Expanding the Rise of Collaborative Consumption

A qualitative study on how to increase the attitude-behavior consistency

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ABSTRACT

A major transformation within the traditional market exchange has taken place during the last decade. Sustainability concerns and individuals’ attempt to protest against the crazy consumption have giving birth to a new movement, namely collaborative consumption. A new trend is identified where the consumers desire more sustainable types of consumption and a preference of access over ownership. Collaborative consumption is aiming to maximize the utility by a peer-to-peer solution, providing access to a wide range of products and generating environmental, social and economic benefits. Whereas sharing is considered as a universal form of economic human behavior, its implementation within a business context is relatively new, creating a scarcity of existing research. Previous research revealed that consumers possess a positive attitude towards sharing activities, however the adoption of using the services and products available on the market has been slow. Hence, the authors deemed it interesting to investigate the inconsistency regarding attitude and behavior within the concept of collaborative consumption.

The preliminary purpose of the study was to contribute with knowledge of how a collaborative consumption firm can increase the attitude-behavior consistency. The authors conducted the study through the perspective of non-users familiar with and positive to the concept in regard to the objective of the research. The study has throughout the process been guided by the research question; ‘*How can a collaborative consumption firm increase the consumers’ attitude-behavior consistency?’*. In consideration of existing research mainly been conducted by a usage of quantitative methods, the authors found it relevant to apply qualitative methods in combination with an inductive approach. Hence, the authors hoped to discover additional insights that have been overlooked by previous studies. Additionally, the authors investigated the phenomenon by taking the epistemological position of interpretivism together with the ontological position of constructivism. The authors conducted the study in two parts applying different methods to examine whether a group setting would impact the individuals’ responses. The study on individual level was based on four unstructured interviews with two representatives from each age group; 20-30 and 30-60. These findings served the purpose of creating a framework for the following study on group level, conducted by two semi-structured focus groups.

Whilst the findings from the study revealed that positive attitudes were possessed, stronger conflicting attitudes also existed. The findings further provided evidence that individuals’ attitude and behavior consistency is affected by intrinsic motives or social pressure. Hence, the authors recommend two strategies that could be applied in order to increase the consistency among non-users within collaborative consumption. The firms should enhance the intrinsic motives by emphasizing the desired attributes provided; convenience and the ability to match preferences with purpose and by educating the non-users in order to inspire a reflective thinking. A social pressure could be achieved by highlighting the attributes that are in line with today’s social norms and by encouraging current users to display their participation. These two strategies could be applied to minimize the attitude-behavior gap and transform a non-user into a user.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Consumption, Sharing Economy, Non-User, Attitude-Behavior Consistency, Qualitative, Decision-making
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Background

1.2 Choice of Subject

1.3 Knowledge Gap

1.4 Research Question

1.5 Purpose

1.6 Contribution

1.6.1 Theoretical Contributions

1.6.2 Practical Contributions

1.7 Limitations

1.8 Disposition

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Preconceptions

2.2 Perspective

2.3 Research Philosophy

2.3.1 Ontology

2.3.2 Epistemology

2.4 Research Design

2.5 Research Approach

2.6 Research Method

2.7 Collection of Sources

2.8 Ethical Considerations

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Sharing Economy

3.1.1 The Evolution of the Concept of Sharing

3.1.2 The Rise of Collaborative Consumption as a Business Model

3.1.3 The Community of Collaborative Consumption

3.1.4 Critique of Collaborative Consumption

3.2 Attitude-Behavior Consistency

3.2.1 Overview of Attitude-Behavior Consistency

3.2.2 Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior

3.2.3 Fazio’s Model of the Attitude-Behavior Process

3.3 Decision-Making Process

3.4 Concluding Research Model

4. PRACTICAL METHOD

4.1 Data Collection

4.2 Sampling Criteria

4.3 Negotiating Access

4.4 Transcribing

4.5 Ethical Considerations

5. STUDY ON INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

5.1 Interviews

5.2 Preparations

5.3 Conducting Interviews

5.4 Coding of Interviews
5.5 Presentation of Participants
5.6 Empirical Findings
  5.6.1 Awareness
  5.6.2 Attitude
  5.6.3 Decision-Making
  5.6.4 Behavior
  5.6.5 Sustainability

6. STUDY ON GROUP LEVEL
  6.1 Focus Groups
  6.2 Preparations
  6.3 Creating Framework
  6.4 Conducting Focus Groups
  6.5 Coding of Focus Groups
  6.6 Presentation of Participants
  6.7 Empirical Findings 20-30
    6.7.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption
    6.7.2 Forming the Attitude
    6.7.3 Evaluation
    6.7.4 Performing the Behavior
  6.8 Empirical Findings 30-60
    6.8.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption
    6.8.2 Forming the Attitude
    6.8.3 Evaluation
    6.8.4 Performing the Behavior

7. ANALYSIS
  7.1 Analysis Interviews
    7.1.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption
    7.1.2 Forming the Attitude
    7.1.3 Evaluation
    7.1.4 Performing the Behavior
  7.2 Analysis Focus Groups
    7.2.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption
    7.2.2 Forming the Attitude
    7.2.3 Evaluation
    7.2.4 Performing the Behavior
  7.3 Summary of Analysis

8. CONCLUSION
  8.1 Final Conclusions
  8.2 Contributions
    8.2.1 Theoretical Contributions
    8.2.2 Practical Contributions
  8.3 Quality Criteria
    8.3.1 Reliability
    8.3.2 Generalizability / Transferability
    8.3.3 Validity
  8.4 Societal Considerations
  8.5 Further Research
REFERENCES LIST
Appendix 1: Introductory Letter 90
Appendix 2: Letter of Consent 91
Appendix 3: Framework Focus Groups 92

LIST OF FIGURES
Figure 1. Theory of Reasoned Action & Theory of Planned Behavior 21
Figure 2. Fazio’s (1986) Model of the Attitude-Behavior Process. 23
Figure 3. The Concluding Research Model 25
Figure 4. The Core Categories 45
Figure 5. The Revised Concluding Model 77

LIST OF TABLES
Table 1. Pseudonyms of Interview Participants 34

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
EPS Extended Problem Solving
LPS Limited Problem Solving
RPS Routine Problem Solving
TPB Theory of Planned Behavior
TRA Theory of Reasoned Action
1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves the purpose of providing the reader with an overview of the background regarding the research topics, namely collaborative consumption and attitude-behavior consistency. Furthermore, it introduces an identified knowledge gap that the authors aim to fill. Continuing, the purpose of the thesis and the research question will be presented. Finally, this chapter will present the contributions the authors hope to make and discuss the limitations of the study.

1.1 Problem Background

“This is a movement as important as when the web browser came out” is how Shervin Pishevar (cited in Geron, 2013) describes the rise of a new sharing economy. The financial crisis in 2008 had a tremendous effect on the world's economic market, resulting in an extensive loss of financial wealth for families throughout the world (Loser & Arnold, 2010, p.23). The financial difficulties transformed the consumers’ mindset and created an awareness of other modes of consumption, which started the rise of the collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xix). Consumers have previously identified themselves by their possessions, expressed as “We are what we have” (Belk, 1988, p.160). The technological evolution has however changed the way consumers buy, communicate and describe themselves (Belk, 2013, p.477). Consumers are no longer in need of ownership but rather prefer paying for access (Bardi & Eckhardt, 2012, p.881). “We are what we have” has transformed into “You are what you can access” (Belk, 2014, p.1598). Following the economic crisis several consumer-to-consumer companies were founded based on the same concept; sharing (Economist, 2013).

Sharing is, according to Price (1975, p.3-4) “The most universal form of human economic behavior…” dependent on social bonds within a closed group. It is a fundamental element deeply rooted in attitudes, mindsets and behavior in various cultures, e.g. African and Asian (Belk, 2010, p.715; Mpansu, 1986, p.386). It is a common behavior about allocating goods and services within a group. Nevertheless, sharing is an act with an underlying assumption of reciprocity and within the African culture it is even a moral obligation to share to be socially accepted (Mpansu, 1986, p.386-187). The concept of sharing does not implicate a transfer of ownership but is rather based on a collective ownership (Belk, 2010, p.720). Whilst the phenomenon of sharing was considered to only function in a smaller community (Price, 1975, p.4-7), the usage of Internet enabled people to share information in a wider extent (Belk, 2010, p.715). Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.xv) refer to the phenomenon as a trend based on the argument “What’s mine is yours”. The development of technological solutions has also created opportunities for businesses to take advantage of the concept, e.g. Airbnb and Zipcar. Online sharing activities are emerging and provide consumers with the pleasure of using products or services without the need of ownership (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010, p.176). Belk (2014, p.1597) describes this collaborative consumption as “People coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation”.
In 2011, Walsh referred to collaborative consumption as an idea that will change the world. Internet transformed the world into a global community, which enabled the common behavior of sharing to generate a new potential source of income for businesses and users alike (Winterhalter et al., 2015, p.33). Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.71) suggest that collaborative consumption firms can be categorized into three different systems; product service systems (PSS), redistribution markets and collaborative lifestyle. PSS are based on the idea that consumers can rent products from either a company or private person and focuses on access rather than ownership, e.g. Zipcar. Redistribution markets signify a transfer of ownership where used products are redistributed to another party, including companies such as Ebay and Tradera. Lastly, a collaborative lifestyle includes sharing services and intangible resources such as time and space and encompasses firms like Airbnb (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.72-73). Botsman (2015) states that certain criteria must be fulfilled for a company to classify as a collaborative consumption firm. First, a collaborative consumption firm should center on improving the efficiency of unused assets. Continuing, they should improve the life of the peer-providers, benefit the peer-user and aid a community belonging. Lastly, values such as humanity, transparency and credibility should be reflected in the firm’s mission and influence the strategic decisions. Collaborative consumption appears to be a much-loved idea among consumers but apart from companies such as Airbnb, Uber and Zipcar, the adoption of the concept has been slow. As the founder of Share Some Sugar expresses it in an interview; “Everybody loved the idea. It was like, ‘Oh, this is great. I would love to use it. Then I launched the thing, and it was super-slow adoption” (Kessler, 2015). A study by the advertising agency Leo Burnett (2014, p.25) suggests that although consumers seem to have a positive attitude towards sharing activities, they rarely participate in the behavior. The findings revealed that even if 91 % of the respondents were either neutral or positive towards sharing activities only 11 % assessed them to be a major part of their life (Leo Burnett, 2014, p.9).

Definitions of attitudes suggest that consumers’ behavior will be directly influenced by favorable or unfavorable feelings and beliefs. General attitudes have however proven to be weak predictors of specific behaviors (Carrington et al., 2010; LaPiere, 1934; Wicker, 1969). This was originally demonstrated by LaPiere’s study (1934) in which Americans’ negative attitudes towards Chinese were tested. With over 250 service encounters during LaPiere’s travels around America with two Chinese, they were surprisingly only refused service once. The proprietors of the visited hotels were contacted six months later in order to investigate if attitudes were consistent with the displayed behavior. LaPiere inquired whether the proprietors would accommodate Chinese to which nearly everyone replied no. This demonstrates that although the American proprietors’ attitudes remained negative, it was not reflected in the actual behavior (LaPiere, 1934). Building on LaPiere’s study, theories such as Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (1985) have introduced intentions as an important mediating factor to understand the relation between attitudes and behavior (Hassan et al., 2014, p.2). Findings show that intentions are a better predictor of behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001, p.487), hence in order to put attitudes into action a mental implementation plan, referred to as implementation intentions, is needed (Carrington et al., 2010, p.144). The Theory of Planned Behavior builds on the notion that attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control lead to intention which translates into behavior (Carrington et al., 2010, p.142) Applied to the concept of collaborative consumption, the Leo Burnett study (2014, p.25) warns marketers to be wary of the assumption that positive
attitudes towards a non-ownership lifestyle will translate into a sharing behavior among consumers.

In consideration of the abovementioned information, the definition of collaborative consumption used for the thesis at hand will thus be: *people coordinating access to a resource for a fee or other compensation without a transfer of ownership.*

### 1.2 Choice of Subject

The authors’ interest in understanding consumer behavior stems from their educational background within marketing. Concerns for sustainability in combination with previous studies have been the main reasons for the choice of subject. An increasing consumption is often blamed to be a major cause for social, economical and environmental problems (Porter & Kramer, 2013, p.63). The sharing economy is thus a relevant topic as it contributes to a sustainable consumption while providing consumers with added benefits (Luchs et al., 2011, p.2). In addition, as knowledge of consumer behavior is critical for firms, especially start-up companies (Davis, 2012), the insights on how to bridge the gap between attitude and behavior are highly relevant. Furthermore, a genuine interest in the research topic is recommended (Saunders et al., 2009, p.22), which the authors have acquired due to their own participation in collaborative consumption.

### 1.3 Knowledge Gap

Consumer behavior concerning sharing within a business context is still a relatively unexplored area despite its long existence (Belk, 2010, p.716). The knowledge regarding this new form of business is thus inadequate even though the establishment of the most recognized collaborative consumption firms; Airbnb 2008, Uber 2009 and BlaBlaCar 2006, extend back to nearly a decade (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xi-xvii; CrunchBase, 2016). Previous studies have focused on identifying the determinants of consumers’ reasons to participate in collaborative consumption. However there is a lack of research combining attitude-behavior consistency with sharing activities. Among American consumers, the Leo Burnett study (2014, p.25) found the correlation between attitudes towards sharing and the actual behavior to be .37, meaning that the relation between the two is weak. If attitudes are to be used as a predictor of consumer behavior, an understanding of why there is a gap is crucial (Carrington et al., 2010, p.141). Prothero et al. (2011, p.32) suggest further research in order to understand why there is a gap between expressed support for sustainability and the actual consumption behavior. The authors extend this to collaborative consumption since environmental benefits is perceived to be a driver (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.70). Hence, the authors found it interesting to investigate how collaborative consumption firms can bridge the gap between attitude and behavior. Continuing, a scarcity of knowledge regarding non-users exists since current research mainly investigates existing users’ intentions for participating.
Additionally, a majority of scientific articles surrounding collaborative consumption are based on quantitative variables listing reasons for participation. This creates an absence of qualitative studies of the concept and conducting a research based on qualitative methods will thus contribute to investigating an unexplored gap. Continuing, the authors identified an important knowledge gap regarding why consumers’ positive attitudes toward collaborative consumption are not consistent with their behavior. The qualitative study thus aims to provide further insights into why there is an inconsistency regarding attitude and behavior and how collaborative consumption firms can bridge the gap.

1.4 Research Question

The identified knowledge gap of consumer behavior within a sharing economy has led to the following research question to be investigated throughout the thesis:

“How can a collaborative consumption firm increase consumers’ attitude-behavior consistency?”

1.5 Purpose

The general purpose of the study was to contribute with knowledge on how firms can increase attitude-behavior consistency within collaborative consumption. The objective was to provide firms with new knowledge on how to successfully conduct business based on sharing activities. Additionally, the purpose was to support companies in developing more sustainable solutions by promoting collaborative consumption as a more sustainable alternative compared to traditional options. By conducting a qualitative study with an inductive approach the authors aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how a collaborative consumption firm can influence consumers’ decisions. How the mediating factors between attitudes and behavior could be used in advantage to increase the consistency was furthermore an objective of the thesis at hand. The study embraced the perspective of non-users familiar and positive to the concept of collaborative consumption to gain necessary insights why the behavior deviates. The intention was to uncover new knowledge to increase the amount of users and thus positively influence the development of collaborative consumption.

1.6 Contributions

1.6.1 Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, the intent of the study was to contribute to new knowledge and bridge a gap in existing literature by bringing together two different dimensions; attitude-behavior consistency and collaborative consumption. Whereas previous research focused on current users, the thesis at hand was conducted to provide insights of non-user with a positive attitude towards the concept. In contrast to existing research that mainly been conducted by using quantitative methods, a qualitative study was believed to contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the authors hoped the findings to be useful in further research in order to expand the knowledge and reveal new insights of consumer behavior within collaborative consumption.
1.6.2 Practical Contributions

The authors chose to approach the topic through a consumer perspective to contribute with useful information that collaborative consumption firms could use to transform non-users into users. Hence, the firms will benefit from the knowledge since they can focus on convincing the consumers to act on their positive attitudes rather than changing the attitudes. As previously mentioned, consumers’ attitudes towards collaborative consumption are mostly positive and marketers will therefore benefit from the findings of the study. The findings could further be beneficial for firms competing in a traditional economic market exchange to remain competitive since understanding consumer behavior is highly relevant for all companies (Davis, 2012). Continuing, the number of successful startup companies could hopefully increase since the findings aimed to provide companies with an awareness of which aspects to emphasize, that could be beneficial for entrepreneurs. The authors further hoped that the findings could be applicable in understanding the attitude-behavior inconsistency within the context of sustainability and thus be beneficial when developing new sustainable solutions.

1.7 Limitations

Since the study was combining two concepts with a limited amount of previous research, the authors believe that certain limitations were in place. Stating certain limitations would facilitate the authors in the process to provide useful and relevant findings. Consequently, the limitations would further increase the quality of the findings and enhance the reliability and validity of the final conclusion. The combination of the two concepts collaborative consumption and attitude-behavior inconsistency were investigated through a peer-user perspective, leaving the peer-provider and firm perspective unexplored. Further limitations were made regarding the various constellations of collaborative consumption since sharing is a common economic behavior implemented in a various range of business models. The thesis was thus limited to investigate inconsistency for companies that coordinate access to a resource for a fee or other compensation without any permanent transfer of ownership. The definition of the concept collaborative consumption used in the thesis did not include a transition of ownership and companies within the redistribution market were thus neglected. In addition, the authors created a limitation regarding the sample since the thesis at hand only investigated the inconsistency of people who have never used any services or companies within collaborative consumption. Existing and former users were thus not included in the study. Further limitations regarding the participants of the study were made as only individuals with an existing awareness of either collaborative consumption or any firm within the concept were approached. Continuing, the thesis was limited to only investigate non-users between the ages of 20-60 years residing in Sweden. The exclusion of non-users of other nationalities made it possible for the authors to analyze a nearly homogenous group of people living under similar conditions and lifestyles. Additional limitations were made due to time and cost constraints and resulted in only including individuals living in the nearby cities Umeå and Östersund.
1.8 Disposition
This thesis is organized into eight chapters following a structure similar to the process. The exception is the theoretical framework, which in reality took place after the two empirical studies due to the inductive approach of the thesis. Nevertheless, the authors chose to place this chapter at an early stage in order to provide the reader with relevant knowledge regarding the investigate topics.

Introduction: The introductory chapter presents the problem background relevant to the research topics; collaborative consumption and attitude-behavior consistency. In regard to the background, a knowledge gap is identified and the purpose of the thesis explained. Moreover, this chapter introduces the research question and states the contributions and limitations of the study.

Research Methodology: The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description and motivation for how the study has been conducted. It includes the philosophical stances and the research design, approach and method. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the collection of sources and the ethical considerations as well as a description of how the authors’ preconceptions might have affected the research.

Theoretical Framework: This chapter provides an overview of the theories and previous research concerning the research topics. In addition, it presents the authors’ concluding research model that describes how the theories are connected and related to each other.

Practical Method: The practical method serves the purpose of providing all the necessary details regarding the collection and handling of the data. Hence, this chapter describes the chosen sample and how the authors negotiated access to the participants. Furthermore, the ethical considerations of the data collection are discussed.

Study on Individual Level: This chapter provides information regarding the preparation, performance and coding of the interviews used for the study on individual level. Following, the empirical findings of the interviews are presented.

Study on Group Level: This chapter provides information regarding the preparation, performance and coding of the focus groups used for the study on group level. Following, the empirical findings of the focus groups are presented.

Analysis: The aim of this chapter is to compare the empirical findings from the interviews and focus groups with the existing theories concerning the research topics of the thesis. Stemming from this comparison, the authors make their own analysis of the findings.

Conclusion: This chapter provides an answer to the research question by presenting the authors’ conclusion based on the findings and analysis. Furthermore, it discusses the quality criteria of the study and how the findings will affect the society. Finally, this chapter describes the contributions of the study and provides recommendations for further research.
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter starts with a description of the authors’ preconceptions regarding the research topic. Moreover, it explains the chosen perspective, moving on to discuss the philosophical stances most appropriate for this study. The authors will motivate for how the study has been conducted, including design, approach and method in regard to the philosophical viewpoints. The chapter finishes with describing the collection of sources and discussing the ethical considerations of the research.

2.1 Preconceptions

The authors’ previous knowledge and experiences could potentially influence the research process and decisions since personal values and beliefs are hard to completely eliminate (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.29). The interpretation of various situations and behaviors are affected by values, thus the acknowledgement of factors that could influence the research is highly important in order to emphasize the possibility of bias (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.30). The authors’ education at the business administration program at Umeå School of Business and Economics has provided knowledge within a wide area. Since the field of consumer behavior and marketing was most recently studied on master level, the authors acquired a deep understanding of the importance of customer relationship management. There is a risk that the authors made unconscious connections to the studied theories. Prior courses on advanced level regarding sustainability and marketing ethics have contributed to additional knowledge within areas that are discussed in the thesis. In order to reduce the risk of conclusions based on preconceptions without sufficient academic- or empirical evidence, the authors approached the topic through a comprehensive literature research combined with an analytical mindset. Nevertheless, the preconceptions and prior knowledge of theories related to consumer behavior and sustainability might have influenced the research approach and the analysis of empirical findings.

