

# Predicting Collecting Intentions

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to predict collecting behavior. In order to achieve this goal, it has been necessary to select a theoretical model with enough detail to allow us to derive specific hypotheses for empirical investigation. The notion of collecting as a field of human activity and therefore as a proper field of study is still in its infancy. The present study attempts to fill this gap within the context of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the theory of strength-related properties of attitudes (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). These two competing models, both of which are derived from psychology research, were tested and applied to behavioral intentions. An empirical study was performed on a sample of 2435 people, 501 of whom were collectors. The results of the present study show that the construct of self-identity is a crucial element in the predictive capacity of the model. Finally, the managerial implications of this study are also important since the number of collectors in Spain has been identified and we have identified the economic appeal of the collecting sector.

## Introduction

The collecting market generates economic profits of millions of euros; all types of objects can be considered collectibles (stamps, comics, painting, toys, coins, etc.). As an example: the first issue of “Action Comic” was sold in 2010 for 740,000 Euros; *L’homme qui marche I* by Giacometti was sold for 74.2 millions of euros; and 23 bottles of Vega Sicilia wine were sold for 100,000 euros. Despite this fact, companies do not pay attention to the collectibles market and studies regarding collecting behavior are infrequent. The goal of the present study is to pay closer attention to this market.

The notion of collecting as a field of human activity and therefore as a proper field of study is still young. However, previous studies on collecting have been conducted from several disciplines such as history (McLeod, 1987; Saisselin, 1985), museum and cultural heritage management (Ballart & Treserras, 2001; Colbert & al., 2003; Bonet & al., 2006), and investment in collectible assets, mainly in painting (Frey y Pommerehne, 1989; Goetzman, 1993; Agnello, 1996; Moreau, 2002; Vettese, 2002) but also in numismatics (Coca, 2001;

Prado, 2009). Several marketing studies like the ones carried out by Belk (1989), Pearce (1997) and Chen (2009) are also worth mentioning.

If the purpose of this study is to predict collecting behavior, it is necessary to select a theoretical model with enough detail to let us derive specific hypotheses for empirical research. The present study attempts to achieve this within the context of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the theory of strength-related properties of attitudes (Petty and Krosnick, 1995). These two competing models, both of which are derived from psychology research, were tested and applied to behavioral intentions.

The first model is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to this model, behavioral intentions are determined by three constructs: people's evaluations of, or attitudes towards a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This model has been applied in numerous empirical studies in the areas of leisure, boating, sports, and cultural activities (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Rossi & Amstrong, 1999). It has been considered of interest to include a revised model; a recent study by Smith et al. (2008) goes into greater depth and expands this model by integrating the role of subjective norms (descriptive norms and injunctive norms), past behavior and self-identity as important antecedents of the decision-making process.

The second model is the Theory of Strength-related Properties of Attitudes (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). In this model attitude is a relevant determinant of behavioral intention. Researchers agree on the importance of the relationships between attitude-perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, norms and self-identity are determinants of attitude (Briñol et al., 2007; Petty & Krosnick, 1995). Drawing on the revision of studies in the areas of psychology and marketing, attitudes towards behavior were seen to be determined by subjective norms and self-identity (Allport, 1935; Sherif, 1936; Brhem, 1966; Maslow, 1962; Murray, 1955; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brewer, 1991; Festinger, 1957; Gross et al., 1995; Pomerantz et al., 1995; Baumeister, 1998; Rosenberg, 1965; Browns, 2000; Correll et al., 2004; Maio & Olson, 2000; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

According to these ideas, this study is organized in the following manner. After a thorough review of the literature, we present a theoretical framework and hypothesis. We then detail the specific characteristics of this empirical study. Lastly, we discuss the results and summarize the main conclusions and consequences, which lead into future areas of research.

## **2. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis**

The effort to establish a global model for the analysis of collecting behavior has led to two alternative models: the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and its recent developments (Ajzen, 1991; Smith et al., 2008) and the theory of strength-related properties of attitudes (TSPA, Petty and Krosnick, 1995). Both models identify the same constructs as antecedents of behavioral intention but differ in the nature of their relationships with behavioral intention. In the TPB model all constructs are directly related to behavioral intention, while in the TSPA model social norms and self-identity are indirectly related to intention through attitude. Because of this, our alternative hypotheses consider the influence of these relationships. Figures 1 and 2 show the structure of both models, following which we describe each construct and its corresponding hypothesis.

Figure 1. Model Based on TPB and Recent Developments.

