



Second-hand Office Furniture Market and the Role of Online Platforms

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ABSTRACT

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Corporate social responsibility is a term that every firm is likely to achieve. That term consists of environmental, ethical, philanthropic, and financial responsibilities. The environmental responsibility is mentioned a lot, but also the hardest criteria to obtain. The current problems that planet suffers urge consumers, especially companies take action to save it. Circular economy, which is a concept of recycling, reusing, and reducing, can be applied in business towards to sustainability. Using second-hand furniture which means reusing old furniture can be considered a quick solution for companies to deal with the current environmental problems.

The thesis was to research the possibility and potential to enter to a new market of Framery – a Finnish manufacturer of working pods for the offices. The objective of the thesis was to figure out the second-hand market which is still new in business-to-business context and the role of online platforms on selling used furniture.

Through the literature research, the author identified that many companies prefer to buy brand-new furniture because they will use it for a long time and they concern unsure quality and short lifespan of the pre-used goods. The data collection included qualitative method with interviews and an online survey targeted to corporate customers, various perspectives regarding second-hand furniture potential were collected and analysed. From these, the new business idea was validated with suggestions and recommendations. Throughout the whole process, the author used academic books, published articles, and reliable Internet resources to collect the theory and information.

Overall, the findings in this thesis proved that there is an opportunity for the case company enter to a new market. They might notice few points which are the concerns of customers when buying pre-owned furniture for offices mentioned in the end of thesis and have detailed business planning for this.

Key words: second-hand market, online shopping, second-hand office furniture, business-to-business

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1 INTRODUCTION

Global warming and environmental issues are more and more serious in our daily lives. With the increase of these concerns, the importance of sustainable choice is considered when making purchase decisions. Not only do consumers nowadays notice the seriousness of environmental issues, but also businesses focus more on their impact on the environment. That is one of the ways they want to build attractiveness with customers. Global environmental concerns alarms enterprises to adjust production and service with the demands for corporate responsibility (Jolink & Niesten, 2013).

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the term “Sustainability” on the environmental side means that the products or services are produced from harmless resources to the environment. Sustainable development is a strategy that embraces growth while using resources more efficiently and has a positive impact on the planet and humans. The United Nations Member States has set up 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) until the year 2030 with the aim of ending poverty, inequality, protecting the planet, and ensuring that humans enjoy health, justice, and prosperity. Progress is reported every year with all the indicators. In the SDGs report 2022, the progress in achieving SDGs in all areas is in danger because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and conflict (Ellerbeck, 2022). The purchasing decision of consumers and businesses becomes more and more important to contribute to achieving the goals by 2030.

Sustainability in business has three concepts consisting of longevity, remaining core principles, and responsible for external changes (Bateh, Heaton, Arbogast & Broadbent, 2013). The sustainability concept should not be discussed only in product development, but also in other organizational performance such as competitive and cost-effectiveness potentials for sustainability measures. The combination of social and environmental performance in an organization’s economy is becoming important (Lee & Pati, 2012). For businesses, retaining profitability is one of the most important criteria to exist. However, not all enterprises

recognize the advantages of sustainability measures for organizational performance (Fibuch & Way, 2012). According to Epstein and Yuthas (2012), most enterprises lack effective methods and knowledge to measure the financial outcomes of sustainability measures. Last but not least, the growing popularity of sustainability theories and perspectives makes the business's operation more responsible for the changes in unsustainable production. Arbogast and Thornton (2012) determined that organizations adopting sustainability will be stronger and the ones that do not will be challenged in the market.

Half of the global customers are becoming more eco-friendly according to PwC's June 2021 Global Consumer Insights Pulse Survey. Laroche et. al. (2001) indicated that consumers are willing to spend more money on sustainable products, they wrote how consumers are increasingly conscious of environmental problems when making purchase decisions. Therefore, businesses that launch eco-friendly products, packaging, and production attract customers. PwC's survey shows that customers in the Asia-Pacific region are more interested in sustainability than the global average. For instance, in Vietnam, the young generation is more paying attention to the environment than the millennials. Thus, the influencers inspire by advertising eco-friendly products on social media where generation Z spends most of their time building awareness among Generation Z and Millennials and they can inspire generation X.

Buying second-hand products instead of brand-new ones is a good way to save money and protect the environment at the same time. Second-hand goods are simply used goods, not originally owned by buyers or manufacturers. The demand for second-hand products is increasing because consumers would like to look for the same products, with the same functionality, and at a lower cost. Shopping at second-hand stores, both online and physical, is becoming popular in Finland, especially among students' age. There are various second-hand stores in Finland offering clothing, kitchenware, furniture, and so on such as Kontti Secondhand, and Martela Outlet. The reasons why students prefer buying second-hand products are that they can afford the product in good condition and at a lower price, especially international students with a limited budget, and there are a lot of things that need to be prepared when studying abroad.

The case company – Framery Oy is looking for the potential of joining a second-hand market. This paper will define more details about the second-hand market of office furniture and consumer behavior towards second-hand furniture.

2 THESIS PLAN

2.1 Research background

This thesis is written to do research for case company – Framery Oy – a Finnish manufacturer of soundproof working pods in the office. Their key customers are companies and organizations that need working booths in offices.

Framery is a company towards to circular economy and one of their aims is contribute to environment by taking the real-world action. It is a fundamental step-by-step stage to achieve the goal of Framery and environmental issue solving. According to Framery Sustainability Report (2021), they optimized their operation to be eco-friendly with renewable and recycled materials and supply chain process. They designed their working pods with long lifespan. With the high-quality materials, the pioneer in manufacturing working pods with different size options, and sustainable production process, they absolutely dominate the second-hand market of their products. The products of Framery are reliable and have positive feedback from many corporate customers from local to global such as Tampere University Hospital's Oncology Outpatient Clinic, Tampere Deck Visit Center, M-Files, Shopee, Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Netherlands, etc.

