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EXPLORATION OF CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOURS CONNECTED WITH PRODUCT REUSE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Purpose of this paper is to explore consumers' behavior connected with product reuse, particularly to assess what product categories are reused more frequently and why. Also paper deals with consumer motivations, knowledge and inspirations to reuse. Product reuse is operationally defined for this paper as usage of particular product in a new context, way of use ect. – not as usage for the same purpose by new owner.

Design/methodology/approach: Authors are using virtual ethnography as main data collection technique, supplemented by secondary data sources. Observation will use selected social media portals, including status and fanpages on Facebook (likes, comments and sharing), as well as Pinterest and Pinspire (pin and follow activities).

Findings: Main drivers to product reuse are not connected with simple ecological motives – those are important to some users, but only as additional motivations. Observation leads to conclusion, that most often reasons to engage in product reuse are connected with the needs to express yourself and show own creativity and individualism, mainly by DIY (Do It Yourself) activities leading to product reuse. Another reasons to engage is seeking savings (not always monetary). Research is suggesting also that people need inspiration, some things that trigger such behavior, they often need to see possibilities before they can change their attitudes toward product reuse.

Research limitations/implications: Main study limitation is qualitative approach to analysis. Subjective selection of places and subjects for observation may be perceived as another shortcoming. Careful data analysis should overcome those shortcomings.

Practical implications: Findings from the analysis will be useful for marketing practitioners to create marketing activities promoting ecological behavior.

Originality/value: Taken approach originally uses virtual ethnography to study conscious and unconscious motives for product reuse. This leads to revealing alternative ways of indirect shaping consumers' attitudes toward ecological consumption.

Keywords: product reuse, motivations, thriftiness, creativeness, social media

Classification: research article



INTRODUCTION

The issue of reuse of the products is becoming more and more significant in an era when consumers are constantly bombarded by information about the deteriorating state of the environment, depletion of resources, consumption-driven lifestyle, or even exacerbating economic crisis.

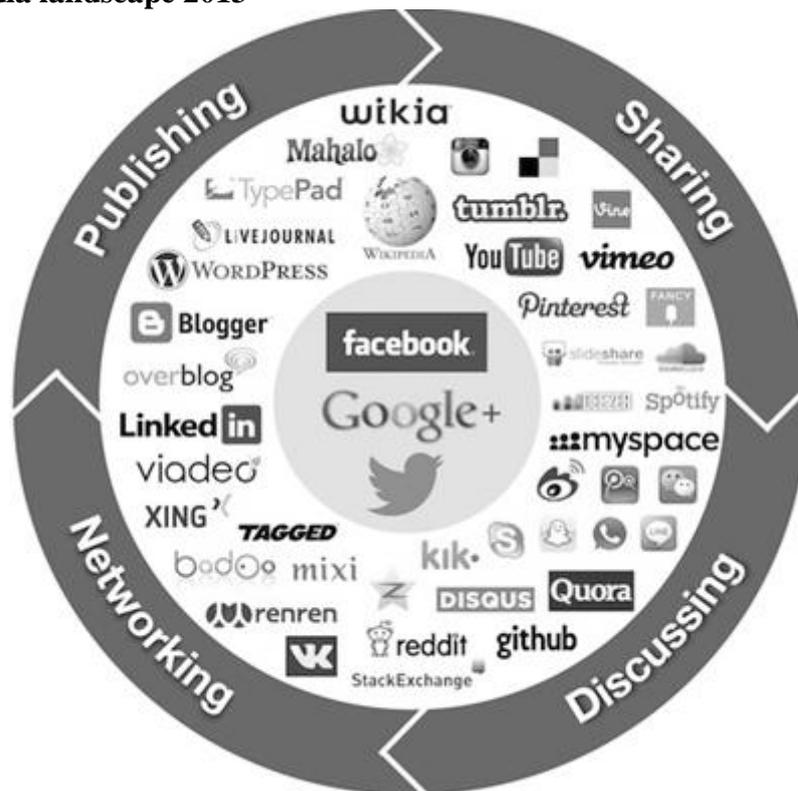
Re-use of products is part of the philosophy of “3R” (Horsman, Brown, Munro, Kendon 2011): reduce, reuse, recycle, and therefore, is the most commonly identified with pro-ecological behavior. The various propositions are trying to extend this formula for a further Rs, such as rethink, repair, refuse and so on. Adopted point of view seems to be well founded. There are many incoming messages seeking to develop and strengthen attitudes of responsible consumption used in almost all media. These standard media are using typically different forms to spread this idea: television (news), radio (interviews), newspapers and magazines (articles); internet (dedicated portals). Also less standard forms as a custom viral campaigns, ambient campaigns, etc. have been deployed to reach this goal. However, with the development of the Internet, particularly social media, one can note different motivations for reuse than the standard attributed catching.