It is necessary to clarify that there were no strings attached to any firm within the concept regardless of the authors’ previous participation in collaborative consumption. This enabled the authors to avoid bias since a connection or favoring of a specific firm could have affected the authors to ask leading questions and thereby shape the participants’ responses. Furthermore, the authors’ neutral position may have contributed to the respondents feeling more secure in expressing their genuine opinions about certain firms. The presented findings are thus honestly presented from the non-users’ perspective. Nevertheless, Bryman & Bell (2011, p.30) emphasize that a close relation between the researchers and the respondents is often developed when conducting a qualitative method. Hence, the interpretation of the empirical findings might be affected because of the researchers’ loss of scientific perspective. In order to minimize the risk of influencing the findings, the researchers of the thesis focused on upholding an objective approach towards the respondents throughout the process.
2.2 Perspective

Since the purpose of the study was to contribute to an understanding of how firms can bridge the gap of inconsistency regarding collaborative consumption, the perspective of non-users familiar and positive to the concept was adopted. It is recommended to focus on consumers with an existing knowledge and interest in the subject to inspire change within sustainable behavior (Prothero et al., 2011, p.32). This further motivated why non-users with a positive attitude towards collaborative consumption was considered for the perspective. Additionally, the provider’s perspective in the peer-to-peer system was neglected, focusing solely on the potential peer-users to provide firms with insights of consumer behavior. By peer-users, the authors refer to people consuming the service in comparison to peer-providers who provide the service (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.70).

2.3 Research Philosophy

The philosophical framework influences the entire research process as it refers to the description of what knowledge is and its development (Quinlan, 2011, p.95). The two main research philosophies, ontology and epistemology, encompass important understanding regarding nature of reality and various definition of knowledge (Quinlan, 2011, p.95). The perspective and assumptions of the world will thus influence various decisions regarding approaches and methods (Saunders et al., 2009, p.108).

2.3.1 Ontology

Ontology concerns the nature of reality and beliefs of how the world functions, whether the social and natural world behave in similar ways (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.11). Researchers can view social entities either as dependent or independent of social actors. These are expressed in two different ontological positions referred to as objectivism and constructionism (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.20). Objectivism suggests that social phenomena have an independent existence without any influence of social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.21). In contrast, constructionism is an ontological position proposing that a social phenomenon is dependent of the perception and behavior of social actors. The constructionism therefore perceives humans as creators of their own reality (Saunders et al., 2009, p.142; Quinlan, 2011, p.14).

Whereas the aim of the thesis was to understand consumers’ attitudes and behavior, which according to Saunders et al. (2009, p.111) are highly subjective, the position of constructionism was adopted. Adopting the position of objectivism would in this study be inappropriate in regard to the objective of the study where the social interactions must be taken into consideration. The authors deemed the position of constructionism to be more inline with the purpose due to the belief of human actors and their actions to impact the social world. In addition, Esterberg (2002, p.11) argues that “Human behavior is very context sensitive” and “Pure objectivity is impossible” when observing humans. This further motivated the chosen stance considering the nature of attitudes and behavior. Constructionism is often considered more appropriate for social science (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.20), thus it was the most suitable ontological position for the thesis to ensure that the respondents diverging perceptions were taken into account.
2.3.2 Epistemology

Bryman and Bell (2011, p.15) refer to epistemology as what can be viewed as acceptable knowledge within a certain field of study. Three main positions defining acceptable knowledge exist, namely positivism, realism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2009, p.112). Positivism is according to Saunders et al. (2009, p.112) the “Resource researcher’s” philosophy as it applies methods of natural sciences. Although positivism is hard to define (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.15), the position assumes that research should be objective and approached through a deductive method (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.23). The philosophy believes that new knowledge is generated and phenomena are explained by the creation and testing of hypotheses (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.15). Realism is a philosophical position similar to positivism due to its scientific perspective. It is based on the notion that knowledge is proved by our senses and that reality is not connected to the human mind (Saunders et al., 2009 p.114-115). In contrast to positivism and realism, interpretivism is regarded as the philosophy of the “Feelings researcher” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.112). It focuses on understanding individuals feelings, experiences and actions to explain reality rather than external forces (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.23-24). The interpretation of situations is highly individual, hence a comprehension of differences between humans is necessary to understand the reality (Saunders et al., 2009, p.116).

Researchers often take the position of positivism in order to provide an explanation of human behavior. However when a deeper understanding is sought the position of interpretivism is more suitable (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.16). The authors embraced interpretivism since the purpose was to gain an understanding of consumer behavior and the consistency with attitudes rather than explaining the reasons for participating in collaborative consumption activities. Due to the individual nature of attitudes and behavior the position enabled the authors to take each participant’s reasoning into consideration.

2.4 Research Design

The main reasons for conducting research is according to Saunders et al. (2009, p.5) to create or increase existing knowledge. The purpose of the study in combination with the research question will influence the entire research process and are thus two essential parts in the preparation stage (Quinlan, 2011, p.99). The objective will determine if the study will be of exploratory, descriptive or explanatory nature and will further influence decisions regarding methodology and collection of data (Saunders et al., 2009, p.138-139; Quinlan, 2011, p.99). An exploratory design is normally used when the topic is relatively unexplored and the study aims to provide new knowledge about a certain phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2009, p.139). In-depth interviews or focus groups are mainly used when collecting data in an exploratory study due to their unstructured nature, which is beneficial for gaining new insights (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p.111). Descriptive studies aim “To portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.140). It seeks to identify essential features of a phenomenon, categorize and classify findings (Spencer et al., 2003, p.212; Ritchie et al., 2003b, p.237). Explanatory studies on the other hand focus on discovering patterns and describing the relation between variables (Ritchie et al., 2003b, p.248). The relationship is generally determined by using various statistical tests such as correlation (Saunders et
al., 2009, p.140). The authors of the thesis perceived an exploratory design to be most suitable since it is characterized by an objective to gain deep insights and an understanding of values and beliefs (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p.110). The insufficient research regarding attitudes and behaviors within the concept of collaborative consumption further motivated an exploratory design.

### 2.5 Research Approach

Although theory is a vital part when conducting research, not all is planted in theory (Quinlan, 2011, p.108). It is therefore essential to determine how to approach it in regard of the research question (Esterberg, 2002, p.5). The philosophical position in combination with the research approach will function as guidelines when taking decisions throughout the research process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.17). Three different approaches towards theory can be applied; a deductive, inductive or a combined approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.11-13). Deduction originates from the natural sciences and is well suited when aiming to explain relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2009, p.124-125). A deductive approach is embedded in theory and focuses on proving existing theory by building and testing hypotheses (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.11). A theory-based research will influence the data collection, often resulting in quantitative methods where the researcher is objective and seeks to generalize findings (Saunders et al., 2009, p.125). In comparison, an inductive approach does not originate from existing theory but instead focuses on building new theory (Saunders et al., 2009, p.125). Rather than testing existing theories surrounding the subject, the social world is examined and empirical data is collected without any particular theory taken into consideration (Esterberg, 2002, p.7). Nevertheless, Eisenhardt (1989, p.536) claims that a completely clean theoretical state is near impossible to attain but the researcher should strive to disregard theories and its relationship to the investigated variables. The likelihood of discovering new concepts and theories increases with an inductive approach. Furthermore it gives a better resemblance to reality since theory and empirical data is closely related and the possibility of researcher bias decreases as no preconceived theories have been chosen (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.546-547; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.12).

An inductive approach was embraced since the purpose of the thesis was to provide new knowledge regarding collaborative consumption and attitude-behavior consistency. Saunders et al. (2009, p.127) suggest the approach as most appropriate when investigating a new topic. Induction was thus applicable since the combination of the two concepts is largely unexplored. Selecting predetermined theories could contribute to researcher bias and would likely influence the findings. Hence, a deductive approach was not suitable for the thesis at hand. Following an inductive approach with a theoretical state as clean as possible ensure that prior assumptions are not imposed on the respondents when trying to understand their behavior (Gioia et al., 2012, p.16). Subsequently, in accordance with interpretivism that assumes an investigation of the social world should precede theories (Esterberg, 2002, p.16), the authors hoped that first collecting the data would contribute to new insights that might have been overlooked with a deductive approach.
2.6 Research Method

Two main methods are generally used when conducting research; quantitative or qualitative. The fundamental difference is that a quantitative method emphasizes quantification and numbers while qualitative emphasizes words (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.26-27). Furthermore, a quantitative method is usually objective and thus associated with a position of positivism and objectivism, as well as with a deductive approach to test existing theories. In contrast, a qualitative method is more subjective and often embraces the philosophy of interpretivism and constructionism. An inductive approach is usually in line with a qualitative method (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.27). Due to the philosophical stances combined with the purpose of creating novel theory, the study applied qualitative methods. As Esterberg (2002, p.2) suggests, quantitative research is not suitable when seeking an understanding of social phenomena and underlying reasons for certain behavior, making it inappropriate for the thesis. Strauss & Corbin (1998, p.11) states a qualitative method is useful when researching unexplored areas or to gain details about thought processes, which align with the purpose of the thesis. As identified in the knowledge gap, there is a scarcity of qualitative studies surrounding the topic, which further motivated the choice.

Qualitative research varies considerably in methods, including but not limited to various types of interviews, focus groups and observations (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.4). The main method however is interviews that allow the researcher to gain insight into individuals’ point of view (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.126). Interviews can either be highly structured, semi-structured or unstructured. The characteristic of highly structured interviews is the aim for quantitative results where all respondents are asked the same set of questions with no opportunity to diverge from the script (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.127). Semi- and unstructured interviews allow a more open approach to the topic as the respondents can express their point of view in own words (Esterberg, 2002, p.87). Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.127) claim that unstructured interviews are particularly useful for creating a framework with questions to be further explored by other methods. Continuing, focus groups are in-depth discussions of a topic where a moderator encourages interaction between 5-8 participants to gain an understanding of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors (Khan et al., 1991, p.145-146). The method is suitable for investigating how knowledge and ideas are generated and are fitting for an inductive approach where the topic is unexplored (Kitzinger, 1994, p.116). Another qualitative method is observations, mainly used when trying to understand various cultures and its behaviors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.141). However, the thesis did not concern ethnographic questions making observations an unsuitable method. Since the research question was combining the two concepts of collaborative consumption and attitude-behavior consistency, unstructured interviews were organized in combination with focus groups to achieve the purpose of the study. The collected data from the interviews was used to create a framework with questions to be further discussed in the focus groups. The focus groups were semi-structured to enable the authors to incorporate the concepts discovered in the interviews and remain some control over the discussion without shaping the participants’ responses. Esterberg (2002, p.87) suggests this method when constructing theory, which was in accordance with the purpose and inductive approach of the thesis. The combination of interviews and focus group enabled the researchers to compare the differing responses between individuals and groups.
2.7 Collection of Sources

The majority of conducted research is developed to expand previous knowledge within a certain field (Weathington et al., 2012, p.138). Literature review is thus an important part when conducting research as it provides a fundamental understanding and justification of the chosen subject and its methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.91). The research approach will decide how literature is used and serves the purpose of eliminating the risk of replicating existing research (Saunders et al., 2009, p.61). Secondary literature sources, i.e journals and books, should according to Saunders et al. (2009, p.69) precede primary sources, e.g. company reports, as it provides a fundamental and objective understanding of the topic. Furthermore, tertiary literature sources, e.g. encyclopedias and indexes, are recommended to be avoided to the extent possible (Saunders et al., 2009, p.81). The accessibility to information on the Internet is highly valuable (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.104), however there is a need for reservation due to the fact that not all information is peer reviewed. While the purpose of using the peer review system is to eliminate research of insufficient quality it is necessary to be aware of possible error (Weathington, 2012, p.140-141). The authors of the study have mainly collected information through secondary sources but due to the unexplored topic, primary and tertiary sources have also been used in order to fill the gap of insufficient research. In order to avoid bias and ensure usage of reliable sources the authors have, to a large extent, assessed peer-reviewed articles and critically evaluated other non-peer-reviewed sources. Bryman & Bell (2011, p.115) claim that the reputation of the journal where the articles are published could be used as a benchmark of its quality. Consequently, a majority of articles used for the study are published in recognized journals such as “Journal of Consumer Research” and “Journal of Business Ethics”. The library at Umeå University, the online database Business Source Premier (EBSCO) provided by Umeå University and Google Scholar were primarily used for accessing scientific articles and books used in the thesis. Relevant literature has been identified by relevant keywords such as: collaborative consumption, sharing economy, peer-to-peer, sustainability, attitude-behavior consistency and decision-making process.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

An essential part in all types of research is the consideration of ethical issues (Saunders et al., 2009, p.187). To prevent the risk of offending assorted parties it is important to consider relevant ethical principles (Orb et al., 2001, p. 93). The researchers must therefore acknowledge the possible consequences that could occur as a result of their decisions. The well being of others should never be jeopardized in exchange for providing new knowledge and the various decisions must therefore be justified. The moral principles should guide people to act apart from personal interest and in line with stated regulations (Weathington et al., 2012, p.24-25). Saunders et al. (2009, p.184) refer to ethical behavior as researchers’ ability to act properly in situations concerning the study and with a concern of how their decisions will affect others. Studying humans is a sensitive area and due to historical events the need for ethical codes of conduct arose to created new standards that must be followed by researchers (Weathington et al., 2012, p.30). The ethical guidelines developed by Umeå School of Business and Economics, together with the ethical principles discussed below, were followed throughout the process.
Several philosophies can be used to determine if a behavior is perceived as ethically right or not. However, the principle of utilitarianism and the principle of rights are most frequently applied (Weathington et al., 2012, p.26). According to the principle of utilitarianism an ethical behavior is ensured when the positive outcome of a decision benefits the greater good and thus outweighs the potential negative impacts for individuals. If the participants have been exposed of discomfort it is of great importance to justify that the benefits are greater than the negative consequences and that no other methods could have been used (Weathington et al., 2012, p.26-27). The principle of rights on the other hand requires the researchers to make ethically right decisions in all situations. This principle supposes that every human has certain privileges that include being perceived as equals and treated with dignity (Weathington et al., 2012, p.28). The authors of the thesis were aware of the occurrence of ethical dilemmas throughout the process and thoroughly considered if and how the various decisions affected the participants, as recommended by Saunders et al. (2009, p.184). As the empirical evidence for the thesis was collected through qualitative methods, measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, which are discussed in chapter 4. Participation in the interviews and focus groups were of voluntary basis and the attendants could decide if and when they no longer wanted to participate. The authors have further avoided sensitive subject irrelevant to the study as not to harm or offend the participants. As later discussed, the authors were also prepared to intervene if a conflict between the participants in the focus groups would occur.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter serves the purpose of introducing theories and previous studies that the authors deem relevant to the research. The theories regarding the sharing economy and attitude-behavior consistency will be discussed in depth to serve as theoretical guidance for the analysis. Furthermore, the consumer’s decision-making process will be reviewed since the research question is regarding a business context. Finally, the authors’ research model will be presented, describing how the theories are connected and how they relate to the research topic of this study.

3.1 The Sharing Economy

In comparison to the traditional phenomenon of sharing, the sharing economy enables people to share assets without dividing and reducing his or hers possessions (John, 2013, p.117). The sharing economy is considered to imply two main features; assets that are not efficiently used and individuals with an incentive to share (Ranchordás, 2015, p.416). The reduced consumption that follows would thus induce environmental benefits. Luchs et al. (2012, p.2) define a sustainable consumption as; “Simultaneously optimizes the environmental, social, and economic consequences of consumption in order to meet the needs of both current and future generations”. The following theories will demonstrate how the sharing economy fulfills this definition of sustainable consumption.

3.1.1 The Evolution of the Concept of Sharing

Sharing is, as previously mentioned a universal economic behavior. To share is, according to Cambridge Dictionaries, the act of “To have or use something at the same time as someone else” or “To divide food, money, goods etc. and give part of it to someone else”. The initial sharing behavior is believed to be relying on rational reasoning and is an activity of reciprocal exchange to various degrees (Widlok, 2013, p.11). Sharing is a fundamental part in the African culture following guidelines such as “One must always have the habit of sharing with others and going to those who are afflicted” (Mpansu, 1986, p.386). This is in accordance with the prehistoric age where the storage capacity was limited, making it reasonable for a hunter to divide the target and share it with others (Widlok, 2013, p.11). Sharing is thus an activity of showing gratitude and generosity towards others and where an egoistic behavior should be neglected (Mpansu, 1986, p.386). However, for half a century people have been raised into a society based on individualism, which has negatively influenced individuals’ innate sharing behavior (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.69). Nevertheless, during the last decade a major transformation has taken place and created a new socioeconomic movement (Ranchordás, 2015, p.413). Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.xv) refer to this movement as collaborative consumption meaning that the traditional sharing behavior has been redesigned to circulate around collaboration, co-creation and sharing. Although sharing is a long-established concept the activity is now occurring in new forms and in a much wider scale, generating a market based on “What’s mine is yours” (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xv). Whereas some assume sharing to be an activity where people are only willing to share belongings worthless to the original owner, reality demonstrates the occurrence of sharing possessions that are still of value (Widlok, 2013, p.12). While sharing is often confused with an exchange of gifts or commerce of
economic goods, gift giving, commodity exchange and sharing are different types of activities (Scaraboto, 2015, p.153). Gift giving involves deeper and more gentle emotions towards the other party compared to commodities and is often related to special occasions to show gratitude, e.g. birthdays and weddings (Belk, 2010, p.717; Carrier, 2005, p.259). Sharing on the other hand is an everyday activity perceived by most people as an ordinary habit. However, the distinction between sharing, gift giving and commodity exchange is vague (Belk, 2010, p.717). Some gifts might not be regarded as typical gifts. Giving money without an underlying occasion and with no wrapper might be perceived as an attempt to blackmail and is thus more in line with a commodity exchange. The same confusion can occur if the money is given to an NGO since it is then perceived as sharing (Belk 2010, p.718). Gift giving is often symbolized as a reciprocal action while sharing is not. Belk (2010, p.720) distinguishes gift giving, commodity exchange and sharing to be dependent on the involved parties. Whereas both gift giving and commodity exchanges have defined terms, e.g. giver/receiver and buyer/seller, the involved parties in sharing have not. The phenomenon of sharing is further described as a concept enabling people to connect and create a mutual bond dependent on trust (Belk, 2010, p.717). Even though relationships among individuals are based on equality, sharing is not perceived as an equal commerce since there will always be individuals with more resources to give and share (Price, 1975, p.7). Sharing has, compared to other distribution systems, no centricity and no distinct movement pattern. Rather than separating the involved parties into groups, it is perceived as a type of exchange within a relationship (Price, 1975, p.7).

3.1.2 The Rise of Collaborative Consumption as a Business Model

Sharing activities, referred to as collaborative consumption, take shape in various forms and situations. It can include both face-to-face or online interaction e.g. people sharing goods with neighbors, at work or on websites (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xv). Collaborative consumption and the sharing economy are dependent on Internet and characterized by a non-ownership system aiming for utility maximization of products or goods (Belk, 2013, p.1595). The integration of sharing activities into a business context has enabled people to access a greater variety of goods to a lower price (Ranchordás, 2015, p.417). Munger (2015, p.190) refers to the sharing economy as the revolution of reducing transaction costs. Compared to prior revolutions it does not involve a launch of new products or services but rather focuses on increasing the utility of existing products. Sustainability concerns, a limited budget or a desire for a closer relation with other humans instead of brands are some of the motives to participate in collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.70). Sharing is, according to Widlok (2013, p.16) driven by an intrinsic motive and an activity for the person’s own benefit. Trendbüro (2008, cited in Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010, p.188) further states; “Those who live the culture of non-ownership attain money, storage capacity and quality of life”. Even though the economic benefit is perceived as a driver of using collaborative consumption, studies reveal that users of these options have a higher income than non-users (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016, p.7). Collaborative consumption alternatives deliver numerous benefits although barriers towards becoming a user have been identified. The main barriers identified were “Trust”, “Efficacy” and “Cost”. These include an uncertainty of privacy and safety combined with skepticism towards online-based platforms, a lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept and its system and perceived insufficient economic winnings (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016, p.11-12).
Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.75-76) present four main principles that are of great importance for the survival of collaborative consumption. The first principle is referred to as critical mass stating a wide range of options and the quantity of users to be crucial in order to satisfy customers with distinct preferences. A large amount of alternatives is vital for collaborative consumption to be considered as a substitute to traditional shopping activities (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.76). An example where critical mass is essential is swapping events for sports equipment since people will not be able to find desired equipment if the supply is limited. Hence, more sharers will contribute to a higher probability of finding the coveted things. Individuals are generally adjusting their own attitude and behavior based on the perception of others' behavior. A critical mass is thus crucial when trying to convert old habits as to convince people to use collaborative consumption as well as creating loyal, recurring customers (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.81-82).