Framery Oy has a Subscription business model where they rent their working pods to customers. The subscription business model means that customers must pay recurring weekly, monthly or yearly when using products or services (Clint Fontanella, 2022), and customers can cancel their subscriptions at any time (companies have different policies and rules for subscription cancellation) or can renew after a certain period. After ending the subscription period, customers will return the working pods to manufacturers, the products are disassembled, checked and sent to a new Subscribed customer. In some cases, they would like to recycle the used pods by selling them as second-hand products to customers. However, they do not have a proper process for checking, documenting and replacing parts for the returned pods. They do not figure out the easy way of selling

second-hand pods directly to customers. They do not have knowledge and experience of second-hand price of product and using outsourced or in-house to implement the refurbishment.

2.2 Thesis objectives and research questions

One of the aims of research is to figure out the possibility and benefit of selling used working pods to new customers. This thesis will find out the trend and advantages of second-hand office furniture in the B2B context. Moreover, another objective of this thesis is the application of selling on an online platform because the online store is one of the potential ways to sell second-hand. Since the world overcame a big pandemic – COVID-19, the role of E-commerce or online shopping is increasing.

The motivation for this thesis is from the author's interest in sustainability as well as old furniture. The author also had experience in buying old furniture and wants to see how this market is in the B2B context. As this thesis is done as research for a case company, it has some research questions. The research question is:

How can the case company sell used working pods on online platforms?

The sub-questions that will help to frame the theory for research question are:

- *How could selling second-hand office furniture be most effectively handled, especially in B2B context?*
- *What is the role of online stores for the sale of second-hand pods?*

2.3 Theoretical framework

Since the selected topic is doing market research regarding second-hand products in B2B. The theoretical part focuses on sustainability in B2B, purchasing second-hand office furniture in businesses, and the possible application of online stores.

2.4 Research methodology and data collection

The qualitative method was chosen for the exploration since it accumulates information with the content based on, for example, diary articles, reports, and so on. The objective of using qualitative research is that the author wants to well understand the concept of topic and theories. There are various qualitative methods used commonly: observations, interviews individuals or discussion in a group of people, surveys with open-ended questions and literature reviews of theories and concepts.

In this paper, the author will have literature review the concept of corporate social responsibility, second-hand office furniture in B2B and application of online stores. Literature review is the secondary data collection which includes e-book and electronic sources. In order to add more value to the recommendations for case company – Framery Oy, a survey and two interviews with two different backgrounds: one is the customer and one is the second-hand furniture retailer will be conducted. The aim of the survey and interviews is to find out more information from B2B perspectives in second-hand products: how do they think about purchasing second-hand furniture instead of leasing or buying a brand-new one; where will the sales be built better: online or physical store; how the second-hand furniture sales process; what corporate customers concern when buying pre-owned furniture.

In the beginning, the author will discuss sustainability and second-hand products, first in general and then in particular within the office furniture market and B2B context. The author will continue with the pros and cons of online shopping and concentrate on the B2B market because shopping online in business-to-customer (B2C) is different from that in the B2B context. After that, the author will demonstrate the advantages of in-house and outsourcing, then compare them.

In the last chapter, the author focuses on the recommendations for the case company – Framery mainly about the market of second-hand furniture in Finland, how to sell them online and which one is the better way to implement refurbishment

with low cost. The author will propose some idea for better insight into sustainability in Finland and B2B perspectives.

3 SECOND-HAND SHOPPING

3.1 Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is mentioned as a series of developing stages distinguished by the changing operational attitudes and behaviour of businesses, stakeholders and public policies. There are five main stages of CSR that are indicated: Corporate Social Trusteeship, Corporate Social Responsiveness, Corporate Business Ethics, Corporate Global Citizenship, and Toward a Millennial Future (Frederick, 2018). Corporate social responsibility takes place when a business is aware of the importance of the impact of the company's operational activity on the social welfare of those whose lives. This meaning of CSR might be present in various business and economic contexts, from start-ups, small-to-medium sized enterprises, and big companies in diverse societies around the world. The awareness and responsibility of evolving business and noticing the social systems at the same time creates an organic link between business and society.

Corporate social responsibility is categorized into four common types that businesses might choose to associate with any of these separately and lack one of area does not identify a company not be socially responsible (Fernando, 2022). Firstly, environmental responsibility is a first-thinking standard when mentioning social responsibility. A firm ensures that the environment would be better than before the company's operation by optimizing operations and supporting related causes. Companies have many ways to step forward to environmental responsibility by lessening pollution, waste, emissions and natural resources consumption when manufacturing; recycling goods and materials and boosting reuse campaigns to customers; selecting the supply methods that have the least impact on surrounding habitats; and creating the products that bring value to customers and environment. In addition, ethical responsibility is one of the types of corporate social responsibility that stems from acting in a fair and ethical manner. Ethical standards are set to be fair treatment to customers, employees, and stakeholders. For instance, positive behaviour to customers regardless of age, social status, culture or sexual orientation; fair treatment to employees regardless of back-

ground and personal differences consisting of satisfactory pay and benefits; respectful attitude and legal manner toward both internal and external stakeholders (Fernando, 2022).

The third one includes in CSR is philanthropic responsibility which challenges how business does and contributes to society. It refers to how a business spends resources on a variety of charity activities such as whether the company extracts part of its profit to charities; whether companies support employees through days off or contribution bonuses; and whether company sponsors or presents in the fundraising events or for-community events. Finally, financial responsibility is the combination of the three sectors mentioned above. A business makes plans concentrating on environment, ethical standards and philanthropy. It demonstrates through the research and development for new products towards sustainability; hiring various background, culture and personalities talents to expand the diverse of workplace; training employees to be more aware of environmental issues and society; more responsible for the society even though the spending is more expensive; making sure the clear and on time financial reporting to stakeholders (Fernando, 2022).

Corporate social responsibility is not only beneficial to the community, but the company also obtains value. When a company follows corporate social responsibility, the distance between corporation and employees is narrowed down, helping them more connected with society. The first advantage of companies following corporate social responsibility is brand recognition. Nowadays, customers are more aware of environmental issues and towards companies that have positive impacts on society, some consumers base on CSR aspect of business to make buying decisions. Thus, the more engagement of business in CSR, the more brand recognition they gain. Moreover, showing how business acts positively to the community helps them attract investors to see the worth of investing and build more relationships (Fernando, 2022).