Deployment of quantitative research methods to assess issues connected with product reuse can lead to a rather typical and trite conclusions. This is due to the fact that the phenomenon of product reuse previously been interpreted in terms of taking care of the environment or the savings for low budget households. However, the observation of this phenomenon in Social Media allowed to point out the issues previously overlooked. Thus, the authors decided to use the method of virtual ethnography and maintaining a closer look at the product reuse. The research examined primarily Facebook.com portal, with additional and extended observations on Pinterest.com and YouTube.com.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNEL

The world of social media is now very rich. Every year it becomes more and more popular, mainly due to world-popular site Facebook.com.

Pic. 1 Social media landscape 2013



Source: Social Media Landscape 2013, online: <http://www.fredcavazza.net/2013/04/17/social-media-landscape-2013/>

Social media allow users to create communities - in several dimensions. One of them is to create groups of friends who know each other, so that they can stay together in constant contact (online), share interesting materials (text, audio / video, photos) directly on the website or in relation to external sites (e.g. redirecting the blogs). Another option is to group of fans gathered around a particular brand (physically existing on the market, but also the ideas treated as brands, people around ideas can create the brand from them). The third option is to create communities of interest – this is important for people who do not know themselves, they live in the remote parts of the world, speaking different languages – but can share common and rare interests and spread interesting content for them. This allows the circulation of certain ideas is much higher, reaching a much larger group of people than the traditional channels, as well as it reaches people who are much interested in the content to show some activity. Can it be (depending on the service) viewing the content – text, picture or videos (the most passive), press *like* button, comment and share on somebody's' profile. Staying even a passive observer of the content (which is the most common for about 90% of users) users are getting familiar with certain things, they develop their own opinions, they develop particular tastes, gain knowledge, gain greater awareness, which is particularly important for building a specific attitudes. The same is when they are using other tools (websites, blogs), but in social media:

- allowing for move from push to pull strategy , which is an advantage to the user, he or she (more often, through information and technology solutions) alone determines what content to display,
- user is itself informed when new content on sites that interest him is shown (for example, Facebook is the main catalyst and synthesizer of content that often link to

external sites), chooses those which are interesting and he/she wants to deeper explore, ignoring less interesting at the same time.

COMMON TYPES OF PRODUCT REUSE

At this point it is worth to systematize some knowledge. The reuse of product we can see as:

- the second life of product (Nalewajek and Mączik 2012)– change the function of the product; a situation in which the package is used in unchanged form again, despite finishing of basic product content, such as box of chocolates;
- upcycling (the most often type) – change the function of the product; upcycling is the reuse of materials as oppose to recycling them. Recycling is the reprocessing of used products down to raw materials and then into new products. Upcycling is reusing the materials without reprocessing them, for example cutting apart old clothing and making new products from the material. Any left-overs from the upcycling process can then be recycled. Upcycling requires less energy than recycling and can be done time and time again;
- the product exchange – changes only the owner of the product, now it works in the second circuit (eg clothes)

Pic.2 Example of second life of the product



Source: own research (2012)

THE PRODUCT REUSE – TYPICAL APPROACH

Looking at the chosen tools of social media (Facebook, Pinterest - portal allows you to create unique collections of photos, You Tube - a service for watching and collecting movies) it can be seen that some content types are spreading in one channel much more dynamically than in another. For example, searching through the channels - an ecological approach to product reuse is easier to find on Facebook or YouTube than Pinterest. It is associated with the capabilities of these services and perceived attractiveness of content, which can be obtained this way. Facebook allows you to create profiles (for people, brands, ideas) and collect of so-called fans around them, You Tube channel allows to collect subscribers, and the last one - Pinterest – you can create and follow specific boards with pictures. So results of seeking content data thus depends on the used keywords that we know - not always it is easy to guess them. Everything depends on t how the item (profile, video, photo) is tagged or described by the user. So by looking for word "reuse" we can find some results, but they are not complete.

