# A Tale of Browsers and Hunters: Exploration of Diverging Consumer Profiles and Their Characteristics in the Secondhand Marketplace

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the literature has used the terms "browser" and "hunter" shopping styles interchangeably. In-depth interviews with 12 consumers revealed that however there is a distinction between the two. The results suggest that, browsers may seek to surprise themselves by shopping secondhand, typically by finding a "treasure", but without knowing what they look for, until they unexpectedly find a valuable product and have actually the means to acquire and store it. On the other hand, hunters may search to surprise themselves by shopping secondhand, to find a "rare find", but with full and conscious knowledge of what they are looking for, while having the means to acquire and store the product. Both may have space for storage and spend very little to very large amounts of time, but browsers try to find a random product that they like, whereas hunters aim at finding the specific gem that they are looking for.

## I.     INTRODUCTION

With web 2.0 and social networking sites, consumers are now increasingly capable of exchanging virtually any kind of goods between each others or with organizations, creating an upsurge in secondhand shopping (Kijiji Secondhand Economy Index, 2015, 2016, forthcoming). Topical literature on secondhand marketplaces has consistently treated the secondhand consumer as exhibiting a homogeneous behaviour across the secondhand purchase process. Most research focused on exploring the peculiar features of such alternative marketplaces as well as the inherent treasure-hunting tendencies that they induce.[1] Yet, as Hanson (1980) suggests, consumers may follow a multistage consumer decision-making when disposing secondhand products, but they may follow a similar process when they purchase secondhand, and more attention should therefore be devoted to uncovering the specificities of that process.

One aspect which relates particularly to the decision-making process, remains still relatively vague and undefined in the literature. This aspect relates to the distinction of what makes a "browser" and what makes a "hunter" of secondhand products. Both consumer profiles have been partly discussed by Guiot and Roux (2010), Bardhi (2003), Sherry (1990), Mano and Elliott (1997), Belk et al. (1988), or Stone et al. (1996). Yet, although evoking frequently the terms of "browsers" and "hunters" in relation to the tendency people have to search for treasures in the secondhand marketplaces, most of these works offer a contradictory picture of what actually a hunter or a browser may be. For example, Herrmann and Soiffer (1984), drew a typology of secondhand shoppers in garage sales and developed a single category encompassing altogether "hunters", "browsers" and "bored" consumers.[2] According to them, these type of consumers are primarily motivated by fun and entertainment, they are "amused with the idea of garage sale prices, rather than actively pursuing purchases" (p. 411).[3] Both appear relatively unfocused and lazy in contrast to more goal-oriented and (pro)active shoppers epitomized by "collectors", "specific-needs shoppers", or "retailers" (p. 410-411).[4] Yet, from the onset, and according to etymological roots of the concept, a "hunter" may denote a sense of active and directed shopping, and thus conflate with goal-oriented shoppers. Given that both hunters and browsers in secondhand marketplaces are committed to finding treasures, what then enables to make a distinction between them?

A better distinction between both types could be of value to either offline and especially online secondhand marketplaces which need to increase traffic in order to attain and maintain a critical mass that is essential to the survival of their business model. One way to sift through the ambiguities related to both constructs is to examine both terms in light of classic theories about decision-making in the consumer behavior literature such as Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986), and more recent works applying these classical principles to the online purchase context.[5] Accordingly, a first section examines in more details the current state of research regarding what defines a hunter and a browser. The second section describes the conceptual framework that is being mobilized for this study. The third section, explains the methodology that has been followed. The fourth section discusses the results that were obtained. The fifth and sixth sections discuss the implications of the results from, respectively, a theoretical and a practical viewpoint. An eighth section underlines the limitations of this study and proposes future research avenues. The conclusion wraps up the article.

## II.    BROWSERS AND HUNTERS IN THE SECONDHAND LITERATURE

In the face of the criticism of the classic consumption model of "extracting-producing-discarding", a new circular economy of "recycling-reusing-repairing" is currently increasing in popularity in business but also in environmental studies (Jones et al., 2012). This more sustainable economic perspective is however not so recent (Ritzer, 2013, 2015). Reuse practices have been traced back to the end of the 18th century in the Netherlands (Van Damme and Vermoesen, 2009). The development of marketplaces devoted to the resale of used items started in the 12th century in France (e.g. the Grande Braderie de Lille) (Cathelin and Grey, 1967).

