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DEVELOPMENT AND PROPECT OF CHINESE SECOND-HAND MARKET

Bachelor's Thesis 2013

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Development and Prospect of Chinese Second-hand  
Market

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Second-hand trade is a booming business mode throughout the world, transforming the way people consume and purchase as well as the way people perceive previously owned commodities. Meanwhile, as the ideas of sustainable consumption and ethical consumption being put forward, resale business, which saves and recycles useable resources while reducing waste and pollution, has gained more popularity. In China, such business style has huge potential as well. It is under this background that the research is conducted.

The study aimed at finding out the developing situation of Chinese second-hand market and providing suggestions correspondingly, so as to forecast the prospect of Chinese second-hand market.

The method used in the research was quantitative method. To be more precise, a study with an on-line questionnaire concerning Chinese consumers' attitude towards second-hand market or flea market was carried out and 150 respondents gave their feedback eventually. By analyzing the results and correlating related data, final suggestions and conclusion were made, ensuring reliability and validity.

In conclusion, compared with physical second-hand stores and flea markets, on-line second-hand trade is more popular among young adults. Moreover, although Chinese consumers still have concerns about resale business in China, the majority of respondents reported their willingness to consider or continue purchasing second-hand products, indicating a bright prospect of Chinese second-hand market.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the research

In this day and age, with the rapid development of high-tech, people's life quality has been improved significantly; nevertheless, the aggravated human activities have exerted a devastating impact on environment, resulting in pollution and waste of resources. To cope with this severe situation, people have started thinking reusing and recycling products so as to create sustainable development for people all over the world. It is under this circumstance that second-hand markets or flea markets, places to conduct trade for used commodities, have gained popularity globally, becoming a new fashionable shopping option for individuals nowadays.

On the other hand, as e-commerce has been playing a crucial role in business, second-hand markets have also gone virtual, which has fundamentally broken the regional limits of actual second-hand trade by enabling individuals, regardless of their location and whether they are in the business industry, to make transaction via the Internet, thus further expanding the participation of used goods trade.

In China, likewise, second-hand market is thriving. Nowadays, almost every city, big or small, has their own flea markets where various previously owned products, ranging from clothing, household goods, books to electronics and antiques, are sold and purchased. Apart from that, even real estate and vehicles, which will cost a fortune, have also found their position in second-hand trade and as a matter of fact, they're being accepted by an increasing number of households.

Most importantly, as Chinese netizens have reached 500 million, on-line business has become an indispensable business style in China. Consequently, many prominent information websites such as 58.com, Ganji.com, Baixing.com as well as taobao.com, the biggest network retailing platform in Asia-Pacific region, have provided C2C



services for used goods, enabling cyber citizens to be not only customers, but also sellers.

## 1.2 Purposes of the research

In this context, it is essential to study the major customers in thrift shops as well as the reasons why they buy items there. Therefore, the following research question has been formulated:

-- Who are the target customers of second hand products in China and what are their motives to buy?

In order to answer this big question, the following auxiliary questions have to be answered:

-- Which factors have an impact on the development of second-hand market?

-- What is the second-hand market like in China?

-- Who are target customers of second-hand products in China?

-- How can the development of Chinese second-hand market be improved?

## 1.3 Methodology of the research

Since this research concentrates on analysing the development status quo and prospects of Chinese second-hand market, the methods primarily used are quantitative methods, with a questionnaire carried out online concerning Chinese people's attitude towards second-hand market. 150 Chinese people participated in it.

On the other hand, in order to back up this study, a large amount of detailed and authoritative theoretical information needs to be presented. In this thesis, theories,

books and publications of gurus in consumer behaviour, sustainable consumption and ethical consumption are mainly used for reference, such as Marketing Management by S.A. Sherlekar and E.Gordon (2010), Consumer Behaviour and Advertising Management by M. Khan (2006), Putting Sustainable Consumption into Practice by Schrader, U. and Thøgersen, J (2011), as well as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, to name the most important ones.

#### 1.4 Structure of the research

Besides the Introduction which consists of the background, the purposes, the methodology and the structure, this research is mainly divided into three sections, namely, Factors influencing second-hand market, Second-hand market in China and Research.

In the part Factors influencing second-hand market, three ideas are used and analysed:

##### 1. Consumer behaviour.

In the first chapter, the study is conducted by exploring the meaning of consumer behaviour as well as factors influencing it. Several characteristics of Chinese people's consumer behaviour are also presented.

##### 2. Sustainable consumption.

In the second chapter, the focus is given to the nature of the idea of sustainability and by extension, sustainable consumption. Also, the connection between second-hand products and sustainable consumption is discussed.

##### 3. Ethical consumption

In the third chapter, the emphasis is put on the role ethical consumption plays in second-hand market and how it affects people's attitude towards second-hand commodities.

In the part Second-hand market in China, the types and features of Chinese second-hand markets are demonstrated.

In the part Research, the process of the research is listed, after which suggestions are given based on the results of the questionnaire; moreover, in accordance with all the study done before, the big question (the development situation and prospect of second-hand market in China) is answered.

The mind- map below (Figure 1) epitomizes the structure of the thesis.

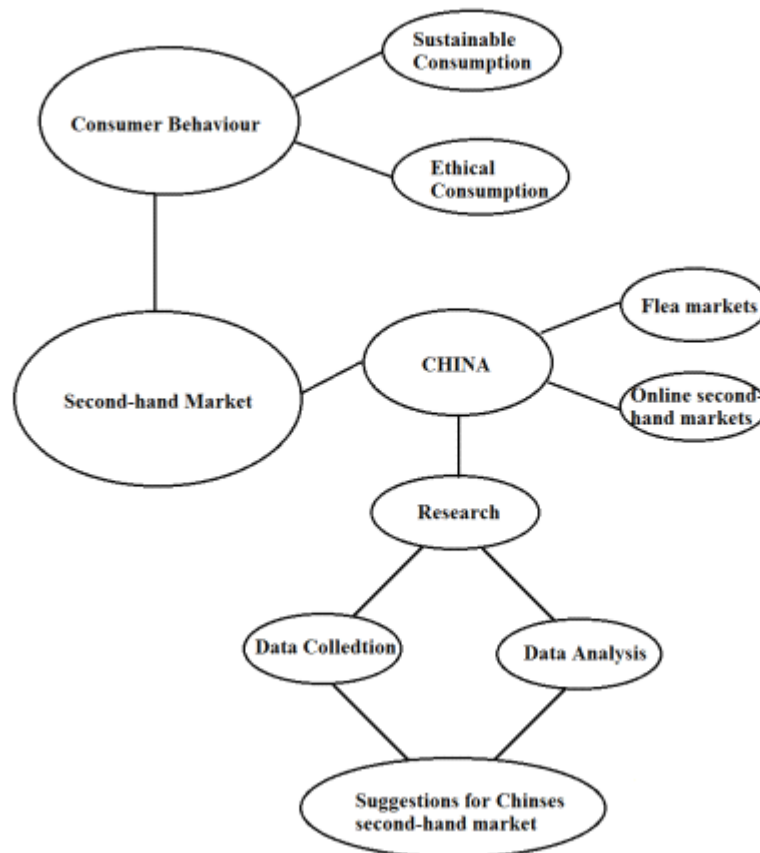


Figure 1. Mind map of the research

## 2 IDEAS INFLUENCING SECOND-HAND MARKET

### 2.1 Overview

Second-hand market has been existing in human civilization for a long time. Nowadays, it seems that this kind of trade has captured more attention of our society, with more residents involved in it. In general, this phenomenon has a lot to do with consumers' buying behaviour, sustainable consumption as well as ethical consumption.

To start with, one of the underlying reasons why second-hand markets are so popular is that it, to some extent, keeps in line with consumers' buying behaviour. To be exact, living in this technology era, consumers now are always on the pursuit of ever-greater products and services, both quantitatively and qualitatively, so much so that many used products, even in good condition and function well, are discarded and replaced by brand-new items with up-to-date technology and fashionable look. A survey conducted by CEA (Consumer Electronic Association 2008) showed that merely 38 percent of respondents admitted that they had thrown away an old product simply because it no longer worked. In this context, second-hand market, which expands the life-span of products, can be seen as a lifesaver for those previously owned commodities. As the old saying goes: One man's trash can be another man's treasure. There are no useless items in the world, but only items with different values.

In addition, second-hand market also matters from the sustainability point of view. Specifically, guided by the philosophy "sustainable development", which has been put on agenda for countries all over the world, it has been suggested that the ideal and ultimate goal of environmental management is that all materials can be reused and

recycled (Valerie 2003, 2), thus decreasing the demand for new goods and environmental problems resulting from the process of manufacture. As ReDO (Reuse Development Organization, 2012) puts it: “Reuse conserves valuable natural resources, reduces the amount of water and air pollution and greenhouse gases.” However, it is widely agreed that consumption models of industrialized world are unsustainable, due to the demand of an excessively fast productivity of materials and energy (Cooper 2010, 30-31). In this context, second-hand trade, decreasing wastes by sending used goods back to the market, is extremely vital for mankind to achieve sustainable development.

Moreover, seen from another perspective, it is not surprising to find out that there is a subtle connection between ethical consumption and second-hand market. That is to say, being aware of the environmental threats e.g. waste and pollution caused by excessive resource consumption (Searle 1995, 1), many businesses have taken action to reuse and recycle old commodities, in the hope of advocating green and ethical consumption. For instance, a non-profit organization called Green Works makes it a rule to sell second-hand office furniture instead of letting them end up in landfills and rot; what is more, they turn some of the furniture into children’s furniture, thus encouraging both businesses and individuals to see the value of second-hand products (Arnold 2010, 150).

In this research, emphasis is given on Chinese second-hand market. By analysing from the three critical aspects above, final suggestions are given concerning the development of Chinese (online) second-hand market.

## 2.2 Consumer behaviour

### 2.2.1 The definition of consumer behaviour

Entering this new millennium, customers, in the eyes of marketers, are as important as God; consequently, the concept of consumer behaviour has been paid great attention

and taken seriously (Nair 2009, 3). As a matter of fact, when we, as consumers, purchase something, there're a set of physiological processes have been gone through in our mind, even though we don't notice them occasionally. They're need recognition, need satisfaction, i.e. finding ways to satisfy the need, information collection, plan making, plan implementation, decision making and post purchase behaviour. In this case, consumer behaviour can be defined as:

*[Consumer behaviour is] Study of how people or organizations behave when obtaining, using and disposing of products (and services) (Kumra 2007, 7).*

According to this definition, consumer behaviour studies not only the utilization and disposal of commodities, but also in which ways the commodities are bought. Furthermore, consumer behaviour can be applied for individuals, for groups (e.g. when go shopping with your friends, their opinions may affect your final decision in some way) as well as for organizations (e.g. personnel responsible for purchasing can decide what the organization should procure) (Kumra 2007, 7).

