Behind the Stars: Consumer Personality and Review Composition for New and Refurbished Products

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Abstract: The rapid growth of e-commerce and technological advancements has amplified the production of electronic waste (E-waste). Refurbished products offer a sustainable alternative by extending product lifecycles, yet consumer behavior toward these products remains underexplored in many regions, including India. This study investigates key product attributes and psychological characteristics of consumers, analyzing 2,189 refurbished and 4,967 new product reviews using text mining and linguistic analysis tools. The findings highlight significant differences in consumer preferences, with refurbished product consumers prioritizing Battery health, Service-related aspects, packaging, and hygiene, while new product buyers emphasize features and aesthetic factors. Psychological differences are evident as refurbished product consumers exhibit a more positive tone and goal-driven reasoning while the new product consumers show more structured analytical evaluation. Using Constructive Decision-Making Theory (CDMT), the study explains how consumers of refurbished products construct satisfaction by reinforcing their choices post-purchase. The findings offer insights for refurbishers, policymakers, and marketers to foster trust and adoption of refurbished products through marketing strategy, standardized practices, and certifications while aligning with consumers' decision-making process.

Introduction

E-waste is now an environmental issue. Globally, several countries have started paying serious attention to addressing it (Aboelmaged, 2021; Borthakur, 2020). Circular business models are gaining popularity as a solution to the growing e-waste problem. Unlike the take-make-waste model, the Circular Economy (CE) model is regenerative (Araujo-Morera et al., 2021). According to CE, all the value chain activities involved in a business should be oriented towards reducing, reusing, and recycling (3Rs) resources. Refurbishing is one such circular business model that aims to increase the longevity of the product and material(Geissdoerfer et al., 2020). Through the process of refurbishing, used products are revitalized to a certain standard, which may or may not be at par with the new product quality (Thierry et al., 1995) From the consumer's perspective while designing a refurbished product, understanding the needs, exploring market trends, comprehending competitors' actions, and designing actionable based on feedback from all stakeholders is crucial for gaining an advantage(Teece, 2007). Many scholars have studied the quality and

characteristics that shape consumer expectations of new products (Anderson et al., 1994; Oliver, 1980) but, there are very few studies that enhance the understanding of these factors for refurbished products. Although some studies have explored consumer perceptions of refurbished products in developed countries (Alyahya et al., 2023; Wallner et al., 2024) there is a notable lack of research on this topic within the Indian context. Further, while extensive literature is available on the psychological characteristics that influence consumers while purchasing a new product, there is a noticeable gap in identifying the psychological characteristics of consumers that influence purchase decisions of refurbished products. Even more scant is the literature that compares consumer behavior between refurbished and new products. This research aims to address this gap by answering the following questions

RQ1: What are the factors that drive purchasing decisions for refurbished products amongst Indian consumers? How do these factors compare to those of new products?

RQ2: How do Indian consumers of refurbished and new products construct their satisfaction,

and what psychological factors influence this process?

This study makes three contributions to refurbished product literature. First, it is the first study to apply the Constructive Decision Making Theory (CDMT) to explain the satisfaction of refurbished product consumers. Second, It leverages Linguistic Inquiry and word count (LIWC) to obtain insights into the cognitive and emotional responses of refurbished and new product consumers.
Thirdly, it identifies key product attributes valued by Indian consumers, bridging the gap in the literature that largely focuses on developed markets.

Literature Review
The extant literature on refurbished products identifies several factors that influence the purchase of refurbished products. These factors are primarily grouped into product attributes, consumer characteristics, and seller engagement. Table 1 summarizes the key factors identified from the literature.
Refurbished products are often rejected as a consequence of a negative trade-off between perceived risks and benefits(Van Weelden et al., 2016). One of the prime reasons why people don't choose to buy refurbished products is the because of hygiene and contamination risk (Abbey et al., 2015; Singhal et al., 2019; Wallner et al., 2022b, 2022a). However, when deciding to purchase refurbished products, consumers categorize the product's features into primary, secondary, and innovative functions, which subsequently guide their decision-making process.
The willingness to pay (WTP) is lower for refurbished products (Harms & Linton, 2016) owing to the perception of lower quality and higher risk (Esmaeilian et al., 2021; Van Weelden et al., 2016). The purchase intention toward refurbished products is also dependent on factors related to the consumer. For instance, environmentally conscious consumers are more likely to purchase refurbished products (Mugge et al., 2017; Wallner et al., 2022a, 2024). Further, value-conscious consumers would be incentivized to buy refurbished products(Wallner et al., 2024). Seller engagement also plays a crucial role when consumers buy refurbished products. As per prior research, in the risk-return tradeoff, low price, strong seller reputation, and warranties can help lower the perceived risk of purchasing a refurbished product (Agostini et al., 2021; Sharifi & Shokouhyar, 2021; Van Weelden et al., 2016; Wallner et al., 2024)