Employee engagement plays an important role in a business's operation, it not only connects the attitude, behaviour and productivity of employees to the goals, expectation and achievement of business; but it also helps the company in talents

retention, decrease employee turnover and expense for a new employee. In addition, lawsuits and legal proceedings might be one of the things that companies should avoid as these bring negativities to brand image and finances. Complying with CSR might help companies diminish the risk of facing legal problems, for example, deforestation, natural resource destruction, the exploitation of employees or unethical earning and use of company funds are likely to cause legal proceedings (Fernando, 2022).

3.1.1 Circular economy

One of the biggest challenges of sustainability is dealing with the continuous production and the over usage of natural resources that leads to environmental degradation. The circular economy (CE) is considered a concept, framework, and process with the main goal of shifting the traditional take-make-waste system by reducing, reusing, recycling, and recovering materials in production, distribution, and consumption (Kirchherr et al., 2017). It aims to achieve sustainable development, which means that creating environmental quality and economic prosperity at the same time with social justice for the benefit of the present and future generations. CE needs to operate at three levels: the macro (industrial composition, entire economy structure), the meso (eco-industrial parks), and the micro (products, individual enterprises, and customers).

In most studies, the circular economy consists of three principles – are called “3R” principles which are originally derived from the verbs Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. There is another phrase that is widely used to describe the more circular economic system as closing the loop. It means that the products, components, and materials loop through their lifecycles instead of going from material to waste. Reducing demonstrates actions and strategies are aimed to decrease material, energy use and overall environmental impacts. Reusing describes actions and strategies that allow the products to be used again for the same purpose. Recycling relates actions and strategies towards reprocessing waste materials into products or materials for original or other purposes. Recent literature illustrates more than three principles to define the CE more broadly and specifically, some definitions include 4R, 6R, or even 9R including the additional principles:

- **Refuse:** preventing raw materials use;
- **Repair:** maintenance and repair;
- **Refurbish:** refurbishing product;
- **Remanufacture:** creating a new product from an old product or parts of it;
- **Repurpose:** product reuse for a different purpose;
- **Recover energy:** incineration or residual flows.

CE might be considered to be a solution for sustainable growth which maintains simultaneously economic growth and environmental prosperity. There are several benefits from CE have been researched, so that it help the company in entering new business opportunities as the CE business model and circular principles open new market areas in the fields of reverse logistics, component re-manufacturing, and recycling systems; material savings because the component and material recovery from the products and waste; mitigating material price volatility and supply risks since materials could be reproduced from the existing products and the reliability on the virgin materials and volatility of price might be decreased (Saarinen, 2021). Thus, purchasing second-hand products is one of the best practices to apply the CE in real life with not much effort in order that many companies can follow at the starting point, even a start-up sustainable responsibility in business.

3.2 Trend, advantages and concerns of second-hand shopping

“Second-hand shopping is booming...” is the title of article (Dickler, 2022) demonstrating directly to the second-hand shopping trend currently. “Thrifting” is certainly not a new thing. Thrift shopping means the purchase of pre-owned items such as clothing, accessories, and furniture at cheaper prices than the original ones. Thrifting is also one of the best ways to save the planet. It is inspired by young generations who have low budgets and care about the environment, they can have unique items, even some items do not exist in the market anymore with affordable prices. The COVID-19 pandemic also additionally raises the “thrifting” and second-hand shopping. The rise in the resales market is faster than in traditional retails (Dickler, 2022).

Second-hand resales happen commonly in C2C (Customer-to-customer) context, particularly in COVID-19 pandemic, most people lost their jobs. The demand for decrease the expense and the urge for increase the income are growing at the same time, purchasing and selling used products are the best choice. Selling pre-owned stuff has become a financial necessity for a lot of people. The eBay Recommerce Report (2021) shows that the percentage of gen Z – who was born in between 1997 and 2012 led the second-hand market with 80%.

Who's Buying Pre-Owned Goods?

Percentage of global responding sellers in each generation who have purchased pre-owned goods in the past 12 months

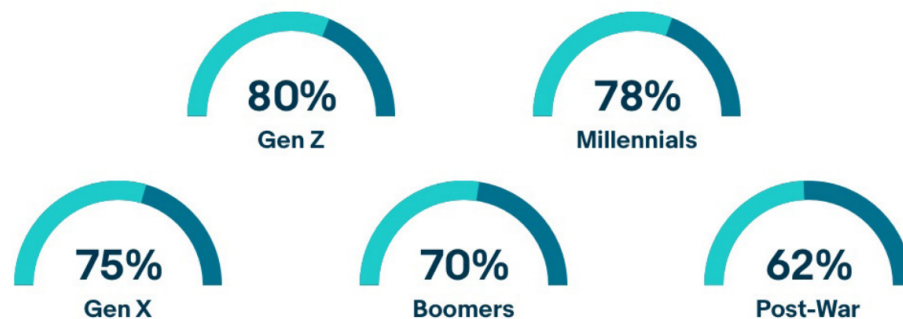


Figure 1. Percentage of global responding sellers in each generation who have purchased pre-owned good in the past 12 months (eBay Recommerce Report, 2021).

Moreover, there are a few main reasons why people decide to purchase second-hand goods. Most of them explained that it is because second-hand products are less expensive than buying brand new ones. The other reasons mentioned are the products are no longer available in new condition, buying pre-owned goods is sustainable and environmentally friendly. Some said that it is one of their hobbies, doing thrift. On the other hand, some demonstrated that they get profit from selling them, they might be financial benefit or spacious benefit for the house.

Main Reasons Why Consumers Buy Pre-Owned

Percentage of global responding sellers that identified their main reasons for why they purchase pre-owned goods



Figure 2. Percentage of global responding sellers that identified their main reasons for why they purchase pre-owned goods (eBay Recommence Report, 2021).