In contrast to “The tragedy of the commons”, the principle “A belief in the commons” refers to a greater amount of users increasing and creating value for their fellowman by participating in collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.89-90). Hence, “The more the merrier” will make a collaborative consumption alternative more attractive, creating a network with more benefits for the users (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.91). Maximizing the utility of assets and a rational reasoning are characteristic human behaviors (Möhlmann, 2015, p.194). Idling capacity is thus the third principle that distinguishes an activity as collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.75). The normal usage of a power drill is between six to thirteen minutes during its lifetime providing an example where a maximization of utility is not reached. Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.83) argue that it is not reasonable to buy a product that will only be used for a couple of minutes. Additionally, the non-ownership trend diminishes the obligations that ownership entails, e.g. repairing a device if it breaks (Moeller & Witkowski, 2010, p.188). Hence, idling capacity is about reducing the spare capacity of products or other intangible assets by a collaborative usage (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.83, 86). The last principle is the fact that a collaborative consumption option requires people to create a bond of trust with strangers. Trusting strangers within a business context is a relatively new phenomenon since traditional shopping experiences usually involves a type of middleman (Belk, 2010, p.717; Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.91-92). Collaborative consumption alternatives require the users to trust the peer-provider to a great extent, including the credibility of the provider’s intentions and honest descriptions.

3.1.3 The Community of Collaborative Consumption

Sharing within the concept of collaborative consumption is perceived as a process that forms a community (John, 2013, p.126). The construction of communities is a long-established phenomenon perceived as a cornerstone in social contexts (Muniz JR & O’Guinn, 2001, p.412). Communities consist of groups of people with a shared relationship due to a common interest, occupation or geographical area (McAlexander et al., 2002, p.38). Additionally, Fiske (1992, p.689) argues that individuals base and match their social life to reflect their relation towards others whom they can relate and feel attached to. He introduced the conception of communal sharing, where people within a closed group are perceived as equals showing genuine kindness towards the other members (Fiske, 1992, p.690-691). People in a communal sharing relationship do not consider material goods as individual assets but as resources available to everyone
within the group. The members are presumed to contribute depending on their own ability and are not obliged to share in exchange for membership (Fiske, 1992, p. 693-697). However, communities are no longer limited to a specific geographical area due to the technological evolution (Muniz JR & O’Guinn, 2001, p.412). The online brand communities have become a vital part for collaborative consumption firms since they are based on technological solutions and consumers’ online behavior (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xx). Online brand communities are proven to constitute a relationship and positively influence the consumers’ decision and upholding its existence could thus be beneficial for companies (Adjei et al., 2010, p.651). Building platforms where the consumers can exchange information and experiences is an efficient method to increase transactions (Adjei et al., 2010, p.634). Similar to traditional communities, a brand community is generated by individuals sharing the same idea and relationship towards a brand and is an essential part for the status of the brand (Muniz JR & O’Guinn, 2001, p.412).

A strong brand contributes to various benefits such as a willingness to pay premium prices or enabling a relationship with the consumers (Aaker, 2014, p.1). Thus to keep the exclusiveness and avoid value dilution of a brand, companies are trying to restrict the access by limiting their distribution channels (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005, p.1449). Brand dilution can occur when consumers beside the desired target group are using the product or due to an inappropriate marketing strategy, e.g. expanding too much (Bellezza & Keinan, 2014, p.397). Making a brand available to other than its chosen segment can create unwanted and negative associations and thus negatively affect the perception of quality (Aaker, 1991, p.222-224). It is important to consider the wider context when the relationship is taking place to deeply understand consumers’ behavior and their attitudes towards a brand (Fournier, 1998, p.366-367). A more aggressive global competition has influenced companies’ marketing strategies to focus on establishing a relationship with their customers to create competitive advantage (Buttle, 1996, p.1). Collaborative consumption creates an uncertainty regarding the ownership, making it harder for consumers to decide whether or not they should identify themselves with a certain brand (Belk, 2013, p.1598). Continuing, Esch et al. (2006, p.99) claim that consumers establish a relationship with a brand in the same way as when establishing relationship with people. Building a strong brand and develop loyal customers is thus of great importance. Aaker (2014, p.8) further confirms the value of brands since it appears that customers make decisions based on other variables besides price and actual function. Brand equity is often mentioned when describing a strong brand and refers to the assets as well as the associations that occur (Aaker, 1991, p.15). Keller (1993, p.1) introduces the concept of customer-based brand equity, describing it as “When the customer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong and unique brand associations in memory”. Brand equity is thus a form of knowledge based on an examination of its two main elements; brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993, p.2). Brand awareness is the power of the brand and refers to the consumers’ capability to recognize the brand in various contexts. Brand image on the other hand refers to the consumers associations held towards the brand and may contain associations separated from the actual product or service (Keller, 2008, p.51). For example when examining the brand of IKEA, the typical blue and yellow IKEA-bag or the traditional furniture are well recognized. Nevertheless, the specific associations may vary since Swedes often associate it as “home” no matter where they are in the world, which is not true for other cultures.
3.1.4 Critique of Collaborative Consumption

The sharing economy is as previously described recognized to bring several positive effects for the environment. However, nothing is so good that it can't be made better, which call for a need for displaying the negative side effects of collaborative consumption. In alignment with Price’s statement (1975, p.7) that sharing is not an equal commerce, the peer-to-peer economy has created loopholes within the existing regulations. This allows peer-providers to benefit from others limited resources. Collaborative consumption firms have contributed to making it more difficult to access long-term housing contracts since a higher profit can be attained by lending a residence on a day-by-day basis (Malhotra & Van Alstyne, 2014, p.24). The sharing economy is thus generating major benefits for homeowners whereas a low-income earner will have a harder time finding a permanent dwelling. Although collaborative consumption is perceived to induce economic winnings (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.70), not everyone will manage to make an earning by participating. The majority of these alternatives are priced to only cover the marginal costs, creating no room for future or additional expenses (Malhotra & Van Alstyne, 2014, p.25). Furthermore, many of the collaborative consumption firms demand the peer-user to ensure their identity by uploading a valid ID. Although prejudice exists in all social contexts, the occurrence of prejudice to negatively affect the peer-provider or peer-user position is assumed to be higher within the sharing economy (Malhotra & Van Alstyne, 2014, p.25). Whereas traditional companies have to account for the costs of various licenses and insurances to ensure their reliability, the sharing solutions avoid these expenses. This enables the collaborative consumption firms to offer their services at a lower price, providing them with a competitive advantage. The sharing economy is also perceived to generate the possibility of people sharing access to a product or service that they do not personally own. Individuals will gain access to products by first renting them and thereafter make the rented products available on the market for a slightly higher price than what they originally paid (Malhotra & Van Alstyne, 2014, p.25-26). Considering the abovementioned negative aspects of collaborative consumption, the sharing economy is sometimes observed as the skimming economy where the companies delight in profits while transferring the risk to the peer-provider and user (Lanier, 2013, p.55-56).

3.2 Attitude-Behavior Consistency

“An attitude is essentially an association between a given object and a given evaluation” (Fazio, 1986, p.214). Social scientists disagree of the definition of attitudes due to its abstract nature and can therefore be confused with perceptions, values and beliefs (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.428). While they are all related and influence each other, it is important to distinguish them. Perceptions are current opinions of an experienced situation influenced by an individual’s attitude, which is described as “The degree of belief that a consequence will occur, multiplied by the evaluation of that consequence” (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.429). Individuals are thus perceived to be more likely to perform a behavior if their own perception is in line with a certain statement (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.429). Attitudes are in turn usually influenced by an individual’s values, which refer to the morals and code of conduct to be followed. They are more stable than attitudes and usually rooted in the social structures (Bergman, 1998, p.86-87). Beliefs on the other hand are a person’s self-revelation their understanding of the world around them. A belief can either be descriptive, shaped by observation and thus reliant on the
individual’s senses or inferential, extending to non-observable beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975, p.131-132). Perception, attitudes, values and beliefs are influenced by socialization, meaning that they to a large extent are formed in response to an individual’s history and the environment in which the individual is situated (Bergman, 1998, p.82-83). It is believed that the development of new attitudes automatically will be reflected in a change of behavior as long as the attitude is accessible by memory at the time of the current appraisal (Fazio et al., 1989, p.280). The authors have chosen to provide an overview of previous research regarding the subject attitude-behavior consistency and provide a more detailed description of Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior as well as Fazio’s Model of the Attitude-Behavior Consistency. The reason for this choice is that Ajzen’s theories are leading within the concept of attitude-behavior consistency, providing the perspective of a purposive process. In contrast Fazio’s model was chosen to provide a perspective showing it to be a spontaneous process.

3.2.1 Overview of Attitude-Behavior Consistency

While the aforementioned studies suggest a consistency between attitudes and behavior to be a given, a recurring finding suggests that people’s attitudes not always correspond with their actual behavior (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p.99-100). This inconsistency is referred to as the attitude-behavior gap (Caruana et al., 2015, p.1), first demonstrated by the earlier discussed LaPiere study (1934) where American proprietors’ attitudes towards Chinese people did not correspond with their behavior. The inconsistency is especially noticeable within the 30:3 syndrome, where 30 % of the consumers proclaim a positive attitude towards sustainable and ethical standards while only 3% of the consumers’ actual behavior reflect these attitudes (Cowe & Williams, 2000, p.1). Caruana et al. (2015, p.1) criticize previous research due to their methodological choices and misinterpretations. The majority of existing research is based on quantitative studies assuming and promoting rational reasoning with a high risk of bias since the participants may answer to certain question in a way that makes them seem like a good person. The Auger & Devinney study (2007) demonstrates the occurrence where people are answering a questionnaire in line with social norms, proving the desire of displaying themselves as a good citizen. Before-or after justifications of a behavior should thus be considered as a factor that could increase inconsistency between attitudes and behavior (Caruana et al., 2015, p.1). Furthermore, Carrington et al. (2010, p.142) believes that many studies concerning attitude-behavior consistency are disregarding the external factors surrounding a situation. Sheeran (2002, p.6) states that two types of attitude-behavior consistency can occur. The individual can either be an ‘inclined actor’ who possess and act on a positive attitude, or a ‘disinclined abstainer’ where a negative attitude is possessed and the action is consequently neglected. Equivalently, attitude-behavior inconsistency can occur if an individual fails to act upon a positive attitude, referred to ‘inclined abstainers’ or if the individual performs a behavior regardless of the negative attitude, known as a ‘disinclined actor’ (Sheeran, 2002, p.6). The study stated that the median percentage of individuals with a positive attitude neglecting a behavior to be 47% compared to the inconsistency of the disinclined actors that was only 7 %. This demonstrates that the inclined abstainers are mainly responsible for the existence of the gap (Sheeran, 2002, p.7).

Whereas previous studies focused on determining whether or not attitudes affect behavior, current research aim to understand the situations where the attitudes are
translated into actual behavior (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.429). The mediating factors that affect the attitude-behavior consistency presented in Sheeran’s study (2002) are; the type of behavior, perceived control over the behavior, strength of the intention, how the intention was formed as well as past behavior and habits. Luzar & Cosse (1998, p.429) further emphasize the formation of the attitude; “contemplation”, as an important factor, continuing with adding two additional factors; multiple attitudes and prior information. Sheeran (2002, p.9-10) distinguishes the type of behavior as being either single or multiple actions to achieve a specific goal. A consistency between attitude and behavior is more likely to occur in regard to single actions since it is hard to distinguish if each action's outcome will result in an achievement of the goal (Sheeran, 2002, p.9-10). The individual must have a perceived sense of control to be able to perform the behavior regardless of their attitude in order to achieve an attitude-behavior consistency. Factors that are contributing to a sense of control are; knowledge, ability and resources to perform the action, opportunity to take part in the behavior, availability, unexpected situations and cooperation (Sheeran, 2002, p.10). The inconsistency is further influenced by the strength of the attitude (Sheeran, 2002, p.16). As mentioned by Luzar & Cosse (1998, p.429) an individual can have multiple attitudes towards a behavior, sometimes conflicting with each other. If the conflicting attitude is stronger, an inconsistency is more likely to occur.

Related to the strength of the attitude is the formation/contemplation of the attitude (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.86; Sheeran, 2002, p.18). A consideration of how the attitude was formed increases the likelihood of predicting a behavior since possible obstacles could be foreseen. Nevertheless, the risk of receiving biased reasons for a certain behavior increases if the individual is asked beforehand to consider why certain attitudes are possessed. As a result, a temporary attitude will be created and only have a short-term effect on the behavior (Millar & Tesser, 1990, p.86). On the same note, individuals who are self-focused and participate in a behavior due to intrinsic motives are more likely to stay true to their attitudes and create a higher consistency (Millar & Tesser, 1990, p.86). Prior information is furthermore a factor that can create bias and influence the consistency between attitudes and behavior (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.429). An attitude based on prior information is a better predictor of the upcoming behavior compared to attitudes developed out of the blue. This information can include knowledge on how to perform the behavior, consequences of the behavior or information regarding the attitude object. This causes the individual to contemplate on the attitude and is as a result more likely to act in accordance to it (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.429). Lastly, Sheeran (2002, p.25) argues that past behavior and habits influence present behavior by referring to Bargh’s research (1997) “The Automaticity of Everyday Life”. According to Bargh (1997, p.2), automatic processes first and foremost determine the behavior, occurring when no conscious choice is made due to certain situational factors. In contrast, Fazio (1990, p.103) argues that a combination of automaticity and reflection will influence the behavior, although admitting that automatic processes are more likely to occur in everyday life.
3.2.2 Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior

Attitude-behavior consistency is impossible to discuss without mentioning the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TRA will first be explained since TPB is an extension of this theory. TRA is based on the notion that behavior is foreseen by an individual’s intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, p.11). Hence it concentrates on behaviors that are performed with a deliberate intention, rather than unconscious actions. The intentions are in turn determined by two factors; attitudes and subjective norms. By attitudes, Ajzen (1985, p.12) refer to the perceived positive results or negative consequences of performing a behavior rather than attitudes towards a certain object or individual. The subjective norms are the pressure the individual experience from society and other people to perform the said behavior (Ajzen, 1985, p.12). The intention to perform a behavior is strengthened if the assessment is positive and if others expect the individual to perform a certain behavior. While both factors are considered determinants according to TRA, one may have more impact on the behavior than the other depending on the context (Ajzen, 1985, p.13). The TRA claims that attitudes are determined by beliefs regarding the behavior and its expected outcome. The consequences associated with performing the behavior in combination with the strength of the associations will together form the attitude, referred to as behavioral beliefs. A person is more likely to form a positive attitude if the consequences of a behavior are assessed to be positive (Ajzen, 1985, p.13-14). The subjective norms are based on normative beliefs, meaning that the individual perceive a social pressure to behave in a certain way. Thus, the theory concludes that salient beliefs influence the mediating factors, namely attitudes, subjective norms and intentions, finally resulting in an intended behavior. The theory further states that factors such as personal characteristics have no direct effect on behavior (Ajzen, 1985, p.14).

![Diagram of Theory of Reasoned Action & Theory of Planned Behavior](image)

Figure 1. Theory of Reasoned Action & Theory of Planned Behavior.
Source: Ajzen (1985).
Apart from the two factors determining intentions, the TRA claims that intentions can change over time if new information emerges, unforeseen events occur or habit kicks in when the behavior approaches. Conflicting intentions could thus occur at the time of action diminishing the likelihood of acting on the initial intention (Ajzen, 1985, p.19). If conflicting intentions exist it will more likely result in the individual falling back to rely on old habits (Ajzen, 1985, p.19). Furthermore, as an unforeseen event is more likely to occur over a longer period of time, a behavior-intention consistency is more likely to occur if the formation of the attitude and the actual time of action is up close, leaving little room for unforeseen events. The intention can also change depending on the strength by which it is hold. Intentions held with low confidence are more vulnerable to external factors and the intention can easily change due to e.g. introduction of new information (Ajzen, 1985, p.21). Depending on how receptive the individual is to social norms or guided by their own principles, the intention-behavior consistency will vary. Unforeseen events have a stronger influence on individuals sensitive to external factors. TPB differs from TRA since it includes an individual’s perceived sense of control over a behavior (Ajzen, 1985, p.12). The TPB states that intentions cannot predict an actual behavior since it can be influenced by factors beyond the individual’s perceived control. Intentions are instead perceived as a predictor of an attempted behavior (Ajzen, 1985, p.29). Hence, both the strength of the attempt to perform a behavior and the level of control are considered determinants according to the TPB. The TPB further includes a possible failure of the behavior as a determinant of the attitude (Ajzen, 1985, p.31). In contrast to TRA that states attitudes are predicting the actual behavior, the TPB assume that the attitudes only can predict an attempt to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1985, p.32).

### 3.2.3 Fazio’s Model of the Attitude-Behavior Process

Fazio’s model of the attitude-behavior process is another attempt to explain how attitudes guide behavior, based on the notion that a person’s behavior is a response to the perception of the current situation (Fazio, 1986, p.207). The model states that an individual’s behavior is dependent on the interpretation of the situation, which is influenced by the person’s attitude towards the object or situation (Fazio, 1986, p.208). The situation will then predict the individual’s behavior depending on its own definition. While the TRA and TPB are purposive processes where an individual decides on a specific intention and then act on it, Fazio’s model of attitude-behavior process is explained as an inattentive process. The attitude is thus not reflected upon at the time of behavior but serves as an underlying factor when interpreting the situation (Fazio, 1990, p.70). Immediate perceptions rely on existing attitudes to provide structure and make sense of ambiguous situations (Fazio, 1986, p.209). An individual with an existing negative attitude of an object, person or situation will thus perceive it differently than someone with a positive attitude, which will influence the behavior (Fazio, 1986, p.210). Moreover, similar to the TRA and TPB, Fazio (1986, p.210) argues that social norms impact the attitude-behavior consistency. The attitude of an object is only one element by which the individual defines a situation. Social norms can sometimes force the individual to behave in a certain way although it might contradict with the held attitude (Fazio, 1986, p.211). Finally, attitude accessibility plays a crucial role when forming a perception of the object or situation. The individual will not be able to rely on existing attitudes to form an immediate perception if the attitude is not immediately activated from memory upon encountering the object (Fazio, 1986, p.212).
3.3 Decision-Making Process

Olshavsky’s and Granbois’ research (1979) suggests that a decision process is not taking place in many purchases. Instead, a purchase can occur out of habit, an established lifestyle, earlier preferences, recommendations or an emerging necessity. The research also concludes that a purchase can occur randomly (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979, p.98). They claim that the abovementioned factors in combination with the consumers’ pre-purchase decision process will determine the actual purchase (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979, p.99). Continuing, Engel et al. (1986, p.23) suggest that the level of active reasoning before a decision will vary depending on three factors; involvement, alternative differentiation and time pressure. Involvement refers to the importance and relevance of the decision on account of the individual’s own interest or the context. The involvement can thus be perceived to be higher if the individual feels an appeal towards the product or service or if pressure is felt from external factors. The degree of involvement will form the attitude towards the specific purchase intention (Engel et al., 1986, p.24-25). Differentiation refers to a more active reasoning occurring if the individual perceives that the different options offer a variety of attributes. Hence, the alternatives need to be weighed against each other before reaching a final decision. Lastly, time pressure will affect the possibility to conduct a well-reasoned decision. The individual will in these cases opt for the most convenient alternative rather than going through the entire process (Engel et al., 1986, p.25). Hence, a high involvement and alternative differentiation combined with a low time pressure will determine the level of active reasoning that is taking place before a purchase decision is reached.

Considering the different levels of active reasoning, Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1986) have developed a modified model (EBM) originating from the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB) model. The EBM model consists of three different strategies namely extended problem solving (EPS), limited problem solving (LPS) and routine problem solving (RPS) (Engel et al., 1986, p.22). The EPS strategy is applied when there is a high involvement, a great differentiation and no time pressure. The first step of this strategy is problem recognition, which is the point where the individual discovers an emerging need or want. It is activated by a motive that will guide behavior into reaching the desired goal or by persuasion (Engel et al., 1986, p.28). The individual will as a second step conduct an internal search, examining him or herself to determine if the
existing knowledge of available alternatives is enough for an evaluation. If existing knowledge is insufficient, the individual will turn to an external search to gather information (Engel et al., 1986, p.29-30). When enough information has been gathered to provide a foundation, an evaluation of alternatives will occur. The individual will form a belief about the concerned product or service during the evaluation process, which will shape the attitude towards purchasing that option. If the attitude is positive, an intention to go through with the purchase is developed and vice versa. Various criteria will influence the formed belief, including personal values and social influences. If the attributes of the product meet these criteria a purchase is more likely to take place (Engel et al., 1986, p.31-32). Furthermore, the consumer is exposed to marketing messages that may or may not catch their attention. To convert the message into a long-term memory and thus impact the individual’s attitude, the message must be comprehended and accepted by the receiver (Engel et al., 1986, p.33). Assuming that the message aligns with the person’s existing beliefs or if it was managed to influence the attitude, the next step in the decision-making process is the actual purchase. As a last step, the outcome of the purchase will be evaluated and weighed against expectations. If the product or service aligns with the expectations, the consumer will be satisfied with the decision and in turn strengthen the existing positive attitude. Dissatisfaction on the other hand will occur if the product or service fails to meet the consumer’s expectations and might lead to a changed attitude (Engel et al., 1986, p.34).

