

Our work adds to existing research on eBay by presenting it as a space where consumers' imaginations are stimulated and where their psychological work to manufacture ever new wants and desires allows for a reflection of consumer tastes and practices. To do so, we conceptualize eBay as a virtual platform-cum-epistemic object which allows consumers to browse at length through a plethora of goods, and which tests preferences and potentially reflects on the significance of objects and daydreams pursued.

We draw on Shields' discussion on performing virtualities and Knorr Cetina's theory of the epistemic object to sketch how the nature of virtual spaces, such as eBay, situates them at the centre of modern consumerism. Specifically, we explain how an individualistic production of wants and desires, fuelled by a recoding of eBay as an experience, sets in motion a reflective process through which individuals find out about themselves. We then consider concrete consumer practices by which consumers feed and actualize more substantive daydreams of an improved life, including bookmarking, bidding, and winning (owning) desired items. We focus on the psychological work consumers do on eBay to continuously manufacture desires, by turning objects gazed at into potential bridges to achieve coveted lifestyles or product complements to an ongoing collection. We conclude that eBay's significance as a seductive site to consume (in) lies in its ability to allow for the continuous construction of latent wants while providing consumers with the tools to react to these wants in various ways.

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