Besides the advantages of purchasing pre-owned products, there are various concerns that consumers might consider. First of all, there is no warranty with the used products; for instance, it was bought and the following week, it is broken, there is no chance of getting the money back. Moreover, some used products do not work properly because of the short lifespan, and do not have the same performance as the brand-new ones. Some second-hand goods are damaged and less reliable, consumers should check carefully before buying them, such as cars or electronic devices which have greater risks and more complicated solutions if they have problems. In addition, finding suitable used goods takes a lot of time for consumers because of the limit in availability of that type of product and depending on the conditions of the used products that fit to the consumers' preferences. Last but not least, hygiene is one of the factors that should be taken into account when purchasing second-hand goods, some people wondered that used products are unhygienic and might be contaminated with bacteria. Therefore, consumers had better clean and disinfect used products before using them, especially products used in daily life such as beds, clothes, and so on.

Businesses might consider using pre-owned furniture for offices instead of buying new furniture. It saves money for businesses, particularly start-ups which are new entry to market with low capital and are spending money on a lot of things. In addition, it contributes to protecting the environment since using second-hand goods is a way of recycling, reusing and reducing waste. Moreover, the old furniture which works well is proof of using high quality materials at a lower price. The

business will profit from using good quality furniture compared to new furniture but lower quality because the period of using good furniture might last longer (Millwill Furnishers, 2018).

One more advantage is that businesses can customize or redesign the old furniture by repainting or remodeling according to the company's style, preference without any hesitation. Short-time delivery is another benefit that businesses might gain when buying used furniture. Ordering new furniture sometimes takes around one to three weeks, however, ordering pre-owned furniture takes fewer days to pick up since it is available and ready to take right away. On the other hand, the purchase of second-hand furniture should be selected carefully before making decisions. The limit on product options might also be considered if companies want to buy with a large quantity.

3.3 Second-hand office furniture

The main consumption category in this thesis is office furniture. In 2021, the market size of office furniture globally reached USD 58.17 billion with an estimated compound annual growth rate of 3.9% between the year 2022 and 2027 because of the expansion of corporate industry, developing real estate and rising demand for high-quality and designer office furniture (Expert Market Research, 2021). Office furniture can be segmented by product types such as seating, systems, tables, storage units and files, and overhead bins. It can be divided into distribution channels such as direct sales, specialist and non-specialist stores, online; and can be divided into materials such as plastic, wood, metal, and other materials.

The growth in furniture resales has been remarkable recently. From the year 2019 to 2024, the compound annual growth rate was estimated to be approximately 6%, the largest market and fastest growth is Asia Pacific (Mordor Intelligence, 2021). According to Kestenbaum (2021), the effects of that growth are significant for the furniture industry. First of all, furniture resale remains the value. Brands that can be sold in aftermarket for a value closer to the original price might not discount to sell their first price product. The focus of brand marketing will be

changed as well to make consumers' awareness of value retention, product durability and style endurance, how well brands do in the aftermarket, in order that consumers will pay more for the original purchase. From that, brands can facilitate the value of brand at higher price. Moreover, the value of used furniture is smaller than the original purchase price, but it is becoming a gradual rise in the market, making the brands differentiate themselves in the future.

The market for second-hand furniture is rising rapidly both online and offline distribution channels. The availability and attractive price of the used furniture made consumers demand it in future. Normally, the price of used furniture is more than 50% cheaper than the brand-new one, thus, consumers might have various furniture designs at less cost. More customers buying leads to the expansion of the market.

Many offices are changing to buy second-hand furniture, it is becoming a popular trend in workplace design in 2021 because it brought to companies sustainable and eco-friendly policies; and it is one of the best solutions for finances, especially in COVID-19 pandemic. More than that, changing the workplace environment also increases employees' efficiency and productivity. Therefore, many companies rethink their interior design and figure out more innovative solutions. Selling and buying other second-hand furniture would be one of the best options. Some furniture items are still good for use, enterprises can sell it and buy other used furniture for offices, for example, for being fit to the new design. Office design trends are changing all the time with new ideas and concepts coming every year, so, it helps employees to have an open and comfortable working environment. However, the purchase of second-hand office furniture trend might stay longer since it allows companies to deal with creative solutions in the limited budget and sustainable policies. It quite covers the areas in corporate social responsibility and will evolve the brand image and its overall operation.

4 APPLICATION OF SELLING SECOND-HAND OFFICE FURNITURE ON ONLINE PLATFORMS

4.1 The growth of “Click-and-mortar” stores

Currently, selling goods on several channels that are both online and offline tends to increase the sales. Having both would diversify the ways to meet the demand of the right customers because the choice depends on the buying preferences of customers. According to Statista (2018), the percentage of consumers in the U.S shopping multichannel is higher with 56%. Building both offline and online channels also might help companies advertise brands, increase brand images and approach more potential customers in effective way without the barriers. For instance, geography barriers are not allowed companies to approach oversea or different area customers. Additionally, when making purchase decisions, customers are more likely to buy from companies that have also physical stores, which brings trust, and the warranty is more guaranteed. Thus, it is an opportunity for “brick-and-mortar” owners to expand their businesses to be “click-and-mortar” - a physical store has online presence.

Many companies are looking for the balance between offline and online channels and building a grow strategy. Offline marketing and online marketing have their own strengths to boost the companies’ awareness to customers. There are several methods to combine traditional shopping (offline) with online shopping like social media or websites to create strategies to evolve every kind of business. First of all, businesses should be consistent in branding both online and offline, for instance, the design of logo, font, color and style across marketing channels should be the same, customers might not be confused whether the companies are same or different, and easier for customers to recognize the brand. Secondly, there is a common and easy way that most businesses do nowadays is adding website links or QR code leading to the company page where consumers can find the online shopping page to the marketing materials such as flyers, banners, or business cards. It also allows customers to check the availability of items they are looking for in case the store they visited has no availability. However, at some points, businesses encourage customers to come to the store, online store is a

tool to check out the availability and styles choosing, offline store is necessary at the same time for customers to check the quality, materials, try-out chance so that the ability of return and change is decreased. That helps customers in making quick decisions and shortening the time of items possession.

