concern in fashion is a very recent phenomenon.

Participant Nicole has been the creator and organizer of “Fashion Trade,” held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, for more than five years. For her, the sustainable fashion movement is one of the reasons for the increase in shopping in thrift stores and, consequently, a raise in environmental awareness in fashion buying. The fair is a way to promote this kind of attitude: “The fair has changed, because before, it was a ‘Fashion Trade’, today it is a sustainable fashion fair that involves [...] people who want to get rid of their clothes.”

For Emily, shopping in thrift stores is a way to end consumerism. She comments that consumerism can be seen in people who accumulate clothes they often do not wear. Buying second-hand clothes, for Emily, is a way to “get out of the total cycle of buying in fast fashion [...] we know that their productive chain is tense.” The slow fashion movement is congruent with previous research (Vehmas *et al.*, 2018). This consumption behavior is critical in nature and is a way of rejecting the traditional productive chain, rethinking how fashion is consumed and decreasing the number of goods produced.

Clothes sold in thrift stores usually have superior quality to the fashion currently produced (Edbring *et al.*, 2016). For this reason, the quality of these products, an economic factor, is associated with the concept of critical and ethical consumption, since buying high-quality second-hand clothes is a way of prolonging the useful life of products and rejecting the traditional production chain. For example, Linda shows off a coat made of imported wool that she bought many years ago and Emily, when showing us some second-hand jeans that she bought at a thrift shop, explains that the product is superior to other jeans sold in fast fashion stores today. Doug’s comment supports this idea: “thrift stores are great for buying

jeans, [...] old ones [...]. I have them and [...] they are so 1980, they are rough jeans, things we do not find today, not this cutting model [...].” Parker, who also likes to buy coats in thrift shops, explains that this quality is not found today in the traditional market: “The items that I buy in thrift stores, I cannot find in the market today. They do not exist in the same style, material, model [...]. I believe that it is not possible to reproduce the same product, with the material that we use today, with the existing technology.”

However, many thrift shops have begun selling branded clothing at higher prices because of the increased demand for these products. For several participants, this movement is a way to take advantage of the consumer. Doug reports a fact to support this argument: “[...] on the Instagram, [a thrift store] [...] announced an incredible coat. [...] the jacket cost \$66. No, a second-hand jacket is not worth \$66 [...]. This is because shopping in thrift stores has become elitist and that is not the idea of a second-hand store.” Emma speculates that luxury thrift stores specializing in selling used luxury brand items (Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015) will not succeed because they are expensive. For Linda, these stores charge excessive prices for clothing that they often receive for free or for below the market price. According to previous studies, fair prices on branded products are an important consumption motivation for second-hand clothing (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Bardhi and Arnould, 2005), and what we find here is that this is not just important for the bargain, but for the consumption value added on the peace price. Consumers evaluate the notion of ethical fairness for this kind of trade.

Chloe created a second-hand clothing fair named “Let it Go.” She argues that when a person sells his/her clothing, he/she has no further interest in wearing it. This item can be donated to someone who needs it, or it can be sold for a lower price than a new piece. For her, the donation of clothes has an ideology: “If you have used clothes, they should be donated to someone. If this is no longer for you, it is unproductive for you [...]. It has an ideology [...]. If you are going to put a price on what is not useful to you, which can be donated, you should put a lower price.”

The critical and economic overlap highlights the association between critical and ethical consumption and the search for second-hand products with quality and durability. Several participants argued that this behavior of seeking better products at fair prices is a way of rejecting the traditional fashion chain of production. In the participants’ perception, better products are made with quality materials and have more value and durability. However, charging high prices for second-hand clothing is seen as unethical behavior performed by thrift store owners. This perception is related to the purpose of second-hand commerce, which should be the circulation of goods that are not useful to the original owner, rather than the creation of added value for the seller.

Critical and hedonic overlap

The results show that hedonic consumption (Guiot and Roux, 2010) is related to the desire to be unique (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Edbring *et al.*, 2016), since consumers want to have clothes different from those produced on a large scale by the fashion industry.

The vintage trend is a motivation to buy second-hand clothes (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Duffy *et al.*, 2012). Several participants said that even a new product that emulates old styles is not produced as in the past. Doug explains this difference: “The fashion industry makes t-shirts with patterns that simulate marks [stains and wear], but the inspiration for this pattern comes from the wear and tear of time, as with an item that already exists. However, people want to buy something new that has only a reference to something used or old. Why not use something old that really inspires this new thing?”