Nair (2009, 5) defines consumer behaviour from a different perspective:

*[Consumer behaviour is] Study of how individuals make decisions on how to spend their available resource (time, money, effort) on various consumption-related items.*

Apparently, this definition highlights the importance of customers' decision-making process which reveals the number of people participating in and the role they play (e.g. users, deciders, influencers and final buyers). In order to make final decision, effective and accurate information are needed. Table 1 below demonstrates customers' attitude towards information searching of different item (Nair 2009, 5).

Table 1. Consumer decision making (Nari 2009, 5)

Decision making (information search, consider	High involvement purchase decision	Low involvement purchase decision
--	---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

brand alternatives)	Complex decision making (automobiles, autos)	Variety seeking (cereals)
Habit (little or no information search, considers only one brand)	Brand loyalty (cigarettes, perfumes)	Inertia (canned vegetables, paper towels)

### 2.2.2 Factors influencing consumer behaviour

In general, consumer behaviour can be affected by many variables, both internally and externally. The former implies individual differences such as motivation, occupation, age, gender, lifestyle, customs and belief, perception and education etc. while the latter presents factors outside individuals, such as culture, economic status of different areas, reference family and so on (Kumra 2007, 3-14). In this research, two important factors, namely culture and motivation, are discussed.

#### Culture

Culture is an abstract and broad concept which includes knowledge, art, moral laws and any habit that an individual possesses as a member of the society (Khan 2006, 29). Due to the tide of globalization, companies and firms all over the world have begun to realize the importance of transnational cooperation and their performance in other regions or countries; consequently, when analyzing consumer behaviour, marketers value cultural differences greatly (Findlay 1990, 213). On the other hand, as values, perceptions and preferences of a person are formed in the societal environment, cultural issues are believed to have the deepest influence on consumer behaviour. For instance, women living in urban areas are concerned about fitness, which is actually a cultural change that being pretty means being slim, thus giving rise to a lucrative market for weight loss products and beauty salons (Karunakaran 2008, 71).



Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

### Motivation

Admittedly, all humans have their own wants and demands and no matter in which facet these wants and demands are, biologically, socially or mentally, there must be a driving force leading to direct activities to fulfil some of them. When it comes to buying behaviour, the driving force can be motivation.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 2) is a well-recognized theory of motivation, which believes human needs are categorized into five levels and higher level ones will be prioritized when lower level one are satisfied (Sherlekar 2010, 31).

### 2.2.3 Chinese consumer behaviour

Owing to the prosperous development of Chinese economy and the inevitable tide of globalization, the consumption pattern in China has been transforming drastically and



Chinese consumers' spending power has been boosting gradually. China therefore stands in the spotlight of global consumption stage, with her unique consumer behaviour gaining more and more interest.

### Confidence

It seems that Chinese consumers are rather confident and optimistic about their financial situation. In a survey conducted by BCG (Boston Consulting Group) (2012), only 4 percent of Chinese respondents reported they are in financial trouble and only 16 percent of them felt financially insecure, which are both the lowest compared with six developed western countries (Figure 3). Another survey done by Mckincey (2011) showed that the majority of Chinese interviewed (83 percent) chose to enhance their household expenditure, meaning they are willing to spend more on daily consumption.

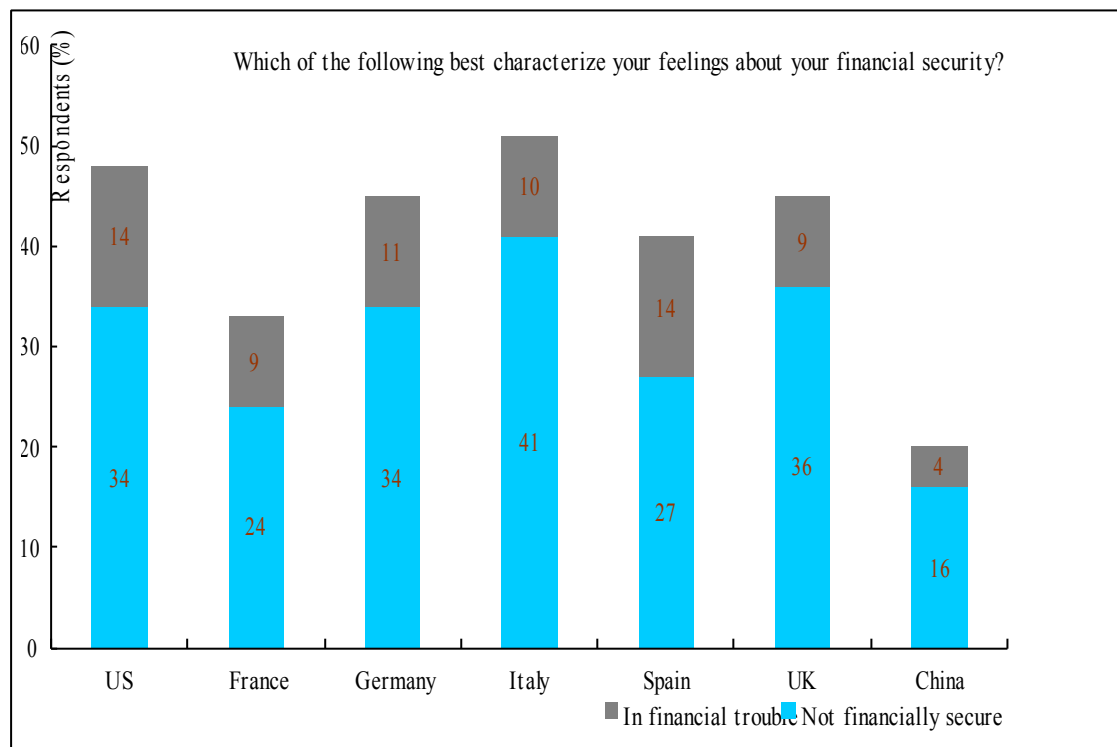


Figure 3. Consumer sentiment (BCG 2012, 3)

### Face consumption

It is widely acknowledged that Chinese attach great importance to their face, or MIAN ZI in Chinese characters, which can be reflected from their buying behaviour. That is to say, in order to keep face or win respect, Chinese consumers may choose to purchase something expensive and luxury, regardless of their economic status and whether they are in need of that kind of product, resulting in the face consumption (Li&Su 2007, 251-252).

High brand awareness, low brand loyalty

In the Mckinsey survey (2011), Chinese consumers consider brand most when making buying decisions and there are 45 percent of participators believe that the more famous the brand is, the better quality the product has. However, concerning brand loyalty, most Chinese consumers prefer to have several alternatives instead of being loyal on one certain brand while people with higher income incline to choose only one brand, especially for high-value products.

## 2.3 Sustainable consumption

### 2.3.1 The concept of sustainable consumption

In this modern society, being fully aware of the imperativeness of striking a balance between economic development and environmental conservation, human beings are devoted to sustainable development, a term proposed by WCED (the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) describing “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs*”. Sustainable development concerns the life of every single individual and can be achieved in many ways. Sustainable consumption (SC) is one of them.

The appearance of sustainable consumption dates back to 1992, when Agenda 21, a plan of action concerning sustainable development, was set up in the UN Conference

on Environment and Development (UNCED). Agenda 21 (1992) stated that unsustainable consumption and production is the reason of global environmental deterioration. Two years later, in Oslo symposium on sustainable production and consumption (1994), sustainable consumption was defined as:

*The use of services and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggest that several objectives can be achieved by developing sustainable consumption:

- Fulfilling humanity's basic need
- Enhancing people's living quality
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Maximizing the use of renewable resources
- Expanding product life-cycle (PLC) from production, transportation and retailing, use and disposal

It is manifest that the implementation of sustainable consumption relies deeply on consumers; however, other parties must participate in and interact as well (Figure 4). Firstly, governments are supposed to establish relevant regulations and legislation, thus creating a favorable environment for SC. Second, companies should provide more sustainable and Eco-friendly products and services so as to encourage sustainable consumer behaviour. What is more, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ought to take responsibility to publicize and facilitate the idea of sustainable consumption, enabling the public to take it into serious consideration (Schrader, Thogersen 2011, 4-5).

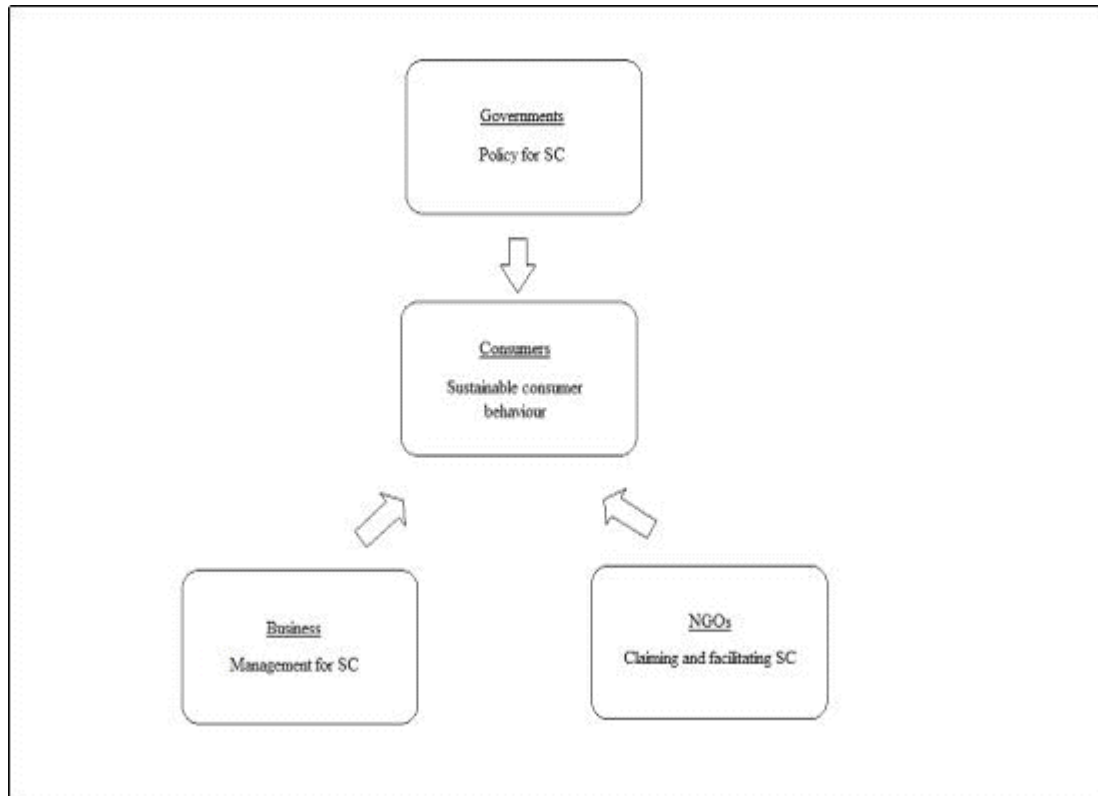


Figure 4. Parties involved in SC (Schrader & Thøgersen, 2011, 4-5)

### 2.3.2 Sustainable consumption in China

Although Chinese consumers now are quite familiar with the idea of sustainable consumption, there are still many obstacles when it comes to putting sustainable consumption into practice (switch asia PROGRAMME year). By the year 2025, the population of China's middle class will surge to 800 million from today's 300 million (Peggy 2012). However, the majority of them are lacking in education and experience in sustainable consumption compared with their western counterparts; besides, since several decades ago Chinese people were confronted with the problem of food and clothing, when their life are better off, they prefer to purchase luxury products that are aspirational for most individuals instead of considering green products, which is the reason why Chinese middle class will become the world's largest luxury consumers by 2015 (Joel 2011).

