# On the Hunt: Search Enjoyment Motivates Collecting Behavior

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## Summary

What motivates people to collect items? Previous work focused on item possession and characteristics as primary drivers of collecting behavior (Formanek 1991, Belk 1995, Gao et al. 2014). We argue that the enjoyment of the search process (**joy for the hunt**) can act as an equally powerful motivator to collect, and can induce people to indulge in more costly preferences.

After identifying and validating search enjoyment as a prominent reason for collecting within communities of real collectors on Reddit, in the lab and online, across **four preregistered studies** we demonstrate that **people enjoy the search more** (study 1) and **are willing to spend more** (study 2) for collected (vs not collected) items.

We also show that when adopting a collecting mindset (vs. not), the greater enjoyment during the search process **mediates** people's higher spending propensity for the acquisition of an additional piece (studies 3A-B). Such effect and mechanism hold for **items collected for real** (studies 1, 2, 3A) or **simply perceived as collected pieces** (study 3B).

The effect is **robust** in both **naturalistic (eBay)** and **controlled (online) settings,** using **real behavioral search tasks** (studies 1-2), **incentive-compatible designs** (study 2), **hypothetical scenarios** with **self-selected** (study 3A) and **constant items** (study 3B).

The effect is not due to differences in item price (study 2) nor in cost expectations (study 3B).

## Exploratory investigation: Joy For The Hunt

(Van Osselaer and Janiszewski 2021)

- **Targeting population of interest on Reddit** (MacInnis et al. 2021)**:** Investigation of the reasons for collecting on a **highly representative sample** (*N*=200 real collectors)

### Search enjoyment emerged as a prominent reason for collecting

- **Responses validated on less representative samples:** lab (*N*=300) and MTurk (*N*=100)
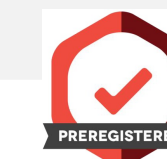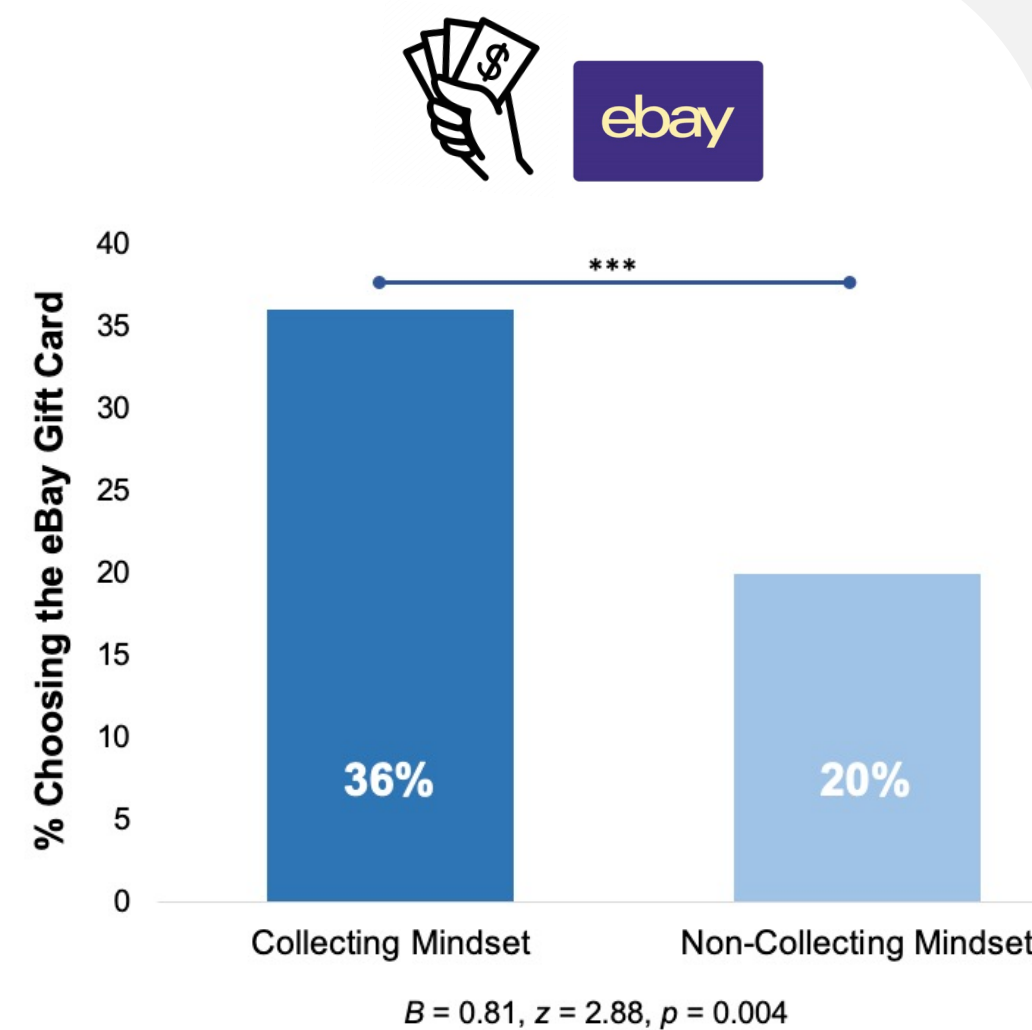
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## Study 1: Behavioral Search Task and Joy For The Hunt