These strategies above could be applied in business-to-business context. In Europe, businesses also purchase products and services online to another business. B2B e-commerce market in Europe estimated reaching US \$1.8 trillion and in Finland, the sales from B2B e-commerce expected to grow to US \$25 billion in 2025 (Statista, 2022). However, because of the sudden situation, many companies have spent the past eighteen months making sure that the web stores work well and online shopping is new for B2B buyers. The latest data shows that around 50% of e-commerce sites do not meet the full expectations of B2B buyers. Thus, the improvement in 2022 has been indicated, they are delivery and tracking, visibility of product features, checkout and payment and repeat order processes (Sana Commerce, 2022). Therefore, it is easier for companies to sell goods online targeting to private customers than targeting to corporate customers.

4.2 The growth of pre-owned product sales on online platforms

4.2.1 The growth of online shopping

In the digital world, shopping online plays an important role in people's lives. Online shopping is a form of electronic commerce (e-commerce) and is one of the fastest growth sectors globally. The Internet, nowadays, is one of the most powerful tools for information transmission. Thus, it is not a surprise that sellers created online shops to take advantage of this incredible technology (Barber, 2022). In the past two years, with COVID-19 and there are most of offline stores closed, sales and purchases have had a significant transformation, customers' shopping style has changed from offline to online. Therefore, according to Statista (2022), total global e-commerce sales are subjected to rise by 56% in the next years with the approximate of US \$8.1 trillion by the year 2025. The category

of e-commerce sales went up significantly over the past two years were furniture, building materials, and electronics with cumulatively more than 200%.

Nowadays, even though lockdown periods were lifted, and people freely buy products in the physical stores, customers are likely to experience online shopping because of the convenience of that. People like shopping on e-commerce platforms because they have lots of products with a variety of sizes and colours available, some brands have many branches sometimes there might be limited products available in the store that customers come to.

The additional convenience is that customers do not have to drive to the store to get the needed or favourite items, they could stay at home and shopping with a few clicks, some “online supermarkets” are now evolving by speeding up the delivery to fit to the customers’ meals for those do not have time for grocery shopping. Moreover, online discounts are offered to attract customers to buy more on e-commerce, which is beneficial for both customers and businesses. It is also comfortable for buyers to freely shop without the sales pitch or to buy discreet goods with anonymity, they can read the description by themselves, decide what they want, and purchase, be delivered to customers' place anonymously.

In addition, on some special days with big discounts such as Black Friday, or when people are preparing for special occasions, there would be a long waiting queue and huge crowds in shopping malls. At that time, shopping online might be ideal for people who do not like crowds and stand for a long time to buy something. Previously, it took a long time for the parcel to be delivered to customers’ door, it became a barrier for those who need something immediately. However, nowadays, many online platforms and companies speed up the delivery time with same-day delivery options, but customers would need to pay more for these extra services. Clear information of products and review of experienced customers makes customers’ purchasing decisions effective and easier to find the best option. Finally, the physical store cannot compare to online shopping when people might look for rare and limited items which become a cultural phenomenon for collectors and fans such as sneakers, or gaming.

4.2.2 The rise of used products on online platforms

The concept of pre-owned purchasing is becoming more common because of the shortage of new product supply and delay of restock, particularly in the pandemic. It gradually spread to the online spaces, for example, eBay and Amazon, they have offered customers used products in good condition at more reasonable prices besides the new product. It attracts consumers to buy from their website because consumers' behavior also changes during that time, they prefer purchasing second-hand goods. The motivator that leads companies to sell pre-owned items is the rise of promoting circular economy through sustainability angle.

Online marketplace sales occupied 67% of total ecommerce around the world in 2021, with US \$3.23 trillion spent in total. Businesses often sell used goods through the marketplace to spread their products to large audiences as customers are interested in buying on marketplace for convenience while comparing prices between similar goods and deciding which one would be better.

eBay and Amazon are two online places having second-hand options beside brand-new items. The second-hand options include detailed information about the old items, if they were in good or normal condition, and how they looked and functioned. Younger generations accounted for a large portion of purchasing used items on online platforms.

4.3 Benefits & concerns when purchasing used products online

Online platforms are beneficial for businesses to reach their customers' demand with a variety of products. They are also great when selling and purchasing pre-owned items, and furniture is one of the products commonly sold on online platforms. Customers might compare the prices of similar products and find a suitable supplier to their expectations. The most popular online platform for used products is Facebook Marketplace which is famous for customer-to-customer. Additionally, there are a few companies that buy and sell used office furniture such as Mjuk, Martela Outlet and so on. On these websites, customers might find a variety of

office furniture made from high quality materials, modern models at cheaper prices. They also could find the review, feedback of previous customers which contribute to purchase decision. Besides, there are also some manufacturers having their own outlet stores, thus, customers could rely on the quality and authenticity of products they look for. However, customers as well as businesses would like to buy pre-owned products on e-commerce or retailer's outlet websites because of the diverse of product types, brands and prices to choose, not only from one supplier.

Nevertheless, it is not always safe when buying second-hand furniture from online stores and marketplaces like Facebook Marketplace. There are a lot of scammers, selling bad quality products but saying good quality, or stealing important private information like bank accounts, identity and so on. Importantly, there is no return policy for used items being bought if customers are not satisfied with the products. In addition, sometimes, the same model of used products is not available in large quantities. Therefore, if businesses would like to buy numerous same models of items, there might not be enough.

However, several second-hand office furniture companies targeting business-to-business are boosting online shopping. For example, Mjuk – high quality second-hand furniture store located in Finland and Sweden. They offer second-hand furniture at reasonable prices and quick delivery for private customers and businesses. They took the used furniture from both individuals and companies and the seller could choose how many items might be sold. Mjuk can directly pick up the furniture depending on the cities located, the sellers should contact Mjuk for more information and negotiation about the collection. Before products being transferred to customers, they have their experts check and clean them to make sure items are good enough to put up for sale. Their main distribution channel is online store in both Finland and Sweden including social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Google and so on. Some products are considered to be sold on other marketplaces such as Tori – one of the marketplaces where people can dispose of and acquisition pre-owned products.

5 DATA COLLECTION ANALYSIS

This chapter consists of the interviews and qualitative data collection (survey) which will be combined and discussed with the previous multiple online resources reviewed.

5.1 Interview

There are two interviews with different participants implemented as additional sources for deeper insight from different perspectives into the topic. One interview was conducted face-to-face, and one was done online. Both interviews are recorded with the permission of participants.