The pursuit of unique clothing is a way that consumers use to build their identity through items they can identify with. While Chloe opens her closet and shows us her second-hand clothes, she comments: “I like my things. They are not just what they are.

Every time I see clothes that belonged to someone else, I think it's not just one thing [...], these items have my identity." These results are similar to those of Roux and Korchia (2006), where desire for uniqueness is a good reason to use clothes that had previously belonged to unknown individuals.

The results show that, within the critical and hedonic overlap, there is a relationship between the desire to be unique and the critical consumption. Consumer behavior that rejects the traditional production chain and searches for alternative channels for the purchase of fashion is associated with the desire to be unique (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Edbring *et al.*, 2016) and a search for originality (Guiot and Roux, 2010). The capacity to find second-hand clothes in thrift stores is also perceived as a cultural capital (Duffy *et al.*, 2012) which motivates consumers to visit these places.

Economic and recreational overlap

The results show the importance of social relationships in thrift shopping. This idea is evident in most participants' responses because the custom of wearing used clothing often comes from childhood. While Emma spreads a pile of second-hand clothes on the couch to show us, she explains that she wore the clothes that were her mother's and that she has the custom of buying in thrift stores: "maybe it came from my childhood. A long time ago, we used to meet one day a week and we showed each other beautiful things that we found because we went looking for something and found something different." The influence of family and close friends is related to nostalgic feelings that refer to memories about the individual past (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012).

For Emma, the custom of buying second-hand clothes remains today because it also has financial benefits. As pointed out in the literature, economic motivations involve the search for products sold at fair prices (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Edbring *et al.*, 2016). This motivation is clear when Doug shows us a jacket and comments: "The essence of these cheap thrift shops is to be cheap and sell items at low prices, which is the original idea of the thrift store. With \$3, you buy wonderful things, and people who buy from these stores are often people who really want to buy cheap clothes for financial reasons." This custom of visiting the thrift shops begins because of financial reasons but over time becomes a leisure activity. The search for clothes is pleasurable for the consumer when he/she finds something that has his/her identity. Doug explains this: "Fashion is more than a way of dressing, showing who we really are and what we think now [...], is a kind of expression [...]. Clothes represent something. The way we dress is our brand, and it tells more than we want to say or tells it in a way that we do not think but it is there speaking for us."

However, although financial reasons motivate such behavior, economic restraint is not the main reason consumers buy second-hand clothing. Most interviewees reported that it is a genuine pleasure to find a good, beautiful and exclusive outfit at a lower price than that of the traditional market. An excellent negotiation that causes consumer pride is defined in the literature as a bargain (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Guiot and Roux, 2010). Doug exemplifies this in his comment about a cheap item that he had obtained: "This jacket cost \$1.35. If you find this boyfriend style jacket, so cool, so cute, you pay \$500. In a thrift store, [...] if you are lucky, you will find amazing jackets for \$8." When consumers buy clothes with lower prices than the traditional market price, they show frugal behavior, since they save money and use it in other consumer activities (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012). Emma explains that money saved from shopping in thrift stores is used in other activities, such as traveling or other forms of entertainment.

This habit of strolling through thrift stores and fashion flea markets is seen as a treasure hunt (Ferraro *et al.*, 2016; Guiot and Roux, 2010). Although some authors refer to treasure hunting as a motivation related to the purchase of new clothes with vintage style (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012), many participants demonstrated the same feelings regarding the purchase of second-hand clothes. Treasure hunting is defined as the pursuit of unique clothing that

when found arouses consumer pleasure and pride. These feelings are evident when Doug explains, “[inside the thrift store] it is full of clothes, hangers full of clothes. You need to look at them one by one [...]. It is a treasure hunt to really be able to find something.”

The concepts of bargaining and treasure hunting are also associated with social relations (Guiot and Roux, 2010). Consumers become friends with thrift shops owners. Linda says that this relationship with the owner is essential for her to visit the store. For Emma, making friends with the owners is habitual and makes buying exclusive clothes easier, since they come into personal contact and offer novelties.

For Edbring *et al.* (2016), buying second-hand clothes is seen as a “fun” and “cool” activity, as it stimulates and strengthens social relationships. For this reason, social relationships can be a motivation for the popularization of this behavior. During our observation at the “Fashion Trade” fair, Nicole comments that the event came up: “As a meeting between friends. [...]. Close friends came, other friends [...] came too and we created the event. After the first meeting, we never stopped. Since 2011, five years ago [...]. And it became something we never imagined, I quit my job and today I make a living out of it.” Chloe also told us how the fair “Let it Go” came about as a gathering of friends: “I was with some friends and [...] I separated several clothes and offered them [to my friends][...]. Then came the idea of doing an event on the street [...]. The goal of the ‘Let it Go’ fair was to bring friends, people who want to expose something, who want to donate or not, who want to exchange things with another person.”