- **Collecting Mindset**: Focus on an item participants collect and pay for vs have several of, but do not collect (*N*=228)

- **Behavioral Task**: Search for **two** additional items on an e-commerce platform (eBay)

- **Joy for the hunt** ($\alpha$= 0.94)

  - *The search for the [items] was thrilling/exciting* (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree)
  - *How much did you actually enjoy the search task?* (1=not at all; 7=very much)



Joy For The Hunt — Collecting Mindset: 5.30, Non-Collecting Mindset: 4.30
*t*(226) = 4.516, *p* < 0.001 ; *d* = 0.6

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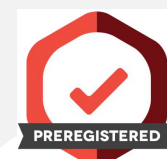
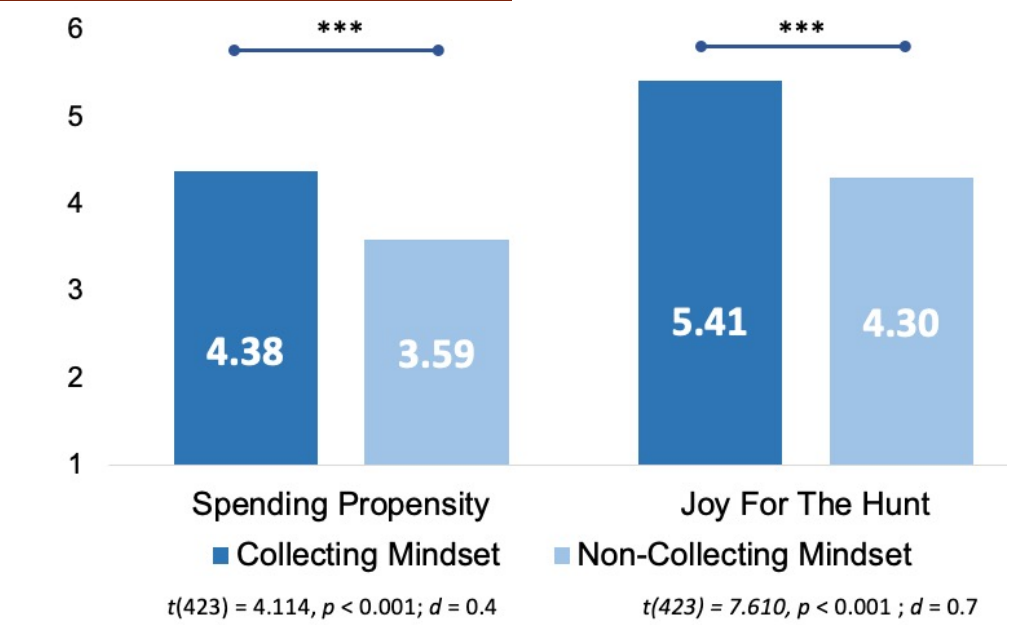## Study 2: Behavioral Search Task and Consequential Choice