Even though these factors have given us considerable insights, most studies have focused on purchase intention as the dependent variable. Often purchase intentions don't get converted into actions leading to an intention-action gap (Khor & Hazen, 2017; Wallner et al., 2022) thereby resulting in limitations. To comprehend the actual consumer behavior, it is critical to understand the post-purchase stage(Nasiri & Shokouhyar, 2021).Hence this paper utilizes online customer reviews (OCR) to understand consumer behavior.
According to several studies on consumer behavior, post-purchase satisfaction is a psychological process where consumers validate their purchase decisions *(Festinger & Urry, 1957; Oliver, 1980)*. In addition to sharing their experiences, consumers write reviews to justify their decisions, legitimize tradeoffs, and construct their satisfaction on factors other than physical product features (Dholakia et al., 2004; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Li et al., 2023).
This is consistent with the Constructive Decision-Making Theory (CDMT), which posits that consumers build their judgments using context, available knowledge, and cognitive effort rather than having a predetermined set of preferences(Bettman et al., 1998).
CDMT states that consumer choices are context-dependent and influenced by several factors, such as social influence, available alternatives, marketing messages, etc. Secondly, consumers select options that align with their objectives. These objectives could be either minimizing effort, maximizing the accuracy of the result, reducing the negative impact of the decision, or ensuring the ease of justifying their decision. Thirdly, consumers will shift between rational (analytical) and intuitive (heuristic) approaches to decision-making depending on the complexity of the task. Because the consumption choices are constructed, CDMT provides a lens to explain why consumer reviews reflect the process of validating purchase decisions other than product performance.
To quantitatively assess how these psychological processes manifest in customer reviews of new and refurbished products, this study employs Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) analysis. LIWC is a robust text

| Key Research Variables	Theme/Parameter	Reference
Price	Product Attributes	(Ghosh et al., 2023; Sharifi & Shokouhyar, 2021)
Product features (Primary, Secondary and Innovative features)	Product Attributes	(Ghosh et al., 2023; Nasiri & Shokouhyar, 2021; Seifian et al., 2023; Sharifi & Shokouhyar, 2021; Wallner et al., 2024)
Consumer motivation (Environmental motivation and financial motivation)	Consumer attributes	(Nasiri & Shokouhyar, 2021; Seifian et al., 2023; Wallner et al., 2024)
Consumer characteristics (Value consciousness, Disgust sensitivity, Environmental concern)	Consumer attributes	(Wallner et al., 2022b, 2024)
Seller Related (Warranty, Reputation, Packaging)	Seller's Engagement	(Seifian et al., 2023; Wallner et al., 2024)

Table 1. Factors from Literature Review

analysis tool to analyze the emotional, cognitive, and structural aspects of written language (Boyd et al., 2022). LIWC has been found effective in extracting psychometric traits from text(Pal et al., 2023), making it a suitable tool for evaluating consumer reviews.

Method

The data for this study was gathered from the Amazon India website (www.amazon.in). Reviews of both new as well as refurbished versions of the same headphones (e.g. JBLC100 SI, JBL C50Hi, Sony WI-C100 etc.) were scraped for text analysis using rvest package in R. This approach allows direct comparison between the two product categories. For the study, headphones were selected as they make up a substantial portion of small waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). These often remain unused, and hence present an opportunity for reuse and integration into the circular economy (Shittu et al., 2022).

Reviews from India, written in the English language were selected for analysis. The final dataset consists of 2,189 reviews of refurbished products and 4,967 reviews of new products spanning between March 2015 to May 2024.
The selected review text underwent a series of preprocessing steps to ensure consistency and accuracy. Different packages from the R library were used for the process. Thereafter a lexicon was developed to code the reviews. This step followed an iterative method using a hybrid of deductive and inductive approaches to create a robust dictionary (Fereday et al., 2006; Proudfoot, 2023) as shown in Figure 1
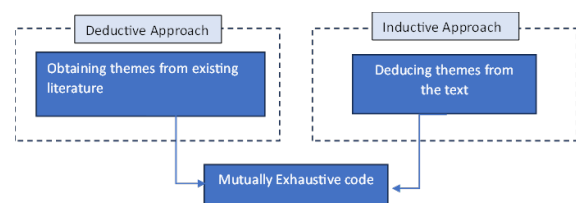
Figure 1. Lexicon Development

The lexicon outlined above was applied to the reviews to identify 13 key attributes that the consumers of refurbished products prioritize (the lexicon is available on request). A Chi-square test, was conducted to compare the distribution of these 13 attributes in the reviews of Refurbished and new products to address RQ1.

