

Promoting Sustainable Purchases: The Impact of Pre-Ownership Salience on Engagement and Purchases in Online Secondhand Marketplaces

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Abstract

The rise of online secondhand marketplaces offers rich opportunities to extend product lifecycles and reduce the environmental impact of new product production. However, these platforms limit the seller's opportunity to create a psychological bond with a product's potential new owner—a facet central to traditional secondhand consumption. This research explores whether pre-ownership salience—manifested through seller visibility in product images—can foster such a bond and promote secondhand purchases. Analyzing 30,461 product posts with 110,764 images from a peer-to-peer marketplace using automated image analysis, the authors find that high pre-ownership salience boosts engagement and purchases. Moderation analysis shows this effect is stronger for products with higher past usage intensity. Drawing on self-disclosure theory, the study highlights how revealing personal identity through images strengthens the psychological bond between seller and buyer. The findings provide actionable insights for enhancing engagement and promoting sustainable consumption in online secondhand marketplaces.

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media