- **Collecting Mindset**: Focus on an item participants collect and pay for vs have several of, but do not collect (*N*=275)

- **Behavioral Task**: Search for **one** additional item on eBay

- **Incentive-compatible DV:** choice between an eBay gift-card for the purchase of the selected item **(proxy of higher spending propensity)** vs cash bonus (-20% item price)

- Choice calibrated and pretested (*N*=131)



% Choosing the eBay Gift Card — Collecting Mindset: 36%, Non-Collecting Mindset: 20%
*B* = 0.81, *z* = 2.88, *p* = 0.004

- **Results:** When collecting people had **higher preference for the eBay gift card, thus higher propensity to spend for the acquisition of an additional item.**

- **Alternative explanation exclusion:** Effect not due to item price differences ($M_{collecting}$ = 19.32, $M_{non-collecting}$ = 19.00, *t*(273) = 0.248, *p* = 0.805)

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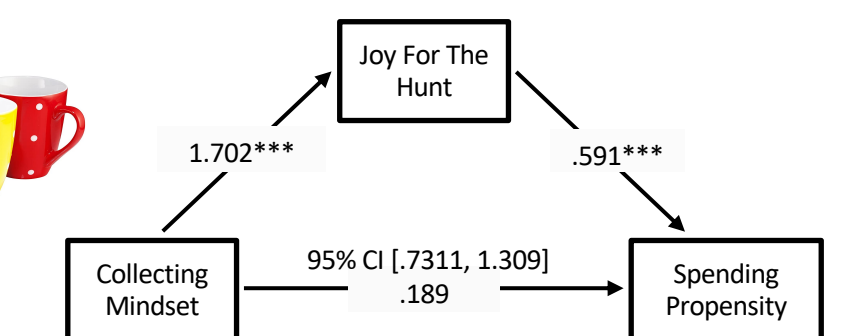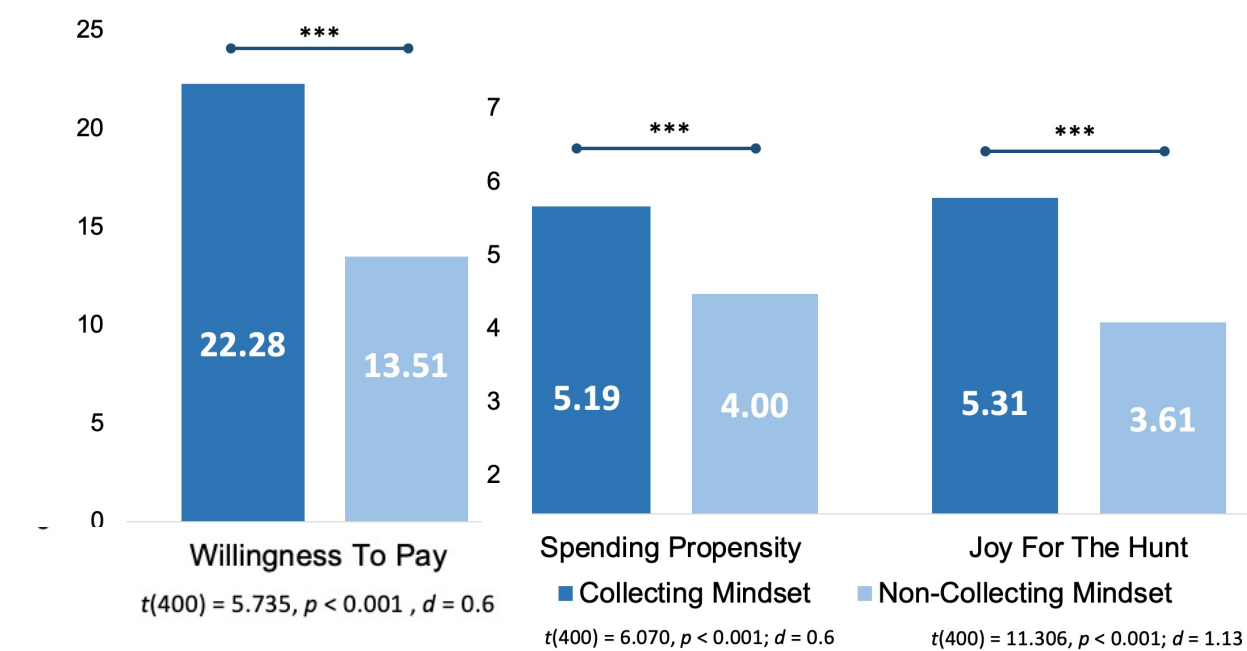## Studies 3A-B: The Mediating Role of Joy For The Hunt