Interactions between owners, sellers and customers allow consumers to know the history of the product they are buying and the events this clothing has been through until it reaches the current owner (Duffy *et al.*, 2012). For Chloe, second-hand clothes have a history, a symbology and the exchange of used clothes involves people. Even when the story related to clothing is negative; it does not interfere with the motivation to purchase. Chloe says it is not a problem if the previous owner died: “My grandmother always says, ‘I do not buy these second-hand clothes sold in thrift stores, they might be from someone who died.’ But people die. I do not believe in this bad energy [...] how good that the clothes are with me now.” Emily also refers to the energy that is in the clothes: “I think it is good that I have this outfit. This has already lived through some things, I do not know what it was, it can be something bad, it can be something good, [...]. But now it is with me and will live through things that can also be very bad or very good.” This belief in the energy of objects and clothes, and the role it has in object exchange is congruent with Albinsson and Perera’s (2009) findings.

The admiration for the history of clothing reinforces the relationship between the concepts of nostalgia and appreciation of vintage pieces. This feeling is like a desire to live in an age of history in which the individual was not born. Doug explains that: “[...] it is a feeling of something that is from another time. [...] the clothes I buy in thrift stores are not just clothes. No. It has a marked age. You can see that it comes from another decade, from another year and from another fashion segment that we cannot find today.” Although vintage fashion is defined as clothing produced between 1920 and 1980 (Cervellon *et al.*, 2012), many participants quoted vintage clothing as being produced in the 1990s. Emily explains that she paid a high price for an item of clothing produced in this decade: “this [Hard Rock Café jacket] was more expensive because it is what they [fashion people] call a relic [...] and was something very striking at the time, in 1990.” According to Roux and Korchia (2006), this sort of nostalgic experience has a therapy function for memory, working against the uniformity and banality of mass production, and against a gradual depersonalization of the individual.

The economic and recreational overlap includes concepts such as financial and personal reasons, social relations, nostalgia, bargaining and treasure hunting. For most participants, exchanging clothes among relatives in childhood motivates the consumption of second-hand clothing. This behavior has become a leisure activity which generates

feelings like pleasure and well-being when the consumer can find high quality beautiful clothes, and manage to negotiate the price, lower than on the traditional market (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005; Cervellon *et al.*, 2012; Guiot and Roux, 2010). In addition, nostalgia and interaction with thrift store owners, salespersons and other customers, also generate positive emotions (Duffy *et al.*, 2012).

Discussion

Analyzing the critical and economic overlap, we identify relationships between the concepts of financial reasons, quality and durability, and critical and ethical consumption. In the critical and hedonic overlap, we find an association between concepts of personal reasons and critical and ethical consumption. Finally, in the economic and hedonic overlap, the results reveal relationships between financial and personal reasons and social relations.

The analysis shows that the concepts are interconnected and the overlaps between the dimensions motivate consumer engagement in CE. Although the consumer is not aware of their own role in this context, they enter into a virtuous circle that leads to participation in the slowing cycle. This result demonstrates that CE is beyond business models. Also, the active role of the consumer in this system is highlighted.

The research findings show that consumers are so involved in second-hand purchases that they become active players in CE, promoting events to encourage the exchange of used clothes between people. Based on consumer reports and results analysis, it can be argued that consumer engagement can also be a cycle that continually motivates their active role in the extended fashion product life. The cycle begins with nostalgic feelings related to the consumer's childhood, when their family exchanged clothes between siblings and cousins. Following this, second-hand fashion shopping becomes a custom for the consumer, mainly for financial reasons. Consumers then realize that buying used clothes is a way to get quality products that last longer. By having clothes that last longer, the consumer buys less and begins to reject the traditional productive chain because it sells lower-quality products at high prices. Consumers begin to relate to owners of thrift stores, salespersons, and customers through second-hand clothing purchases. Furthermore, they show the items they purchased to friends and family, and exchange other clothes they no longer need. They involve other people, through social relationships, in buying second-hand clothes. Consequently, consumers begin to take an active role in CE and accumulate memories that derive nostalgic feelings, restarting the cycle again. Figure 1 illustrates this framework.