By taking a consumer decision making process this paper challenges the existing undifferentiated conceptualization of secondhand shoppers in marketing. Guiot and Roux (2010), Sherry (1990), Chu and Liao (2007, 2010), Belk et al. (1988), Bardhi (2003), Gregson and Crewe (2003), Herrmann and Soiffer (1982, 1984), Williams and Paddock (2003), Bardhi and Arnould (2005), Corciolani and Dalli (2014), Stone et al. (1996), Gregson and Crewe (1997, 2003), and Maisel (1974), to name but a few, have all conducted empirical research exploring consumer behaviour in secondhand purchase environments such as online classified ads, garage sales, swap meets, flea markets, thrift shops, retro shops or car boot sales. Overall, these studies converge to assess that secondhand products and channels exhibit highly informal, unique, unusual, unconventional or authentic characteristics. The randomness of their nature makes their unpredictability attractive (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Gregson and Crewe, 1997; Sherry, 1990). Two profiles of secondhand shoppers have therefore gradually emerged in response to these environmental characteristics.

On the one hand, consumers seem to adopt a hunter-like purchase style. They feel stimulated by a "thrill of the hunt" (Bardhi, 2003), "engaging in treasure hunting" (Guiot and Roux, 2010), "bargain hunting and smart shopping" (Mano and Elliott, 1997) or "systematic searching and examining" (Sherry, 1990). According to Bardhi (2003, p.375), "the disorganized, anonymous ambience in the thrift stores conditions thrift shopping as a search activity for the "unknown object of desire" that is hidden among the garbage". The hunter engages therefore in a thorough and systematic processing of the products offered, taking a very active stance and expert-like posture.

On the other hand, many authors also emphasize the fact that consumers generally engage in a journey of discovery involving aimless strolling around and immediate response to sensory appeals (Belk et al., 1988; Gregson and Crewe, 1997, 2003; Stone et al., 1996). Secondhand shopping is a highly recreational consumption experience where consumers can thoughtlessly give way to their imagination, fantasies and passions (Guiot and Roux, 2010).

Whether secondhand shopping involves either a hunter-like or a browser-like shopping profile remains ambiguous, mainly because both concepts are used interchangeably. Studies which conflate the hunter-like shopping profile with the overall secondhand shopper profile, equate browser-like aspects to the hunter.

For example, a "hunting" shopper style has been considerably documented in prior literature (Belk et al., 1988; Sherry, 1990; Guiot and Roux, 2010; Soiffer and Herrmann, 1987; Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984; Stone et al., 1996). Gregson and Crewe (2003) refer to them as a "knowing elite" (p.34), suggesting well-informed consumers. Bardhi (2003) refers to them as being engaged in a process of thrift shopping involving an "endless

search and longing for that particular 'gem hidden somewhere'" (p.375). Yet, that very process of comparing and contrasting product features eventually drives the consumer to develop highly construed preferences and to have a greater focus on specific and detailed product information (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2013). A hunter is thus not only knowing, but also highly involved, and thus relatively advanced in her decision process, as outlined by Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann (1983). The hunter searches and examines to buy specific products, in a highly targeted manner. While Bardhi (2003) remarks that the hunter-like shopping behaviour is like shopping for surprise-in that the shopper never knows what she is going to find-she further adds, though that, "thrift shoppers do not have a specific idea of what they are looking for when going shopping" (p.375), which is more characteristic of a browser-like shopping behaviour. In fact, consumers who have their preferences construed at a broader level, are typically less involved in their purchase (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2013).

Similarly, Guiot and Roux (2010) or Belk et al. (1988), emphasize that hunting is a key aspect of second hand purchasers. Yet, they assert that secondhand shoppers may consider secondhand channels as venues for wandering around and living an experience that is similar to museums or exhibitions, setting out on a journey of discovery and mystery. In contrast to the active hunter, this depiction of the secondhand shopper resembles more closely that of a passive browser who is a recipient of external stimuli. Such consumers have a broad idea of what they want thus focusing on higher-level goals. They have a broad and thus, vague idea of the kinds of products they want to purchase. Such consumers are more likely to response to external sensory stimuli.[6] This is what makes them more passive in comparison to the more active hunters. In essence, the secondhand shopping literature remains relatively broad, and often contradictory, when it comes to characterize consumers" decision-making process in the secondhand marketplace. Yet, the new goods literature emphasizes that marketing efforts may be more or less effective depending on the stage in which the consumer is engaged.[7] Consequently, a better understanding of the attributes which pertain to a browsing or hunting shopping style in the secondhand marketplace could be of great value to marketers so that they may rip higher benefits from better crafted marketing campaigns.