As pointed out above, some decisions require less deliberation than others. The LPS strategy occur when the involvement is low, where the attributes do not significantly differ and with an existing time pressure (Engel et al., 1986, p.36). Hence, the LPS strategy is not as extensive as the EPS. However, the first step is still problem recognition usually activated by a sudden need rather than motives and persuasion. The search for alternatives is normally neglected with a LPS strategy due to the low involvement and the lack of time. The consumer is thus more sensitive to marketing campaigns, e.g. sales promotion and can thus skip straight to the purchase stage. If the sales promotion or other influences manage to persuade the consumer to try a new product or service, an evaluation of alternatives might occur afterwards to compare it to previous purchases (Engel et al., 1986, p.37). The final strategy is known as the RPS, illustrating the process when an individual relies on previous purchases (Engel et al., 1986, p.38). Similar to the EPS and LPS strategies, problem recognition first occurs. The consumer will then conduct an internal search while neglecting any external search, since personal experiences are more trusted. The purchase intention and the actual purchase will then be in line with past decisions. As long as the product or service still meet the consumer’s expectations, satisfaction will be achieved. The routine behavior is likely to occur as an aftermath of a successfully conducted EPS strategy with the initial purchase (Engel et al., 1986, p.38-39).

Asch’s conformity study (1951) demonstrates that other individuals influence people’s opinions, decisions and behaviors. Venkatesan’s study (1966) further reinforces the occurrence of this phenomenon in a consumer behavior context. Consumers can thus adjust their own opinions and behavior in a group setting so it corresponds to the other members (Engel et al., 1986, p.318). It is therefore relevant to investigate the social influencers in order to understand consumers’ decisions. Social influence is divided into either normative or informational (Engel et al., 1986, p.306). Normative social influence is used to describe people who are adjusting their behavior based on others expectations to evade perceived positive or negative consequences. Hence, a consumer’s decision to
buy a certain product could solely be based on how he or she will be perceived by others (Engel et al., 1986, p.306-307). Normative social influence is perceived to be stronger for products that are visible to others compared to private products that are hidden (Engel et al., 1986, p.310). Informational social influence refers to the phenomenon where people conform to others recommendations and advice due to their assessed superior knowledge (Engel et al., 1986, p.310).

### 3.4 Concluding Research Model

The concluding research model was developed by the authors to display how the theoretical approaches have been combined in order to answer the research question. The model was constructed to create an understanding for the reader regarding the various sections relationship and how they are connected to each other. The fundamental fields of the model are “user” and “sharing”. Additionally, theories of attitude-behavior consistency, collaborative consumption and decision-making processes have been added in order to understand how to transform a non-user into a user within the concept of sharing. Furthermore, the authors incorporated the areas of group or individual as influencers for the attitudes and behaviors. The arrows in the model aim to describe how the various fields affect each other. Considering the exploratory study the authors could not foresee what the findings would look like. The authors did however compare the empirical findings with the developed model to confirm that the relevant fields for explaining the attitude-behavior inconsistency within collaborative consumption had been investigated. The authors would thus be able to draw justified conclusions based on the empirical findings with the support from the theories.

![Figure 3. The Concluding Research Model](Source: The Authors)
4. PRACTICAL METHOD

This chapter explains the necessary details regarding the data collection and how the process was carried out in order to obtain relevant findings. The chapter begins with a short description of the various methods that have been applied followed by an explanation of the sample criteria. The authors continue to describe how access to the participants was gained and how data were processed. The ethical considerations are discussed at the end of this chapter.

4.1 Data Collection

The authors used qualitative methods to gain a deep understanding of how collaborative consumption firms can influence consumers’ decisions and thus increase the consistency between attitude and behavior. Unstructured interviews and semi-structured focus groups were applied to collect the empirical data. Saunders et al. (2009, p.490) recommend researchers with an inductive approach to continuously examine the themes that emerge. Hence the data from the interviews was collected and analyzed before conducting focus groups in order to discover the themes that required further exploration. Unstructured interviews also referred to as in-depth interviews, are characterized by their informality and allow the researchers to gain deep and broad insights into the chosen topic (Saunders et al., 2009, p.321). Unstructured interviews are not guided by any pre-written script, which enables the authors to be flexible by allowing interviewees to express their opinions without restrictions (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.467; Saunders et al., 2009, p.321). However, it requires that the researchers are able to assist and encourage the participant to elaborate on their own opinions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.132). The authors conducted four unstructured interviews with two representatives from each quota. The obtained insights from the interviews were, as previously stated, used to develop a framework for the following focus groups. In addition to the interviews, focus groups were conducted to gain supplementary understanding of various perceptions and behaviors within a group setting. Focus groups are suitable when aiming for understanding attitudes since they enable participants to elaborate on their own opinions and beliefs by listening to the responses of others (Finch & Lewis, 2003, p.171; Lewis, 2003, p.58). The interaction between participants will further increase the opportunity to attain an understanding of the entire behavior pattern (Morgan, 1997, p.12). The authors chose to apply two various qualitative methods in order to investigate if a group setting could impact the participants’ responses. The focus groups were in contrast to the interviews semi-structured in order to maintain the discussion within relevant themes. Additionally, by combining the two methods the authors hoped to reveal extensive information on how to increase the attitude-behavior consistency.

The authors considered the option whether to conduct the interviews and focus groups in Swedish or English since the thesis is written in English but investigated non-users residing in Sweden. Since the researchers and all participants were native Swedish speakers the authors concluded that all interaction with the participants would be held in Swedish. This was believed to contribute with extended findings encouraging the participants to express their true opinions. The authors appreciated that the possible risk of language bias from translating was outweighed since the participants’ were perceived to be able to provide more elaborate answers by speaking their mother tongue. This was
considered especially relevant for the focus groups to avoid judgment among the participants due to varying levels of linguistic knowledge. In consideration of the abovementioned, the introductory letter and the letter of consent were delivered to the participants in Swedish and have later been translated by the researchers.

4.2 Sampling Criteria

It is nearly impossible to efficiently investigate the entire population relevant for the context when conducting qualitative research within social sciences. Instead, a sample is selected to represent the population (Quinlan, 2011, p.208). To determine the requirements that must be fulfilled in order to be considered as a representative a clarification of the inclusion and exclusion criteria is needed (Quinlan, 2011, p.209). There are different strategies that could be applied when selecting the sample (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.77). Probability sampling is based on the notion that everyone within the population has the same odds of being selected. The findings will be generalizable and the strategy is thus most suitable for quantitative studies (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.78). In contrast, non-probability sampling implies that some members of the population have a higher chance of being selected based on the researcher’s chosen criteria (Saunders et al., 2009, p.233). Due to the requirements of the study, not everyone qualified for the sample. Hence, the authors selected a non-probability sample to find participants possessing a positive attitude towards collaborative consumption. Ritchie et al. (2003a, p.78) further declare the inappropriateness of using probability sampling for a qualitative study, which further motivated the authors’ choice.

A non-probability sample can be conducted by applying a purposive, convenience, snowball or quota sampling. First, purposive sampling is based on the researcher’s view of the characteristics each participant needs to possess in order to contribute with insights relevant to the study (Quinlan, 2011, p.213). The characteristics vary depending on the objective of the research and may for example include age, gender or various personality traits (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.78). Convenience sampling is chosen due to its easy accessibility to participants. This method is beneficial to the researchers in the form of time and cost savings although the findings will be hard to generalize (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.190). Snowball sampling is an extension of the convenience sampling, where a large group of people is reached by first initiating contact with a few individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.193). Finally, quota sampling involves categorizing members into various groups based on age, gender, profession etc. in order to achieve diversity (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.228). The thesis at hand conducted a purposive sampling with elements of snowball sampling. When determining suitable candidates, criteria are necessary to ensure that useful insights will be contributed (Rowley, 2012, p.264). The inclusion criteria for participating in the study were thus first and foremost a positive attitude towards the concept of sharing and/or collaborative consumption. However current or former users of collaborative consumption activities were excluded since no inconsistency exists. Additionally, the participants needed to attain some basic knowledge of the concept itself or an awareness of any collaborative consumption firms, e.g. Airbnb, Uber or Zipcar. The authors deemed that without the basic knowledge, the participant would not be able to form an attitude towards the concept and hence not qualify for the study. A snowball sampling was used in combination with the purposive sampling since some of the criteria were highly exclusive. Hence, the authors used existing contacts and participants to reach people.
that fulfilled the abovementioned criteria. Snowball sampling could however harm the diversity since the sample frame is limited to its size and based on existing contacts (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.94). To increase a diversified sample the authors aimed for a balance between gender and age. By ensuring a diversified sample the possibility of identifying the most relevant factors connected to the investigated topic increases (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.83).

The sample size of a qualitative study is often relatively small compared to quantitative studies since its purpose is to provide more detailed information where no statistical significance is required (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.83). The authors chose to divide the sample in two age groups 20-30 and 30-60 to avoid bias due to generational differences. Due to the individuals’ between the ages 20-30 upbringing, the authors suspected that their habit of using online-based platforms would be reflected in their attitudes towards collaborative consumption. The in-depth interviews conducted for the thesis thus consisted of two representatives each from the both age groups who fulfilled the stated criteria. Two separate focus groups consisting of 4 participants each were organized posterior to the interviews to represent the two age groups. The size of the sample was supported by the purposive sampling, which ensured diversity and the appropriate candidates (Ritchie et al., 2003a, p.85). Moreover, the small sample for the in-depth interviews was justified since they at the beginning only would serve as a guideline for questions to be further explored. This was however changed during the research process and a larger sample would thus have been preferable.

### 4.3 Negotiating Access

After establishing the appropriate candidates for the study, the researcher must negotiate access to the participants in order to attain the relevant data (Saunders et al., 2009, p.168). Access usually refers to two factors; the willingness and availability of the participant and the convenience that the researcher can provide (Rowley, 2012, p.264). Since an interest in the research topic is important for the participants to feel engaged (Rowley, 2012, p.266), the authors hoped the sample criteria of a positive attitude towards the concept of collaborative would increase the willingness to participate. The main concern was however the availability, especially when conducting the focus groups. Since the authors were flexible with time and place, the interviews could be conducted at the convenience of the interviewee and thus increase the availability. When conducting the focus groups however, the authors needed to take all participants preferences into account to negotiate a suitable time and place. This made availability harder and resulted in dropouts from the initial sample.

Saunders et al. (2009, p.176) suggest using existing contacts as one way to approach participants. The authors have been using an existing network to approach and recruit people filling the quota of the two age groups. The potential participants will quickly make a decision whether to participate in the study or not based on how they are approached (Rowley, 2012, p.264). Thus when requesting access, an introductory letter should be sent to potential participants. The letter should include the purpose of the study, the requirements for participating as well as what the participation will involve (Saunders et al., 2009, p.179). Moreover, the approached individual should be informed of the confidentiality of the data and ensured anonymity (Saunders et al., 2009, p.180). The researchers should also consider including an introduction of themselves, the
amount of time the interview or focus group will take and any potential benefits for the participant (Rowley, 2012, p.264). Therefore, the authors composed an introductory letter that was distributed to potential candidates. Since a snowball sampling was used to distribute the introductory letter, it clearly had to state the criteria for participation to enable the purposive sampling. The introductory letter also informed the participant of the purpose of the study and further information about the process (Appendix 1). Furthermore, the interviewees, participants and the authors all signed the letter of consent at the start of each session (Appendix 2). Therefore all involved parties agreed to the stated terms, e.g. being recorded and ensuring confidentiality of the data.

### 4.4 Transcribing

Transcription involves producing a written record of an interview or focus group (Saunders et al., 2009, p.485). Transcription allows the researcher to review the material multiple times to produce a more thorough examination of the responses and expressions, further reducing the limitation of remembering (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.481). How the interviewee responds to a question is something the researcher should take into consideration, which the transcription enables the researcher to do (Saunders et al., 2009, p.485). Audio recording of the interview is highly recommended since the researchers do not need to focus on taking notes. This is beneficial since attention can be turned to listening and there is no need to interrupt the interviewee (Legard et al., 2003, p.166-167). Furthermore, recording gives an accurate account of the interview compared to taking notes since the exact wording accompanied with pauses, hesitations or laughter is included (Legard et al., 2003, p.166-167). Hence, the authors chose to record all interviews and focus groups. The recording was especially necessary for the focus groups to capture and not interrupt the interaction between the participants. In accordance with Finch & Lewis (2003, p.177-178), the researchers let everyone present themselves with their name and some background at the start of the session to be able to identify each participant during transcribing.

Since transcribing is a time-consuming process, an alternate way is for the researcher to only transcribe the parts of the interview that are of relevance for the study (Saunders et al., 2009, p.486). However, due to the inductive approach the authors could not identify the irrelevant data. Hence, all material was transcribed and later processed. Moreover, transcripts from interviews and focus groups need to be labeled in such a way to preserve the participants’ anonymity (Lewis, 2003, p.68). Saunders et al. (2009, p.485-486) suggest using codenames that ensure that the participants cannot be identified but should still contain recognizable information for the researchers. This was an important part of the transcribing process since a letter of consent was signed both by participants and the authors, stating confidentiality of the data handling. All material was entitled by a system only known to the authors, ensuring no participant could be recognized by name.
4.5 Ethical Considerations

“Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful” (Johnson, 1996, p.158). A numerous amount of ethical issues arise during the data collection that the researchers must be aware of (Saunders et al., 2009, p.193). Two essential ethical considerations are ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The identity of the participants should be secured throughout the process and not revealed to others than the researchers. However, since the study was conducted by focus groups the authors cannot ensure anonymity among the participants. A potential risk of the others revealing their identity exists, which the authors tried to eliminate by having them sign the letter of consent agreeing to the stated terms (Appendix 2). Furthermore, a coding system is recommended to ensure confidentiality, this can be achieved by keeping the information regarding the participant identity separated from the collected data (Lewis, 2003, p.68). The participants’ personal rights and privacy should further be obtained, meaning that they a right to withdraw their consent to participate at anytime during the process (Saunders et al., 2009, p.193). As previously mentioned all participants signed a letter of consent upon arrival agreeing to the term of implementing their responses in the thesis. Nevertheless, the authors ensured that no responses could be traced back to the individual by excluding personal information. The authors further assured that the interviewee understood his/her rights by verbally informing the participant the terms stated in the letter. The interviews in the study were, as previously mentioned, conducted to identify main themes to be further discussed and investigated in the following focus groups. To secure the interviewees’ privacy no personal themes addressed in the interviews were considered when creating the framework. The presented framework for the focus groups was thus based on themes voiced and discussed by more than one interviewee.

All parties must approve to be recorded and the interviewees should further understand how the material would be used (Weathington et al., 2012, p.35). Thus all participants of the study signed a letter of consent agreeing to be audio recorded. All participants were further informed of the purpose of the recording and that the authors would exclusively handle all materials. The recordings were coded so that no names were revealed and the participants’ identities and codenames were stored in separate documents. All recordings and data material were further stored on separate devices and in folders secured by passwords to ensure their anonymity. Hence, only the researchers could access the sensitive information that could expose the participants’ identity. Required documents and recordings were only stored until they were no longer needed and were later destroyed and erased with secure methods. Saunders et al. (2009, p.197) emphasizes the importance of handling the material correctly and with objectivity. All data should be presented properly and with honesty to eliminate any misjudgments and subjectivity (Saunders et al., 2009, p.199). The authors made sure to interpret all responses within its main context to reduce any possible appearance of subjectivity. At the start of the session of the focus groups the authors emphasized that all opinions should be respected and that there are no right and wrong answers. The authors were prepared to interrupt the discussion if the integrity of a participant was at risk of being harmed.
5. STUDY ON INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This chapter will concentrate on explaining all necessary details on how the study on individual level was carried out. The authors will illustrate the entire process starting with explaining the preparations and how the interviews were conducted. The chapter will then concentrate on how the findings were interpreted and processed and how the interviewees’ anonymity has been maintained. The last part of the chapter focuses on presenting the findings from the interviews.

5.1 Interviews

An interview is a method used to generate data and will contribute to “Insights into people’s own perspectives on and interpretation of their beliefs and behaviours - and, most crucially an understanding of the meaning that they attach to them” (Ritchie, 2003, p.36). Interviews can be conducted through various techniques, e.g. telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews or group interviews (Quinlan, 2011, p.290-291). Face-to-face interviews are believed to provide the researchers with an understanding of the interviewees’ attitudes and beliefs (Rowley, 2012, p.260), which motivated the authors’ choice of this technique. Additionally, in order to engender relevant information from the interviews, the characteristics of the respondents are important to consider so that they can be recognized as representatives (Rowley, 2012, p.263). Hence, the authors’ conducted four interviews with two representatives from each age group.

5.2 Preparations

The planning process of the interviews is highly relevant to require necessary insights and prevent a possible occurrence of problems (Quinlan, 2011, p.292). The interview preparations vary depending on the purpose of the study and the structure of the interviews. The typology of the interview will determine the required planning to be done beforehand (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p.110). In-depth interviews rely on the researchers’ ability to coordinate and prolong the responses making the interview skills and the competence to prevent bias vital (Easterby-Smith, 2012, p.136). Not only could the asked questions create bias, the researchers’ behavior, tone of voice and body language during the interview are just as important to consider (Saunders et al., 2009, p.333). Therefore, due to the unstructured nature where no questions were prepared in advance, the preparation process was instead aiming to improve the authors’ soft skills. Additionally, the authors were aware of how their behavior could affect the development of the interview depending on the interviewees’ interpretation. Furthermore, if the researchers are not able to obtain trust it could result in dishonest responses based on what the interviewee believes the researchers want to hear if (Easterby-Smith, 2012, p.136). Hence, the authors focused on establishing a sense of informality, which according to Legard et al. (2003, p.143) would induce a climate of trust. Even though no question is predetermined in an unstructured interview, Saunders et al. (2009, p.321) state the importance of having a clear idea of elements that could be relevant to investigate in relation to the research purpose. A topic guide was thus created consisting of various areas to be investigated. A topic guide normally consists of
a few themes the authors deem important to address during the interview (Rowley, 2012, p.262). The main areas used for the topic guide were loosely based on the theories discussed in the theoretical framework, resulted in the following areas: awareness, attitude, personality traits, sustainability and consumption. Saunders et al. (2009, p.328) suggest that it could enhance the credibility of the study by supplying the respondents in advance with information regarding themes that will be discussed. However, the authors considered it to be inappropriate for the study since it could have affected the participants’ view of the social world and therefore create bias. The respondents were therefore only provided the introductory letter and did not take part of the topic guide. The authors deemed that sharing the topic guide in advance could have harmed the spontaneity, as it would allow them to prepare answers.

5.3 Conducting Interviews

The location is a vital part to consider when conducting interviews to ensure that the participants feel comfortable during the session (Legard et al., 2003, p.166). To minimize the possibility of tension the interviews were held at places familiar to each interviewee. Due to the unstructured nature of the interviews the authors emphasized the importance of creating an easeful atmosphere as it was assumed to provide deeper and more honest responses. The locations consisted of both public and private facilities, e.g. study rooms at Umeå School of Business and Economics and the participants’ offices. The authors deemed that the interviewees would feel more relaxed and thus contribute with more elaborated answers. Prior to the interview, all participants were provided with an introductory letter stating the purpose of the study and preparing them for the unstructured format. The introductory letter further informed the interviewees about the specific terms that would be applied (Appendix 1). In addition, a letter of consent was signed upon arrival, ensuring that the participant had read and agreed to the announced terms (Appendix 2). When considering the length of the interview it is of more importance that relevant findings will be acquired rather than reaching the recommended time of an hour (Rowley, 2012, p.263). Bryman & Bell (2011, p.482) further argue that a long interview is not superior to a short one although care should be taken that they are not too short. In accordance with Rowley's suggestions, the authors aimed the interviews to be an hour. However, the actual time for all the interviews varied and lasted between 30 minutes to an hour depending on the interviewees elaborated answers and way of speaking. The duration of the interviews was however not perceived to negatively affect the findings. Rowley (2012, p.266) further suggests several techniques to extend the responses and prolong the interview such as being quite, repeating or asking follow-up questions containing how, why, who and what. Therefore the authors put great emphasize on these techniques in order to gain desired insights. While the researchers would have preferred to conduct all the interviews during the same week to minimize the risk of some participants being exposed to external influences, this was not possible. The availability and the convenience of the interviewees had to be respected which resulted in the interviews taking place during the time span of two weeks rather than one. In regard to the possible bias the authors studied the news to ensure that no major events had occurred that significantly could influence the attitudes.
5.4 Coding of Interviews

Several approaches could be used when analyzing the findings derived from qualitative methods and there are no right and wrongs. How the authors will analyze the collected data will be partly determined by the epistemology beliefs and the primary purpose of the study (Spencer et al., 2003, p.200). Some techniques are however more suitable for an inductive approach. Data display and analysis is a method consisting of three parallel steps; summarize, structure and analyze the data. This procedure involves visually displaying the data through networks and matrices to identify and determine relationships and connections of the findings (Saunders et al., 2009, p.503-505). Whereas some of the themes can be predetermined, new themes will emerge during the interpretation of the data (King, 2004, p.256). The identified codes will serve as a basis for a theoretical framework and will assist the researcher to recognize key topics to be further investigated (Saunders et al., 2009, p.508). Analytic induction is another method used in order to interpret and understand the collected data. This method is preferable used in studies that aim for explaining a specific phenomenon by investigating a certain number of cases (Saunders et al., 2009, p.508). A method used to develop a theory based on key themes is called grounded theory. The method involves three steps, starting with open coding where similar data is grouped together into categories. Followed by a step referred to as axial coding, where the relationship between the identified themes and categories are examined. Finally, a selective coding is carried out to recognize the main categories that will develop the final theory (Saunders et al., 2009, p.509-511). The process involves a constant comparison of the findings and concepts used prior in the study (Saunders et al., 2009, p.509). Furthermore, a discourse analysis technique is used to understand how the language is used within certain situations. The fundamental belief is that language has a vital part in creating the social world and is thus not used to explain it (Saunders et al., 2009, p.512-513). The last method that could be used for analyzing data collected by qualitative methods is called narrative analysis. It is a technique where, instead of presenting the responses word-by-word, the main focus is on interpreting and understanding the underlying message (Saunders et al., 2009, p.514).