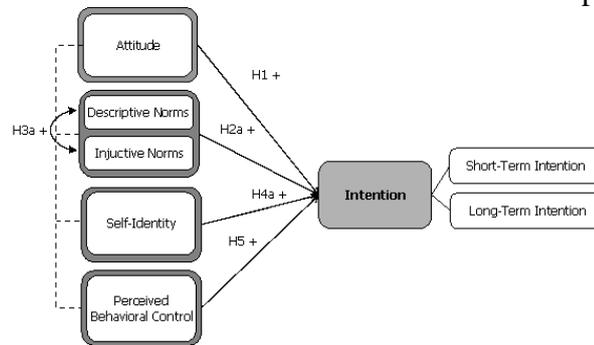
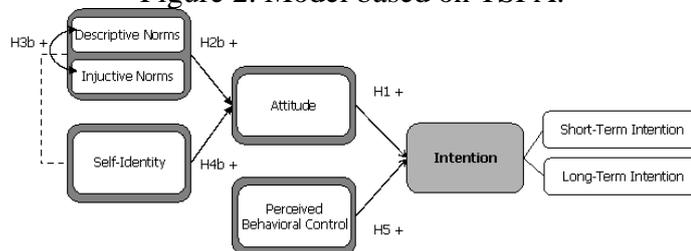


Figure 2. Model based on TSPA.



The first variable of collecting intention is attitude, which is a positive or negative predisposition towards a type of behavior. A review of the literature reveals that collector's attitudes favoring purchase intent are auto-realization, as well as the search for attitudes that reinforce personality, self-image, and security (Belk, 1989; Muensterberger, 1994; Pearce, 1994). Attitudes project their values upon the collectible objects. Collectors do not simply acquire goods; the search and collection maintenance process is intense and makes these goods highly valued by collectors. Overall, attitudes must be analyzed as an antecedent of intention and will exert a direct and positive influence towards purchase intentions. Therefore:

*Hypothesis 1. The more favorable the attitude towards collecting, the greater the purchase intention for collectibles.*

The second variable is constituted by subjective norms. These are the individual perceptions of social influence towards a specific behavior. They are a function of the perceived expectations of role-figures, family, friends, or companions, who may approve or disapprove of the behavior and the motivation to perform it (Ajzen, 1991). In our research, we consider that subjective norms (injunctive or descriptive) can function differently according to the model that is being applied. In TPB (Ajzen, 1991) they must be considered as antecedents of intention, while in TSPA (Petty & Krosnick, 1995) they are antecedents of attitude, exerting an indirect influence on intention.

The literature on collecting reveals that although it is possible to practice collecting in groups, such as family or collector's associations, the collection building process is usually an individual activity. It is simultaneously an individual and a social behavior due to its competitive characteristics. A collector values his collection by comparing it to other collections and the opinions of other collectors (Belk, 1989; Pearce, 1994). Social recognition is also driven by the existence of collector's associations and countless venues devoted to

collecting, as well as collector's shows and competitions (Belk and Wallendorf; 1991; Formanek; 1991; McIntosh & Schmeidel, 1991; Muensterberger; 1994; Sherry, 1991). Finally, although it is a socially recognized activity, Long & Schiffman (1991) add that there is a certain fear that non-collectors might consider this activity as infantile or a loss of time and/or money.

Furthermore, in order to overcome the observations on the scarce predictive value of social norms, we will study them in depth and classify them according to their role (Cialdini et al., 1991; Terry & Hogg, 1996). We propose to individually study the two types of subjective norms: injunctive norms (“should be”) and descriptive norms (“is”). We therefore establish the following alternative hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 2A. The larger the intensity of descriptive norms, the greater the purchase intention for collectibles.*

*Hypothesis 2B. The larger the intensity of descriptive norms, the greater the purchase attitude towards collectibles.*

*Hypothesis 3A. The larger the intensity of injunctive norms, the greater the purchase intention for collectibles.*

*Hypothesis 3B. The larger the intensity of injunctive norms, the greater the purchase attitude towards collectibles.*

The third variable identified by the model is perceived behavioral control, the resources and individual skills that play a decisive role in collectible acquisition. It has been found that in order to collect certain goods it is necessary to have a specific income or study level, or even to just have enough free time available, since it is considered a leisure activity. Following through with this argument, we include it in the model in order to increase its predictive capacity:

*Hypothesis 4. The greater the perceived behavioral control towards collecting, the larger the purchase intention for collectibles.*