## III.      CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In summary, the review of the literature on secondhand shoppers has dealt principally, on the one hand, with identifying motivations and impediments to secondhand purchases, and on the other hand, with the characteristics of the secondhand purchase channels and functioning, generally from an anthropological, sociological and even geographical perspective but not much from a decision-making perspective. In doing so, the distinctive features of the hunter and browser shopper styles have been, at best, be overlooked and, at worst, slightly confused. Rather, classic consumer behavior theory posits that consumers undergo an evolutive decision-making process, which is tightly intertwined with their involvement with product category (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981, 1986; Petty et al., 1983). In recognizing that consumers' choice decisions can be modeled as a multistage decision process (Lambrecht et al., 2011), the conceptual framework of this study is based on the two-stage decision process (Lambrecht et al., 2007), which models purchase as an outcome of both product choice and choice of timing of consumption.

Accordingly, on the one hand, some consumers may initially have only a broad idea of what they want or no idea at all (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2013). Their preferences are construed at a high level, and they focus on higher-level goals involving broad product categories (e.g. home appliances, clothes, arts & collectibles). A consumer may desire an original "household decoration". Such a consumer will be more likely to exhibit a browsing like mode of shopping, wandering about to get a better idea of a more specific sub-category of household decoration from all that which are available in their environment. That process continues until she lets herself be taken by surprise by a specific product within the broader category.

On the other hand, some consumers put the focus on specific products and even specific product attributes. They have "narrowly construed preferences, because they hold a detailed viewpoint of the kinds of products they want to purchase" (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2013, p.562). Such consumers exhibit a hunter-like behaviour, in that, contrarily to the browser searching for any "household decoration", they may already have narrowed their search to a "gold-framed painting of a nature morte". Because their attention is already concentrated on a specific sub-category of products, they will be less likely to respond to other unrelated stimuli. Therefore, such consumers will be less likely to browse by looking into a variety of other "household decoration" sub-categories.

We follow Herrmann and Soiffer"s (1982) approach to characterize garage sales shoppers. More specifically, we explore the commonalities and distinctions between both a hunter and browser, by reframing them into ideal-types, in the Weberian sense. In so doing, we stylize models of secondhand shoppers, one that captures all the characteristics associated with either a hunter or a browser (Weber, 1949, p.89-94).[8] We thus use both constructs as analytical constructs which represent essentially methodological templates.[9] These templates are not observable per se but may constitute useful metaphors for incidentally observable behaviors (Arnould and Rose, 2015).

## IV.       METHODOLOGY

Two focus groups involving a total of 12 respondents (n1=7, n2=5) were conducted in Montreal, Canada in August 2015. Each group lasted for about 65 to 80 minutes during which consumers were asked questions, drawn from a discussion guide, about their secondhand economy practices. They were later primed to describe how they perceived a secondhand product browser and a secondhand product hunter, while eventually being asked about their own acquisition and disposition activities in the secondhand economy.

Respondents were recruited via the website and Facebook page of the authors' research group. A convenience and snowballing recruitment process was combined to a more oriented sampling procedure. Consumers had to fill in a short filtering questionnaire online, on which they indicated their secondhand acquisition and disposition practices over the last 12 months. Consumers were selected based on their stated practices. Participation in secondhand purchase or resale was an important criterion for retention. Both focus groups were conducted in French and participants were compensated with vouchers for $75 worth of grocery at local grocery stores (i.e. IGA or Rachelle-Berry).