SWITCH-Asia Programme conducted a survey concerning green consumption of urban residents in Beijing in 2012, in which 347 questionnaires were recovered, with

people of different age, education background, vocation and income being interviewed. According to this survey, Beijingers need to improve their awareness of green consumption, as only 9.43 percent of interviewees said they would think about the environmental problems when purchasing, and approximately half of the interviewees admitted they pay no attention to green or sustainable products on the market (switch Asia Programme 2013). British Council (2013) and China Youth Daily also conducted National Survey on Sustainable Consumption among Chinese Young People. Statistics showed that most youngsters know clearly the environment is suffering from some human behaviour, but they're not willing to change their consumption patterns. Further, these young adults are lack of environmental knowledge such as replacing ordinary bulbs with energy-saving light bulbs and changing personal water consumption).

## 2.4 Ethical consumption

### 2.4.1 What is ethical consumption?

Emerged in the 1980s, ethical consumption is a relatively novel concept for human beings; nevertheless, it has been emphasized day after day (Littler 2008, 6) and by now, it seems that ethical consumption is being widely spread, forming a modern and green life attitude for consumers worldwide.

When talking about ethics, people naturally think about words like responsibility, morality and principles. As a matter of fact, ethics exists everywhere, not only in the respect of distinguishing right from wrong, but also in our daily routines and behaviour, such as consumption and it is pivotal to understand the real meaning of ethical consumption.

For James (2008, 31-32), ethical consumption illustrates clearly thinking globally and acting locally. He believes that ethical consumption is of importance in both private perspective and public perspective. To be exact, as a private matter, ethical

consumption is the willingness of consumers to be related with objects that don't obey normal moral codes; as a public matter, ethical consumption is more of a movement that has something to do with market transactions. That is to say, it is ethics that forms product value and by extension, affects the sales of different objects .

For Barnett (2010, 1-2), ethical consumption is the replacement of privatized acts of consumer options for appropriate political forms of collective actions and it should be explained as a means through which various actors seek to do politics in and through distinctively ethical registers or in other words, individuals' concerns about global issues can be reflected through purchasing and therefor have a big impact on political decisions.

#### 2.4.2 Being an ethical consumer

It is clear that ethical consumption, similarly to sustainable consumption, has become a guiding philosophy of consumption behaviour nowadays and such trend will continue; therefore, each person, as an ordinary consumer, is supposed to put it into practice so as to be a real ethical consumer.

Responsible consumption and political consumption are the most accepted interpretations of ethical consumption (Emese 2008, 4). In order to be more ethical, consumers can change or improve their purchase behaviour through these two factors.

Literally, responsible consumption refers to behaviour that takes the earth, society and environment into first account instead of self-satisfaction (Emese 2008, 4). Such consumption practices include purchasing fair trade, organic goods, averting exploitative products and dispensable consumption (Littler 2008, 6) as well as recycling and reuse (Emese 2008, 5). From this point of view, shopping in second-hand stores definitely belongs to ethical consumption, because most goods available are previously owned by others and buying them means extending their life cycle and avoiding resource waste at the same time.

In terms of political consumption, the most familiar methods are political movements and campaigns towards global concerns such as climate change, human rights and animal rights, trade justice (Barnett et al. 2010, 1) etc. Consequently, boycotting sweatshops and commodities that test on animals (Littler 2008, 6) are all methods of political consumption. In spite of the fact that these campaigns are, to some extent, passive forms (Emese 2008, 5), there is no doubt that political activities can, if done in an appropriate way, sound the alarm for citizens with regards to problems we're confronted with or situations in need of change.

### 3 SECOND-HAND MARKET IN CHINA

#### 3.1 Flea market

Flea market, known as a traditional business mode, often refers to an outdoor place that comprises many stalls selling used and second-hand articles ranging from daily necessities (e.g. clothes, kitchen utensils, furniture) to precious antiques (Joyce 2011). Today, thanks to the idea “What is Old is New Again”, flea markets are flourishing everywhere, including China. For example, the typical flea markets in Beijing and Shanghai are presented here.

##### Panjiayuan flea market

Speaking of the most famous and representative flea market in China, it would be Beijing Panjiayuan flea market, one of the tenth best flea markets in the world (Joyce 2011). Used to be called the “dirt market”, Panjiayuan flea market now is not dirty at all. Quite on the contrary, the market now mainly sells Chinese curio, artworks and any ancient items one can imagine, inheriting and showcasing the splendid Chinese culture. What is more, visiting Panjiayuan flea market has been put on the must-to-do list in Beijing by Simon (accessed 26 Jan 2013), proving the value of this wonderful Chinese flea market.

##### Flea markets in Shanghai

It is no secret that the living cost in Shanghai is extremely high. In order to save more money, residents there like to go to flea market, a paradise to bargain and have a good deal. Generally speaking, there are two types of flea markets in Shanghai, permanent ones and temporary ones respectively. In permanent flea markets, the main products are second-hand books, electronic devices and grocery as well as second-hand furniture and antiques. With regards to temporary flea markets, most of them are for charity, which means citizens voluntarily donate products (in most cases, used but still function) and put them on sale in flea markets (Yiran & Qinglian, 2013).



### 3.2 Online second-hand markets

As the Internet is developing at a spectacular speed in China (Wong & Ling 2000, 12), Online shopping or B2C e-commerce, is enjoying great prevalence correspondingly. An article on Business Day (Chen 2013) said that among China's 1.34 billion population, 16 percent of them often shops online; further, for Taobao Marketplace and Taobao Mall, the largest e-commerce platform in China, the total transaction volume in 2012 amounted to 1 trillion yuan, making up 2 percent of China's GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

According to ChinaRetailNews (2011), many classified information websites, such as Ganji.com, 58.com, Baixing.com, are able to provide a platform for netizens to sell and buy second-hand products with convenience currently. In 2011, Alibaba group also launched an online trading platform for second-hand products, symbolizing the increasingly complete C2C business for used goods.

What's worth mentioning is that not only second-hand market for common commodities is developing well, but that for luxury goods is also booming. As Avery (2010) described in his article , in Chinese mainland, market for high-end second-hand goods is on the way of being mature and complete, with physical stores established in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai and online stores launched, enabling more ordinary citizens to purchase luxury products with lower prices.

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Method and objectives

The major method applied in this research is conducting online questionnaires, a quantitative research method. Based on the theory of Wellington & Szczerbinski (2007, 156), questionnaire is the most commonly employed method of evaluating personality, beliefs and attitudes.

On the other hand, Rogers (2009, 8) said when it comes to research, the Internet is served more than just a site for virtual culture. With the help of Internet, researchers are able to diagnose cultural transformation and societal conditions.

My questionnaire focuses on Chinese people's attitude and perception towards second-hand market. The objectives of doing this research are finding out how Chinese perceive second-hand markets, what can be done to encourage them to visit them and also, coming up with suggestions for marketers of second-hand stores.

### 4.2 Problems and limitations

Out of question, there're more than 100 cities with different development levels in China, which means the questionnaire ought to be conducted in most areas and regions to ensure its reliability. However, due to the limitations of time and publicity, only 203 respondents gave their feedback eventually. What is more, when my Chinese friends opened the link of my questionnaire, many of them complained that it was very slow and hard to answer. That's probably because the program used is a Finnish program which takes much more time to run in another territory. This problem led to the fact that some respondents lost their patience and decided not to finish the questionnaire, affecting the accuracy and effectiveness of data analysis.

### 4.3 Data collection

The finalized questionnaire was sent on February 8 to my family, friends and classmates via QQ (a Chinese online chatting) and E-mails. Ending up on February 17, it took me 10 days to await and collect all data and feedback. The reason why it was time-consuming is that people back then were celebrating Chinese New Year, the most important festival in China, resulting in their unwillingness to answer the questionnaire immediately. Thanks to the publicity of my friends, the questionnaire spread widely and reached more netizens, with more and more people taking part in it day by day. There were 203 respondents eventually, 150 of whom answered all questions involved.

According to the feedback from some of the interviewers, time needed for finishing the questionnaire, putting aside technical problems, was roughly 3 minutes, which is acceptable and stress-free in general. Further, as the survey was conducted anonymously, there was no need for those who did it to be afraid of information disclosure.

#### 4.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are two of the most essential aspects in quantitative methods, both of which have something to do with measurement. In simplest words, validity is about whether we are measuring what we intend to measure. By using questionnaires, each question is a variable that shows underlying concept (Muijs 2004, 65). In my case, without bias and misleading, all variables are carefully designed and theoretically relevant, all choices are neutral and equally assigned, thus ensuring validity of the research. Apart from that, the research is made in a way that only allows respondents to see one question each time, so as to reduce interference.

Reliability explains to which extent the survey is free of measurement error (Muijs 2004, 71). My questionnaire was done online anonymously and related to no commercial use, so that participants felt free giving real and accurate answers, which guarantees the reliability of the majority of data. Besides, all statistics were

automatically stored and then transferred to SPSS system for analysis, which lowers the likelihood of data error.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1 Background information of respondents

Among all the 150 respondents, 75 (50 percent) of them are male and 75 (50 percent) of them are female, which is quite even and equivalent of the whole gender ratio.

In terms of the age, as shown in Figure 5, the youngest participant is 16 years old while the oldest one is 51. And ages that occupy the largest portions are 23 and 22, with 24 percent of respondents are 23 and 21 percent of them are 22.