To explore the psychological dimensions of post purchase satisfaction (RQ2), the study employed the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22) tool. Eight variables were selected, which represent emotional and cognitive dimensions that are commonly associated with consumer behavior.
The sequence of steps has been illustrated in Figure 2
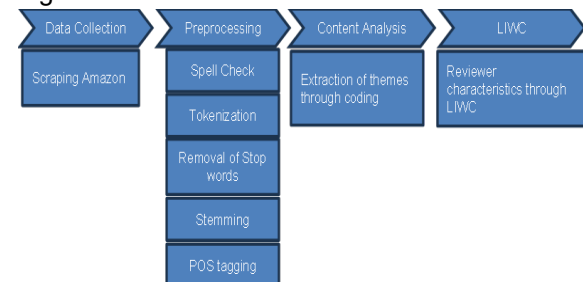
Figure 2. Process

Results

Key Attributes of Refurbished Products

Table 2 below presents the frequency of reviews mentioning each attribute for both refurbished and new products derived from the coding process mentioned above.

Theme	Variable	No of reviews	
		Refurbished	New
Product Related	P1-Sound Quality	1006	3210
	P2-Usage related	253	1144
	P3-Accessories	349	1478
	P4-Design Features	146	1020
	P5-Battery	331	619
	P6-Price	152	788
Seller Related	S1-Product_Service_related	578	1337
	S2- Warranty_related	78	266
	S3- Packaging	146	138
	S4- Unhygenic	16	8
Customer Related	C1-Brand consciousness	524	1746
	C2-Value /Price Consciousness	401	1221
	C3-Usecase	214	1054

Table 2. Key factors Identified from reviews of Refurbished Products

Comparison between Refurbished and New product Reviews

The Chi-square test yielded significant results ($\chi2$ =449, p=0.000). The Mosaic plot of residuals Figure 3 clearly distinguish the distribution of these factors in the reviews of both product categories. Standardized residuals > |2| indicate attributes that are significantly overrepresented or underrepresented in each category.

Attributes Over Represented in Refurbished product Reviews

Battery health, Service-related aspects, packaging and hygiene overrepresented in reviews of refurbished products. These results are consistent with the body of research that indicates refurbished product consumers place a high value on longevity, functionality, post-purchase service, and hygiene ((Ghosh et al., 2023; Seifian et al., 2023; Wallner et al., 2022b, 2024).

### Attributes over Represented in new product Reviews

Consumers purchasing new products tended to discuss design features, usage related aspects, use cases and price more. Even though the prevalent marketing message is that the refurbished products are sold at lower prices (Alyahya et al., 2023; Mugge et al., 2017), price was underrepresented in refurbished product reviews. The negative residual for price in refurbished product reviews (-4.37) suggests that while price is discussed, as against for a new product consumer, it is not the primary factor driving satisfaction or dissatisfaction in refurbished purchases.

Instead, refurbished consumers focus more on perceived value and quality rather than absolute cost.

Attributes Equally Represented in Both New and Refurbished Reviews (Fundamental Consumer Requirements)

Despite the observed differences, four attributes—sound quality, warranty, brand consciousness, and value consciousness—showed no significant difference between new and refurbished product reviews.

This suggests that these are fundamental expectations for consumers, irrespective of whether they buy a new or refurbished product. For all consumers, Sound quality is a core requirement and warranty serves as a risk-reduction mechanism that consumers demand in both categories. These findings suggest that product sellers must meet these fundamental expectations.
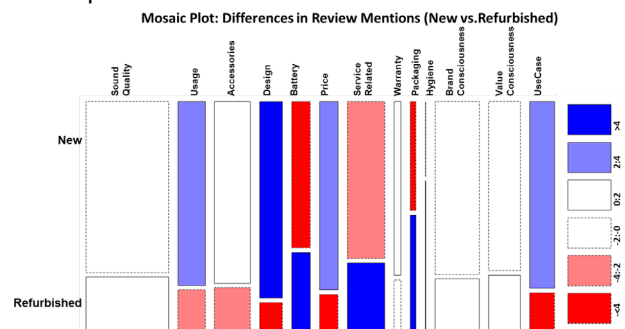
Figure 3. Mosaic Plot of Residuals

Comparison of Psychological differences between Refurbished and New product consumers.

Table 3 below shows the mean scores of different psychological markers from LIWC across product categories and the

corresponding significance values of the t-test for comparison of these scores. These scores against each variable represent the percentage of words in a text that corresponds to the variable.

Variable	Refurbished	New	p value
Analytic	42.2	45.0	0.002
Clout	13.0	14.4	0.048
Authentic	51.7	51.1	0.606
Tone	60.9	55.8	0.000
Social	4.0	4.1	0.306
Lifestyle	7.0	5.5	0.000
Drives	3.7	3.0	0.000
Cognition	11.2	12.0	0.001

Table 3. t- test results to compare mean scores from LIWC.