There may be sections dealing with the product reuse, but calling themselves quite differently, for example, responsible consumption. In this way - on some sites, some content spread more easily, because they are called in better way.

For instance searching on Facebook for word *reuse* the authors found that for more than 100 profiles established, their names contain this string of letters. The number of fans ranges for them from a several dozen to several thousand (i.e. Reuseit fanpage has 17 052 fans). However, to verify the phenomenon of reuse must also be taken into account fanpage dealing with environmental behavior or responsible consumption, since the same "reuse" is only a small part of the ecological behavior. It is not possible to look at all, and the whole content they made and publish, because there are so many of them, and some of them are very intensively carried out (changes of status, new posts ect. occur in this case as often as every three hours).

Thanks to social media, their users are made aware of the issue of the effects of waste (e.g. by infographics, simple description of the photos and sometimes video), have presented the products can help to protect the environment (such as reusable bags and containers for lunch, instead of disposable bags, etc.). They also can spot the images where one can see the process by which the old items in a fast and simple way are transformed into something new. Users also can be introduced to the easy ways to get rid of old, unwanted items, which would be a problem with disposal or proper segregation of garbage.

Pic. 3 Examples of product reuse



Source: Pinterest.com



In addition to fanpages general in terms of content that revolve around themes reuse, you can already find these specializing in a more narrow subject, such as:

- clothing,
- bags,
- jewelry/watches,
- baby goods/kids goods,
- furniture,
- glass/jars/watter bottles,
- computers/technology.

In this way, a narrower group of interest in a particular specific area can be found and utilized to spread even very exotic ideas – but always strictly connected with fanpage topics covered.

WHAT IS HIDDEN?

Exploring the phenomenon of the product reuse through virtual ethnography in social media helped to point out quite important behaviors, which were not expected to be seen in such quantities. It turns out that the interest for product reuse connected topics can come not only from ecological reasons. More often it is dictated by the need or desire to do something by yourself (which is part of a DIY trend - do it yourself). Profiles on Facebook focused on this subject (DIY) have very fast growing number of fans (one, within three months - almost 90,000 of fans, the other, within two months - 84,000 of fans). Number of fanpages and the number of people interested in the content posted on it continues to grow. Major importance of such growth is the viral mechanism, ie. situation in which a particular user action learn his friends (depending on the settings of the profile) what is going on. In this way, the fanpage learn more and more new people. Naturally, if we analyze the number of the fans on different profiles - some of them would be covered. This reflects the degree of interest in the topic and the desire to stay up to date with the content. Intensity of getting messages and stronger interaction with posted messages can result in the substantial evolution of attitudes. Observing simplicity how to do various items by yourself, they can limit their own shopping and get satisfied using the compilation of products that already have at home. Very often in the analyzed social media channels were found remade and reused: clothing, household items - furniture (eg bed or table built from industrial pallets), organizers (the kitchen stuff) and things for the garden.

For some people watching, searching and sharing the images presenting things handmade from reusing other products is also a source of hedonistic feelings. Such things allow them to find inspiration over the Internet and then create unique solutions in the home. The most common were product types spotted here were furniture and household items.