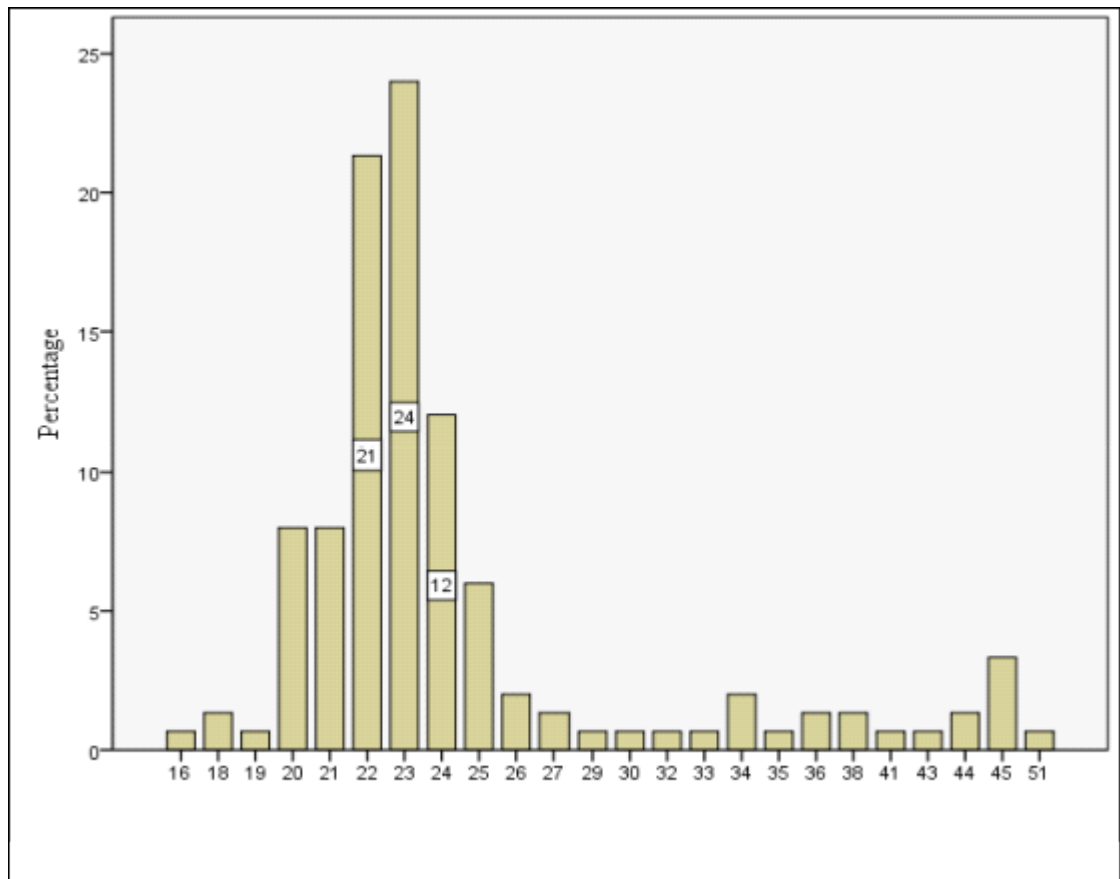


Figure 5. Age of respondents

As for interviewees' monthly income, Figure 6 clearly illustrates that over half of the people interviewed earn less than 2000 yuan per month. This is followed closely by those who earn between 2000 and 5000 yuan, which accounts for one third of the total

percentage. With a total occupation of 13 percent, people with high incomes who earn more than 5000 yuan per month makes up the smallest proportion.

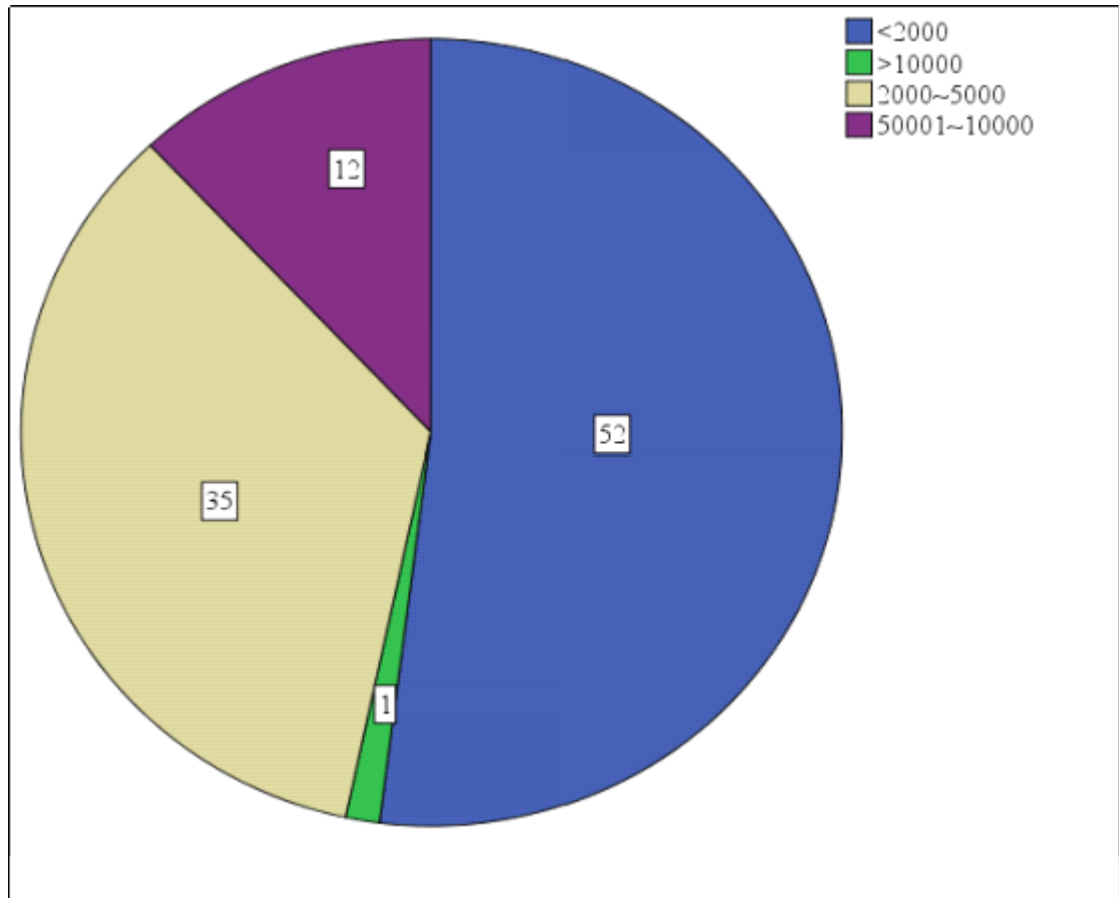


Figure 6. Monthly income of respondents

## 5.2 Purchase of second-hand products

There are 79 individuals saying they purchased previously owned products once, accounting for 53 percent. The rest 47 percent (71 persons) represent people who have never bought second-hand articles, (figure 7).

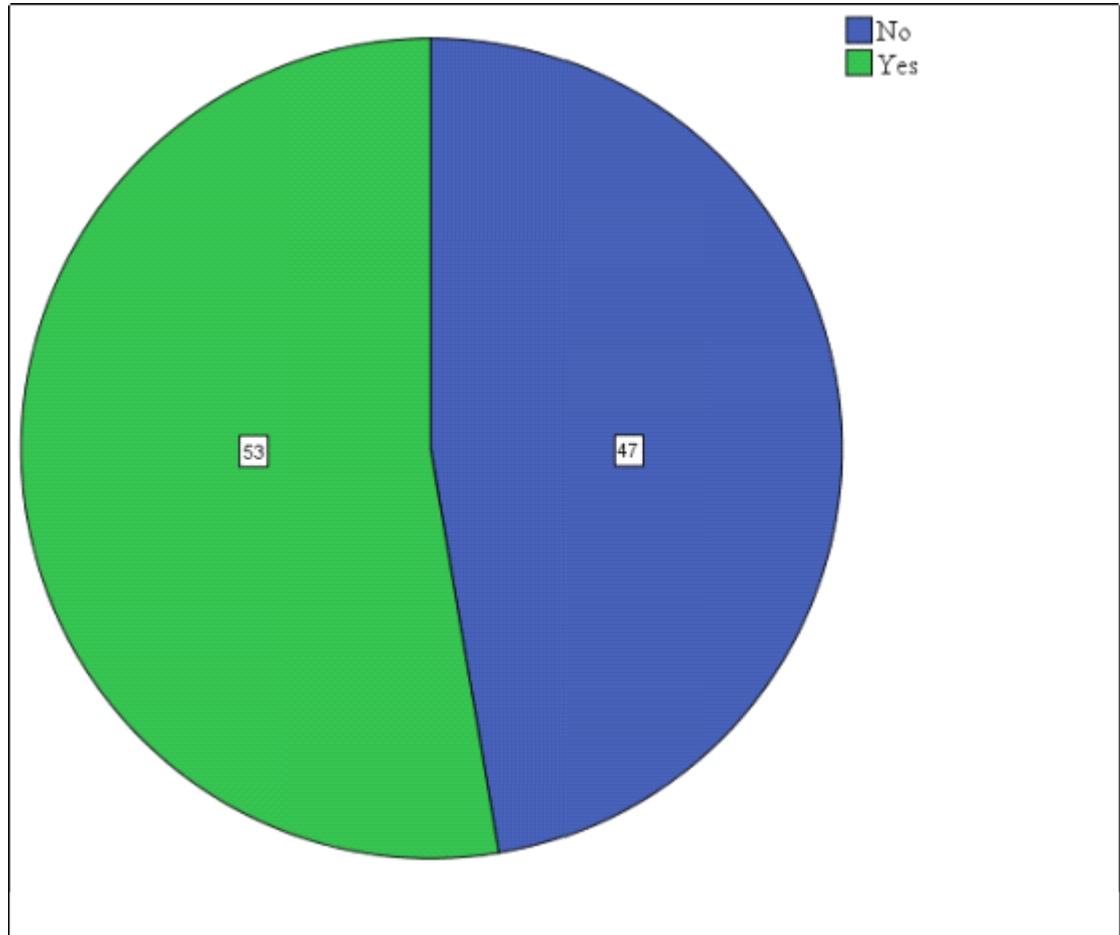


Figure 7. Purchase of second-hand products

When correlating purchase with age and monthly income (figure 8), we can find out that people aged between 21 and 24 with a monthly income of less than 5000 yuan are the major customers. By extension, Chinese Generation Y or post-80s and post-90s are supposed to be the target group of second-hand products. That is mainly because young adults, unlike their parents' generation, are profoundly influenced by the cutting-edge technology and Internet culture, so much so that they are both eager to try out novel things and willing to embrace new concepts and ideas, purchasing second-hand products for instance. On the other hand, as most of these post-80s and post-90s are still students or freshmen in the society, they do not earn very much per month, giving rise to their limited financial capability; therefore, buying old commodities instead of buying new ones is a practical way to save money.