The fourth and last variable is self-identity, since purchase can function as a way to establish and reinforce the sense of self-identity and to express differences between social groups (Bourdieu y Darbel, 1990). In this context a current has risen that interprets collecting as a symbolic purchase because of the link between the objects and the self-esteem and auto-realization of the collector (Belk, 1989; Dittmar, 1992; Elliot and Desirve, 1994; Luna, 1995). This variable has received the most attention in the literature on collecting. It is an activity in which the individual sees himself reflected, projecting a larger meaning upon the acquired goods, turning them even into symbols. The sense of “oneself,” reinforcement of self-esteem, and differentiation are basic motivations for collecting (Belk, 1989; Chen, 2008; Formanek, 1991; McIntosh and Schmeidel, 2004; Muensterberger, 1994; Pearce, 1994; Solomon, 1997).

According to the proposed models, self-identity is seen either as an antecedent of intention (TPB) or as an antecedent of attitude, inasmuch as a positive predisposition originates from “what we hope to be” (TSPA). In view of this discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 5A. Self-identity influences positively on purchase intention for collectibles.*

*Hypothesis 5B. Self-identity influences positively on purchase attitude for collectibles.*

### 3. Research Methodology

The statistical universe is made up of collectors that live in Spain. Collector status is a desired objective in this study, without refusing to record those interviewees that are not collectors but have a profile to be compared and contribute a percentage of collectors in the country. A summary of the technical information for this study can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Technical Information of the Empirical Study

<b>Universe</b>	Spanish population over 18 years old
<b>Sample unit</b>	Spanish population over 18 years old
<b>Geographic area</b>	National (Spain)
<b>Data collection method</b>	Telephone interview
<b>Sampling error</b>	Total sample: 1.99%; Collector sample: 4.38%
<b>Confidence level</b>	95%; $Z = 2$ ; $P = Q = 0.50$
<b>Sampling method</b>	Probability
<b>Number of interviews</b>	2,435 of 2,500 interviews
<b>Information collection period</b>	From November 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009

To measure the underlying variables we used 5-point Likert scales and adopted measurement scales from other empirical investigations founded on TPB or TSPA and similar behavioral areas such as leisure, sport, and cultural consumption (Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; Cuadrado & Berenguer, 2002; Daigle et al., 2002; Dosil, 2004; Hubres et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2008). Having analyzed the data and confirmed its adequacy, we proceeded to evaluate the reliability and validity of the scales. This is especially relevant since it is a newly developed study based on adaptations.

Table 2. Measurement of the Variables in the Analysis.

Variable	Item	Content Description	Mean	Std.Dv.
Short-Term Intention	INT1	I expect to buy an item for my collection in the next 6 months	4.02	1.22
	INT2	It is probable that I buy an item for my collection in the next 6 months	3.90	1.29
Long-Term	INT3	I expect to continue collecting in the future	4.02	1.33
Attitude	A2	Collecting helps me fight boredom and forget my daily routine	4.35	.67
	A4	Collecting entertains me, I have fun and take pleasure in it	4.53	.67
	A5	Collecting enriches me culturally	4.32	.78
	A6	I like the idea of collecting something	4.50	.60
Descriptive Norms	NSD1	People that are important to me like the fact that I collect	3.86	1.23
	NSD2	People that are important for me encourage me to collect	3.17	1.35
Injunctive Norms	NSI1	My family and friends consider that I should collect something	1.92	.92
	NSI2	I consider that everybody should collect something	2.15	.92
	NSI3	Collectors should belong to collector's associations	1.81	.92
Self-Identity	ID1	I consider myself as a typical collector	3.54	1.21
	ID2	I identify myself with the objects I collect	3.83	1.29
	ID3	Collecting makes me different	3.64	1.06
Perceived Behavioral Control	CCP1	It is easy for me to find objects for my collection	4.20	.97
	CCP2	I am able to find objects for my collection	4.50	.75
	CCP3	I have free time for collecting	4.45	.73
	CCP4	I have economic resources to buy collectible goods	4.33	.74

### 4. Results

The analysis of the results is performed in two steps. Firstly, we evaluate the psychometric properties (reliability, convergent and discriminant validity) of the measurement scales (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Churchill, 1979). Following that we test the hypothesis concerning the two models being considered.