Since the unstructured interviews were conducted to identify key topics to be further discussed in the focus groups the authors used a template analysis. A grounded theory was not suitable at this stage as the objective was not to create a final theory. Compared to grounded theory, a template analysis is perceived to be more flexible and allows to researchers to adapt the process better to their purpose (King, 2004, p.257). A main element in template analysis is to structure the codes in a hierarchical order within certain clusters. High-order codes refer to more general topics while low-order codes identify more specific information within the general topics (King, 2004, p.258). This method was thus suitable for the thesis as it enabled the authors to develop the framework based on the identified high- and low-order codes. Considering the key areas recognized prior to the interviews some codes were determined beforehand, which would serve as high-order codes. Nevertheless, some high-order codes were added and modified during the interpretation process of the data. Furthermore, lower-order codes were identified through probing during the interview and later categorized and placed within the existing high-order codes. The final and modified high-order codes identified
during coding were thus: Awareness, Attitude, Decision-making, Behavior and Sustainability.

5.5 Presentation of Participants

To ensure the participants’ anonymity and maintain confidentiality, code names in the form of pseudonyms were used. The authors chose pseudonyms that were gender-neutral and were randomly ascribed. Due to the small sample for the interviews, rather than revealing the participants’ exact age, the authors categorized the participants into the age groups; 20-30 and 30-60. Furthermore, the presented order of the pseudonyms in the table below is random and does not reflect the order of the interviews.

Table 1: Pseudonyms of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>30-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>30-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 Empirical Findings

The findings from the interviews are presented according to the high-order codes; Awareness, Attitude, Behavior, Decision-making and Sustainability identified during the coding process. Thus, the authors have not presented the interviews one-by-one but rather collected and displayed the responses interpreted to have similar meanings in order to provide structure. Due to the subjective nature of the data collection the authors have recounted the wording of the responses, to the extent possible considering the translation from Swedish, to avoid bias. Furthermore, since the authors have taken the position of constructionism where social phenomena are dependent of perceptions and behaviors, it was vital to stay true to each individual's expressions.

5.6.1 Awareness

Since an awareness of the concept or any collaborative consumption firm was a criterion for participating in the study, all interviewees were familiar with it. However, the authors identified different levels of awareness. Alex expressed it as “I recognize companies within the concept, but I would not be able to label it as collaborative consumption”. Similar, rather than recognizing the term collaborative consumption, Charlie associated the concept to a peer-to-peer system based on an awareness of the firms Airbnb and Uber. On the other hand, instead of focusing on specific firms Kim’s level of awareness extended to the concept. A notion was possessed that products can be rented as a service rather than bought and that the concept of sharing results in ownership being perceived as unnecessary. Furthermore, exploiting existing
overcapacity both from a short- and long-term perspective combined with a community belonging were elements associated with the concept.

Although the leading firms within the concept have existed for some time, the interviewees’ awareness only extends back to 1-3 years. However, Kim states; “It should have existed earlier” and connected it to file sharing networks that were dependent on peer-to-peer activity. The initial contact with collaborative consumption firms occurred through recommendations from acquaintances, which was expressed by the majority of the interviewees. The awareness was further raised through the companies exposure in media e.g. in articles and TV-shows, as well as suggestions from trend spotters to keep an eye on the development. Both Kim and Robin agree that collaborative consumption firms will see a substantial growth and threaten companies with a traditional business model refusing to adapt as the new revised business models are changing the industries. However, they believe that existing operators are trying to implement regulations to limit the expansion in order to protect themselves.

5.6.2 Attitude

“It creates a complete new market with products that didn’t exist, you were not able to rent a penthouse in Manhattan before...” and “Imagine the amount of restaurants that will exist all of a sudden, I find that amusing” are quotes that highlight the positive attitudes towards collaborative consumption firms. In order to investigate an inconsistency between attitudes and behavior within the concept, only participants with a positive attitude were approached. Hence, all interviewees expressed positive impressions towards collaborative consumption. Robin revealed reasons for the positive stance to be a curiosity concerning new trends and a fascination towards the concept due to the fact that it is threatening a whole market. Kim believes peer-to-peer activities to be a new trendsetter that more and more people will catch on to since people seem to prioritize experiences rather than material goods. The benefits of owning products are thus perceived to be decreasing. Robin continued to express a passion for new products and a “Childish delight” in keeping track of smart solutions. Continuing, Charlie agreed that “Trying new things is always fun” and stated that the firms are based on a brilliant idea. Furthermore, Charlie’s positive view of the collaborative consumption firm Airbnb increased after media broadcasted how the company restored a house totally trashed by an Airbnb-customer. However, they continued to reveal that sometimes there is not much to experience, which negatively influence the interest to participate. Friends who had previously engaged in peer-to-peer activities influenced Alex’s positive attitude. “High flexibility, simple, somewhat varying quality but an overall good impression. It got you what you paid for” are the kind of opinions that Alex claimed formed the attitude. Alex continued with stating “I feel just as outdated as when my grandmother is trying to learn how to use email, I haven’t used it yet even though I feel like I should”. A perception of receiving better service was expressed since Alex believes the peer-provider has a sense of being self-employed and would thus make more of an effort to enhance the positive experience. All interviewees admitted that reviews from acquaintances have a strong influence on their attitude due to the existing trust between the parties. Moreover, online reviews further impact their decision since they believe it provides an unbiased account of how the companies act in various situations.
Kim does not express any concerns regarding the online activities that collaborative consumption involves since secure payments are taken for granted. In addition, Robin does not consider online-payments as a risk as long as no payments are made in advance. Furthermore, the firms’ use of algorithms that identify the customer preferences contributes to the positive stance since a feeling of relation is created. Even though Alex is mainly using physical stores for purchases, a positive attitude and a will to order online is expressed because of the dislike of traditional shopping. However, while the participants initially showed positive attitudes, probing revealed reservations towards using the services offered by the firms. Kim expressed a concern of losing some of the benefits that traditional service encompasses such as being attended to; “Being taken care of is a feeling that everyone appreciates”. Although Airbnb’s actions have increased the positive attitudes, the media attention has made Charlie more concerned regarding potential risks. Robin elaborated on Airbnb and further raised a worry whether or not there is an apartment available upon arrival. Trusting fellow peers was an issue raised by all interviewees since trust is perceived as a main element in a peer-to-peer system. Moreover, Charlie stated that the sense of control is somewhat compromised with the type of services offered by collaborative consumption firms, which has contributed to hesitation in using the service since control is an important element in Charlie’s life. Robin agreed that the sense of control will influence the attitude by stating that “I must be able to chose what I want to share with others and what I want to keep to myself” as well as a need for an agreement between the parties stating the expected condition of the returned product.

Robin stated that a well-designed platform is important as long as it does not compromise functionality since that will contribute to a skeptical mindset. An example was given of an attempt to engage in a collaborative consumption activity where the functionality was perceived as inadequate, creating a feeling of uncertainty resulting in not using the service. While the algorithms previously described enhance a positive attitude, however, Kim stated that they could provoke negative attitudes as well. While the algorithms are used to identify and recommend options based on the person’s previous views, Kim finds it irritating to receive recommendations that are not reflecting the actual preferences. Even if the benefits of ownership are perceived to decrease, Kim announced that some products are necessary to own due to the emotional aspects and expressed it as “This is my home, this is my castle, I am the owner here”. Kim elaborated on the disadvantages of not owning a home and stated that it is a form of borrowing and almost as living at a hotel the entire time. Not to mention that someone else is benefiting from the property’s increase of value and the rent paid by the tenant. Continuing, Robin believes that ownership engenders a sense of freedom and gladly pays the price for the flexibility that it brings. In contrast, Alex considers it to be a price-related question and prefers to borrow or rent if the product is expensive. All interviewees agreed that “We are foreign of everything that is new” and prefer to receive feedback regarding a service or product before trying it themselves. Hence, a safety net is created to avoid spending unnecessary money. Alex wishes to minimize the risk of negative experiences and thus prefers to wait until the market is mature. Robin believes that skepticism exist until evidence is given that it actually works, even if the person is curious towards it. The level of skepticism is perceived to be the most essential element whether or not to participate in new activities.
5.6.3 Decision-Making

Searching for reviews online, e.g. Google and TripAdvisor, is one of the first actions the interviewees take before reaching a final decision; “I believe my decisions are often based on others’ evaluations”. The reviews serve the purpose of eliminating alternatives with negative comments and hence prevent making a bad decision. To find the relevant reviews Charlie stated that the process begins with identifying the actual need and preferences. Robin stated that the process of finding relevant reviews is easier when approaching selected acquaintances since their knowledge is perceived to be more honest and thus becoming more trustworthy than an online review. Robin and Charlie further specified that reviews pay a more important role in their decision-making depending on price and perceived risk with the purchase; “There’s a lot more that could go wrong if you buy a product for 10 000 SEK rather than 100 SEK”. Kim added that the frequency of use impact the decision whether to buy or not. Alex agreed that family and friends are often approached for an evaluation and that their input influences the decision although it might not reflect Alex’s own preferences. Charlie also proclaimed that “I find it more enjoyable to read reviews” resulting in a proposal of alternatives to be evaluated together with the domestic partner.

“I got caught up in the Apple-hype” explains Alex’s worst purchase. Rather than reflecting on the actual need before the purchase, Alex was affected by an imagined need created by others. This resulted in the product not being used and hence perceived to be the worst purchase made, which was reinforced in the interview with Charlie. Continuing, Robin announced that dissatisfaction occurs when the expectations are not met and that the worst combo is paying a higher price for a worse alternative. This happened when purchasing a product from a previously used and trusted brand, which contributed to an inadequate screening process. Buying the familiar brand’s premium product was associated with receiving a better product, making Robin deem reviews as unnecessary. Besides the familiarity, the price is perceived to be an indication of quality, e.g. Charlie expects a higher quality and better service at hotels than hostels since they are often more expensive. To further ensure a high quality Robin prefers to examine a product in a physical store if the features could vary. It was also expressed by other interviewees that physical stores are preferred if an online-purchase is too much of a hassle. All interviewees express a variety of criteria when making a purchase decision. Most references were in connection to accommodation where the discovered criteria were; price, location, tidiness and comfortability. However, Robin believes that the criteria can vary depending on context and that the decision can differ if more people are involved, e.g. a family traveling with children might value comfortability higher than price. Satisfaction is according to Kim achieved when the product or service exceeds expectations and offer a better and more efficient solution. Services that “Put flavor to life” and products fulfilling a need are valued by all interviewees and considered worth paying for. While Kim associates spending time at hotel with a feeling of being tended to, a higher service is expected and desired. In contrast Robin who prefers to spend time outside the hotel and does not require the same extent of service. In addition, the interviewees expressed that the decision might be affected by factors such as a relation to the company, the design of the product or the company’s values and participation in sustainable activities.
5.6.4 Behavior

“People don’t want to change”, “People do as they’ve always done” and “I guess I’m a bit of a slow adopter” are viewpoints expressed by the interviewees. Charlie believes that the behavior of not using collaborative consumption firms could be explained by old habits. Not reflecting on alternatives to traditional options at time of purchase was perceived to be the main obstacle. However, Charlie believes that the obstacle will be diminished after the interview since a reflection of collaborative consumption alternatives has occurred. Additionally, Alex deemed that inexperience contributes to an avoidance of new behaviors and elaborated by stating that it creates a large threshold. Kim believes that changing oneself and learning a new behavior is exhausting. Kim further perceives that people are not using collaborative consumption firms as they have not existed long enough and it takes time to adapt. Alex explained that the lack of participation is due to the fact that the opportunity has not presented itself although situations where the possibility of using such alternatives was described. However, the behavior was justified by saying “The others preferred to use traditional options, so I obliged and did what everyone else wanted”. Some of the interviewees used Airbnb as an example and explained that the service has not been used due only traveling within Sweden, which is mainly to visit and stay with friends and family. Kim stated that the resisting behavior could be explained by a perceived absence of collaborative consumption firms and that there is a slack demand for such alternatives, meaning that demand controls whether an innovative idea will be successful or not.

A majority of the interviewees are participating in sharing activities by borrowing and renting products or services but the activity is limited to neighbors, family and friends where no compensation is expected. Kim revealed to have engaged in similar activities where there was no company involved but rather based on an existing network. It appears that sharing is believed to occur on a more regular basis between closely related people with similar preferences. As mentioned earlier by Robin, an ownership is preferred due to the flexibility it brings. However, Robin clarified that lending products to family members and friends is acceptable even if the flexibility is compromised. While Alex expressed a wish to interact with strangers the behavior is not acted out since it is not beheld as a common norm in Sweden. “I would be labeled as a crazy-person” is Alex’s prejudice of others reaction such behavior. Two main reasons for starting a conversation were presented; to give praise or to criticize. When approached, Alex reluctantly keeps the conversation alive to not be perceived as impolite. Approaching strangers is also an obstacle for Robin since it is perceived as an uncomfortable situation due to the uncertainty of the person’s reaction. Even if an interaction with strangers was expressed as a barrier, one of the interviewees acknowledged the monetary benefits to be the key determinant whether or not to participate.

Some of the interviewees perceive collaborative consumption alternatives to be more appealing for a younger generation. Kim believes that the younger generation has a desire to display their experiences by using various social media platforms and are more concerned of their personal brand, whereas the older generation is at risk of lagging behind by holding on to the perceived benefits of ownership. Robin believes that the younger generation will accept the concept to a wider extent since computers and high-technology solutions have been a major part of their upbringing. Furthermore, they are considered to be more open-minded to innovative solutions due to the dynamic lifestyle
of being everywhere and explore everything while at the same time build a career. Robin continued by expressing a concern of the disadvantages the technological-evolution causes by dividing and excluding people from the society due to the inability to adapt. To overcome this obstacle the platforms must, according to the interviewees, be user-friendly in combination with a high functionality and secure payments to make the process as simple as possible. Nevertheless, one of the younger interviewees confessed to never having tried online-shopping while one of the older interviewees is a frequent online-shopper due to the variety of goods. “If I see a new cracker in the store I throw myself at it” and “If I see something that looks cool I rush into it” are statements that draw attention to how the curiosity is reflected in some of the interviewees’ behavior. Following up on Robin’s curiosity, the behavior is displayed by constantly subscribing to newsletter from various trend spotters and blogs, fearless of being the first adopter. However, if the trend does not catch on quickly the interest is lost, resulting in Robin returning to past behaviors. Robin further admitted that the curiosity does not always translate into a purchase. On the other hand, “I let others try it first and wait until I hear good things about it” and “Waiting until it becomes more established” are quotes from the other interviewees reflecting more contained behaviors. Charlie implied a hesitation towards collaborative consumption and secondhand alternatives resulting in paying a higher price for the perceived benefits of being a traditional consumer.

5.6.5 Sustainability

The topic of sustainability was raised in all interviews since collaborative consumption is assumed to be a response to the anti-consumption movement. Robin acknowledged that companies with a corporate social responsibility influence the choice of brand. All interviewees described a sustainable behavior to various extents where the separation of waste was a common denominator. Alex expressed the main reason for sorting waste to be an action of minimizing the ecological footprint whereas the other interviewees also point to the personal benefits. Those benefits are related to everything from the economic winnings to the feel-good feeling and the avoidance of unpleasant smell. The younger respondents expressed the behavior to be a habit since they have grown up in a society with a deep-rooted sustainable mindset. Alex stated that “It has become second nature” and that not sorting certain waste is perceived to be “A deadly sin”. Kim believes the raised awareness among the younger generation will lead to a new trend within sustainable behavior. On the contrary, the older respondents declared that the environmental concerns did not exist when they were growing up and is thus relatively new. Robin mentioned that the behavior stretches back around ten years when new regulations concerning the households were implemented in Umeå. A raised awareness and civic information has influenced the respondents in the way they participate. While Robin has increased the sorting of waste, Alex has refrained from sorting colored and transparent glass due to a new awareness of it being unnecessary. Furthermore, quotes such as; “It is not that much more complicated than putting everything in the same bin” and “It is a matter of convenience, we’ve become worse after we moved to a new place that is not equipped to sort waste” highlighted that convenience is vital for the interviewees to maintain a sustainable behavior. If the sustainable behavior is perceived to be too time consuming or if it demands too much effort, the behavior will not be carried out despite previous mentioned benefits.
All interviewees expressed a usage of secondhand markets. The object must be perceived to be of value for the buyer while still providing economic benefits in order for the interviewees to consider secondhand options. The majority of the interviewees prefer to give or throw away belongings if the economic benefit does not outweigh the effort of selling. Furniture, sports equipment and interior decor are the main objects that the interviewees purchase on the secondhand market due to the lower prices and uniqueness of the products. Clothes are avoided since the assortment is considered unsatisfying and sometimes unsanitary as well as technology if the quality cannot be determined. In the cases when the product is estimated to be infrequently used Alex and Kim prefer other options such as leasing and renting; “Why should you own a really nice boat that costs a tremendous amount of money, if you only are going to use it once? It is impossible to buy everything, it is not sustainable”. Apart from saving money, Kim mentioned that leasing a car offers advantages such as included car washing, insurances and changing of tires. Owning a car is according to Robin a Western World luxury, but one that is enjoyed due to its convenience. However, Alex explained that public transport is more convenient than a car when the connections are good or when traveling to places where parking is hard to find. If the public transport is perceived to be too much of a hassle and requires too much time and effort, traveling by car is preferred.
6. STUDY ON GROUP LEVEL

This chapter will concentrate on explaining all necessary details on how the study on group level was carried out. The authors will illustrate the entire process starting with explaining the preparation, the creation of the framework and how the focus groups were conducted. The chapter will then concentrate on how the findings were interpreted and processed and how the participants’ anonymity has been maintained. The last part of the chapter focuses on presenting the findings from the focus groups.

6.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a suitable method when specific information is sought from a particular group of individuals (Stewart et al., 2007, p.51). The authors specifically selected the participants as representatives of the investigated population. When the study is applying an exploratory design to investigate an unexplored topic, a more unstructured focus group is useful. This approach will enable the participants to discuss the topics they deem interesting and relevant rather than being steered by the moderator (Morgan, 1997, p.40). Nevertheless, the moderator needs to regulate the group to avoid the participants diverging too far from the relevant topic (Stewart et al., 2007, p.69-70). One of the authors was thus selected as moderator and administered the discussion to prolong wanted topics. Furthermore, the researchers need to consider the cohesiveness of the group, referring to their similarities in qualities, views and their perceived purpose of participating. Group cohesiveness is vital to achieve interaction between the participants and it might prove problematic to perform the focus group if the views differ extremely (Stewart et al., 2007, p.25-26). It is important to keep in mind that the interaction will develop according to the participants’ personality traits. Whereas some possess a more dominant personality others might be more approval seeking or possess a tendency to avoid conflict. This will result in some participants taking the part of influencer while others allow themselves to become influenced in their views and behavior (Stewart et al., 2007, p.23).