As Figure 1 shows, the findings allowed us to construct a framework that illustrates a virtuous cycle, motivating the consumer to play an active role in CE, contributing to a slowing resources cycle and extending the lifespan of fashion products. For Gopalakrishnan and Matthews (2018), the essential components of second-hand fashion retail are the customers, resources, activities, partnerships, cost and revenue, among others. The results show that consumers have a fundamental position in this chain, because they are customers, sellers, partners and suppliers in this context. For this reason, one important contribution of this work is to highlight the consumer's role in the CE, which goes beyond business models.

As a contribution to the previously mentioned concepts in the literature, we identified the decision-making process in the purchase of second-hand clothes in thrift stores. This type of purchase is an acquisition that is both planned and unexpected. Whether the consumer plans to go to the thrift store, or enters casually, by chance, it is not common to look for specific products. What they look for in a second-hand store is precisely a treasure. It is not a purchase by necessity, but a hedonic purchase by nature (Bardhi and Arnould, 2005). People go to thrift shops for pleasure and buy because they want to feel good or because they identify the opportunity of buying a rare outfit for a fair price.

Critical and ethical consumption behavior, presented by participants as a form of rejection of the traditional productive chain, is another important consideration. This

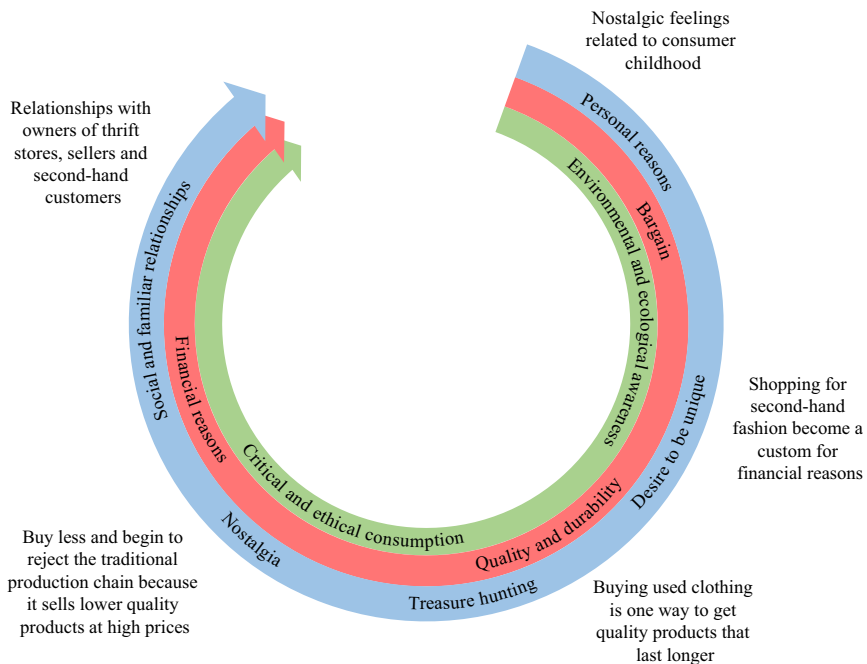


Figure 1.
Virtuous circle of
consumer engagement
in circular economy

concern about the social impact of mass fashion production, although defended by consumers, does not constraint personal or financial reasons for consumption. Some products that consumers perceive as expensive at thrift stores are purchased at fast fashion stores. The results show that consumers have neither anti-consumer behavior, nor do they avoid fast fashion shops. In fact, consumers reduce purchases in traditional stores as a means of alleviating the social costs of production to society. Also, this behavior attenuates the psychological costs of such consumption to consumers. It is not about not consuming anything, but rather consuming less in traditional fashion retailers and more in thrift stores.

Regarding the theoretical dimensions integration for buying second-hand fashion, the findings show that concepts such as quality and durability are related to both economic and critical dimensions. High-quality clothes last longer and therefore help preserve the environment of new production processes. At the same time, these quality products are worth what they cost, especially when purchased in bargaining situations. Bargaining, paying less or a fair price for something, is part of the well-being produced by the purchase and reinforces the frugal attitude of the consumer. Therefore, the interlocution of several concepts previously dichotomized in the literature, and the inclusion of new perceptions that emerged from data to understand consumers' motivation on CE, are other very important contributions of this work.