The two focus groups were tape-recorded and entirely transcribed manually for further analysis. The analysis followed a Grounded Theory approach of open, axial and selective coding,[10] using the Atlas TI software package, which enabled a thematic coding process and brought about main themes to answer research objectives. The software was

used in order to develop a structure of associations and links within the corpus of text. The analysis was iterative and followed a qualitative and hermeneutic process. More specifically, once the first stage of coding was over, it was then used as a basis for elaboration and reflection on the emergent global themes.[11]

Open coding is the part of analysis during which each line and sentence in the textual database is read in search of the answer to the question "what is this about? What is being referenced here?".[12] Tentative coding is then assigned to each of these textual units in Atlas TI as a mean to identify, name, categorize and describe given consumers' input (Patton, 2002). Axial coding consists in drawing causal relationships between the codes that emerged during open coding.[13] The objective is to fit codes into an overall frame of generic relationships which is also performed in Atlas TI. Eventually, selective coding goes deeper into inductive and deductive thinking by unfolding a process or a storyline from the different causal relationships of emerged codes developed in the two previous phases.[14] A category of codes is emphasized to the detriment of others which are made to revolve around that category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

## V.          RESULTS

In this study, the process is somewhat more directed and less inductive since the aim was to identify the characteristics which define a browser and those which pertain to a hunter. Consequently, the codes are related to criteria and aspects which define either shopping style. The demographic profile and information pertaining to each of the respondents is exhibited in Table 1.

Overall, the "hunter" or "browser" purchase behaviour may represent two sides of the same coin. Consumers switch on either purchase mode depending on specific personal and situational conditions. Consumers seem to have very diverse representations of what a "hunter" of used objects may be. Mental associations vary from "a metal scrapper filling up his pick-up" (Isabelle) to a "normal full-time working person seeking to complement her revenue through reselling items" (Céline). Temporal and spatial aspects do not seem to be useful criteria in order to distinguish between browsers and hunters. Both may spend a lot of time on their respective search tasks. Besides, free space may as much be required from a hunter than from a browser since both eventually acquire to store items. A hunter has a lot of time to devout to the search of used objects and needs a lot of space to store them. For example:

"Even if the person does that as in addition to a normal job, I am convinced that it must be something that takes a lot of time. You know, it is not a mere sideline of 2-3 hours per week but if it is really an object hunter, I think it must be several hours per day at least" (Léonie)

"I see someone common but who may have a job aside which enables them to have some time to do that, because that's it, it takes so much time" (Paola)

"A hunter is someone who accumulates obviously and who has some space left" (Marianne)

Similarly, it appears that a browser also disposes of a lot of time and needs a lot of space alike. Therefore, this does not constitute a useful characteristic to distinguish between both shopping styles.

"Browsing is looking without really having something to buy. But you would be able to buy it and to store it" (Léonie)

**Table 1**
Presentation of focus group participants

| Name | Age | Profession | Residence | Number of products purchased secondhand[a] | Number of resold products[a] | Focus group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Céline | 25-34 | Employed | Island of Montreal | 5 objects[b] | 5 objects | 1 |
| Isabelle | 25-34 | Student | Island of Montreal | 5 objects | 5 objects | 1 |
| Marianne | 25-34 | Job search | Island of Montreal | 10 + objects | 5-10 objects | 1 |
| Stéphanie | 25-34 | Student, Employed | Island of Montreal | 5 objects | 5 objects | 1 |
| Victor | 35-44 | Self-employed | Island of Montreal | 5-10 objects | 5-10 objects | 1 |
| Aurélie | 25-34 | Employed | Island of Montreal | 10 + objects | 10 + objects | 1 |
| Maryvonne | 65+ | Retired | Montreal South Shore | 5 objects | 5 objects | 1 |
| Andréane | 25-34 | Employed | Island of Montreal | 10 + objects | 10 + objects | 2 |
| Paola | 25-34 | Student, Employed | Island of Montreal | 5 objects | 10 + objects | 2 |
| Léonie | 25-34 | Employed | Island of Montreal | 10 + objects | 10 + objects | 2 |
| Adèle | 25-34 | Student | Island of Montreal | 10 + objects | 10 + objects | 2 |
| Mélanie | 45-54 | Student | Montreal North Shore | 5 objects | 5 objects | 2 |

Notes: [a] the "number of products purchased secondhand" column indicates the number of products that the respondent purchased secondhand over the past 12 months preceding the recruitment process. Conversely, the "number of resold products" column indicates the number of products that were resold during the same period of time.
[b] "- 5 objects" means that the participant purchased less than five objects over the past 12 months preceding the recruitment process.