6.2 Preparations

Time pressure, a limited budget and ethical considerations are three elements that will affect the preparation process of the focus groups (Morgan, 1997, p.31). Cost due to travel or to pay for the moderator could be major expenses when conducting focus groups. However, these factors were not perceived as limitations for the thesis at hand since the focus groups were moderated by the researchers and conducted within a close geographical area. It is time consuming to plan and conduct focus groups are, especially the recruitment of participants and the analysis of the findings (Morgan, 1997, p.33). Due to the awareness of the time needed for preparing the focus groups the authors started to recruit people as early in the research process as possible. The ethical considerations in focus groups are similar to other qualitative methods, however one distinct issue is that anonymity of the participants are jeopardized since all individual responses are shared with others (Morgan, 1997, p.32; Stewart et al., 2007, p.43).
Focus group are mainly used as a qualitative method when the objective is to acquire insights of various perspectives, thus the discussion should be relatively unorganized and instead focus on a limited amount of topics (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.510). The focus groups conducted in the study was, as previously stated, semi-structured and guided by a framework developed from the interviews. A framework is beneficial since it will assist the moderator to keep the discussion within the necessary topics and is primary used to support the progression of the discussion (Stewart et al., 2007, p.51, 61). However, the interaction among the participants should be the main objective and the researchers might therefore at times relinquish the role as moderator in order to discover insights developed by a natural conversation (Finch & Lewis, 2003, p.171-172). The framework is further recommended to consist of maximum five to six topics to emphasize and enhance each participant’s involvement in the various topics (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003, p.123). Two different principles could be used when creating the guide. One option is to organize the discussion by starting with addressing what the authors deem to be the most important questions and topics. Alternatively, the discussion could be structured to start with more general questions and progress to focus more deeply on the various themes (Stewart et al., 2007, p.61). These two principles could be applied alone, however it is perceived as inappropriate when the topics are closely related to each other (Stewart et al., 2007, p.61). This is in line with the thesis at hand making the authors address the most important topics in an early phase of the discussion and investigate the various themes by starting off with general questions. Each theme was deeply discussed before moving on to topics engendered by the discussion or topics that were perceived next in the importance order.

6.3 Creating Framework

As previously mentioned, the four preliminary interviews were conducted to create a framework to be later used in the following focus groups. Morgan (1997, p.22) suggests that such a method is helpful as it provides the researchers with a sense of how the respondents react to certain topics. Those insights could thus be used to generate a discussion at once. The main purpose of having a framework is to function as guidance for the discussion (Stewart et al., 2007, p.60). Morgan (1997, p.47) further states that the usage of a framework is helpful since the researchers partly remain control of the group synergy. Furthermore, the guide helps to ensure that the discussion will cover the essential parts relevant for the study.

The interviews were based on five key topics; Awareness, Attitude, Personality traits, Sustainability and Consumption. These topics were however modified during the coding process and the findings were presented within the five high-order codes; Awareness, Attitudes, Decision-making, Behavior and Sustainability. The findings from the interviews were analyzed and the high-order codes used in the presentation were further modified when creating the framework. The new key topics for the focus groups were thus; Attitudes, Decision-making, Behavior, and Consumption and the framework consisted of twelve predetermined questions (Appendix 3). The former high-order code “awareness” was implemented within the attitude since the findings revealed that the attitudes was to some extent created by the respondents awareness of the firms and the concept as whole. The authors chose to categorize the questions within the new key topics to achieve a coherent structure of the discussion, which is recommended (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.475). However, a specific order of the topics and the questions were not
determined beforehand and was thus to some extent affected by the responses of the participants. Since focus groups are mainly used to gain insights in a specific field by inspiring a discussion among the participants, open and not leading questions are preferred (Stewart et al., 2007, p.63). Hence, the authors phrased open questions to minimize the risk of shaping the participants answers. The researchers further ensured that the questions were phrased with a simple language to ensure that the participant would understand what was being asked for and avoid misunderstanding.

6.4 Conducting Focus Groups

The location for where the focus groups should take place is an important element that the researchers should consider since it has a great influence on the group synergy and the progress of the discussion (Stewart et al., 2007, p.57). The location should correspond with the requirement from both the researchers and the participants meaning that all parties should feel comfortable during the session. Public establishments, e.g. school buildings or library are often perceived to create a neutral environment. However, options such as the researchers’ workplace or a participant’s home could be suitable depending on the purpose of the study (Morgan, 1997, p.54). The participants are more likely to accept to participate if it does not involve too much effort to reach the location (Stewart et al., 2007, p.57). The room for the focus group should be equipped with a table as it will minimize a rigid atmosphere and create a more natural set-up (Stewart et al., 2007, p.91). The researchers could further provide each participant with a nametag to make the interaction between the members more personal and to simplify the process of elaborating on the others answers (Stewart et al., 2007, p.91).

All members participating in the focus groups were in accordance with the procedure of the interviews provided with the introductory letter preparing and informing the individuals of what to be expected during the session (Appendix 1). The letter of consent was further signed upon arrival to ensure that all participators agreed to the stated terms (Appendix 2). A short presentation of the authors, the study and the aim of the session were held before starting the discussion. All participants were further asked to give a short presentation to make everyone familiar with each other and increase comfortability. The first focus group was held in a study room within the facilities of Umeå University. The majority of the participants had studied or was studying at the university, which made them all familiar with the location creating a perception of easeful atmosphere. The first focus group took place in the afternoon since it was desired by all of the participants. Food was served during the session to minimize tiredness and stress. The second session took place at lunchtime at one of the participant’s home since the participants preferred it. This minimized the effort to participate since all members in that session were living close to each other. Similar to the first focus group, food was served upon arrival to enhance a relaxing atmosphere and reduce the possibility of tension of being in someone else's home. Nametags were considered to be unnecessary in both sessions due to the small number of participants in each group. The authors believed that the participants would be able to remember each other’s names, which were proven to be right during the discussion. The two focus groups were conducted during the same week to reduce the possibility of being influenced by external factors. The respective focus groups lasted for approximately one and a half hour since the authors noticed that the participants started to lose concentration. The authors moderated the focus group to ensure that everyone had the
opportunity to contribute to the discussion and to avoid the risk of one participant dominating the session.

6.5 Coding of Focus Groups

As previously described, a template analysis was carried out for the study on individual level. However, since the findings from the focus groups aimed to create a final theory, a grounded theory analysis strategy was more suitable. This strategy focuses on building and generating a theory based on key topics derived from the data (Saunders et al., 2009, p.509). Grounded theory is further used when investigating an area where existing knowledge is limited (Goulding, 2002, p.42). A grounded theory strategy is according to Goulding (2002, p.50) commonly applied when aiming for understanding human behavior, which is in line with the purpose of the thesis at hand.

The first step in grounded theory is open coding, which involves going through the data line by line. At this stage, all data is important and everything should thus be coded (Oktay, 2012, p.57). Two types of codes can be applied, namely substantive and theoretical codes. A substantive code is based on the actual expressions and ideas of the respondents whilst a theoretical code is based on the interviewees’ expressions that the researcher can connect to the theoretical framework (Oktay, 2012, p.55-56). The researcher is cautioned to rely too much on theoretical codes since existing theories may cause bias to the collected data. Instead, it is recommended to code statements that express emotions, behavior, beliefs, perceived norms and assumptions (Oktay, 2012, p.56-58). The identified codes are then grouped together into concepts based on common traits to organize and reduce the amount of codes. Similar concepts can further be grouped together into categories (Oktay, 2012, p.60). The second step is called axial coding which includes a deeper investigation of the identified concepts to establish relationships between them (Oktay, 2012, p.75). The researcher can discover the reason for certain expressions and reveal hidden connections by considering conditions of the situation (Oktay, 2012, p.76). These will serve as hypotheses that might be included in the concluding theory and which will be tested in the final stage of the coding, called selective coding (Oktay, 2012, p.81). Selective coding involves the development of one or multiple core categories based on recurring categories discovered in the collected data. When the core categories are established, the researchers will focus their analysis on these and neglect the one without any connection to the investigated topic (Oktay, 2012, p.82).

In line with the abovementioned recommendations, the authors began with interpreting the entire data and allocated each line with a substantive code. Applying theoretical codes were not applicable since the thesis at hand was conducted with an inductive approach and that methods would thus harm the analysis. The authors continued on with grouping together all substantial codes with similar meaning and examining a potential relationship between them. The final core categories were developed and identified in the last step of the coding process after a thorough analysis of the groups created in the second step. Some codes were disregarded due to their irrelevance and to give room for more frequently occurring codes. The final codes developed are seen in the figure below.
6.6 Presentation of Participants

The authors decided to present all responses anonymously within the final core categories developed during the coding process in order to maintain a coherence of the findings. However, the authors decided to separate the findings from the two sessions in order to examine if any differences between the age groups existed. Compared to the interviews where the findings were presented by using pseudonym, the authors found it unnecessary to use such a method for the focus groups. Since the interaction with the other participants encouraged them to elaborate on previous responses, presenting the responses from each individual could create confusion for the reader and a risk for misunderstanding. Although the authors chose to not present individual responses, the wording of the quotes have been recounted to the extent possible considering interruptions and translation from Swedish.
6.7 Empirical Findings 20-30

6.7.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption

Existing Beliefs

In accordance with the framework (Appendix 3), the authors chose to start the discussion by raising the question on how the initial contact with collaborative consumption or any firm within the concept occurred. Some participants expressed an awareness of local collaborative consumption firms in Umeå, known as “Delbart.se”. Additionally, some participants compared it with similar services such as car-sharing groups on Facebook. The participants continued to discuss the perceived benefits and limitations of collaborative consumption alternatives compared to traditional firms. They quickly agreed that the main benefit is the perceived ability to match preferences with purpose to a wider extent. The participants believe that collaborative consumption contributes to a greater range of options, more exclusive and before unattainable alternatives; “You can get a stunning and unbelievable view, which is not offered by the hotels”. Nevertheless, collaborative consumption alternatives are believed by the majority of the participants to be cheaper and more convenient options since they are supposed to eliminate unnecessary intermediaries. A perception was expressed that the firms rely on a low price as a competitive advantage in order to attract people to use it. However, one of the participants argued for this not being the case by mentioning that some Airbnb accommodation are more expensive than hotels. Additionally, the participants affirmed that collaborative consumption could induce positive environmental results but after some discussion also concluded that it could induce negative consequences. They perceive these alternatives as cheaper options, which contributes to an ability to afford more travels and a less sustainable behavior due to the higher frequency of flying. Nevertheless, the participants also agreed that the usage of collaborative consumption alternatives could contribute to a more sustainable environment. They believe that a sharing of already existing resources will induce a decreased consumption. The possibility of a decreased demand for traditional options could result in fewer hotels being built or a reduced production of taxis since the products offered by collaborative consumption firms already exist.

Perceived Barriers

The participants further assumed that people are hesitant towards the concept due to a lack of accustomedness. They perceive collaborative consumption to be a relatively new and foreign phenomenon, which contributes to a sense of the firms not being established. Whereas the participants perceive the processes for traditional options, e.g. booking and staying at a hotel, to be clearly understood, they do not express the same perceived clarity regarding collaborative consumption. The standardized process of checking in and the ability to receive help are elements that the participants have become accustomed to, creating an uncertainty for entering new processes; “It feels like problems are more likely to occur with collaborative consumption firms, what do I do then?”. Thus, they all agreed that reviews are of high importance within the concept of collaborative consumption and that the peer-providers rely on positive feedback to strengthen their position. To further establish trust between the provider and user, the participants also discussed different options and concluded that both the provider and
user should be reviewed. Moreover, one participant raised the subject of insecurity against collaborative consumption since “You don’t know what you will get”, which the other participants agreed to. They discussed that the risk of being scammed or fooled is perceived lower when purchasing services or products provided by companies with a traditional business model since “You know what you will get”. Pictures and descriptions differing from reality are perceived to occur so rarely within traditional firms that it does not influence the participants’ confidence toward those companies. However, they point out that a traditional company does not automatically infer an assurance of being a credible firm; “You should always take pictures if you rent a car to protect yourself if anything happens”. On the contrary, the participants deliberated that people dare to use the Swedish companies “Blocket” and “Tradera” even if there is a risk for receiving a product or service that does not correspond with the displayed pictures.

**Perceived Target Group**

The participants continued by raising the question regarding the actual target group for using collaborative consumption alternatives. They were quick to agree the perceived target group to be younger people and those who are problem-solvers in case something unpredictable happens. Additionally, the participants believe that some people are more willing to try collaborative consumption alternatives because of certain personality traits. Whereas some people are perceived to be more eager to try new things, some are believed to be more reluctant. The participants describe the early adopters to have a daring personality, with a willingness to take risks in exchange for the possibility of new experiences. On the contrary, ditherers are perceived to bide until enough positive reviews have come to their attention. Additionally, the participants disagreed over what a daring personality entails. This led to a discussion of the difficulty of identifying someone with a daring personality since this can clearly be affected by each individual’s own definition of trying new things; “Trying a new spinner could induce a feeling of treading on thin ice for some, while others need to visit a new continent because they’ve already experienced Europe”.

**6.7.2 Forming the Attitude**

**Influencers**

The participants’ initial contact with the concept collaborative consumption was expressed to stem from acquaintances’ recommendations regarding the company Airbnb. However, it should be pointed out that one participant was unsure of how the initial contact happened but agreed with the others when they suggested that it was probably recommendations. Positive experiences of the firm was shared through word-of-mouth and gave an impression of providing user-friendly services with high flexibility. Furthermore, the satisfied users emphasized the credibility of the service provider, which reduced the perceived risk of being scammed and was expressed to strengthen the participants’ positive attitude. Additionally, they revealed that the knowledge of previous users reduces the insecurity and doubt when forming an attitude towards unfamiliar companies. The positive recommendations regarding Airbnb resulted in a piqued interest where the participant decided to further investigate the concept. The awareness of collaborative consumption firms was also explained to be originating from an impression of raised media attention in the last year. Media was
perceived to highlight the negative consequences, for instance legislation concerns regarding tax avoidance and disrespecting tenancy agreements. However, the participants declared that negative press did not significantly influence their attitudes. Additionally, they agreed that opinions from friends and family have a stronger influence on their attitudes compared to external sources since skepticism towards traditional marketing strategies is expressed to exist. It was discussed whether or not repeatedly hearing positive experiences will influence their attitude towards a service or product and all participants agreed that this was the case. They concluded that reviews from external sources are less trusted and more dependent on a large quantity to form the attitude; “A person with 100 reviews is more trustworthy regardless if some are negative, compared to someone with only 2 positive reviews”. A large amount of reviews are believed to diminish the possibility of the company itself publishing dishonest and misleading comments. Moreover, a reservation towards external opinions was affirmed since the participants believe that unsatisfied customers have a higher intention of expressing their dissatisfaction. Satisfied customers are on the contrary not perceived to be as inclined to share their experiences as long as the service does not significantly exceed their expectations.

A societal shift of preferences implicating that people prefer having access to products or services instead of owning them was acknowledged. The participants view the diminishing value of ownership as positive as it contributes to a more sustainable consumption. It was declared that a sustainable concern has been a vital part of their upbringing although the participants possess varying definitions disagreeing of what sustainable consumption entails. Whereas some claim that buying organic food and eating less meat is a type of sustainable behavior, others state that it is more related to their own shopping behavior and that a sustainable behavior is reached when reusing or reselling products. Nevertheless, the participants concurred that the definition of sustainability includes a sort of conscious consumption, meaning consuming durable goods. When discussing the reasons for participating in a sustainable behavior, they all agreed that a concern for future generations exists as an ulterior motive in their own consumption. However, after one participant admitted that personal benefits, such as warmer summers, in certain situations outweigh the consideration of how the rest of the world is affected, which was affirmed by the others. They further elaborated on their own positive stance towards sharing to be partially originating from the perceived flexibility and other practical aspects rather than monetary savings. The sense of burden that ownership is perceived to bring results in a reluctance of owning unnecessary products, making services such as the ability to rent a trailer or a drill offered by their housing cooperative to be highly welcomed.

Social Norms

Besides the economic benefits and reduced burden of ownership the participants believe that services within a housing cooperative help to establish a community creating a natural entrance for getting to know their neighbors. Expectations from others are expressed to significantly affect the participants’ own stance regarding certain behavior, such as buying organic food or when to have kids. They further agreed that expectations influence the forming or changing of their positive or negative attitude; “My circle of friends expect me to eat vegetarian food so now I feel like a bad person if I eat meat”. The participants also raised the subject of societal trends strong impact on individuals’ beliefs. The intention to participate is expressed to increase if an extensive amount of
people are perceived to be involved in an activity; “All of a sudden everyone in my proximity is buying a house, which made me want to buy a house as well”. It was further revealed that their attitude of a product or service is influenced by society’s perception of high status. The participants’ objective to buy a certain brand or product could thus be due to external factors or to brag. This was most applicable to products or services that are exposed to other people, e.g. computers and cellphones or experiences that could be displayed on social media platforms. The participants admitted a desire to buy new products without an existing need, especially technology, just for the fun of it. The participants elaborated on the fact that a decade ago, people were willing and accepting to switch off the telephone line in order to connect to Internet, whereas people today are getting irritated if the Internet is not as fast as it usually is. The participants perceive today’s need for high accessibility to be a main influencer in forming people’s attitude towards buying new technology. Societal trends could, according to the participants, affect the attitude either positively or negatively. Ownership was previously perceived to induce a high status creating a need for irrelevant products but the participants interpret it to be less important today. Additionally, visiting flea markets have long been regarded as an option for people with a limited budget, however the participants explain that nowadays it is common for those with a stable economy to visit them as well. They admitted that their own attitude towards flea markets has changed in step with the societal trend.

**Multiple Attitudes**

All participants raised issues concerning trust towards service providers of collaborative consumption alternatives. Some of the participants admitted their own hesitation to be a consequence of a fear of the unknown and an uncertainty regarding the process. A majority of the participants lack knowledge of insurances towards these types of firms and perceive the risk of being scammed as higher even if they acknowledge that the risk always exists. They believe that collaborative consumption relies on an established trust between service provider and user; “As a service provider I need to be sure that my belongings won’t get stolen or destroyed and as a user I need to trust the provider not to accuse me of stealing”. Distrust towards the peer-provider is expressed since they are perceived to display the service or product in a biased way to maximize their own profit. Reviews are believed to partially overcome the distrust and as mentioned earlier, the amount of reviews are the main aspect considered. Continuing, the participants indicated that people need more time to adjust in order to establish a sense of trust. Some of the participants admitted a hesitant attitude towards performing an unfamiliar activity even if they sometimes wish that they were more daring, whereas others described themselves to be an early adopter who enjoys trying new things. The ditherers revealed a need for others positive experiences in order to consider trying it themselves, while the early adopters expressed a desire to be amazed and is thus always looking for launches of new services and products.
6.7.3 Evaluation

Strategies

The participants had varying opinions regarding the process before a purchase. Nevertheless, after discussion they concurred that an emerging or a perception of an emerging need is the first step. It was acknowledged that a need could arise when observing a solution to something they did not realize desired. The views started to diverge regarding the following steps as some participants describe a spontaneous purchase behavior while others describe going through a more extended process; “I buy it straight away if I find something I like” compared to “I read reviews, visit the store for my own evaluation and then conduct the purchase. Afterwards I might even write a review”. One participant also included discussing the purchase with a significant other and reflecting on the actual need in order to avoid a spontaneous and unnecessary purchase. A sudden discount is described to be a possible determining factor since the economic savings could be used for other acquisitions without a feeling of guilt. Discounts also affect the participants to purchase products that are not needed at the moment but might be considered as a future need, e.g. buying winter clothes in summer.

Choice Criteria

All participants expressed a strong preference for using products or services that provide a high flexibility and an opportunity to adapt to their own specific needs. The perceived freedom that the high flexibility induces is believed to be greatly valued in today’s society. The preference for non-ownership was expressed as a response to the existing fear of commitment that limits the individual’s mobility. A desire of having a wide range of options was cited, as was an ability to select and filter the alternatives according to price range and specific requirements. The participants concluded that fulfilling a specific purpose or need is the most important element and exemplified this by their choice of accommodation when traveling; “I don’t really care how I live as long as I get to experience what I came there to do” and “I value a nice room if I’m going to spend a lot of time there”. Continuing, the participants declared that the willingness to pay a high price for accommodation diminish if they are only going to use it for sleeping, but increases if they perceive the accommodation to be exclusive and provide value for money. Furthermore, advice from acquaintances regarding a service or product was declared to have a strong impact on their decisions; “I believe that I would be greatly influenced and be more hesitant if you had tried it and would tell me; never do it”. All participants agreed that exceeding or not meeting expectations determine the level of satisfaction after the purchase. However, some disagreement occurred when discussing merely meeting the expectations. While some of the participants believed this would result in satisfaction, others believed that meeting expectations should be taken for granted and thus require more in order to be satisfied. Additionally, the participants revealed that their choice of purchasing certain products at a specific store is influenced by a various range of criteria. The quality of the received service is one factor expressed to have a high impact resulting in a willingness to visit a certain store even if it contributes to more effort. It was discussed how expectations are exceeded and concluded that the deliverance of additional unexpected services or features have a significant impact on satisfaction; “I got a text from Apple after I bought my phone which welcomed me as a customer, it was such a surprise and it made me happy”. Occurrences where the participants received candy and movie tickets with an order
resulted in great satisfaction and the need to share their positive experience with others. They further explained that “It doesn’t have to be a lot, just something extra”, which apart from candy can include a nice treatment in the store or a lower price than was first expected.