The t-tests clearly show that customers of new and refurbished products construct their satisfaction in very different ways.
Customers of refurbished products use adaptive reasoning to support their choices, whereas consumers of new products rely on structured evaluations.

Cognitive Processing
New product consumers have higher Analytic and Cognition scores, suggesting a more methodical, logical, and data-driven assessment procedure. This is in line with CDMT's expectation-driven framework. New product consumers evaluate products against pre-determined benchmarks(Bettman et al., 1998). New product consumers also have higher Clout score, indicating greater confidence and assertiveness in their decision-making.

Consumers of refurbished products on the other hand exhibit lower Analytic and Cognition scores, indicating more flexible and adaptive reasoning. Their lower Clout score points to greater uncertainty in their purchase, leading them to seek reassurance through post-purchase rationalization.

Emotional Reinforcement and Justification
Consumers who purchase refurbished products have higher Tone scores, indicating they are writing more optimistic reviews. This lends credence to the notion that they construct satisfaction after purchase by reinforcing their decision emotionally, a key post-purchase strategy described in CDMT. Since refurbished products are accompanied by inherent uncertainty, consumers compensate for potential shortcomings by emphasizing positive experiences. This behavior aligns with Cognitive Dissonance theory which says consumers justify their decisions post-purchase to minimize psychological discomfort *(Festinger & Urry, 1957)*.

Lifestyle and Goal-Oriented Framing
Refurbished product reviews have higher Lifestyle and Drives scores. This suggests that the consumers integrate their purchases into broader personal goals and motivations. Customers of refurbished products present their purchase as a deliberate, goal-driven choice, whether out of resourcefulness or financial prudence. According to CDMT in such cases, consumers construct satisfaction by coordinating their decisions with their long-term goals and self-concept (Bettman et al., 1998).

Social and Authentic Expression
There is no significant difference between the Authenticity and Social scores, indicating that both consumer groups express their opinions with comparable sincerity and that social engagement and communicative intent in reviews are similar.

Implications
The findings from our study offer actionable implications for the Refurbishers and Policymakers.

Reducing Pre-purchase uncertainty to increase adoption
Given that battery health, Service-related aspects, and packaging aspects are over-represented in product reviews, businesses should implement proactive strategies to reduce consumer hesitation. Assuring quality checks, post-purchasing service guarantees and ensuring packaging like new products can reduce customer hesitation.

Reinforcing Satisfaction through emotional and Goal-based messaging
Since Refurbished product customers rely on post-purchase rationalization, businesses must reinforce positive decision-making after purchase.
Post-purchase engagement through e-mails reaffirming that the purchase decision of refurbished product as a smart choice can

enhance satisfaction construction. Featuring consumer testimonials with real buyer stories can validate purchase decisions. Helping consumers justify and rationalize their decisions will reduce the cognitive load and encourage adoption.

New product consumers respond better to feature-driven ads, while refurbished consumers need trust-building messaging upfront to encourage adoption.

Through certification programs for refurbished goods, policymakers could promote adoption and further lower consumer perceptions of risk.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the academic discourse on consumer behavior in circular economy markets by highlighting how Indian consumers evaluate and construct satisfaction for refurbished products.

The over-representation of battery health, service, and packaging-related aspects in reviews indicates, that trust and quality assurance can play a significant role in encouraging the adoption of refurbished products. The findings indicate that consumers prioritize perceived value, risk mitigation, and product dependability over price as factors influencing their decision to buy refurbished goods.

Applying CDMT provides a deeper understanding of how customers dynamically construct satisfaction. Refurbished product buyers use goal-driven reasoning (higher Lifestyle and drives score) and post-purchase justification (higher tone), in contrast to consumers of new products who use structured evaluation (higher analytic and cognitive scores).

These differences suggest that to encourage the adoption of refurbished products, companies and policymakers should take a two-pronged approach. To reduce the perception of risk, they ought to implement tactics like quality assurance, professional packaging, and post-purchase service. To present refurbished goods to customers as clever and resourceful options, marketing narratives should provide positive reinforcement, align the message with the goals of the consumers such as making smart and resourceful purchases, and make it easier for consumers to justify the purchase.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, it is subject to limitations. Firstly, there may be platform bias because the reviews were gathered from just one e-commerce site (Amazon India). Secondly, some characteristics, like hygiene considerations, may not be adequately present in reviews. This is because these deterred the consumers from purchasing the product whereas this study only looks at the post-purchase phase. Future research could overcome this limitation by using survey or experimental techniques to record pre-purchase obstacles and contrast them with post-purchase assessments, Lastly, while the study highlights how consumers construct satisfaction, future research can incorporate how these differences influence the ratings, repurchase intentions, brand perceptions, etc. Examining these aspects could provide further insight into the role of psychological factors in encouraging the adoption of refurbished products.

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