"Buying second-hand to buy beautiful products takes some time, I mean objects you love, it takes some time actually. I think that since it could take the whole of your time, it could take the whole of your free time of the day. Because in order to buy used goods but that you do not care about like ugly chairs it is very easy. But things you love, that are beautiful and that incur a value, a real value, it takes time" (Léonie)

The line between hunter and browser is very thin and it appears that consumers tend to endorse either the browser or the hunter role, depending on the circumstances they face in their lives. The concept of need seems more appropriate to distinguish between both profiles. On the one hand, whenever consumers face specific situations in

their lives (e.g. moving, child birth), or are in need of a specific product very quickly, they will tend to adopt a hunter-like style of shopping. This type of shopping is very goal-oriented, focused, and consumers may go as granular as looking for a specific product model or even colour. Web platforms are an obvious facilitator to hunting.

"It is overall when I feel a need that I start to search but browsing is not really in my habits" (Mélanie)

"I consider myself as a hunter, you know in the sense that when I am looking for a bargain, it reflects into my secondhand purchase style. When I look on Kijiji during weeks in order to find the thing I have in my head, I consider myself as a hunter" (Marianne)

On the other hand, consumers may not necessarily look for something specific but shop secondhand as a hobbie, a treat on the long-run. They feel a pleasure to browse (sometimes for long times) randomly to ultimately find out a unique, special object that has a lot of value in their eyes. They also see it as a practical mean to diminish the harmful effects of compulsive shopping or overconsumption "to render more responsible some purchases which are not" (Stéphanie) or "to see what objects are out there even if they are of no immediate use, just in case if" (Victor). For example:

"I do not need a heck of a lot, I have pretty much everything I need but I look, yes I look." (Maryvonne)

Maryvonne who is an old and retired lady as well as other younger respondents, some of which being recent graduates (Andréanne) or middle-aged workers (Victor), express clearly that they visit secondhand marketplaces for hedonic purposes as an intrinsic end in itself instead of an instrumental end to some higher-order objective. The strolling and wandering about is very appropriate to consumers who are in that type of mood.

"I go into used furniture stores by pleasure, not just furniture but also tableware. I have bought a tableware set last year. 12 covers, a Royal Dalton, it is beautiful but it is priceless. I fell on it randomly, it was there and I took it (…) I consider myself as a browser (…) it is in case if, in case if, I have bought furniture, knickknacks, stuff." (Maryvonne)

"Someone who has no specific needs you know someone who would say "I have nothing to do this afternoon I am going on Kijiji" someone like that" (Andréane)

"I had a colleague at work who told me that he went to garage sales in West Island, just to see what was out there and even if there were things he did not need, he said "you never know, you may need it one day". On Kijiji, it is really a sort of hobbie, to find something" (Victor)

Contextual or environmental as well as intrapsychic factors will therefore conduct people to form specific anticipations or intentions related to their secondhand shopping process. In line with early motivational theories equating the concept of needs with that of motivations (Guiot & Roux, 2010), it is the actual manifestation of a need which will trigger motivation and thus explicit intention articulation for the purchase of a specific item. The intention causes therefore the behavior to be more goal-oriented. In the absence of such a need, motivation may be lower and intention non-existing which withers intentional behaviour governed by an overarching goal to reach. A respondent provides an eloquent synthesis of this process by stating that:

"The reason will cause the profile of that full-time secondhand hunter to vary. For example, if it is for example for [his or her] own needs and you know when I speak about

needs I mean "there are no table and no chairs" and there is really a need for a table and for chairs. This is not like "oh well you know I might as well get another table". You know that in such a situation you rather fall within the leisure aspect, where you try to have a table but for secondary needs versus the one who does that specifically to resell and make money, you know acquiring it, modifying it, I think it varies a great deal…" (Aurélie)

It is also worth mentioning that second hand acquisition is not limited to second-hand purchase and thus hunters or browsers may tumble on the appropriate object via a large range of consumption means such as reception of gifts, barter. As a consumer puts it:

"In the last year I committed myself to not to buy any new clothing. Thus it has been several months that we have been organizing clothing swaps with friends" (Adèle)

Browsers may seek to surprise themselves by shopping secondhand (finding a good deal) but without knowing what they look for, until they unexpectedly find a valuable product and have actually the means to acquire and store it. On the other hand, hunters may search to surprise themselves by shopping secondhand (finding a good deal) but with full and conscious knowledge of what they are looking for, and have the actual means to acquire and store it. Both may have space for storage and spend very little to very long amounts of time until they find, respectively, an object and the object. Table 2 provides a description of each shopping style.