#### 4.1. Scale Reliability and Validity

We validated the scales following the same process: we developed an exploratory factor analysis, we estimated a confirmatory factor analysis and removed non-significant items. Once we verified the adequate construction of the structural model for effective testing we identified and introduced two dimensions of the intention variable: short term intention (6 months) and long term intention (future). In this way, the goodness of fit indicators reached the recommended values ( $\chi^2$ : 218.062, g.l.: 126 ( $p=.000$ ); NFI: .947; NNFI: .971; CFI: .978; IFI: .978; GFI: .956; AGFI: .937, RMSE: .036).

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Theoretical Constructs.

Variable	Item	Standardized Loading	Robust t Value	Average Loading	Alpha Cronbach	CR	AVE
Short-Term Intention	INT1	.944**	16.95	.897	.895	.901	.814
	INT2	.859**	15.91				
Long-Term Intention	INT3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Attitude	A2	.692**	16.57	.750	.835	.839	.569
	A4	.766**	18.99				
	A5	.669**	15.90				
	A6	.873**	22.71				
Descriptive Norms	NSD1	.801**	17.40	.847	.840	.839	.720
	NSD2	.894**	19.30				
Injunctive Norms	NSI1	.746**	15.61	.670	.712	.708	.449
	NSI2	.647**	13.53				
	NSI3	.609**	12.71				
Self-Identity	ID1	.749**	18.01	.779	.822	.823	.608
	ID2	.755**	18.19				
	ID3	.833**	20.55				
Perceived Behavioral Control	CCP1	.842**	22.23	.800	.876	.878	.644
	CCP2	.848**	17.33				
	CCP3	.819**	18.74				
	CCP4	.692**	16.87				
$\chi^2$ : 187.427, g.l.: 120 ( $p=.000$ ), NFI: .947, NNFI: .971, CFI: .978, IFI: .978, GFI: .956; AGFI: .937, RMSE: .036 ** $p < .01$ ; * $p < .05$							

Following this, we evaluated discriminant validity among constructs. The confidence interval test confirmed that none of the correlations contained a one; results from average variance extracted (AVE) showed that squared covariances were less than the variance extracted. The application of a restricted model produced a significantly worse fit, confirming the discriminant validity of our model.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Behavioral Control	<b>.64</b>	.093	.15	-.05	-.06	.04	-.06
2. Attitude	(-.01;.19)	<b>.57</b>	.27	.30	.43	.18	.15
3. Descriptive Norms	(.04;.25)	(.17;.37)	<b>.72</b>	.50	.32	.23	.19
4. Injunctive Norms	(-.16;.06)	(.21;.39)	(.40;.60)	<b>.45</b>	.27	.24	.16
5. Self-Identity	(-.16;.04)	(.34;.52)	(.21;.43)	(.16;.38)	<b>.61</b>	.33	.34
6. Short-Term Intention	(-.02;.11)	(.08;.28)	(.13;.33)	(.16;.31)	(.19;.46)	<b>.81</b>	.26
7. Long-Term Intention	(-.15;.03)	(.05;.24)	(.15;.24)	(.07;.25)	(.24;.43)	(.13;.38)	<b>1</b>

Below the diagonal: confidence interval for factor correlation. Diagonal: squared variance. On top of the diagonal: Estimated correlation between factors

## 4.2. Hypotheses Testing

Before presenting our results, it is necessary to identify which of our two models is more appropriate. In order to do this we will compare the structural models with the CAIC goodness of fit measure, the lowest score will indicate the best model (Bozdogan, 1987). In our case the CAIC goodness of fit indicator shows that the TSPA model has the lowest score (-735.348). It is therefore the model that best fits the behavior observed in our study; the TPB model has a higher (-718.441) score.

By choosing the TSPA model as the one that best describes collecting behavior, we reject the hypotheses that connect self-identity and subjective norms with intention. Following this we show the links we have identified and evaluate our hypotheses.

Table 5. Estimated Structural Equations for TSPA.

Hypotheses	Structural Relationships in TSPA	Standardized Coefficients	T-value
	<b>Short-Term Intention</b>		
H1	Attitudes → Short-Term Intention	.170*	2.87
H2B	Descriptive Norms → Attitudes	.070	1.15
H3B	Injunctive Norms → Attitudes	.167*	2.57
H5B	Self-Identity → Attitudes	.381**	6.80
H4	Behavioral Control → Short-Term Intention	.120	.26
	<b>Long Term Intention</b>		
H1	Attitudes → Long-Term Intention	.178**	3.71
H4	Perceived Behavioral Control → Long-Term Intention	-.073	-1.56
**p<.01; *p<.05; n = 501			
R <sup>2</sup> (Attitudes) = .241; R <sup>2</sup> (Short-Term Intention) = .029; R <sup>2</sup> (Long-Term Intention) = .037; X <sup>2</sup> (g.l.= 143) = 313.53 (p=.00); NFI=.923; NNFI=.948; CFI=.957; IFI=.957; GFI=.936; AGFI=.915; RMSE=.049			

From these results we observe that purchase intention is determined by two factors. Firstly, the link between self-identity and attitude is the strongest relationship in the model, verifying that the image an individual has of himself establishes a positive predisposition towards collecting. Secondly, we confirm the relationship between injunctive norms and attitude, proving that attitude is also influenced by the image society expects from an individual.