6.7.4 Performing the Behavior

Inner Motivation

The participants discussed the motives to perform a behavior and agreed that a high degree of inner motivation needs to exist, especially in order to break a habit. It is believed that a higher inner motivation will abide if a problem is perceived to affect them personally rather than affecting someone they cannot relate to; “If someone I knew would die of a heart attack, I would be more inclined to donate to heart research than I am at the moment”. Continuing, the participants expressed their degree of participation in sustainable behavior to be mostly due to habits and not driven by any inner motivation since they do not perceive the negative consequences to affect them personally. It was further elaborated that strong feelings due to the proximity of the problem is more likely to result in a behavior. In addition to the degree of willingness, it is believed that the individual needs to come to a conclusive decision to perform the intended behavior. Although the ditherers admitted to avoid certain behavior to the extent possible, they declared that some situations unwillingly requires an instant action; “Someone has to be first, all you can do then is hope that you didn’t buy a pig in a poke”.

Social Norms & Preferences

In addition, the participants believe that some actions could be explained by a generational difference; “Our grandparents could save money for years in order to afford buying a refrigerator that would be used for its entire lifetime, whereas people today take an instant loan with the mindset to pay it back later”. The participants continued with expressing that historically, people bought or built a house with the intention of living there forever and that it would be a home for following generations. Present generations are on the contrary perceived to buy a house or an apartment for a temporary usage due to a higher mobility and a believed fear of long-term commitments. The participants expressed that not even purchases associated with a high economic value result in a desire for permanent ownership. Moreover, they explained the younger generation in today’s society to be “The most unreliable one” since people seem to have a tendency to avoid promises in everything from relationships to informal meetings. The participants wants to keep all doors open at all time and thus diminish the risk of missing more exciting events; “If a friend asks me about my plans for next Thursday I usually reply very vague, such as I don’t know right now”. Furthermore, the participants believe that certain behaviors are performed due to others expectations. The individual might not want to participate in an activity but the pressure from others is strong enough to result in a performance anyway. A reference was drawn to the pressure of always possessing the latest technology as to not lag behind your peers as well as a habit to buy without reflection. Nevertheless, it was also admitted that buying new technology is fun and not completely based on peer pressure.
Perceived Control

The participants also claimed that the situation and the perceived risk will affect their behavior. Regardless of the individual possessing a positive attitude towards an alternative, an Uber is not believed to be the first hand choice if a person is in a hurry to the airport, neither is an Airbnb accommodation if you are traveling with children. The risk is not perceived as high if being shared with friends, e.g. traveling together, since they would be able to laugh it off if something went wrong and be more able to adapt to the situation. Continuing, the participants believed that a potential limitation of using such firms when going abroad could originate from a language barrier or lack of travel experience. Insecurity regarding the performance of an activity was explained to be a major obstacle for not executing the intention. However, even if these obstacles contribute to a greater effort it was not assumed to necessarily eliminate the option, merely resulting in avoidance. Additional potential barriers that hinder people to try collaborative consumption alternatives were speculated to include lack of word-of-mouth from previous users and an absent awareness. One of the participants announced that an attempt to use a collaborative consumption alternative, namely Delbart.se, has been made. Nevertheless, lack of responses from other members on the site resulted in an inability to perform the desired behavior. An assurance of the willingness from the other party to participate in a sharing activity is expressed to strongly affect the participants’ own behavior since the person that replies will not be reluctant to participate.

The participants assumed that people rely on previous experiences and perform a routine behavior they have become comfortable with. Hence, collaborative consumption alternatives are not believed to be the obvious choice since people are not perceived to easily break old habits. In order to break a habit, the participants believe the individual needs to be exposed to a more flexible and convenient solution that will make them reflect on why they have never done it like that before. The participants declared that both their own and others expectations must be reasonable when embarking on a new behavior. Without a sense of control the behavior is not perceived to be achievable; “It’s not possible for me to become a rock star if I can neither sing nor play the guitar”. Instead, the participants suggested a need of breaking down the final goal into sub-targets to achieve a sense of control, which in the above example would include taking guitar lessons as a first step. Rather than viewing the lacking guitar skills as an obstacle, they believed that the lessons should be viewed as an opportunity to get closer to your goal. However, even if the action is viewed as an opportunity, obstacles such as price can occur. One of the participants explained that climate change has formed a positive attitude towards buying organic but because of the perceived high price this behavior is not performed as often as the participant would have liked. Nevertheless, the participants presented the fact that people basically always afford to buy new things if they take it in installments. An annoyance of the products’ shortcomings can easily be resolved due to the perceived effortlessness of buying new things.
6.8 Empirical Findings 30-60

6.8.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption

Perceived Barriers

All participants described their initial contact with a collaborative consumption firm to stem from recommendations from friends and colleagues and that the awareness is mostly limited to the company Airbnb. One participant also mentioned that social media created an awareness of the existence of collaborative consumption alternatives. Furthermore, the knowledge of their existence does not extend past a year for any of the participants, with a majority admitting that they have only known about the service a few months. They acknowledged that the companies would be perceived to be a scam without recommendations from acquaintances, but even so some hesitation regarding the concept persists; “It’s impossible to know what you’ll receive”. The participants discussed concerns regarding whether you will receive what the service provider promised and what insurances apply if that is not the case. Legislation concerns and their impact on social system were expressed and the assumption was made that the service providers of collaborative consumption firms avoid taxes, which contributes to less money for the state. They concurred that collaborative consumption is the service providers’ market and that the exchange will occur on the provider’s terms. A perceived inadequacy of maintenance and regulations was raised, leading the participants to a worry regarding lack of security. They discussed that the provider will not be as inclined to manage maintenance and that the risk of being taken advantage of is higher since they do not know who to turn to if help is needed.

Perceived Drivers

The participants admitted that they do not possess enough knowledge about the price difference, but collaborative consumption firms are perceived to be cheaper options. Continuing, they believe that the cheaper price could be an attractive attribute that will pique people’s curiosity and persuade them to opt for these alternatives, even though the quality might vary. In addition, they perceive collaborative consumption firms to offer more customized options, especially when comparing Airbnb with traditional hotels; “I think you can choose between more locations and facilities, such as a washing machine or a fully equipped kitchen”. The participants acknowledged differing opinions regarding the environmental effects of collaborative consumption. However, they concluded that a concept based on sharing is an innovative idea to reduce the “Crazy consumption” that exists in today’s society and would thus generate environmental benefits. Optimizing the utility of existing products is believed to be a better alternative to meet the increased demand compared to constantly producing new products. Hence, collaborative consumption is not perceived to have a negative impact on the environment since the product already exists. However, some participants still emphasized the possibility of new productions to induce more sustainable solutions, e.g. by constructing more energy efficient buildings. These effects could therefore outweigh the negative consequences of new constructions implying that a reduced consumption is not the only solution to save the environment.
6.8.2 Forming the Attitude

Existing Beliefs & Influencers

The participants discussed the importance of the ability to adapt their own preferences to a specific purpose when considering an option. Most of their examples referred to situations that occur when traveling. The access to a kitchen with cooking facilities is for example perceived to be highly valuable for families traveling with kids since it will reduce the effort of dining at restaurants. The participants discussed and appraised the fact of having accommodation similar to their regular house with all the included facilities, e.g. washing machine. However, one participant raised and convinced the others of the fact that it is dependent on other variables such as the length of the stay or the distance traveled. Whereas laundry facilities might be highly valuable for families with young children going on vacation for two weeks, the same service might not be considered as a benefit for a group of friends on a five-day vacation. Hence, the participants concluded that the purpose must be considered before potential options could be explored. Additionally, the participants elaborated on how preferences change over time and how it influences the choice criteria. It is perceived that some people desire the effortlessness of following fixed steps that do not require much mental effort while others prefer arranging everything by themselves. The participants expressed that their perception of product or service is further influenced by what others perceive to be of high status. They acknowledged being more willing to pay a higher price for those products or services since they connect the price to better quality and a higher value. However, some participants admitted that the main reason for choosing some brands or products is simply due to the external design. However, the participant disclosed some distrust towards traditional companies as well and stated; “It is really hard to know what you’re actually buying as a consumer”. For instance, the label on a baby product might state; “Controlled by the Asthma & Allergy Foundation” or display the Nordic Swan Eco-label but when examining the list of contents several substances that are allergy forming can be found. The participants declared a higher willingness to put more effort in searching for information and reading reviews if it concerns a product or service aligned with their own interest. However, even if they read reviews, they expressed that recommendations from acquaintances or noticing others using a certain product or service influence their own attitude to a greater extent; “Hearing or seeing that someone else has tried it before me makes me feel safer and more willing to try it myself”.

Preferences

The participants described a perception of Internet orders to be of low risk since it is frequently used without any problems. E-commerce is believed to usually be a cheaper and more convenient option since the products are delivered straight to your home, which is expressed to increase the participants’ intention to participate in the action. They admitted a preference for using online shopping compared to visiting physical stores; “You get the products straight to your mailbox and you don’t have to worry about bringing two screaming kids, dragging them in and out of the car”. Nevertheless, one participant expressed skepticism towards collaborative consumption firms due to their reliance on the Internet, since a lot of the content is perceived to be scam. However, the others did not reinforce this. Additionally, the participants expressed a preference of receiving the included guarantees that being a traditional consumer entails. The assurance on whom to turn to if a product or service does not fulfill their
expectations is expressed to be a major determining factor when finalizing a decision. However, in order to use the included guarantees offered by traditional firms the economic value of the original product must be high enough to outweigh the effort. The economic factor is further expressed to determine the participants’ positive attitude, “I’m satisfied if the product looks and works as planned, but I will be even happier if I get it at a good price”. Again, they referred to Airbnb and mentioned that booking a trip often involves a lot of money. Hence the participants expressed an unwillingness to spend money on accommodation that have the perceived possibility of being no good. For services, it was added that external factors such as weather or the behavior of other customers determine their own attitude; “I wouldn’t be happy if I bought a trip to a warm and sunny place and it ended up raining the entire week”.

Multiple Attitudes

It was further discussed that a certain degree of inner motivation needs to abide and that the individual must be responsive to change. Some participants thus revealed some negative attitudes towards participating in certain activities due to the lack of personal benefits; “We don’t use energy-saving light bulbs at home, we prefer the cozy atmosphere that the unsustainable option provides”. The participants admitted the ability to identify the negative consequences of their behavior as essential in order for them to consider making a change; “I need to get it in black and white and see how my way affect the environment”. One participant explained that installing solar panels has been considered, but the high price was not worth it since the environmental benefits would not be noticeable if not everyone else was doing it as well. Instead, some participants argued for it being the responsibility of others, referring first and foremost to other countries to act in a sustainable manner. In addition, the participants expressed skepticism towards society’s efforts to actually resolve the climate change; “People can travel all the way to the moon but they haven’t found a fuel for a car that is more environmental friendly”. The participants continued by elaborating on that people must be able to see beyond the higher purchase price of e.g. an electric car and realize the environmental benefits. In contrast, some participants perceive their own sustainable behavior to detain the climate change one step at a time and wants to contribute with as much as possible even if it results in higher expenses. Thus, rather than owning unnecessary assets, it is believed that a joint ownership for the block where everyone contributes with infrequently used products would be appreciated. The opportunity to include cars was also discussed since some participants own two cars that are rarely used at the same time. However, all participants agreed that these alternatives require an increased effort and could create an inconvenience if the product is not available when needed. Hence, they still hold on to the belief that there are a lot of benefits with ownership since they can avoid hassle; “I own a crazy amount of stuff that I don’t use that frequently, which might seem unnecessary but it’s so nice to have them close by when I actually need them”. The participants expressed that they do not believe there is anything wrong with buying products that will be infrequently used, as long as it is not a recurring purchase; “I reckon that people should be allowed to buy a drill even if they are not going to use it a lot, as long as they don’t buy the latest model every year”.

55
6.8.3 Evaluation

Strategies

The decision whether to go through with a purchase or not was described by the participants to start with an emerging need. However, they admitted that this does not have to be an actual need but could include a perceived desire; “I might not actually need that lantern, but if I can imagine the perfect place for it, it suddenly becomes essential to light up that dark corner”. Some participants acknowledged that future needs are considered and that they can purchase products they are not in need of at the moment. The others agreed to the behavior as long as it could save them some money. Depending on the purpose of the product or service and the economic risk involved, the participants described different processes after identifying the initial need. If the purchase is considered to be cheap and affordable, they described that the purchase will be spontaneous based on a feeling rather than a reasoned process. All participants expressed a spontaneous purchase behavior to be true when it comes to re-purchases, where the participants already know what they want depending on previous purchases. They described that this can sometimes have the consequence of buying unnecessary products but that it does not matter as long as it was cheap. If the product does not meet the participant’s expectations, they can simply buy another one. The urgency of the need is also expressed to influence the process; “If a frequently used product suddenly breaks, I will probably just buy a new one without reflecting on any other alternatives”. In contrast, a purchase such as a car is described to involve a high economic risk resulting in the participants performing an investigation to ensure the quality before reaching a final decision.

Choice Criteria

In other cases, the participants described that a search for different alternatives will occur as a next step after the identified need; “I can spend thousands of hours investigating different color options, the cheapest place to buy it and discount coupons”. If the purchase will affect others the participants also expressed that the decision requires more reasonable thinking rather than relying on impulse to ensure good products. Hence, a more elaborate search for alternatives and possible negative attributes are conducted. However, one participant admitted that their evaluation of options and that the final decision is not significantly affected by external factors such as sustainability concerns; “I wouldn’t chose one trip in front of another just because one of them would be better for the environment”. This statement resulted in all participants to acknowledge that travels overall are bad for the environment, while admitting that the sustainability concern is ignored when purchasing travels since their options would become too limited. Continuing, the participants believe that the final decision is dependent on the personality of the actual user of the service or product; “Some people can just run off and take it as it is” compared to “I want everything to be predetermined so I know exactly what is going to happen”. Before making a final decision the participants also declared the importance of reviews to get an unbiased perspective of the product or service. Reviews are perceived to be especially important for online purchases and secondary markets since the risk of being scammed or receiving a product differing from the pictures are believed to be higher. The reviews were expressed to help them eliminate sellers or products that does not reach the desired quality.
6.8.4 Performing the Behavior

Habits

All participants agreed that a lot of an individual’s behavior could be explained by habits. They elaborated on that trying a different action beside the one you are used to requires effort, which can be avoided by relying on previous behavior; “Why should I try something new if I’m used to a certain behavior and everything is working fine?”. Additionally, the participants declared a preference of repeatedly purchasing products or services from the same brand; “I’ve always had an iPhone and I know how they work so why should I bother switching to an Android?”. This was expressed to induce a false assurance of receiving a product or service with the same quality the next time. Some of the participants admitted to rejecting a behavior if the action is perceived to demand too much time and effort; “My spare time is worth more than spending those extra minutes asking my neighbors if I can borrow their drill”. The economic winning of that action was expressed to be too small and thus disregarded due to the higher effort. On the other hand, the participants admitted that they would start performing an action if the economic winnings would be high enough. Some further declared a usage of secondary markets, e.g. “Blocket” and “Tradera” as long as the activity is effortless and not too time-consuming. The minimized effort was thus explained to be one of the reasons for why the participants chose familiar companies. The participants discussed and concluded that a habit should be broken if the individual comes to the realization that the behavior is harmful. Furthermore, they added that it takes a long time to adjust and that others need to demonstrate the success of the new behavior before considering breaking their routines. An enforced behavior was also described to be a catalyst to breaking a habit. One participant described this through an example that contained all the abovementioned elements, in which regular grocery shopping was abandoned in favor of receiving a predetermined menu with the befitting ingredients delivered to your home. The concept has existed for a while and recommendations had created a curiosity to try it. Nevertheless, it was not until an opportunity to try it for free presented itself that this new behavior was embarked upon.

Perceived Control & Inner Motivation

An individual’s willingness to take risks is expressed to be a vital part when changing a behavior. Personality traits are however not perceived to be the only determinant when changing a behavior but the participants concurred that various contexts must be considered. Some participants expressed a higher willingness to take risks when traveling alone and where less people are affected by a potential bad situation; “Two adults can handle almost any situation whereas traveling with kids requires more convenient solutions”. This was however not expressed to eliminate a possible curiosity towards a new product or service, but rather increase the reluctance towards performing the behavior. The participants continued to discuss that vital elements in people’s lives, such as accommodation and means of conveyance are more resistant to change compared to inessential behaviors. Whereas some participants declared a daring behavior if the action only affect them, others affirmed a more skeptical approach independently of the affected people. The ditherers acknowledged that their hesitancy is not due to fear but rather an assurance to see others successfully use a product or service first. Furthermore, the participants admitted to not participating in certain behavior due
to the perceived lack of result of the action. They explained this to be especially true in regard to sustainable behavior since it is “Too late” and no matter what they do, it will not help the environment. Whereas the majority of the participant announced a sustainable behavior to various degrees, some rejected it completely due to a perceived sense of incapability to make an impact. The majority of the participants still engages in sustainable behavior to a certain extent but expressed a lack of control since they believe their actions do not contribute much. They also described that they rank and prioritize behaviors, resulting in participating in some unsustainable behavior as long as they avoid the most harmful for the environment. While the participants declared to perform a sustainable behavior, the discussion made them realize that some of their actions are harmful to the environment as well. When thinking about their own behavior one participant admitted; “I’m always taking the car to the recycling center and I might even leave the car to run empty, what will the environmental benefits be then?”. Moreover, they perceive that the lack of options as a consumer is an obstacle for participating in certain behavior; “I won’t give up my car until they’ve invented an alternative that is just as good” and “I’m trying to buy products without any excess packaging, but most of the times you can’t avoid it”.
7. ANALYSIS

This chapter will compare the empirical findings with existing theories regarding collaborative consumption, attitude-behavior consistency and the decision-making process. In contrast to the presentation of the findings, the authors chose to not separate the analysis of the two focus groups since no significant differences were discovered. The authors did instead separate the analysis of the interviews and the focus groups to investigate if a group setting would impact the participants’ responses. To provide a coherent structure both analysis are presented in accordance with the core-categories identified in the focus groups since they are more comprehensive.

7.1 Analysis of the Interviews

7.1.1 Perception of Collaborative Consumption

Perceived Barriers

The interviewees displayed various levels of knowledge regarding the concept with some of them expressing a deep understanding of the processes and systems used by collaborative consumption firms. In addition, the interviewees declared that raised media awareness has reduced the hesitancy regarding collaborative consumption alternatives and strengthened the positive attitude. However, some announced that they also became more aware of the potential risks. The raised media attention contributed to a better understanding of how collaborative consumption firms take responsibility if or when things do not turn out as expected. This is in contrast to Tussyadiah & Pesonen’s study (2016) that outlined “efficacy” as one of the main barriers since none of the interviewees participate in collaborative consumption regardless of their possessed knowledge. This implies that efficacy is not the main barrier and that possessing the relevant knowledge will not naturally translate into a behavior. Furthermore, Tussyadiah & Pesonen (2016, p.11-12) identified “trust” as a barrier, including skepticism of online-based platforms. The interviewees did however not agree with this being a problem since secure online-payments are taken for granted in today’s society. Instead, the interviewees expressed some distrust towards the peer-provider. This was especially in regard to Airbnb where a worry whether or not there would be an apartment upon arrival or not were expressed. This aligns with one of Botsman & Rogers’ (2010, p.92-92) four principles for the survival of collaborative consumption, stating the importance of building trust among strangers. The authors thus deem that establishing trust between the peer-provider and user is vital for a continued growth of collaborative consumption.

Perceived Drivers

The interviewees further associated the concept of collaborative consumption to be a solution to exploit existing overcapacity. This is in alignment with Ranchordás’ (2015, p.416) statement that the sharing economy is implying two main features; asset that are not efficiently used and individuals with an incentive to share. Two of the interviewees expressed a belief of a substantial growth of collaborative consumption due to a raised awareness regarding its perceived benefits. However, today the incentive to share is
perceived as insufficient. The authors thus believe that collaborative consumption firms need to emphasize the personal benefits of participating in sharing activities to increase the incentive. A wider range of options was expressed as a main benefit for using collaborative consumption alternatives and the interviewees believed this new movement to induce access to before unattainable products. This is a personal benefit that the collaborative consumption firms should highlight in order to attract more users. Furthermore, the interviewees noted that the value of these alternatives increases in step with the number of users, which is in accordance with the principles of critical mass and “A belief in the commons” (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.75-76). A big network is thus crucial for a collaborative consumption firm’s survival. Moreover, collaborative consumption was expressed to contribute to environmental benefits, which according to Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.70) is considered as a driver for participating in collaborative consumption. Nevertheless, even though the interviewees could recognize the benefits of the anti-consumption movement, a sustainable concern was not perceived as a main driver for participating, further emphasizing that the personal benefits should be promoted.

7.1.2 Forming the Attitude

Multiple Attitudes

Multiple attitudes towards a behavior could according to Luzar & Cosse (1998, p.429) explain individuals’ attitude-behavior inconsistency. Since all respondents in this study possess a positive attitude towards collaborative consumption alternatives but still neglect them, the authors wanted to investigate if multiple attitudes could explain the interviewees’ absence. Although the interviewees acknowledged having positive attitudes, probing revealed concerns regarding collaborative consumption that confirmed the existence of multiple attitudes. Whereas Trendbüro (2008, cited in Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010, p.188) states that users of collaborative consumption alternatives receive a higher quality of life, one interviewee expressed a concern of losing quality and benefits that traditional companies offer, e.g. being attended to. Continuing, the other interviewees expressed concerns related to their perceived sense of control, which according to Sheeran (2002, p.9-10) is important for an individual’s ability to perform a certain behavior. Hence, to increase the attitude-behavior consistency within the concept collaborative consumption the firms should improve the users’ sense of control regarding the processes and outcome. The findings confirmed that the interviewees possess multiple contradicting attitudes where the negative attitudes are regarded to outweigh the positive. Collaborative consumption firms should thus focus on diminishing the negative attitudes to minimize the gap since the authors deem that the positive attitudes are already strong enough.