### Study 3A

- **Collecting Mindset** : Focus on an item participants collect and pay for vs have several of, but do not collect (*N*=425)

- **Spending Propensity DV**: *"How likely would you be to buy an alternative and more affordable product versus to buy the item you really wanted but at 25% above the price you expected?"* (1=buy an alternative and more affordable item; 7=buy the item I really wanted but at 25% above the price I expected)

- **Joy for the hunt** ($\alpha$=92): *The search for the [items] would be thrilling/exciting* (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree)



Spending Propensity — Collecting Mindset: 4.38, Non-Collecting Mindset: 3.59
*t*(423) = 4.114, *p* < 0.001; *d* = 0.4

Joy For The Hunt — Collecting Mindset: 5.41, Non-Collecting Mindset: 4.30
*t*(423) = 7.610, *p* < 0.001 ; *d* = 0.7

Mediation: Collecting Mindset → Joy For The Hunt: 1.114***; Joy For The Hunt → Spending Propensity: .251***; Collecting Mindset → Spending Propensity: .516** (.189); 95% CI [.1259, .4617]

### Study 3B

- **Collecting Mindset**: Focus on a collection of coffee mugs vs focus on several coffee mugs, but not collect them (*N*=402)

- **Spending Propensity DV**: *"How likely would you be to buy an alternative and more affordable product versus to buy the item you really wanted but at 25% above the price you expected?"* (1=buy an alternative and more affordable item; 7=buy the item I really wanted but at 25% above the price I expected)

- **WTP**: *"How much money would you be willing to spend to buy the coffee mug?"*

- **Joy for the hunt**: same items S3A ($\alpha$=93)

- **Alternative explanation exclusion:** equal cost expectation for a coffee mug ($M_{collecting}$ = 8.91, $M_{non-collecting}$ = 8.46, *t*(400) = 0.626, *p* =0.531.



Willingness To Pay — Collecting Mindset: 22.28, Non-Collecting Mindset: 13.51
*t*(400) = 5.735, *p* < 0.001 , *d* = 0.6

Spending Propensity — Collecting Mindset: 5.19, Non-Collecting Mindset: 4.00
*t*(400) = 6.070, *p* < 0.001; *d* = 0.6

Joy For The Hunt — Collecting Mindset: 5.31, Non-Collecting Mindset: 3.61
*t*(400) = 11.306, *p* < 0.001; *d* = 1.13

Mediation: Collecting Mindset → Joy For The Hunt: 1.702***; Joy For The Hunt → Spending Propensity: .591***; Collecting Mindset → Spending Propensity: .189; 95% CI [.7311, 1.309]

## Conclusions

- When people adopt a collecting mindset (vs. not), they experience greater enjoyment during the search for an additional piece, which boosts people's spending propensity for that item.

- We unearth a new motivator of collecting behavior that has implications for both consumers' wellbeing and purchase decisions.

## References

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