**Table 2**
Comparison between the browser-like and the hunter-like shopping style in the second-hand marketplace

|  | Browser-like shopping style | Hunter-like shopping style |
|---|---|---|
| Need | No specific need to be met, broad need | Specific need to be met quickly, specific need |
| Motivation | Does not know what to look for, lower motivation | Conscious knowledge of what to look for, stronger motivation |
| Intention | Absence of intention | Presence of intention |
| Preferences | Highly-construed preferences | Narrowly-construed preferences |
| Research focus | Lack of focus | Focus on a specific item |
| Level of involvement | Lower | Higher |
| Consumer process | No specific goal to reach, intrinsic, autotelic | Overarching goal to reach, extrinsic, instrumental |
| Focus of attention | Responsiveness to sensory stimuli | Focus on detailed product attributes |
| Shopping style predominance | Experiential | Utilitarian |
| Specific consumption behaviour | Impulsive shopping, overconsumption | Use of online platforms as facilitators |

Although distinct, our results suggest that the same consumer can switch from a browser-like shopping style to a hunter-like shopping style, depending on the characteristics of the shopping situation in which she engages. More specifically, when a consumer has no specific need to be met, she does not know what to look for and her motivation is lower. Consequently, her needs are broadly construed, which means in turn that her intentionality is lower. Besides, there is no specific need that has been identified, the preferences for a product or group of products are highly-construed, which means in turn an unfocused research process. In sum, everything and anything could be of interest to the consumer. Because, these is no specific purchase goal to reach, the involvement towards the purchase process will be lower and the consumer process more of an intrinsic or autotelic nature. Since the consumer's attention is not directed toward the fulfillment of any specific need, or any given goal, the consumption process becomes an end in itself. Hence, the consumer's reactive stance by merely responding to external stimuli of the second-hand setting, which may in turn, favour impulsive shopping or overconsumption. This purchase process is therefore predominantly experiential.

That same consumer could also adopt a hunter-style shopping behaviour when she has a specific need to be met and has, therefore, a more conscious knowledge of what to look for, and a higher motivation. The faster that need has to be met, the more salient the hunter-shopping style would then become. Since the need is more narrowly construed, intentions are higher and preferences are narrowly-construed, meaning that the consumer knows for what particular product and product attributes to look for. With an overarching goal in mind, the level of involvement towards the purchase will be much higher, and may possibly extend over longer periods to find the "hidden gem". The shopping process is therefore extrinsic and instrumental with the "final treasure" acting as the ultimate reward for the time and energy spent shopping. The consumer adopts therefore a very active or even proactive stance by focusing her attention on detailed product characteristics. Online secondhand platforms may therefore be particularly valuable as facilitators of the whole research process. A consumer may, for example, search the web extensively for information over the price and attributes of a specific product to better bargain during an upcoming flea market. That shopping style is therefore predominantly utilitarian.

## VI.        THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Consumers are increasingly capable and willing to opt for alternative consumption schemes, especially secondhand purchases or swapping (Chu and Liao, 2010). Yet, while much has been written about the consumer decision-making process in the new goods market, little research investigated the extent to which these mechanisms do also apply in alternative consumption settings (Guiot and Roux, 2010). The latest review of consumers' behaviour in secondhand marketplaces dates back to the 1980s with Hanson (1980), and was limited to product disposal not acquisition.

With the advent of Web 2.0 and social media much water has flown under the bridges and secondhand is now as easily accessible (if not more) than new products purchases (Chu and Liao, 2007; Ertz et al., 2015). This study sought to investigate the specific characteristics that pertain to a "browser" and the specificities of a "hunter" in the secondhand marketplace. A parallel is also drawn with the classic browser vs. hunter dichotomy that has been discussed in classic consumer behavior literature. Given the

mixed evidence in the secondhand literature pertaining to what defines a browser and what defines a hunter, this study is an attempt to reconcile diverging conceptualizations and empirical evidence.

We use qualitative field research to determine first that the common denominator to both browser and hunters is their willingness to surprise themselves in the secondhand marketplace. Previous research emphasized that this need for stimulation, excitement and ultimate "wow" surprise effect is, indeed, a fundamental underlying aspect of secondhand marketplaces that is especially appealing to consumers (Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984; Bardhi and Arnould, 2005). Further, browsers and hunters only squarely fit previous descriptions in the secondhand literature about their specificities. Browser shopping style is clearly distinct from hunter shopping style in a temporal perspective, since the former conflates with a secondhand consumer who construes preferences at a higher level. The latter epitomizes a secondhand consumer who construes preferences at a narrower level.