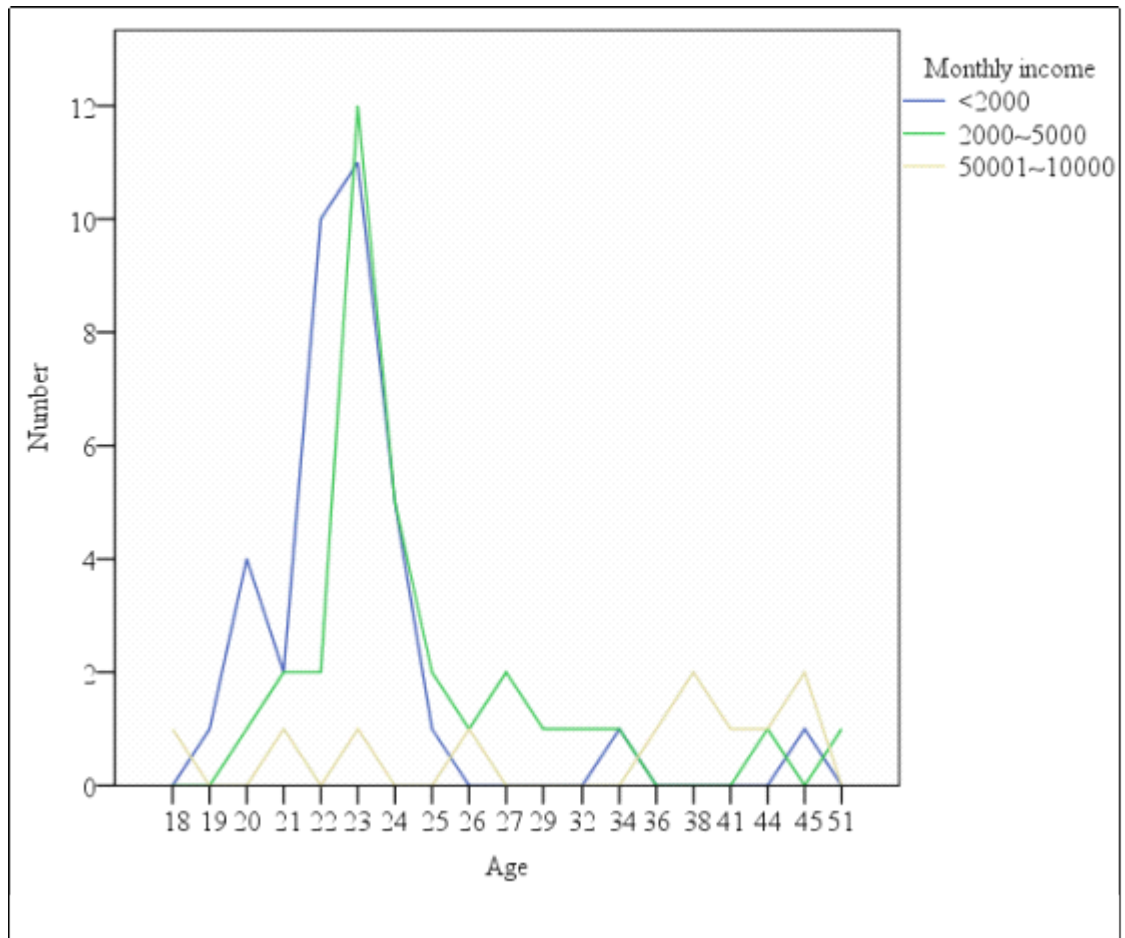


Figure 8. Age-monthly income correlation

### 5.3 Consumption situation

#### 5.3.1 Consumption sites

The statistics below (figure 9) describe sites where consumers prefer to buy second-hand products (multiple choices). Ganji.com, with 32 percent, becomes the most popular place, followed closely by flea markets and second-hand stores, which make up 29 percent and 22 percent respectively. The remaining 22 percent go to taobao.com, 58.com and baixing.com while the last 5 percent go to other websites, such as youlu.com.

Out of question, when it comes to the purchase of second-hand products, online market develops most mature in China. Take ganji.com, the biggest classified information website in China, as an example. Almost every city has its own sub web



of ganji.com, with information related to every aspect of life posted free of charge, including selling second-hand products, thereby enabling netizens to find whatever they are interested in easily and effectively. That explains why online second-hand market is popular in China.

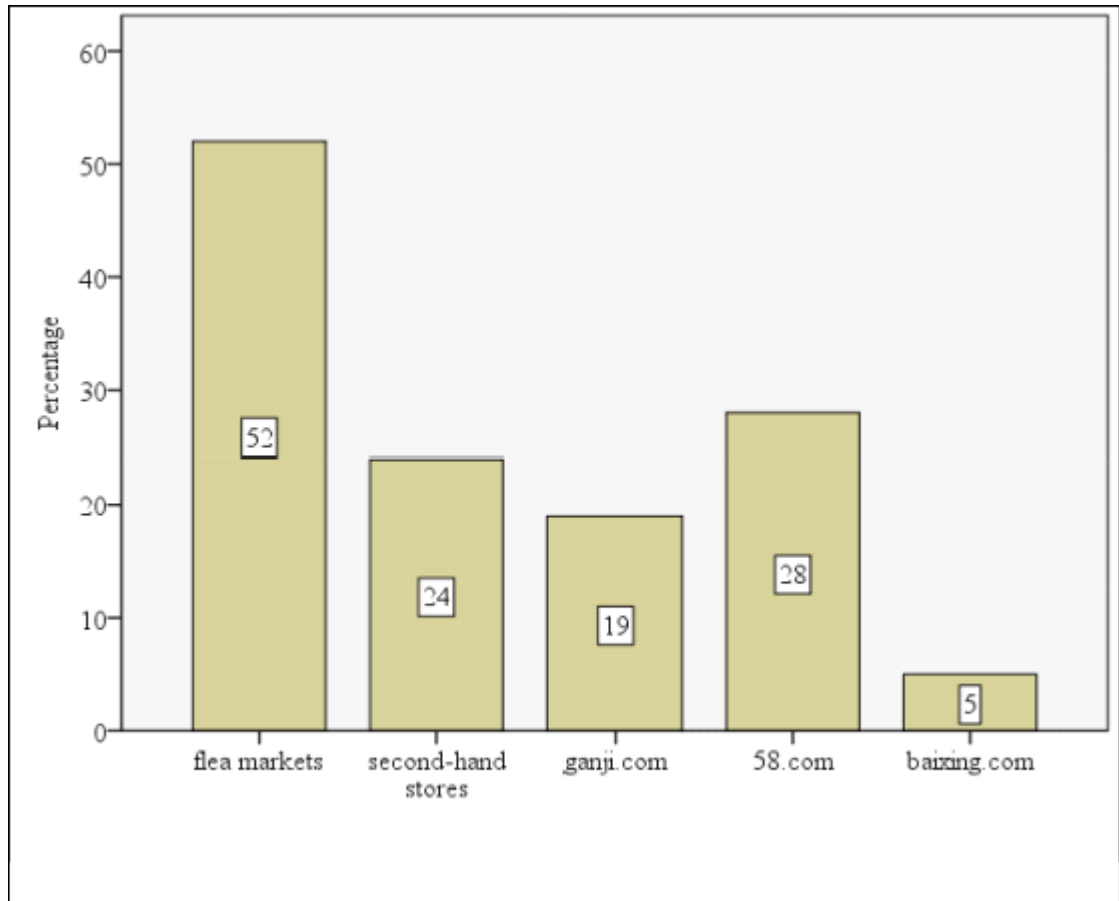


Figure 9. Consumption places

### 5.3.2 Consumption times

Figure 10 demonstrates how often consumers go shopping for used commodities. It is manifested that, 76 percent, the biggest proportion of respondents, go second-hand shopping once or twice a year, which is three times larger than the share of respondents who go shopping once or twice a month. Only 3 percent of consumers do second-hand shopping as frequently as once a week. In addition, it is not surprising to find that no one chooses buying old items several times a week.

According to this figure, even though more than half of the interviewees have the experience of second-hand product purchase, this kind of shopping is still not widely accepted, as most consumers are only willing to give second-hand products a chance on a yearly basis.

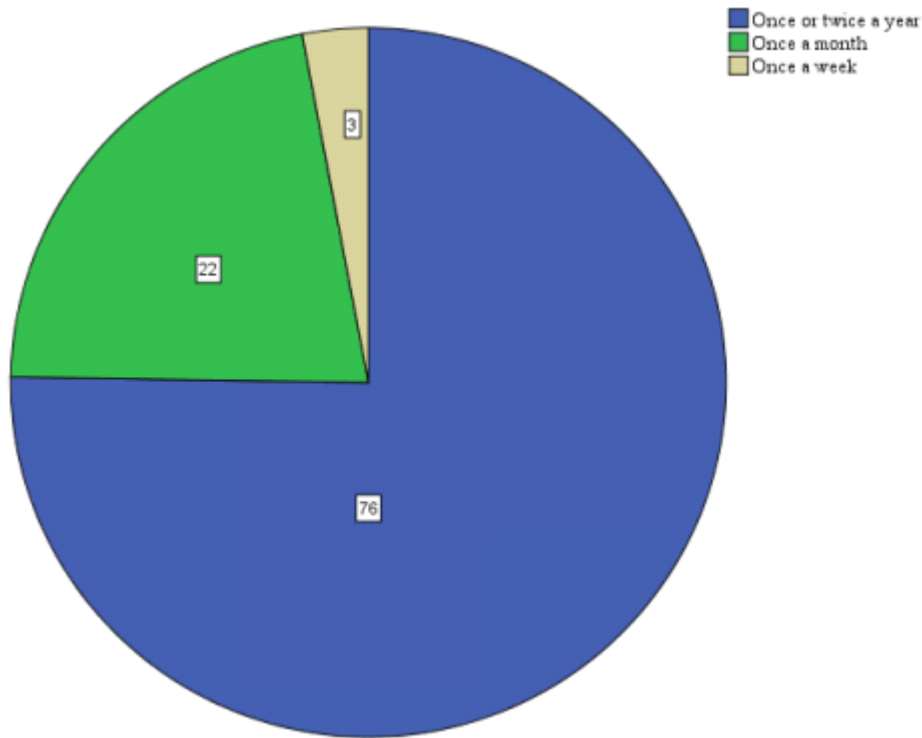


Figure 10. Consumption times

### 5.3.3 Consumption categories

The bar chart (figure 11) explains things people prefer to buy in second-hand market (multiple choices). It is clear that second-hand books, with a share of 33 percent, are the best sellers in the second-hand market. Occupying nearly one fourth, used electronic appliances become the No.2 favourite products. Old bikes (14 percent) are the third most popular products whilst previously owned clothes, bags, furniture and cars together take up 27 percent. 14 percent consists of other products, such as curios, accessories and kitchen utensils.

The underlying cause of second-hand book business being thriving in China is that there is an enormous demand among college and university students. To be exact, textbooks students use on campus are virtually expensive and proved to be trashy after graduation; consequently, many freshmen are in the market for cheap used textbooks and meanwhile, graduates are happy to sell theirs in a low price, thus stimulating the fast development of second-hand book market among students. Besides, most book buyers will just read the book once or twice and find no further use of them later; therefore, they prefer to purchase second-hand books in the first place.

In terms of electronic appliances, most consumers are attracted by their incredibly low price. For instance, plenty of wage-earning class are unable to afford a brand-new iPhone 4s which costs 4500 yuan; however, with a price of 1000 or 2000 yuan, they are willing to purchase a second-hand one.

