

Performing second-hand retail

-

Organizing the material re-circulation of goods

Lars Hedegård

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Textile Management at the University of Borås to be publicly defended Friday 9th of June, 10:00 in the room Vestindien B, University of Borås, Sweden.

Opponent

Peter Dobers, Professor at Södertörn University, Sweden

The grading committee

Birgitta Schwartz, Professor at Stockholm University, Sweden

Maria Jose Zapata Campos, Docent at University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Niklas Egels Zandén, Professor at University of Gothenburg, Sweden



THE SWEDISH SCHOOL
OF TEXTILES
UNIVERSITY OF BORÅS

Abstract

This thesis concerns second-hand retail and efforts to prepare used goods for re-circulation. Second-hand retail is one of the most promising forms of alternative retail. However, second hand retailers struggle to attract mainstream consumers and often fail to commercialize most of the used goods donated. Against this background, the thesis explores how second-hand retail is performed and the difficulties and contradictions involved in preparing used goods for re-circulation.

Theoretically, a socio-material approach is used, drawing mainly on Actor-Network Theory, to analyze how second-hand retail is performed at ReTuna. ReTuna is a recycling shopping mall in Eskilstuna, Sweden, aimed at combining an attractive shopping mall setting with the local sourcing of used goods. The thesis draws on seven years of ethnographically-inspired fieldwork at the mall.

The thesis highlights that the preparation of used goods is a performative endeavor. Preparation for re-selling is performed using four sets of intertwined socio-material practices; selecting, modifying, pricing, and marketing. These practices construct and re-construct what used goods are, simultaneously enacting several versions of second-hand retail. The processes involve heterogeneous goods, workforces, measures, and material conditions, due to this being messy and leading to uncertain outcomes. In addition, the different versions of second-hand retail sometimes collide during performative struggles over how to accomplish second-hand retail. These various complications constrain efforts to re-circulate the goods.

The thesis contributes to the field of second-hand retailing and consumption by providing insights into what happens at second-hand stores when used goods transit from donors onto store shelves. It also depicts a new format for second-hand retail, i.e. the shopping mall. In practical terms, the thesis illustrates the work and skill needed to organize second-hand retail, as well as the importance of discussing the outcomes thereof, including the identification of the most desired out-comes.

Keywords: Second-hand retail, Material re-circulation, ReTuna, Textile management, Shopping mall, Actor-Network Theory

Title: Performing second-hand retail - Organizing the material re-circulation of goods

Language: English

Available at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-29665>

ISBN 978-91-89833-00-5 (Print)

ISBN 978-91-89833-01-2 (Digital PDF)

ISSN 0280-381X, Skrifter från Högskolan i Borås, nr. 140