Pic. 4 Hedonistic motivation of the product reuse – shelf made from chair and another from ladder



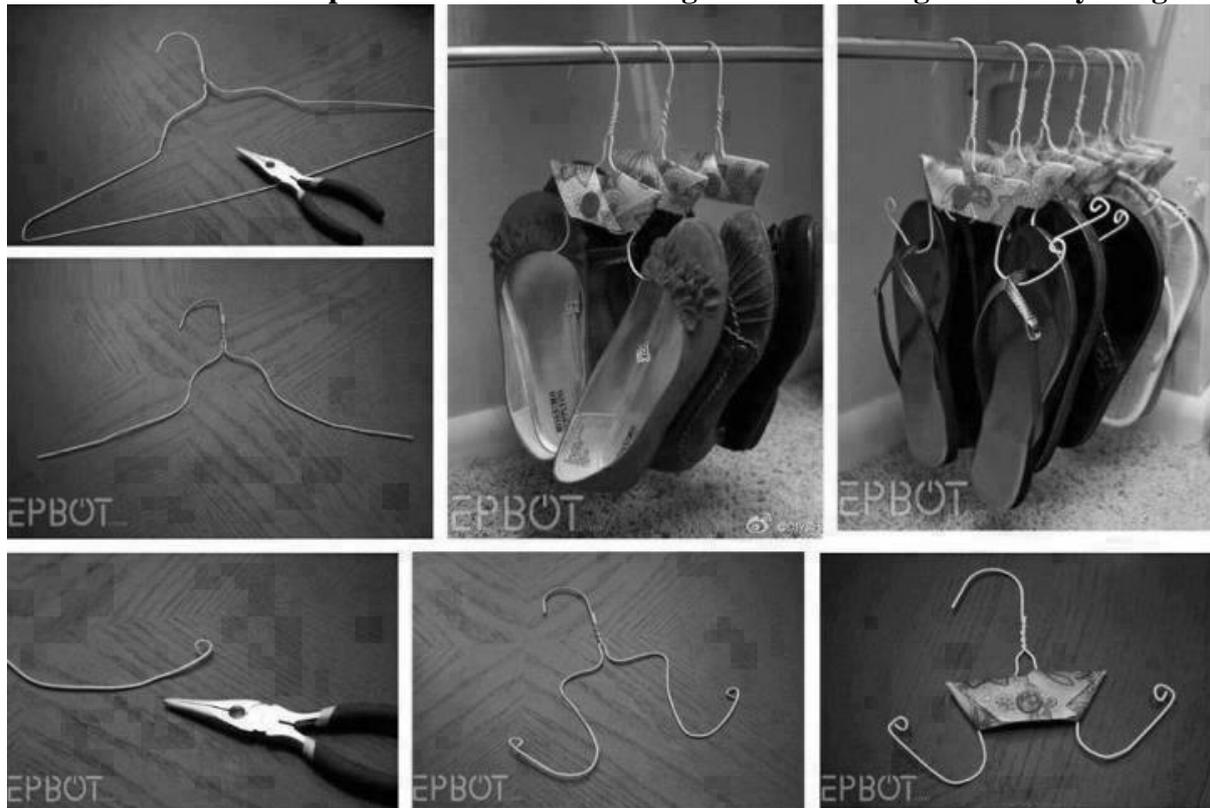
Source: Facebook.com

For the others finding new solutions by using old objects is the result of creative expression, for others who benefit from these solutions – form of award. Often they share these handmade products on their blogs presenting the product development stages as well as the end result - using the extensive photographic documentation (or video tutorial), along with a brief description.

For the young persons, because they are the main users of social networking sites and blog makers - is becoming an important aspect of the division (Młodzi 2011). They do not want their ideas to act for themselves, but spread throughout the world. In this way, individuals become creators, gaining popularity and recognition (often being identified with the name of the blog, nickname and not by name). Looking at it from a different perspective, you can see growing trend of C2C (consumer to consumer) exchange. Also when individuals are starting to show and set some trends, mass-production companies are in opposition to the unique concepts and design.

Yet another motive interest in the product reuse is the desire/need to look for useful solutions that simplify, organize some things. In this way, are conserved not only money but also time and effort (it is easier to find something in the house or harder to destroy, eg by breakage). In the case described, the important role played by Facebook, which acts as a catalyst for some content and allows you to enchant removing reference to external sources (often blogs devoted to this subject). Visible are also references to the videos on YouTube, where most young girls show how to use things in your home to prepare organizer for clothes (shawls, scarves, belts, underwear) or cosmetics. On Pinterest are created a whole collection of images dedicated to the theme. Often these are powerful images showing several smaller ones that illustrate the step-by-step how to get the effect discussed.