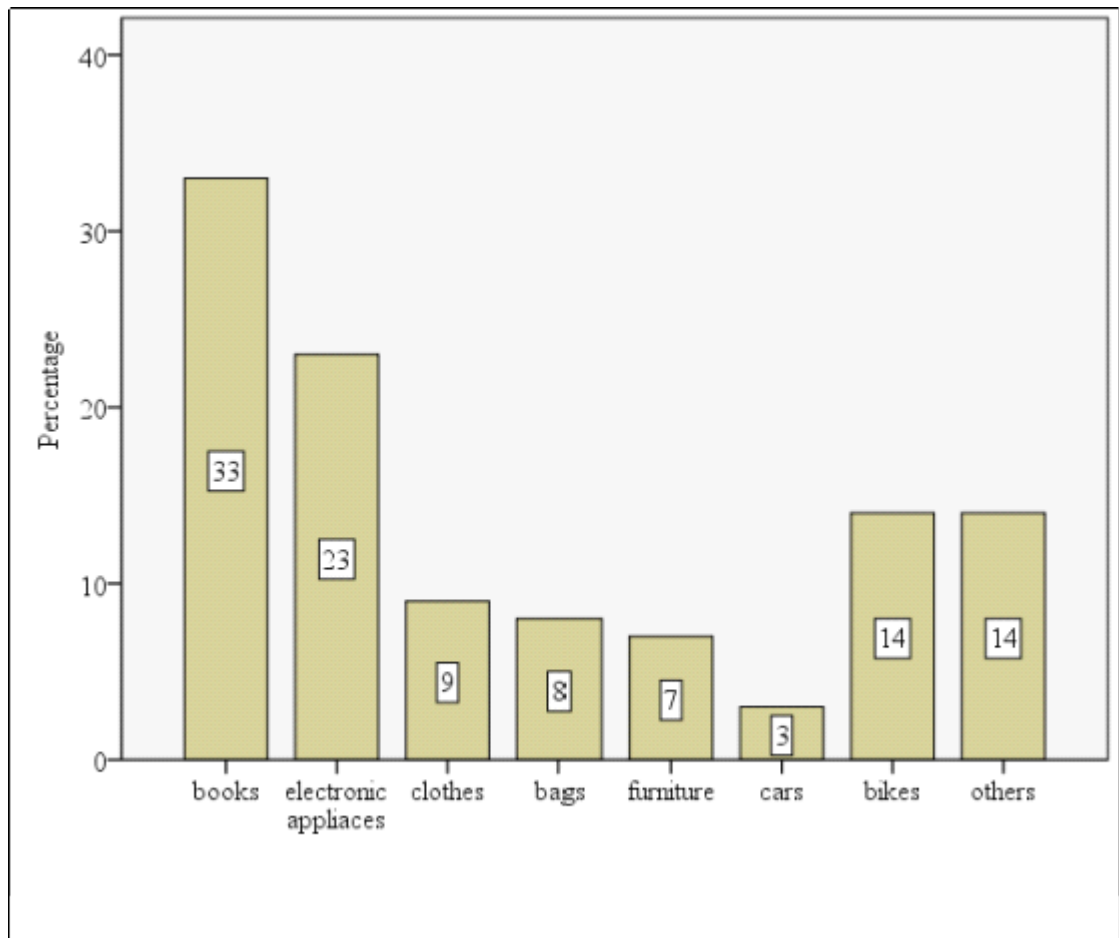


Figure 11. Consumption categories

### 5.3.4 Consumption motivations

Figure 12 illustrates factors that motivate people to buy second-hand products (a multiple-choice question). More than half of second-hand product users thought attractive prices is the biggest motivation, which is roughly twice higher than number of those who chose recycling (28 percent) and convenience (24 percent). Only 19 percent of consumers admitted it is economic factors that motivate them to purchase second-hand products. The rest 5 percent of respondents said they buy such products for the sake of hobby, collection and decoration.

It seems that in China, price advantage is the biggest motivation for consumers to do second-hand shopping. Indeed, a used item can be priced 50 percent and even more lower than a brand-new one. As Chinese consumers take price seriously, a low and attractive price tag contributes most to people's second-hand product purchase.

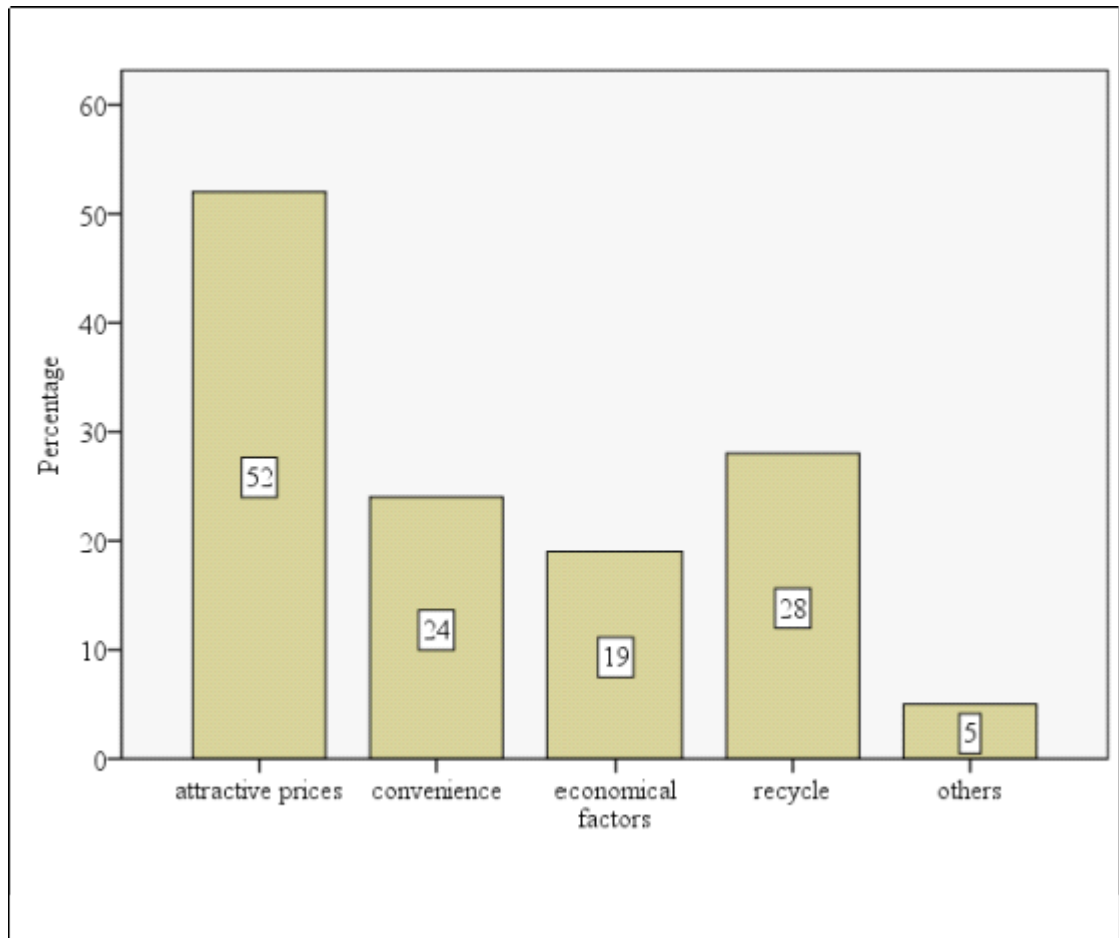


Figure 12. Consumption motivations

#### 5.4 Customer satisfaction

Table 2 demonstrates the agreement level of statements with regards to several aspects of second-hand market. The answers are ranked into 5 levels, in the order of 1 representing totally disagrees whereas 5 representing totally agree. The responses, all scored less than 3.5, indicate that the current situation of second-hand market in China is not very optimistic. So far as the statements of second-hand stores are reliable, hygienic and popular, the agreement level is 2.74, 2.59 and 2.88 respectively; meaning from the consumers' point of view, Chinese second-hand market does not do an impressive job concerning reliability, hygiene and popularity. In terms of environmentally-friendly and practical respects, interviewees tend to be neutral (both scored 3.33), showing that consumers believe there is still much room for second-hand market to make improvement.

In general, the customer satisfaction of second-hand market in China is in a relatively low level. In other words, even though sustainable development is a basic state policy in China and Chinese citizens have realized recycling is beneficial to the environment, there are still many obstacles to put theory into practice. People still have many doubts, mistrust and stereotypes towards second-hand products, e.g., old things possess inferior quality, and old things are not sterilized and dirty.

Additionally, people on average do not totally agree second-hand market is popular in China, indicating the number of flea markets and second-hand stores is small or such places are unknown to most residents.

Table 2. Attitude statements

Second-hand stores are:	reliable	hygienic	environmentally -friendly	practical	popular
N = 150	2,74	2,59	3,33	3,33	2,88

## 5.5 Consumer behaviour

### 5.5.1 Waste disposal

The graph below (figure 13) showcases how consumers deal with abandoned articles or idle items in their household (multiple choices). Apparently, giving others (23 percent) and storing at home (20 percent) are the best favoured ways. And throwing away follows closely with 18 percent. Respondents who choose to transform old items into new use takes up 10 percent, which is about twice higher than those who chose selling them online and selling them in second-hand stores (both 6 percent). Only 9 percent of answerers will donate what they will not use to charities while 4 percent will sell them in flea markets.

What can be seen from the statistics is that the ideas of sustainable consumption and ethical consumption have not fully drawn the public's attention in China. That is to say, people do not consume in an ethical way and they would rather throw things away or continue to store them at home than put them back into market and extend their life cycle, which help reduce waste and pollution effectively. In addition, selling or donating second-hand goods is not a usual practice for Chinese households, of which I consider the lack of motivation as the fundamental cause. As discussed before, consumer behaviour has a lot to do with motivation. In China, the majority of consumers' motivation remains at the fourth level which is esteem needs (figure 1). As a result, when it comes to abandoned products, people fail thinking about neither how valuable they are to the society nor how meaningful it is to let them satisfy others' needs.