Interestingly both shopping types may be found within a single person. Browsing without having a clear idea of what product to buy may lead to increased level of research out of pleasure and excitement. Yet, more research may also grant a better idea of the types of product available, their price ranges, their quality as well as their advantages and defects, which could ultimately lead to a narrower consideration set. It is easier for consumers to choose from reduced rather than broadened consideration sets.[16] Therefore, mere browsing may ultimately turn into plain hunting for a specific item. Such a process may not only apply across product categories but also within specific product categories. A consumer browsing in a secondhand clothes shop may not know what she is exactly looking for until the review of different clothes types may activate the need for a specific type of clothing such as a white summer skirt for example.

The distinction between browser and hunter echoes the recent works on the focus on the affiliation of patentees to the manufacturing industries (Basberg, 2014). On the one hand, amateurs, with a "neophyte-posture", work more independently, while on the other hand, professionals, with an "expert-posture", work closer to firms and institutions (Basberg, 2014).

This study proposes therefore that similarly to the classic consumer decision-making process that has been identified in the consumer behavior literature, secondhand purchasers do also follow multistage process in alternative marketplaces, with its unique specificities. This suggest that the latent consumer behavior process may be superimposed across either new or used goods acquisition settings. Consumers may consider both used and new product marketplaces at the same time, when looking for a given product.[17]

## VII.        MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Consumers indicated that they usually have very specific product ideas in mind when shopping second hand. They even go sometimes as specific as the product model. Besides, many consumers indicate using the Web to access secondhand marketplaces which is supported by an increasing amount of evidence from the professional literature.[18] Consequently, fine-tuning the filtering or classification system of an online secondhand platform might be of interest in order to enable consumers to drill down as much as needed for their specific research goals. In marketing it is also well known that lowly-involved consumers, who do not have a specific idea of the product they research,

will pay more attention to broad categories that do not restrict them in too specific sub-categories (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). This leaves them room for browsing across different product types, for example between a laptop and an iPhone, within the technological gadget category. On the other hand, highly-involved consumers are more goal-oriented since they tend to have a more precise idea of the product they are looking for (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). They are more prone to search in the most granular fashion and compare specific product models such as an iPhone 4S and an iPhone 6S; or even, an iPhone 4S from vendor 1 and an iPhone 4S from vendor 2. For those consumers, recommender agents in the form of highly detailed filtering systems constitute valuable features. In sum, the secondhand exchange platform should provide broad categories for consumers and combine those to filtering capabilities, which would satisfy both browser-like and hunter-like secondhand purchase styles.

The findings of this research make also a strong case to adapt -online secondhand platforms- to the distinctive browsing or hunting shopping styles of secondhand purchases. Previous research emphasized that the knowledge of either shopping style can be assessed or derived from various sources, such as past product purchases and shopping basket content, consumer content category, website visits, searches, views and clicks or recency, frequency, monetary (RFM) data[19]. We build on an online consumer behavior literature stream that suggests that online platforms can personalize "recommendation systems" to highlight specific products or specific vendors that consumers were visiting before leaving the website, as suggested by Dias et al. (2008). According to Linden et al. (2003), consumers who browse a product or vendor, who leave the site without buying and who do not return, may be reached through dynamic retargeted ads that feature pictures of the exact product consumers previously visited. Therefore, a specific emphasis on product features will be most effective when a consumer adopts a hunter-like shopping style, because in such a process, the consumer construes preferences on a narrow level, with more focus on specific and detailed product information which increases likelihood to respond positively to ads displaying specific products (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2013, p.574). Conversely, dynamic retargeted ads are less effective than their generic equivalents, for browsers who construe preferences on a broad level (Lambrecht and Tucker, 2013, p. 561). Generic ads may correspond to general advertisement for a specific online secondhand platform or for a broad product category such as Kijiji"s YouTube ads for overtly vague product categories including birthday presents ideas, bedroom items, or garage sales items that could be sold/bought on Kijiji.

The evolution of product preferences, and hence, the change in the consumer stage from browser to hunter shopping styles, may be assessed by using data on external website visiting. Lambrecht and Tucker (2013) recommend to track whether the consumer visited review sites, or searched for a specific product category across several different websites.