5.1.1 Interview with public sector (public education)

The author had an interview with the person that is responsible for the facility management at one of the public educations in Tampere, Finland. The author chose to interview that person because public education is potentially possessing attitude towards sustainability and corporate social responsibility. It is suitable for the author to gain more insights into the second-hand furniture market from the customers' point of view.

At first, the author asked him about the model of acquiring furniture that school is using, he said that with the furniture, they bought, and they explained that the furniture could be used in around 20 years, it is quite expensive if leasing for such a long time because the price of leasing is calculated by month or period, and it would cost a lot. Most of the furniture has been purchased from retailers and from online stores. They are not really interested in second-hand furniture as they thought that if one thing needs to be used for a long time, it should be the new one. However, they have another way to be sustainable with furniture is that when furniture is broken or scratched, they will bring it to marketplace to sell the old furniture, or they have companies to repair and refurbish. In their opinion, the reasonable price for second-hand furniture could be 50% off the original price.

Moreover, when purchasing furniture, the important factors noticed are price, quality, functionality and warranty policies. They do not have a fixed company for furniture, each of them is from different companies, they compare the price on website, and they select one company that could offer the best price. However, they still prefer the brand-new one to the second-hand one. They also recommended that companies or organizations such as small-and-medium sized enterprises, if they have limited budget and want to contribute to the greener planet, consider second-hand office furniture options. They thought that the best place to buy second-hand furniture is from the supplier, office furniture companies because acquiring pre-owned furniture is risky, buying from them ensures the quality, price and warranty if there would be some issues. Additionally, online stores are the best place in their opinion, not a lot of people have time to go to the physical stores to check and find the needed furniture, online stores will include all information about the condition, price and availability of these. Companies that are supposed to buy can check how many products are available, and do not have to waste time if there are not enough quantities.

5.1.2 Interview with second-hand office seller

The second interview with a business that selling second-hand office furniture in Finland. The company's mission is to make the office a better place to work by ecological and reused office furniture. The business was originally launched in 1997 as a solution to recycle and resell excess used office furniture. Almost all the used office furniture comes from different corporate bodies since they try to find a series of the same products rather than individual products, and it would be easier to sell it to other companies. Their organization is designed for business-to-business sales, they do not focus on private customers. Thus, they have some individual customers, about 5- 10% of all business, but they are welcome to the store and web shop. Their main customers are micro, and publicly listed companies, and most of their business comes from small-to-medium sized enterprises. Because of growing interest towards circular economy products, lower price point and getting the ecological values in the deal, they consider to buy used furniture.

Being asked what factors the company concerns about when getting used furniture from corporate, they answered that air quality in buildings would be a big ongoing issue in Finland. Before buying or receiving used furniture, they always check that there are no known air quality problems such as mold or fungus in the place that they get furniture from. After the origin is clear, they make the inventory of furniture and give them a quality classification:

- A = As New;
- B = Good;
- C = Satisfactory;
- D = Below Average.

Classification is visible in the web shop, and it affects the selling price of the product. After getting the products to warehouse, products are checked, repaired and cleaned, then, they are photographed and put on sale to the web shop and enterprise resource planning (ERP). The basic services such as repairing, and cleaning might be done in-house and most of the more demanding refurbishment like renewing upholstery might be outsourced.

Moreover, the questions they often get from customers mostly are regarding the condition of products, whether the products are fully working, and the price of pre-owned goods compared to the new ones. The percentage deduction varies by product groups, for instance, office chairs are priced 60-70% cheaper than the new one, electric desks are around 30-40% deduction. These prices are for products compared to the same or equivalent product, and it is possible to find new products for a lower price, but they are not comparable in quality and in features.

Additionally, customers can find them both online stores and physical stores in several cities in Finland. The products (all used and some new products) that they stock could be delivered to customers in two to five days, depending on the customer's location. They develop both online and offline sales channels constantly. Nevertheless, online channel is probably a bigger challenge as targeting online store to private customers is easier than targeting the marketing to business-to-business customers. Besides that, maintaining online stores takes a lot of work

because key products are pre-owned, there would be constant adding and deleting used products whenever they are sold out.

5.2 Survey result

The survey was conducted as another source of research by the author. The target participants of that survey were businesses or organizations in Finland. It includes the questions regarding their points of view of acquiring second-hand office furniture. However, there are only six participants answering the survey, which is a risky analysis. That is the reason why the author did two interviews for extra research to analyse different perspectives.

Survey participants come from different industries: start-up community, medical device, software, education, food industry and textiles. The most common model they are acquiring furniture is purchasing and the reasons are easier and more convenient than leasing, and they will use furniture for a long time, purchasing is the best option.



Figure 3. The number of survey participants answered the question “What is your model of acquiring furniture?” (multiple answers).

Being asked if they considered the other option, most of the answers received are no; one answered that they might consider renting but with the furniture less used or easier to be replaced after a period of time. Most of participants bought the office furniture from dealers or retailers, some did from online stores, and one answered that they bought it directly from manufacturers. Additionally, one purchased from online auctions, estate sales, tori.fi, through word-of-mouth information, recycling and donation centres because dealers that focus on recycling office furniture are expensive to use.

There are two organizations said that they were extremely interested in second-hand office furniture, two participants were somewhat interested in it, and one is neutral. On the other hand, there is one not really interested in second-hand furniture. Between renting furniture for a period of time and possessing pre-owned products at reasonable prices, all of survey participants selected second-hand furniture at reasonable prices. The reasons given are easier and do not have to worry if something gets broken; the needs are very stable, and they will use until it cannot be used; not interested in renting; they prefer having own furniture and second-hand one is cheaper; it is cheaper and more convenient when have own stuffs; rent is not valid. In their opinion, the percentage of deduction in second-hand furniture compared to brand-new one would be around 30-70% with various reasons such as since it is used, the price should be quite low; office furniture that are under heavy use gets wear and tear very easily should be manifested in the price, many are considered as design items so price is higher than actual value and the condition of the items; and the price also depends on the condition of the product.