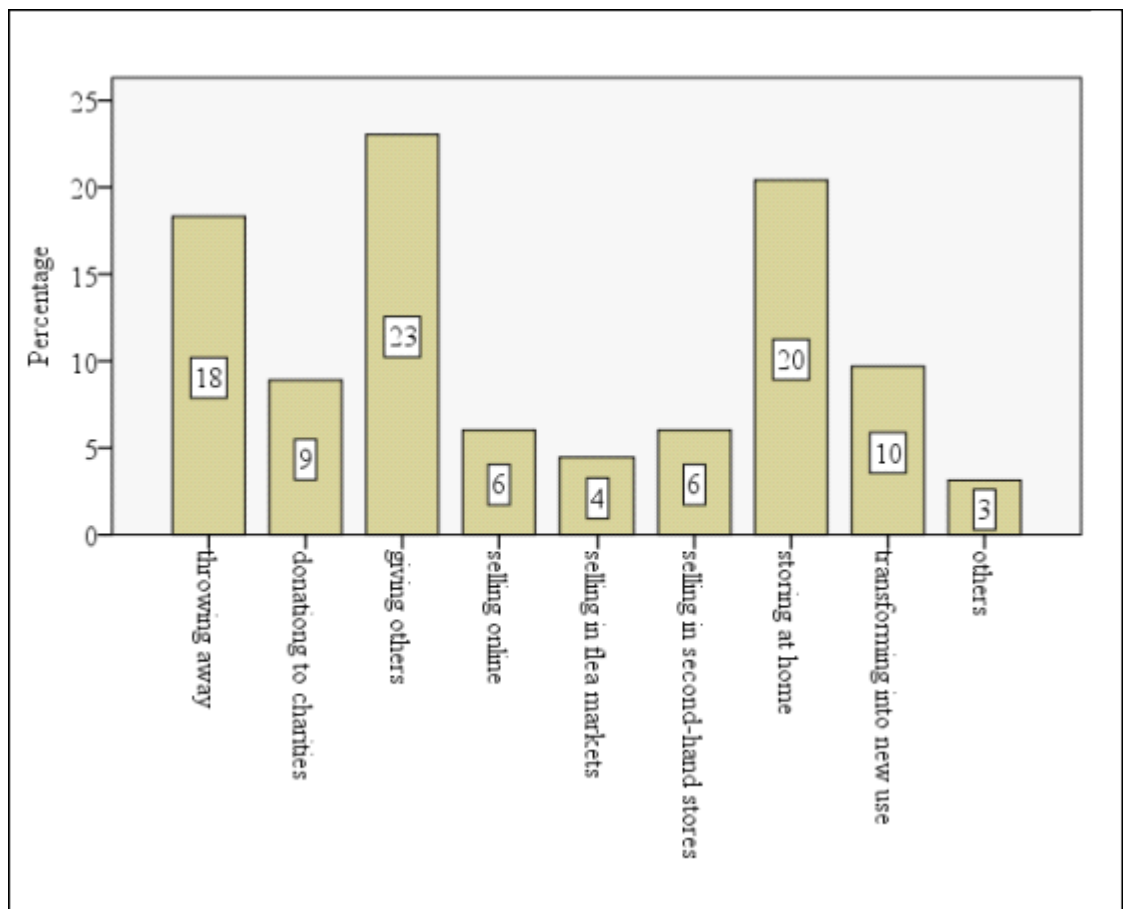


Figure 13. Waste disposal

### 5.5.2 Perception of second-hand consumption

Figure 14 reflects how people perceive the behaviour of purchasing second-hand products. As we can see, 42 percent of respondents believe buying second-hand product is economical, making up the largest proportion. The second most common perception is sustainability (28 percent). Only less than one fifth of interviewees thought such behaviour is embarrassing and face-losing whereas 12 percent of people interviewed hold other opinions.

According to this figure, most Chinese consumers are aware of the positive sides of purchasing second-hand products. In spite of this, the customer satisfaction of second-hand market in China (table 2) is relatively low. From my point of view, this results from Chinese consumer behaviour, in which culture plays an important role. In other words, purchasing commodities that are previously owned by someone else does not exist a long time in Chinese culture compared with that in the western world; therefore, even though consumers nowadays, young adults in particular, are influenced by the sustainability development, deep down in our heart, we still have ethical concerns towards second-hand products.



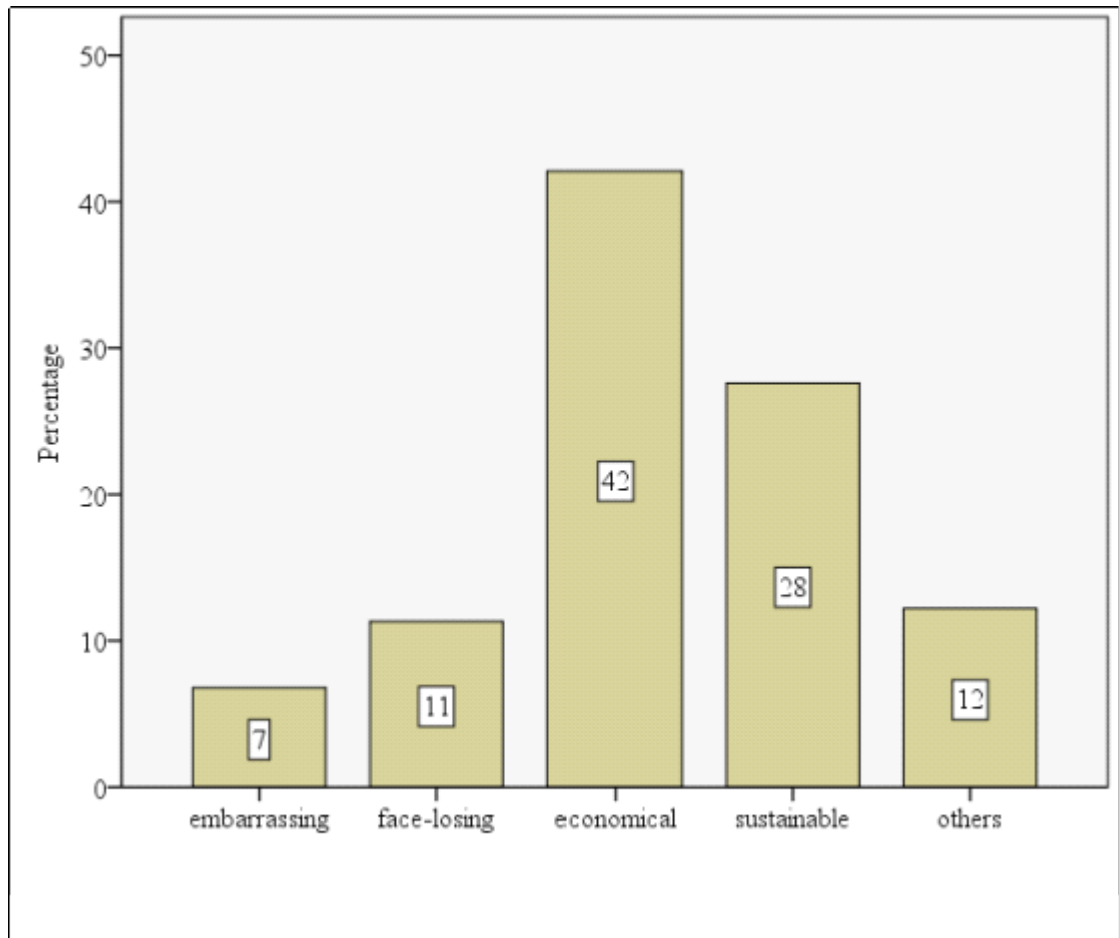


Figure 14. Perceptions of second-hand consumption

### 5.5.3 Important factors for second-hand market

The diagram (figure 15) below reveals which factors are important for flea markets or second-hand stores (multiple choices). Apparently, reliable quality (28 percent) and reasonable prices (25 percent) were chosen as the most important ones, which is followed by hygiene with 17 percent. As for product variety, good service and wide publicity, they seem not so essential for places where old goods are sold.

Such result is predictable and as expected, responding to the characteristic of Chinese consumers' buying behaviour which is price-and quality sensitive. It is not a secret that Chinese people like to haggle when shopping, hoping to get a better deal. This behaviour is even more accurate for previously owned products, as we believe the value of used goods is decreased. On top of that, quality is also one factor we take

seriously for second-hand products, as the old saying goes, you get what you pay for, we have doubts about how reliable second-hand products can be.

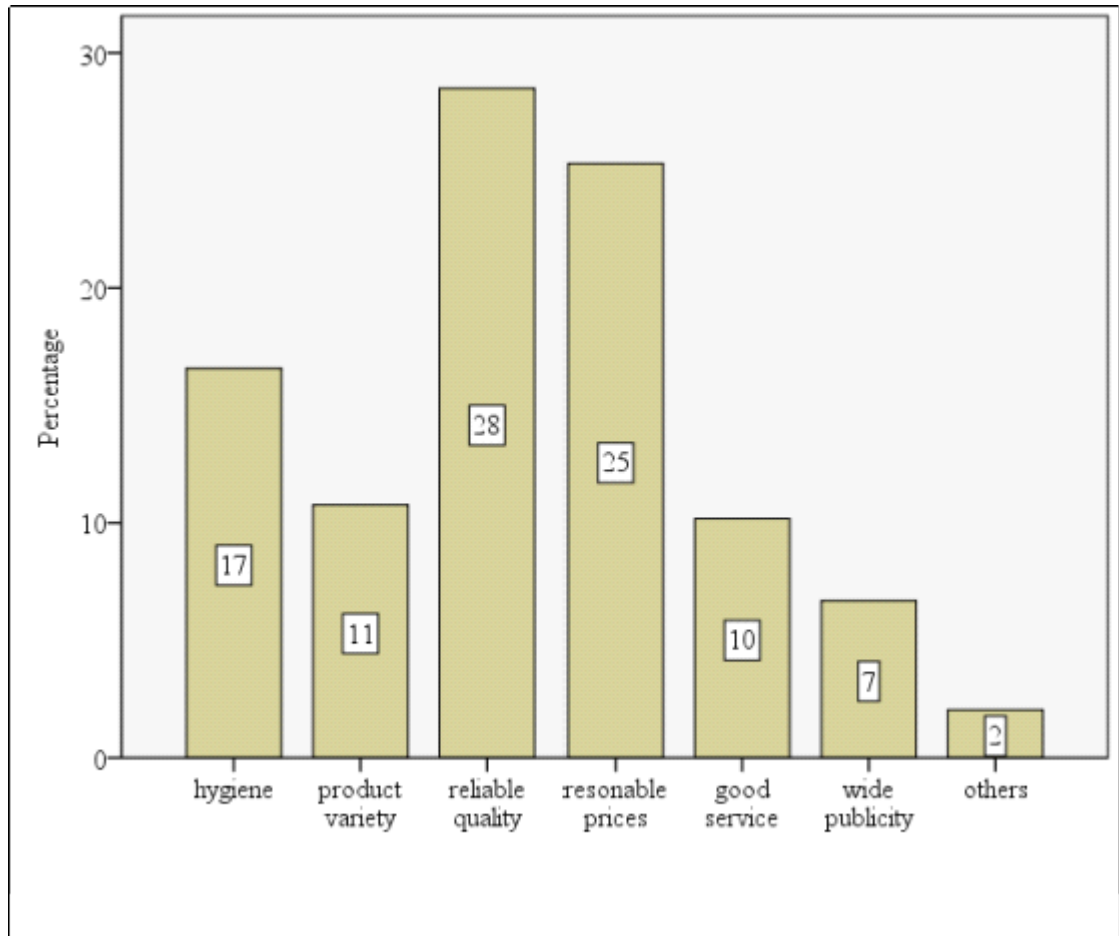


Figure 15. Important factors for second-hand market

#### 5.5.4 Willingness of future second-hand consumption

The last question concerns whether respondents are willing to consider or continue to purchase second-hand products. As exhibited in the pie chart (figure 16), roughly 70 percent of persons participated said they would not mind having the experience of purchasing something used before, merely 30 percent responded with a negative answer.

Unquestionably, a vast number of Chinese consumers do not feel uncomfortable with second-hand products and intend to buy them in the future, implying the huge potential second-hand market has in China.