Final considerations

This paper aims to investigate the role of consumers' motivations in the context of CE through the reuse of fashion products. To reach this goal, we interviewed nine consumers who buy second-hand clothing in thrift stores and street fairs. Based on three motivational dimensions proposed in the literature, and the integration of concepts previously mentioned by several authors, we identified interrelationships and overlaps between these dimensions. Following this, we built a framework that shows a virtuous cycle of consumer engagement in CE.

Research analysis shows that purchase of second-hand fashion is related to the collectivity, mainly because social relations propitiate interactions within the thrift environment (Guiot and Roux, 2010). On the other hand, even with some critical awareness behind buying second-hand fashion, consumers do not demonstrate anti-consumer behavior. While consumers avoid fast fashion stores, well-known brands offer authenticity and quality to second-hand products, which are used as pricing parameters. In the end, the individual creates his own rules of what is valid or not for prices, social acceptance and self-well-being.

Consumers' personal reasons for second-hand shopping, such as environmental concerns, economic bargain or nostalgic feelings, motivate the action in the first moment. Buying high-quality fashion products that can reinforce consumers' self-concept and search for originality reinforces this cycle. The more consumers go to street fairs and thrift stores, the stronger their relationships become with people in this market channel, such as salespersons and other consumers, and the stronger their feeling of rejection for the traditional production chain (event though it could be present also as an initial motivation). By the end, it is normally a hedonic buying experience that results in financial benefits and critical behavior. In this sense, the role consumers play in CE is fundamental to understanding the alternative channels for goods exchange and possible ways for extending the products' lifecycle.

This work has theoretical and practical implications. The integration of concepts and dimensions previously mentioned in the literature shows that the motivations for second-hand fashion purchase are not independent. These results may help researchers to more fully understand the complex consumer behavior in these contexts. Moreover, by showing a consumers' perspective, the findings contribute to authors who investigate CE. Lieder and Rashid's (2016) previous work showed that company's motivations to be involved in CE were economic benefits, resource scarcity and environmental impact. Our results show that consumers also value the same benefits as well as the hedonic experience, with all its associated concepts. In this sense, as managerial practical implications, this work can inspire retailers wishing to start second-hand fashion sales by highlighting consumers' motivations for this kind of purchase.

From an economic point of view, consumers realize that they can buy higher-quality products that last longer with lower prices than on the traditional market. Regarding resource scarcity and environmental worries, buying less and rejecting the traditional production chain because they sell lower-quality products at high prices, is seen as a way to control the environmental impact (Roux and Korchia, 2006). As the study revealed, consumers have worries that are congruent with production chain waste and its environmental impact. Based on such results, companies can observe if their strategies are aligned with consumer motivations, modeling services and products even in a traditional business that deals with new clothing, such as adverting recyclable material usage, environmentally friendly cotton, or even concerns about mass production. This is a way for companies to demonstrate that they are concerned about the impact of their activities on the environment and society. Policy makers can also focus on engaging consumers in active roles that foster CE events and propose ways to motivate citizens' actions and street fairs for second-hand products. This procedure would also enhance the third motivational dimension, the hedonic aspect of second-hand clothing, providing a better shopping experience for citizens.

A challenge for business practice that shows up from our framework is to deal with fast fashion and slow fashion distribution channels and consumption modes at the same time. Even though consumers can seem to be of different profiles, not all of them are enthusiastic about just one side of consumption. Several consumers use both sources of retailing to get fashion. In this sense, in a liquid society, to understand consumer's timely and constant motivations can be more significant for companies than standard segmentation categories.

A suggestion for fashion brands, even in the traditional production market, would be to associate with slow fashion cultural capital. Brands can offer moments of product exchange between consumers, providing interactions that stimulate social relations. In addition, companies can stimulate consumer involvement in the remanufacturing or recycling process, even though it is not their main manufacturing process. In this respect, attention needs to be paid to prices because consumers note the difference between the cost of remanufactured, recycled or used products and new products. Thus, companies can also enter into a virtuous circle of engagement in CE, having a closer relationship with their customers and caring for present and future generations.

Despite these implications, this work has limitations. Some participants are known to each other. On the one hand, this can enrich the discussion and highlight the importance of social relations in this type of consumer behavior. However, this may limit the perceptions analyzed. Future research could interview people of varying ages, social classes and locations. Albinsson and Perera's (2009) research indicates that people's characteristics, as well as community of belonging, have an influence on second-hand consumption. Researchers could also deepen the investigation on the influence of social relations on the active role of consumers in the extension of fashion products' lifecycle, and also on engaging in activities related to CE. Finally, associated with a business model perspective, future directions can examine the alternative channels that foment CE.

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