Pic. 5 Usefulness of the product reuse – how to organise shoes using throwaway hanger



Source: Pinterest.com

Another motive, so that people interested in the repeated use of the products is to spread the idea of creativity. Profiles / channels / boards (depending on social media platform) are filled with creative solutions, how to do something yourself. They encourage stimulating the imagination, inspire, create, shoving ideas. Analyzing the content of those sites from that angle you can see the word refer to overcome the daily grind, boredom, move away from mass production and buying products that “kill” thinking. Colorful pictures encourage the implementation of children's toys and learning them creativity. Pictures 6 illustrates the simplicity of implementation, short time needed to do and small amount of materials needed – those anyone have at home.

Pic.6 Toys for children made from reused products



Source: Facebook.com

Reuse is also connected with thriftiness. This is not necessarily associated with a lack of sufficient funds to buy new things, but associated with the deliberate reduction needs or responsible consumption. Observation of the content appearing in social media in this area has shown that often the content is shown in a very attractive way, that does not mean that somebody could feel touched, but it shows that saving can be fun, easy, nice and pleasant. It has to do with all the previously described phenomena.

Pic. 7 Saving money by using reused things



Source: Pinterest.com

Social media shows the richness of possibilities of the things you can save. Ways to reuse plastic bottles, glass jars, wooden items are countless proving it does not take much effort to achieve what you need in a very simple way. Any material can be used again.

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media allows for a very fast rate spread some ideas. They are removing such barriers as:

- time - the content is available around the clock, constantly "refreshed" on the other fanpage boards, blogs, creating so called long tail effect,
- location - give access to almost every person on earth that has free access to the internet,
- language - the main medium of communication is an image rather than text. The Facebook statuses are short, comments are mostly in English, on Pinterest dominates the image, words are not enough to express all feelings needed; and You Tube offer tutorials that show how to get the effect to which the understanding of words is not often needed.

These portals intersect. Some refer to the latter. Facebook offers YouTube and Pinterest plug-in,. So it is easier to meet the data content that are still out there on the net. They are in a nice form - images are often nicely prepared, in a particular style with a suitably chosen typography.

Another issue is that the users of these sites are mostly young people, for whom a group of friends is a very important point of reference. The importance of family, tradition, humility

falls, creativity, resource fullness, self-confidence, individuality gains. All these factors make the product reuse becomes something totally different than it was previously interpreted.

IMPLICATIONS

Exploring the motivation to reuse helped to verify the situations of the product reuse widely regarded as the ecological. Such themes did not need to be dominant in behavior described in the text, there must also be conscious of the consumer, especially when for many people the care about the environment is not something interesting and involved, but on the contrary - a boring and far. The above qualitative data shed light on the direction of research in which quantitative research should go, so that could be undertaken to attempt to estimate the scale of the phenomenon.

Taken analysis suggests that underlying the repeated use of the product may be not only a desire to save, which has its economic consequences (the crisis). The issue of conservation is also a second meaning here. People want to not only save money (by reducing their purchases), but also a time (better organization of space) or effort (pre-purchase stage of buying process often become extended: consumers have to evaluate many alternatives before making a decision, rather than directly choose product that will look beautiful and perfectly answers their needs - without hours of searching in stores or online). Such dimension of saving has been not described up to date with reasonable depth.

Another issue is the scale of the problem. Netnography research shows that it is much bigger than we might think. Direct search can show a little, but to extend them for a certain word show that the situation of the product reuse is reflected also in other phenomena.

An important premise of the study is the "degree of independence" for consumers who turn away from the trends dictated by global brands, but are looking for simple solutions, which are the product manufactured themselves.

SUMMARY

Main drivers to product reuse are not connected with simple ecological motives – those are important to some users, but only as additional motivations. Observation leads to conclusion, that most often reasons to engage in product reuse are connected with the needs to express yourself and show own creativity and individualism, mainly by DIY (Do It Yourself) activities leading to product reuse. Another reasons to engage is seeking savings (not always monetary). Research is suggesting also that people need inspiration, some things that trigger such behavior, they often need to see possibilities before they can change their attitudes toward product reuse.

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