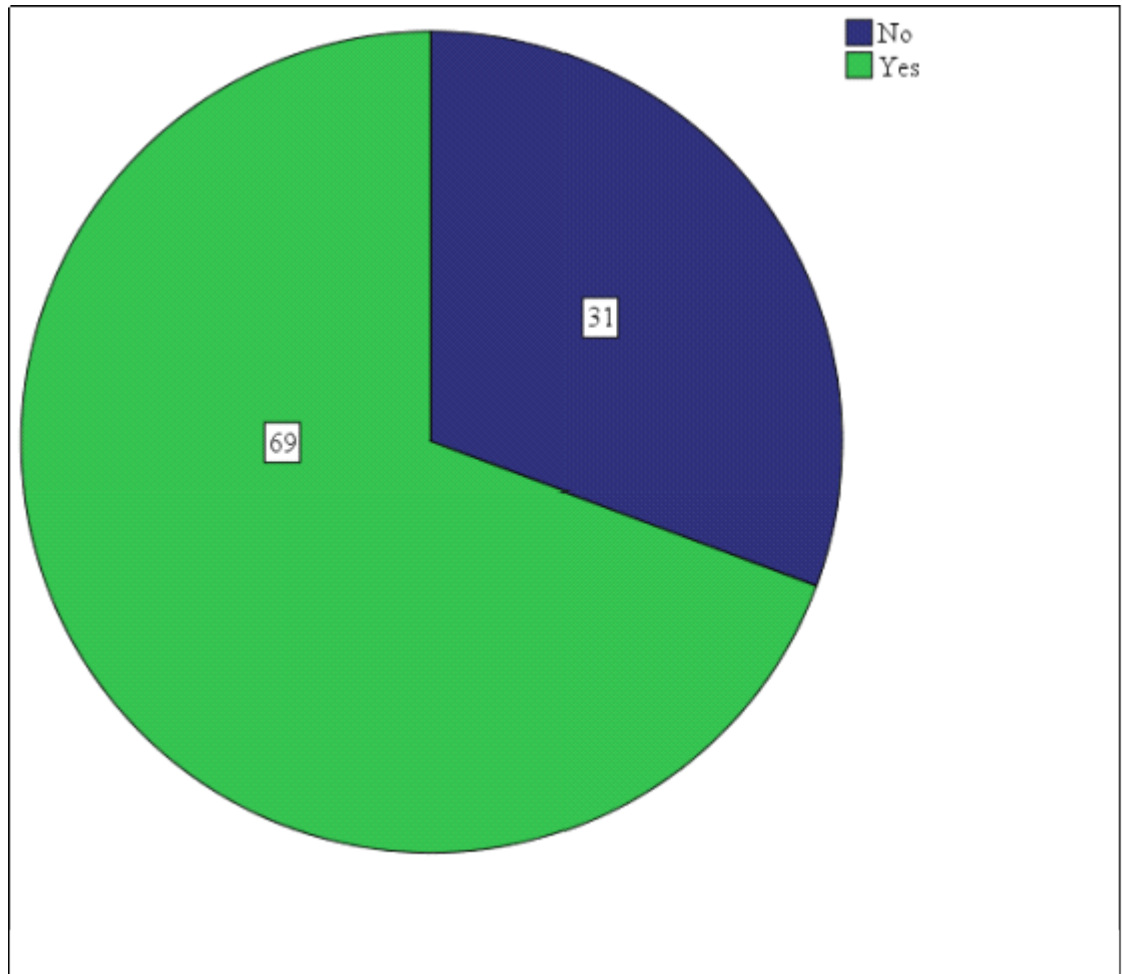


Figure 16. Willingness of future second-hand consumption

## 6 SUGGESTIONS FOR CHINESE RESALE BUSINESS

According to data analysis and findings, the prospect of Chinese second-hand market is promising and bright, with the prerequisite that the market moves in a right track. I hereby make several suggestions based on my own research, hoping booming the trade of second-hand commodity in China.

### 6.1 Business style

The first thing people should think about when starting up a resale business is the business style. There are lots of options. You can definitely open a physical store. Or you can obtain a booth in a local flea market and sell the products at regular intervals. But my research showed that at least in some areas of China, online second-hand product sales appeal to more consumers. Therefore, I would suggest utilizing E-commerce which has immense public influence, quick propagation speed and gets to millions of cyber citizens. A combination of physical store with online store would be better, thus rendering residents to understand resale business and encourage them to be part of it.

### 6.2 Target customers

It is also essential to know who your target customers are and what they really want to spend money on. Based on my research, youngsters and low-income earners are the target customers of second-hand products. And their favorite items are old books and used electronic appliances. That is to say, a second-hand store specializing in books and electronic appliances might be the most lucrative option with least risk. After figuring out target customers, you should decide where and how to start the business. If you want to open a physical store, then the optimal site ought to be near colleges, universities or communities where migrant workers live in; if you want to do business online, ganji.com and taobao.com are the most reliable platforms providing C2C businesses.

### 6.3 Inventory

In retailing industry, inventory management plays a decisive role in whether the business is successful or not. The rule applies for a second-hand store too. You can start acquiring inventory by calling on your friends and family to donate or sell some abandoned or unneeded articles. You can also wholesale your products from big-sized flea markets. Or you can get inventory from auctions and consignments. As discussed above, consumption in China is not ethical enough and most consumers choose to throw away or give others their idle items, so asking people to donate or sell their goods is, from my point of view, the most cost-effective and reliable way to obtain inventory. More importantly, the hygiene and quality must be assured, as Chinese customers do not think highly of second-hand products in these respects.

### 6.4 Pricing

Pricing is another crucial tactic decision in resale business. On the one hand, businessmen must make sure the business is profitable; on the other hand, what people expect from second-hand store, as the research embodied, is low price. This means in order to satisfy customers while making profits you have to decide carefully the markup of each product according to their quality, value, popularity and cost. As long as customers are happy with the price, they will be highly likely to come again.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of theoretical backup and research results, a clear picture about second-hand market and the development of it in China has been made. It seems that resale business is more than just a business mode, it influences people's lifestyle; and resale business in China is anticipated to gain more momentum and develop mature.

First of all, consumer behaviour affects second-hand market in a substantial way, as it plays a major role in consumers' decision-making process and determines what to purchase and how to purchase. Secondly, sustainable consumption also has a big impact on second-hand market, as it encourages people to recycle articles so as to extend their life cycle and reduce waste and pollution. Last but not least, ethical consumption is an indispensable factor influencing second-hand market as well, as it advocates human beings to consume ethically each day, in order to resolve global problems, e.g. global warming and environmental deterioration.

In terms of the development of second-hand market in China, there is still a long way to go, but the prospect is promising. To be more exact, sustainable consumption and ethical consumption have not been part of people's daily life, resulting in people's reluctance to recycle things or purchase used articles. Further, due to Chinese consumer behaviour such as being price - and quality - sensitive, Chinese consumers still have concerns about purchasing something previously owned. Nonetheless, the research has proved that post-80s and post-90s are more open-minded and willing to buy second-hand commodities, especially via the Internet, meaning these people, the backbones of Chinese consumption in the near future, will surely fuel the development of resale business, leading to larger demand for both online shops and physical shops.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Questionnaire about Chinese consumers' attitudes towards second-hand market

## Purchase of second-hand products

1. Have you ever bought any second-hand products?

1. Yes
2. No

## Consumption situation:

2. Where do you buy second-hand products (multiple choices)?

1. Outdoor flea markets
2. Indoor second-hand stores
3. Ganji.com
4. 58.com
5. Baixing.com
6. Taobao.com
7. Others websites: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How often do you buy second-hand products?

1. Once or twice a year
2. Once a month
3. Once a week
4. Several times a week

4. Which kind(s) of second-hand products do you buy (multiple choices)?

1. Books
2. Electronic appliances
3. Clothes
4. Bags

5. Furniture
6. Cars
7. Bikes
8. Luxury products
9. Others \_\_\_\_\_

5. Which factor(s) motivate you to purchase second-hand products (multiple choices)?

1. Attractive prices
2. Convenience
3. Economical factors
4. Recycle
5. Others \_\_\_\_\_

Attitude statements:

Statements	Totally disagree			Totally agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
Second-hand products are hygienic.					
Second-hand products are reliable.					
Second-hand products are practical.					
Second-hand products are environmentally friendly.					
Second-hand markets are popular in China.					

Consumer behaviour:

11. How do you deal with abandoned articles or idle items in your household (multiple choices)?

1. Throwing them away
2. Donating them to charities
3. Giving them to others
4. Selling them online
5. Selling them in physical flea markets
6. Selling them in second-hand stores
7. Storing them at home
8. Transforming them into new use
9. Others \_\_\_\_\_

12. How do you perceive the behaviour of purchasing second-hand goods (multiple choices)?

1. Embarrassing
2. Face-losing
3. Economical
4. Sustainable
5. Others \_\_\_\_\_

13. Which factors do you think are important for second-hand stores or flea markets (multiple choices)?

1. Hygiene
2. Product variety
3. Reliable Quality
4. Attractive Price
5. Good service
6. Wide publicity
7. Others \_\_\_\_\_

14. Will you consider or continue to purchase second-hand products?

1. Yes

2. No

Background information:

15. Your age:\_\_\_\_\_

16. You are:

1. Male
2. Female

17. Your monthly income (yuan):

1. <2000
2. 2000~5000
3. 50001~10000
4. >10000

## Appendix 2 二手市场调查问卷

### 购买情况

1. 您是否购买过二手商品

- 1. 是
- 2. 否

### 消费情况

2. 您在哪购买二手产品（可多选）？

- 1. 跳蚤市场
- 2. 二手店铺
- 3. 赶集网
- 4. 58 同城
- 5. 百姓网
- 6. 淘宝网
- 7. 其他网站

3. 您多久购买一次二手产品？

- 1. 一年一两次
- 2. 一月一两次
- 3. 一周一次
- 4. 一周好几次

4. 您通常购买哪种二手产品（可多选）？

- 1. 书籍



- 2. 电子产品
- 3. 服饰
- 4. 箱包
- 5. 家具
- 6. 汽车
- 7. 自行车
- 8. 奢侈品
- 9. 其他

5. 哪个（些）因素促使您购买二手产品（可多选）？

- 1. 吸引人的价格
- 2. 便利性
- 3. 回收旧物，减少浪费
- 4. 仅用于短期使用
- 5. 其他

消费态度

态度陈述	完全同意			完全不同意	
	1	2	3	4	5
二手产品很可靠					
二手产品很卫生					
二手产品很环保					
二手产品很实用					
二手市场在中国很受欢迎					

## 消费行为

11. 您如何处理家中的闲置物品（可多选）？

- 1. 扔掉
- 2. 捐给慈善机构
- 3. 送给他人
- 4. 在网上卖掉
- 5. 在跳蚤市场卖掉
- 6. 在二手店铺卖掉
- 7. 放置家中
- 8. 旧物改造
- 9. 其他

12. 您如何看待购买二手产品这一行为（可多选）？

- 1. 尴尬
- 2. 没面子
- 3. 省钱
- 4. 可持续消费
- 5. 其他

13. 您认为对二手店或跳蚤市场来说最重要的是因素什么（可多选）？

- 1. 干净卫生
- 2. 产品多样
- 3. 质量可靠
- 4. 价格实惠

- 5. 服务良好
- 6. 广泛宣传
- 7. 其他

14. 您会考虑或继续购买二手产品吗?

- 1. 会
- 2. 不会 (原因)

背景信息

15. 您是:

- 1. 女士
- 2. 先生

16. 您的年龄:

17. 您的月收入(元):

- 1. <2000
- 2. 2000~5000
- 3. 50001~10000
- 4. >10000