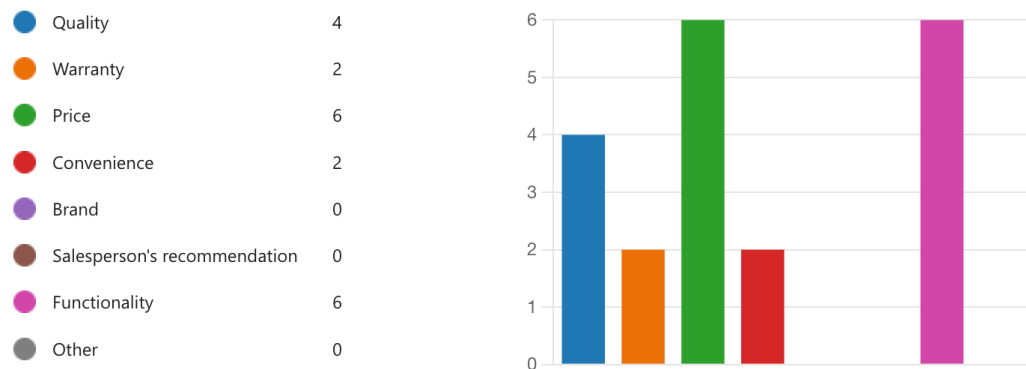


Figure 4. The number of answers for question “When choosing second-hand furniture, which of the following factors are important to you?”.

The chart above demonstrates the important factors when organizations choose second-hand furniture. As shown in the chart, the functionality and the price are the most significant factors, and they are also the basic needs and expectations when buying old items.

Besides these factors, easiness, availability near their place, sustainability, durability of products also value organizations when acquiring second-hand furniture.

From participants' point of view, the good place to buy used furniture is from the item's official website and from the dealer or retailer. Moreover, they thought the second-hand product sales could be built better on both online and offline distribution channels.

5.3 Comparison results

Every year, approximately 100 000 tons of furniture ends up in landfill in Finland and 70-80% of furniture could be recycled (Martela, N.d). Martela took in 2600 tons of used furniture and about 22 000 pieces found new users after cleaning, refurbishing, and maintenance and the rest was recycled as material to make new furniture.

Recycling furniture requires a lot of time, knowledge, and work because of strict environmental regulations. However, there are many businesses providing services to take and sell second-hand furniture to both individuals and corporate customers. The development in that kind of company also rises the awareness of other businesses of circular economy and sustainability.

There were a few similar points of results from the first interview and the survey respondents. All of them answered that they purchased furniture for offices because it was easier, and more convenient, and they would use them for a long time. The level of interest in second-hand furniture was average as they had various concerns regarding the quality of used products. When mentioning the reliable places they could consider buying pre-owned products, they listed online auctions, some dealers or manufacturers having outlet stores. According to the first interviewee, there is an online place where companies can sell their used furniture in good or can-use condition at a low price to other companies and individual customers.

Additionally, the most important factors they might notice when buying second-hand furniture are price, quality, and warranty policies. According to Louis & Lombart (2010), the brand will have a high influence on purchasing a product because the brand represents the value, quality, and reliability of the product. Thus, second-hand purchase decision also depends on the brand reputation, it makes customers, especially business customers rely on their choices.

They also prefer shopping online to going to the physical stores because they only need to stay in one place, search on Google, find the best option, and order without moving. However, the representatives of companies selling used furniture to other businesses found difficulty in selling online because the updates should be done all the time when new products came and some products sold out. Thus, they have physical stores around Finland where customers can come and check the style and quality. It might create an opportunity for them to reach out to all the businesses in Finland. For instance, some companies are not located near physical stores, they absolutely can order online, and furniture will be delivered depending on the location and the day they make the order.

6 RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Recommendation

Not only individuals' behaviors towards sustainability, but also businesses care about the current environmental issues. Consumers who are buying sustainable products urge businesses to take action to save the planet. It will spread the companies' awareness to larger audiences, especially younger consumers. However, sustainability measurement does not stop at selling sustainable products, daily or internal activities are also taken into account. One of the most common and easiest ways to contribute to sustainability is recycling and reusing. Acquiring second-hand items is no longer strange with the younger generations. On the other hand, it is still a new term for an organization.

There are many successful companies with the mission of recycling and reusing goods targeting businesses and organizations. It is becoming more popular, particularly in Finland. Thus, it is an opportunity for Framery to jump into this new market. The corporate customer group should be the best target for pre-owned furniture are small-to-medium sized enterprises. They are young enterprises with low budgets, and willing to take action to protect the environment, the first step leading to corporate social responsibility. Broader advertising of purchasing pre-owned products is an effective way to boost brand image and awareness.

For the future development of this idea, the author has some recommendations. Firstly, second-hand office furniture should be more targeted to the SMEs group than large companies according to the research findings and the qualitative interviews and survey. Secondly, the price should be lower than the original price by approximately 40-60%, the company must define the value they would bring, the condition of the products and calculate by themselves. According to the survey and interviews result, the author figured out that not many companies prefer to rent or lease the furniture because of the regular and long-time usage, they prefer to buy furniture, and even second-hand furniture. It would be a great chance for Framery as they produced high-quality working pods, and the price for the Subscription model is high, not many companies could afford that for long-term use.

Regarding to the refurbishment process, as mentioned in the interview with second-hand office furniture seller, the author recommends that the checking and documentation processes should be done in-house as these are the basic and easy ones. The more demanding and complicated processes such as repairing, replacing tables, glass, or renewing upholstery should be outsourced. However, it might depend on the kind of company, for instance, manufacturer has its own production team and warehouse, it would be easier to complete even the demanding processes than the retailer or dealer. If Framery has their own production team and has existing employees with expertise in these areas, they should do all in-house because they can control the work time and workflow. It is also cheaper than outsourcing services and it does not depend on the outsourcing time.

Online stores are more popular than previous thought of firms. Both second-hand individuals and corporate shoppers prefer online to offline because of the convenience, easiness and no waste time. Having outlet stores on online platforms is a great idea for the new organization. Based on the research, there are few concerns and things that Framery might pay attention to. The first thing is to be clear in describing details of the product on online stores such as the name, the condition, is there any broken or scratched, and the availability of the product; obvious policy, and delivery time are important to customers. Offline stores are also considered since some companies would like to check the real quality of products; they absolutely go to the physical store. After all, online stores are a better choice for Framery if they would like to choose one option.