## VIII.        LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH AVENUES

There are obviously limitations to the results of this study. First, given that this project is inscribed in a broader research study, limited time was available to the researcher to conduct the focus groups which was also composed of a relatively small sample of 12 respondents. In order to alleviate that drawback, a screening mini-survey aimed at maximizing consumer heterogeneity in terms of secondhand practice and

sociodemographic profile in order to capture a broader diversity of opinions and behaviors. Consumers were thus selected based on the richness of the insight that they were thought to be able to add to the discussions. Second, focus groups are a fuzzy kind of qualitative methodology in marketing because they may not necessarily allow participants to articulate clearly and at length their perceptions. To counter the potential bias inherent to focus groups, sample sizes were kept minimal with no more than seven respondents when the minimum prescribed in the literature is eight and the maximum being twelve, as suggested by Malhotra (2010). Third, secondhand practices are inherently two-sided in that consumers are not exclusively purchasers but may easily switch roles and become resellers themselves. This study did not investigate the decision process of the vendor who is assumed to operate as a professional seller or as a company would. Recent research about online reselling, in particular, draws attention to the many specificities of consumer resellers (Chu and Liao, 2007, 2010; Ertz et al., 2015). Overall, more thorough research should investigate the decision process from the reseller viewpoint, especially regarding bargaining, pricing or advertising. Given the rise of collaborative consumption behaviors, such research will be of increased importance in the coming years and decades. Fourth, we examined only two stages of the secondhand consumer decision-making process as an attempt to make these clearer given the mixed connotations and descriptions assigned to both. Yet, more may exist which the authors did not investigate in this study. For example, information research has not been investigated. Also, the tipping point at which browser may turn into hunter has not been studied either.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the authors believe that this research, by documenting the secondhand purchaser process, and namely the distinction between browser and hunter shopping style in secondhand settings, and relating it the classic theory of consumer involvement and decision-making, represents a useful contribution to knowledge about this alternative form of consumption.

## IX.      CONCLUSION

The authors investigate the accuracy of using the term "browser" and "hunter" interchangeably in the context of secondhand marketplaces. A qualitative research phase involving a total of 12 consumers highlighted that both terms, while equally describing the surprising of oneself, do correspond to different processes with differing landmarks. The authors discuss the results from a conceptual point of view and provide managerial food for thought by linking the results of this study with the online recommender systems literature.

### ENDNOTES

1. The treasure-hunting aspect has been discussed by Herrmann and Soiffer (1984) in the context of garage sales; by Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf (1988) in the context of swap meets; by Gregson and Crewe (2003) in the context of retro-chic stores; and more generally by Guiot and Roux (2010) in their study on the development of scale measuring secondhand purchase motivations.
2. Herrmann and Soiffer (1984).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

5. These works include, but are not limited to, Lambrecht and Tucker"s (2013) works on dynamic retargeting of online ads, Lambrecht, Seim and Tucker"s (2011) study on the adoption funnel, as well as Lambrecht, Seim and Skiera"s (2007) works on price uncertainty.
6. Keller and Sternthal (2010). Trope, Lieberman, and Wakslak (2007).
7. Ibid.
8. Weber (1949).
9. Ibid.
10. Corbin and Strauss (1990).
11. Ibid.
12. Glaser and Strauss (1967).
13. See note 10.
14. See note 12.
15. The original excerpt was translated from French. However, in French the word "ses" is neither masculine or feminine, possessive pronouns are a translation of that word into English and are therefore added between squared brackets to make the excerpt more understandable in English.
16. Lynch and Ariely (2000) emphasized that human beings have limited cognitive abilities to process simultaneously a great variety of stimuli such as for example product offerings. Whenever, too much choice is being offered to them they are being overwhelmed by the amount of information which leads them to make suboptimal product choices, which is what Häubl and Murray (2003) defined as the "paradox of choice".
17. This is emphasized in the second edition of the Kijiji Secondhand Economy Index 2016.
18. See also note 17. Other professional studies include the first edition of the Kijiji Secondhand Economy Index in 2015, in 2016, as well as Owyang, Samuel and Grenville"s (2014) study on the "sharing / collaborative economy".
19. See also Ertz and Graf (2015) who evoked the different web data types that may be used to mine consumers' online behaviour using web data mining techniques.

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