Once we have established the elements that affect attitude, we identify a relationship between attitude and behavioral intention, both in the short and long terms. Although we consider this to be a reasonable relationship, it is not statistically proven so we must reject it. In other words, the relationship between attitude and intention is too weak; a consequence of the unstable nature of collecting that has high drop-out rates.

Finally, descriptive norms and behavioral control do not influence collecting behaviors. Therefore we accept that self-identity (Hypothesis 5B) and injunctive norms (Hypothesis 3B) are positive influences on purchase intent. We also prove that injunctive and

descriptive norms are independent constructs. We reject the influence of descriptive norms on attitude (Hypothesis 2B) and of behavioral control on purchase intent (Hypothesis 4). Although we recognize the relevance of attitudes on behavioral intention, we can not confirm their influence (Hypothesis 1), which makes it necessary to study the strength of our measured attitudes in more detail.

## **5. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research**

In this study we have confirmed the socioeconomic relevance of collecting and discovered that approximately 20% of Spanish society engages in collecting activities. Considering that our principal objective was to establish the determining factors of collecting behavior, the main conclusion has been the selection of a theoretical behavior model for empirical testing. We worked with the two most relevant psychosocial models: TPB and its current developments (Ajzen, 1991, Smith et al, 2008), and TSPA (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). We proved that the model that best suits our data is the TSPA model, which emphasizes the role of attitudes. Furthermore, we inspected the adjustments in the TPB and established that it is crucial to introduce the self-identity construct; and that injunctive and descriptive norms are independent constructs, although a descriptive norm variable does not increase the predictive capacity of the model.

With respect to the determining factors of behavioral intention we conclude that attitudes towards collecting are important but weak. This is a consequence of the characteristics of this leisure activity, namely instability and high drop-out rates. Additionally, attitudes towards collecting are influenced by self-identity and injunctive norms. The most studied variable in previous scholarship –self-identity– is also the strongest construct in our model. While collecting, the individual sees himself reflected in his collectible objects, this adds value to the acquired objects and even turns them into symbols (Muentherberger, 1994; Pearce, 1995).

Injunctive norms have been revealed as fundamental influences on attitude. The concept of what “should be” modifies purchase attitudes, inasmuch as purchasing is a social activity. The results of descriptive norms and behavioral control are not significant, a consequence of the fact that the collected object may depend on an individual's resources, skills, or self-esteem.

This study also allows us to extract a number of lessons in the areas of business management, sales success, and client retention for the collectibles industry. Having established the percentage of existing collectors and the fact that self-identity is a crucial variable in purchase attitude, businesses should market goods targeting this group that will increase their returns. They should offer goods that are more scarce and special (limited or collector's editions), encourage the staging of events exclusively for members of collecting clubs or promote collector differentiation with competitions and contests in which member's collections can be evaluated by juries and fellow collectors. In the same vein, our model has confirmed the weakness of collecting attitudes; companies in the industry should emphasize relational market strategies in order to gain their customer's loyalty.

As a conclusion, we comment the limitations of our research and future opportunities. Firstly, we must point out to the limitations caused by the characteristics and size of our sample, the methodology we used (telephone interview) and the behavioral prediction model. Despite the fact that we have proposed alternative theoretical models as well as their recent

developments we are aware that there exist other explicatory, moderator, and antecedent relationships. Finally, instability and a high drop-out rate make prediction more difficult and it would be convenient to add a battery of questions that confirm certain requisites in order to predict behavior.

Given that this is the first study on purchasing behaviors for collectibles in Spain, there are numerous attractive research paths to be pursued such as measuring the strength-related properties of attitudes, including the assets of collectors as a predictive variable for purchasing intention, collective studies of collectibles in order to compare collectors across cultures, studying drop-out motives in order to help industry members design consumer loyalty plans, augmenting the sample size, or considering collecting as a modality of hedonistic behavior.

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