6.2 Conclusion

In the beginning, the research question is “How can case company sell used working pods on online platforms?”. To help answer the question, there are two sub-questions dividing the research question into two parts “How could selling second-hand office furniture be most effectively handled, especially in B2B context?” and “What is the role of online stores for the sale of second-hand pods?”, were explored through the literature review and qualitative approach.

How could selling second-hand office furniture be most effectively handled, especially in B2B context?

After the Subscription period, the working pods could not qualify for transferring to new Subscribed customers, they should be sold as second-hand working pods with cheaper price. It would be easier and more convenient for both seller and buyers; the seller would not throw the old products away; the buyers would be able to afford to buy high-quality working pods that are necessary for the offices.

What is the role of online stores for the sale of second-hand pods?

Online shopping plays an important role in the current digital world. Online outlet stores will help case company and customers conveniently communicate without face-to-face meeting; it would not take time for customers to come to the stores if the location is too far away. Brand awareness and image are increased since second-hand furniture is the trend, and it contributes to sustainability – one of the corporate social responsibility's terms.

This thesis brings the valuable insights of second-hand market in individuals and corporate customers which is the target group of case company, the potential of the market and the benefits of online stores for selling and optimizing the lifespan of working pods.

It is acknowledged that the study is somewhat limited because of the lack of literature about the B2B context, and the limited response of the survey, however, two interviews are conducted to replace and gain more insights from two different representatives from various backgrounds. Overall, the insights from the thesis hopefully would be helpful to the case company to step into the new market and build up planning for this business idea.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. List of questions in the first interview

Question 1: What is the model of acquiring furniture you are using for your organization? You purchase or lease furniture?

Question 2: Can you explain why you chose that model?

Question 3: Where did you buy the furniture from? (online store, physical store, retailer or directly from manufacturer). Which one would you prefer?

Question 4: How interested are you in second-hand office furniture? At what price you consider as “a reasonable price” for that compared to the brand-new one? (how much discount percentage it would be)

Question 5: Between renting furniture in a period of time and buying a second-hand items at reasonable prices, which one would you choose? And can you explain more about your choice?

Question 6: Do you think nowadays, companies or organizations’ office should buy the second-hand furniture instead of a new one because it saves money and protect the environment?

Question 7: When choosing a furniture item, which factors are important to you?

Question 8: In your opinion, where is the best place you would like to buy second-hand furniture like official company or dealer/ retailer?

Question 9: Where could the second-hand furniture sales be built better? (online or offline or you think both of these distribution channels)

Question 10: If you have to choose one, which one would you prefer and can you explain why?

Appendix 2. List of questions in the second interview

1(2)

Question 1: What is the process of your campaign with the used furniture?

Question 2: What is your company's mission and vision, why did you decide to launch this company?

Question 3: Did you get used furniture from companies or individuals?

Question 4: Are your key customers mostly companies, businesses or individuals?

Question 5: Were there a lot of companies interested in used furniture? What kind of enterprises mostly bought second-hand furniture from your company? (start-up, small-to-medium enterprises, or large companies)

Question 6: When you got the used furniture from external, what factors did you concern?

Question 7: When customers purchase used furniture, what factors are customers more focused on? (When they bought the used furniture from your company, what are the common questions and concerns they came up with?)

Question 8: How much discount percentage would be the most reasonable for old furniture compared to the original one that people would satisfy?

Question 9: The price shown on the website is the difference between the brand-new product and the used furniture?

Question 10: Do you have the own place to check the status of products and do the refurbishing, repair or you use outsource service for that?

Question 11: Do you have an online store or offline store? How long does it take to deliver the furniture to customers?

2(2)

Question 12: In your opinion, where could the sales have been built better: online or offline? Can you explain why you thought that?

Appendix 3. List of questions in qualitative survey

1(3)

Question 1: What is your company name/ work industry?**Question 2: What is your model of acquiring furniture?**

Answer choices (multiple answers allowed):

1. Leasing
2. Renting or service model
3. Purchasing
4. Other

Question 3: If you choose “Other”, can you specify what your choice is?**Question 4: Why did you choose that/those model(s)?****Question 5: Have you considered the other options also?****Question 6: Where did you purchase the office furniture?**

Answer choices (multiple answers allowed):

1. Online store
2. Dealer/Retailer
3. Directly from manufacturer
4. Other

Question 7: If you choose “Other”, can you specify where you bought?**Question 8: How interested are you in second-hand office furniture?**

Answer choices (single answers allowed):

1. Extremely interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat not interested
5. Extremely not interested

2(3)

Question 9: Between renting for a period and purchasing a second-hand product at reasonable price, which one would you choose?

Answer choices (single answers allowed):

1. Renting for a period
2. Second-hand product at reasonable price

Question 10: Why did you choose that model?

Question 11: At what prices considered as "reasonable price" for second-hand furniture compared to the original price?

Slide rate: from 0 to 10 as from -0% to -100%

Question 12: Why did you choose that discount percentage is considered as "reasonable price" compared to new product?

Question 13: When choosing second-hand furniture, which of the following factors are important to you?

Answer choices (multiple answers allowed):

1. Quality
2. Warranty
3. Price
4. Convenience
5. Brand
6. Salesperson's recommendation
7. Functionality
8. Other

Question 14: If you choose "Other", can you specify more options?

Question 15: What do you value when purchasing second-hand office furniture?

Question 16: Where is the best place you would like to buy second-hand product?

3(3)

Answer choices (single answers allowed):

1. Company official website
2. Dealer/Retailer
3. Other

Question 17: If you choose "Other", can you specify the place you would like to buy?

Question 18: Where could the second-hand product sales be built better?

Answer choices (single answers allowed):

1. Online
2. Offline
3. Both of online and offline
4. Other

Question 19: If you choose "Other", can you specify your opinion?

Question 20: Do you have any feedback about this survey?