Influencers

How an attitude is formed is further emphasized as important in order to predict a behavior (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p.429; Sheeran, 2002). The interviewees declared their awareness regarding the concept or any collaborative consumption firm to stem from recommendations from acquaintances or by media. However, the participants’ level of awareness differed and some admitted that their attitude towards the concept has changed or been reinforced due to the emergence of new information. Adjei et al. (2010, p.634) state the importance of building online platforms where the users can share
experiences for collaborative consumption alternatives, which is confirmed by the interviewees. The interviewees’ acquaintances recommended these options since they were expressed to be highly flexible, simple and to bring value for money. The recommendations have shaped the interviewees’ positive attitude towards the concept and created a piqued interest. The interviewees also announced a preference of reading online reviews, which further emphasizes the importance of creating these platforms. They revealed to be reliant of reviews before finalizing a purchase, which reinforce the importance of online brand communities within collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xx) Additionally, the interviewees expressed a notion that collaborative consumption is an expanding trend that is gaining popularity and that the higher number of users will make participation more attractive. This is in accordance with two of Botsman & Rogers’ (2010, p.75-76) principles critical for the survival of collaborative consumption; critical mass and belief in the commons. Ajzen’s theory (1985, p.13-14) states that social pressures influence an individual’s own attitude and behavior, which supports the principle of critical mass. The interviewees believe that people in general are skeptical towards new solutions until they are well-recognized and proven to work. The authors conclude that there is a perceived lack of current users who can confirm that it works. Collaborative consumption firms should thus encourage existing users to display their participation in order to attract and convince the non-users.

Existing Beliefs & Preferences

Collaborative consumption is opening up a new market creating access to before unattainable products (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.xv; Ranchordás, 2015, p.417). The ability to match preferences with suitable alternatives is expressed by the interviewees to be a major advantage of using collaborative consumption. In contrast to Widlok (2013, p.12) stating that people are only willing to share possessions perceived to be useless, the interviewees believe the peer-providers are sharing highly exclusive and valuable products, e.g. a penthouse in Manhattan. One of the interviewees further perceives these alternatives to induce a higher service quality. It is believed that the peer-provider makes more of an effort to enhance a positive experience to maintain their good reputation. Millar & Tesser (1990, p.86) point out that individuals participating in an activity out of intrinsic motives are more likely to have a higher consistency between attitudes and behavior. The interviewees express a passion for trying new things in combination with a belief that collaborative consumption is a brilliant idea. The interviewees possess a positive stance towards collaborative consumption firms’ ability to match their preferences with suitable alternatives, although skepticism towards the algorithms used exists. They appreciate these algorithms when the suggestions are in line with their preferences, however it becomes a source of irritation when these do not correspond. It is thus important for collaborative consumption firms to have effective algorithms that align with the user’s interest. This is in line with Engel et al. (1986, p.33) announcing the importance for companies to convert marketing messages into a long-term memory to affect the individual’s attitude and its accessibility. Whereas the interviewees could recognize some major benefits of using collaborative consumption, they did not express any distinct intrinsic motives, which could partly explain their inconsistency. Continuing, they perceive these non-ownerships based alternatives to be attractive but still expressed a preference of owning certain products. The economic winning must be high enough in order for the interviewees to consider borrowing or renting instead of owning, which is in alignment with Tussyadiah & Pesonen’s study (2016) where cost were identified as a barrier. Hence, the interviewees might not have a
strong incentive to share, which is one of the two main features that collaborative consumption is based on (Ranchordás, 2015, p.417).

7.1.3 Evaluation

Strategies

The findings from the interviews suggest that external search for reviews or personal recommendations are typical steps before a purchase. The interviewees emphasized the importance of an external search when the purchase involves a high price and a high risk, which aligns with Engel et al. (1986, p.25) claiming that a high involvement will result in an EPS strategy. One interviewee also claimed that involvement might be due to personal interest resulting in an extensive search for alternatives and reviews. The interviewees further revealed that previous satisfaction cause them to rely on an RPS strategy for forthcoming purchases. A relation is thus perceived to already exist between the company and the consumer creating a false assurance that the brand will meet their expectations. Hence, the authors believe that it is harder for a collaborative consumption firm to be considered as an alternative to the traditional options when an EPS strategy is neglected. Another interviewee described that the final decision is often influenced by social pressure, which is in accordance with Engel et al. (1986, p.31-32) stating that social influences will impact the choice criteria. Furthermore, the interviewees admitted to rely more on information from acquaintances in regard to both their personal qualities and knowledge. Engel et al. (1986, p.310) reinforce these findings since they claim that people who are perceived as more experienced influence the decision. However, the reliance on other’s evaluation has contributed to some of the interviewees’ worst purchases since the product did not satisfy an actual need. The interviewees’ expressed notion regarding the importance of reviews within collaborative consumption makes the authors conclude, in accordance with Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.75), that the firms are reliant on a functioning network.

Choice Criteria

All interviewees declared their worst purchases to include unused products and would rather prefer other alternatives if available. Other solutions could have contributed to both monetary savings and environmental benefits. Idling capacity and reducing the obligations of ownership are two main cornerstones in collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.83, 86). Hence, collaborative consumption firms could help the consumers to avoid unnecessary purchases by highlighting these aspects. Furthermore, the interviewees explained that their personal values have influenced their preferences and generated choice criteria, including a good price, location, tidiness and comfortability when referring to accommodation. One interviewee also declared that sustainability is comprised in the personal values and that firms’ corporate social responsibility is part of the choice criteria. Since an environmental consciousness is suggested to be a driver (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.70), the collaborative consumption firms could emphasize this attribute together with the personal values mentioned abode. In addition, it was expressed that a high price generates a false assurance of quality, creating a preference towards that product or service. The interviewees are more willing to pay a higher price if the product or service is perceived to fulfill a valued need, which is in alignment with Aaker’s (2014, p.1) described benefits of a strong brand. The lower price associated with collaborative consumption
firms could thus be a disadvantage and harm their reputation regarding the quality. The interviewees further elaborated on their preferences when making a purchase and the fact that it can vary depending on context. The decision could thus be influenced if anyone other than the decision-maker is affected. A longer decision-making process is thus more likely to take place since the preferences no longer reflect the individual’s values, e.g. valuing comfortability rather than price. Individuals’ inconsistency between attitude and behavior could therefore be explained by examining if the other involved parties possess negative attitudes towards collaborative consumption. This is reinforced by one of the interviewees neglecting a collaborative consumption alternative due to others’ will.

7.1.4 Performing the Behavior

Habits

In accordance with studies surrounding attitude-behavior inconsistency (Ajzen, 1985; Bargh, 1997; Sheeran, 2002), habits were discovered to be an obstacle for trying new things regardless of the attitude. It was expressed in all interviews that it takes a lot of effort to change a behavior and that it requires strong incentives. The authors concluded that the interviewees prefer an RPS strategy when making a decision due to the minimized effort, inhibiting a collaborative consumption firm to be considered an option. The younger respondents further revealed that habits explain the extent of their sustainable behavior since their upbringing has made it second nature. The older respondents do not participate to the same extent since a sustainable behavior has not yet become a habit. Furthermore, the interviewees reinforced the importance of attitude accessibility, which according to Fazio (1986, p.212) is vital at the time of action for a consistency to occur. The perceived short existence of collaborative consumption firms causes the interviewees to not reflect on these as an option when performing a behavior or making a purchase. However, one interviewee admitted that a reflection had occurred in connection with the interview and the authors deem that this has contributed to forming a long-term memory of collaborative consumption. The authors believe that the interviewees’ positive attitude towards collaborative consumption firms will be more accessible since a reflective thinking has taken place in connection with the interviews. This will thus increase the likelihood to participate the next time they are confronted with the option of using a collaborative consumption firm.

Inner Motivation

As mentioned above, the interviewees believe that a new behavior requires strong incentives, hinting that many behaviors are performed due to the perceived personal benefits and an inner motivation. This is especially clear when it comes to a sustainable behavior where the interviewees admitted that the main reason for performing the behavior is due to the personal benefits, e.g. economic winnings, a feel-good feeling and avoidance of unpleasant smell. Only one respondent claimed that minimizing the ecological footprint is the main reason for participating in a sustainable behavior rather than for personal benefits. The authors thus deem that the positive attitudes towards collaborative consumption formed by external motives are less likely to result in a consistent behavior. Whereas the interviewees described intrinsic motives for participating in sharing activities such as an urgent need or the perceived convenience, they were not reflected in the behavior. This is in contrast to Millar & Tesser (1990,
p.86) stating that a behavior is more likely to reflect an individual’s attitudes if they are formed due to intrinsic motives. Hence, the authors believe that the incentives for ownership to still be stronger, again highlighting multiple attitudes as a possible explanation for the inconsistency. The interviewees explained that the likelihood of performing a behavior is diminished if it is considered too time consuming or requiring too much effort regardless of the positive attitude. This results in performing an action that they might not have as strong positive attitude towards in its stead. In addition, Ajzen (1985, p.14) states that personal characteristics have no direct effect on behavior, which is somewhat confirmed by the findings from the interviews. The interviewees claim to have a passion for trying new things and describe situations where their curiosity is directly transferred into a behavior. However, the authors deem that in the case of collaborative consumption the curiosity is not a strong enough motive.

The authors believe that the inner motivation of ownership; flexibility and convenience, will outweigh the positive attitudes towards a non-ownership solution at the time of action. This aligns with the fact that an individual can possess multiple conflicting attitudes (Luzar & Cosse, 1998, p. 429), such as a positive attitude towards both ownership and non-ownership. Nevertheless, Mpansu (1986, p.386) states that sharing is a non-egoistic activity performed without any ulterior motives, which can explain why sharing is more commonly occurring between closely related people among the interviewees. The authors believe that the existing trust between family and friends enhances the inner motivation to participate, explaining why the interviewees only participate in sharing activities in such a small scale. Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.91-92) state that trust among strangers is vital for collaborative consumption. Nevertheless, the authors believe that the interviewees still view sharing as an exchange within a relationship, which is in line with Price (1975, p.7).

Social Norms

One interviewee explained that the lacking participation in collaborative consumption to be due to others’ behavior. This is in line with Ajzen’s theory (1985, p.12) claiming that an individual feels pressure from society to behave in a specific way. This is further reinforced by the interviewee’s positive attitude towards interacting with strangers while still avoiding the behavior since it opposes the social norms. The authors deem that this can cause a problem for collaborative consumption that is highly reliant on the interaction between strangers to create a network. As mentioned before, a big network is crucial for the survival of collaborative consumption firms (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.91). Nevertheless, the interviewees believe that the younger generation is more open-minded to the interaction since they share their lives with strangers on social media in a wider extent. Collaborative consumption firms can thus be seen to align with the social norms of today’s society. Furthermore, the younger generation has grown up with Internet and the interviewees perceive the usage of Internet to be a social norm. Hence, the authors deem that the firms’ reliance on the Internet should not be a factor that explains the attitude-behavior inconsistency. One of the older respondents also believe that Internet has contributed to a raised awareness regarding sustainability among the younger generation and that a sustainable behavior is now considered a social norm. Due to the sustainable aspects of collaborative consumption, the authors believe that the firms will have a competitive advantage compared to traditional firms if this trend continues to grow. This will however require the firms to highlight the environmental benefits to develop a social norm of using collaborative consumption alternatives.
Perceived Control

In line with Sheeran’s findings (2002, p.10), an opportunity to perform a certain behavior needs to present itself in order for the individual to feel a sense of control over the behavior. One of the interviewees explained that this was one of the main reasons for not participating in collaborative consumption activities. However, the authors are critical towards this statement since the interviewee later described situations where a collaborative consumption firm could have been considered an option. Nevertheless, it was reinforced by the other interviewees who usually stay with acquaintances when traveling within Sweden and thereby lacked the opportunity to use a collaborative consumption alternative. Continuing, they possess a perception that there is a lack of collaborative consumption firms, which affect their perceived sense of control over performing the behavior. According to Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (1985), a perceived sense of control is an important factor to achieve an attitude-behavior consistency and considering the findings of this study, the authors agree with this theory. Furthermore, it was expressed that collaborative consumption firms might exclude some people who are incapable of adapting, due to their lack of knowledge, ability or resources. These are factors that according to Sheeran (2002, p.10) are vital to establish a sense of control. The authors thus agree with the interviewees that the collaborative consumption platforms must be highly user-friendly and secure. However, the authors also claim that some people will always be unwilling to adapt but that collaborative consumption firms should still focus on simplifying the process as much as possible.

7.2 Analysis of the Focus Groups

7.2.1 Perceived of Collaborative Consumption

Perceived Drivers

In both focus groups the participants discussed and concluded that one of the perceived benefits of using collaborative consumption alternatives is the cheaper price. However, they could not determine the actual economic winning due to the lack of knowledge regarding the price difference. Whereas the focus group 20-30 was in accordance with Botsman & Roger’s (2010, p.70) statement that a limited budget is a driver, a limited budget is not perceived as a driver for the focus group 30-60. Those findings were instead in line with Tussyadiah & Pesonen’s study (2016, p.11-12) that suggest a perception of insufficient cost savings to be an obstacle. The authors believe that the participants’ incapability to estimate the final outcome, in this case the potential earning, to contribute to hesitancy. Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.70) categorize sustainability concern as a driver for using collaborative consumption alternatives, which all participants could recognize considering the maximization of utility and reduced consumption. However, in contrast to Botsman & Roger (2010, p.70) the participants also concluded that collaborative consumption contributes to negative consequences since it for instance makes travel more affordable. They further declared that they would not chose one option in front of another just because of the environmental effects. Hence, the authors claim that the environmental benefits that collaborative consumption entails does not significantly influence the participants.
intention for using these alternatives. In alignment with Ranchordás (2015, p.417) the participants perceive the concept to include a wider range and more customized alternatives creating access to more exclusive and before unattainable options. The ability to customize and match the alternatives to their own preferences was expressed as the main benefit by both focus groups. This is further in line with one of four principles that are crucial for the survival of collaborative consumption; critical mass that states a wide range of options and a high quantity of users are essential to satisfy users with distinct preferences (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.75-76). However, the findings revealed that the participants are not convinced of the amount of users, which could explain a worry whether or not collaborative consumption is a successful concept.

Perceived Barriers

The majority of the participants’ awareness of the concept does not extend back to more than a year, creating a perception of the firms’ recent establishment. Consequently, the participants acknowledged insufficient knowledge as a main barrier for using collaborative consumption alternatives. These findings are in accordance with one of the barriers identified in Tussyadiah & Pesonen’s study (2016) where a lack of knowledge and understanding of the system is perceived as an obstacle for non-users. The participants admitted that an uncertainty regarding the process contributes to hesitation although they expressed a desire to be more open-minded. All participants believe that collaborative consumption is reliant on a mutual trust between the service provider and the user in order to function. This is in alignment with Botsman & Rogers (2010, p.91-92) who presented four vital principles for the survival of collaborative consumption, one referring to the ability of creating trust among the involved parties. The participants in the focus group 30-60 continued to express distrust towards collaborative consumption alternatives due to the belief that it is impossible to know what to receive and a perception that the exchange will be on the terms set by the peer-provider. An existing skepticism of collaborative consumption was further disclosed by all participants due to a perception of a somewhat higher risk of being scammed. Nevertheless, whereas a lack of trust is perceived as a barrier for using collaborative consumption (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016, p.11-12), all participants admitted distrust independent of the object or service being acquired from a traditional company or not. Although one participant raised the issue of trust towards online-based platforms, the others who admitted being frequent users of companies and platforms based on a similar system, did not reinforce it. Hence, the authors do not believe the main barrier to be distrust of the firms but rather the lack of knowledge regarding collaborative consumption and the processes.

Perceived Target Group

The participants in the focus group 20-30 also raised the question of collaborative consumption firms’ target group. Although they perceive the target group to be younger people with a daring personality, they revealed an uncertainty regarding whom the firms are actually targeting. This is in accordance with Belk (2013, p.1598) who claims that the lack of ownership associated with collaborative consumption creates an uncertainty among the consumers whether they can identify with a specific firm or not. The sharing economy and collaborative consumption provide access to a wider range of options and can thus expand to people beyond brands’ initial target group, which the authors believe can contribute to brand dilution. Amaldoss & Jain (2005, p.1449) describe value
dilution to occur due to lost exclusiveness, inappropriate marketing strategies or due to a creation of negative associations. Hence, the authors deem that collaborative consumption firms should aim to preserve the original brand’s image and prevent the negative associations that can develop as a result of the reduced exclusivity. In contrast to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 1985, p.14), stating that personality traits have no direct effect on behavior, the participants believe that people possessing certain personal characteristics to be more likely to participate in collaborative consumption. It was agreed that early adopters are an important target group, referring to people not only with a willingness to take risks but also with a desire to constantly be amazed by new things. The early adopters’ perceived ability to adapt and deal with unpredictable situations is expected to overcome the barrier of an uncertainty regarding the process. However, since some of the participants declared themselves to be early adopters in other contexts but not within collaborative consumption, the authors do not believe the personality traits to significantly affect the attitude-behavior inconsistency.

In alignment with the principle “A belief in the commons” where collaborative consumption is reliant on the number of users (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.91), the participants believe the firms should concentrate on creating a big network in order to meet users’ demands. John (2013, p.126) claims that sharing activities form a community, which McAlexander et al. (2002, p.38) describe to be a group of people establishing a relationship due to a common interest, occupation or geographical area. All participants agreed and declared that a joint ownership is a common occurrence within housing cooperatives that will naturally form a community. This is also expressed to develop an opportunity to get to know their neighbors. Compared to collaborative consumption alternatives, the participants did not raise the issue of trust in this scenario. Nevertheless, the participants limit these communities to people in their close proximity, while the collaborative consumption movement and the technological evolution enable people to share in a wider context extending the communities much further (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.vx). Hence, the authors draw the conclusion that mutual trust is easier to establish within a close group of people or a limited geographical area, such as a housing cooperative. Although sharing is not perceived as a reciprocal exchange (Belk, 2010, p.717), the authors believe that people are more willing to share in smaller defined groups due to the perceived likelihood of receiving something in return.

7.2.2 Forming the Attitude

Influencers

Fazio (1986, p.214) describes an attitude as; “An association between a given object and a given evaluation”. Hence the authors believe that in order to explain the participants’ attitudes both their associations and the believed outcome of using collaborative consumption must be considered. In addition, Sheeran (2002) and Luzar & Cosse (1998, p.429) highlight the importance of the formation of the attitude in order to predict a behavior. All participants in this study revealed that their attitude towards collaborative consumption was formed based on other’s assessment after receiving positive recommendations. However, whereas the focus group 20-30 expressed an awareness of the concept collaborative consumption, the participants’ awareness in the focus group 30-60 was limited to the company Airbnb. The positive recommendations have contributed to the participants associating collaborative consumption with being
user-friendly and flexible. Whereas lack of trust was previously expressed as a barrier of using collaborative consumption, the participants declared that the trust issue has to a large extent been overcome by reviews and acquaintances’ positive recommendations. The authors thus agree with Adjei et al. (2010, p.634) that it is crucial for the survival of collaborative consumption to build functional online platforms where the early adopters can share their experiences.

All participants revealed that the recommendations piqued their interest, leading to further investigating the concept to form their own evaluation. During this process they discovered the potential negative consequences of using collaborative consumption, such as vandalism or problems with legislation. Although this admittedly did not impact their attitude to the same extent as opinions from friends and family, the authors deem it could have influenced their positive attitude by creating a conflicting attitude. This is in line with the TRA stating that the emergence of new information can change an attitude or intention (Ajzen, 1985, p.19). Luzar & Cosse (1998, p.429) further claim that multiple attitudes can be the cause of an attitude-behavior inconsistency. Moreover, the participants declared that their attitudes are strengthened by repeatedly hearing positive experiences but also by what they perceive to be of high status in society. In accordance with prior studies (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Botsman & Rogers, 2010), the findings from both focus groups suggest that the participants’ attitudes towards collaborative consumption is strongly influenced by social norms rather than the individuals’ own principles. Since individuals with an attitude formed in regard to inner motivations appear to have a higher attitude-behavior consistency (Ajzen, 1985, p.22), the authors believe that this could be one contributing reason for the gap.

Inner Motivation

They admitted that their attitudes towards participating in a sustainable behavior have been formed due to pressure and expectations from others. Thus, their attitude towards sustainability partly exists as a concern for future generations but also as an ulterior motive to please others. Furthermore, the participants in the focus group 20-30 revealed that a sustainability concern has been present throughout their upbringing, strongly influencing their attitude and making sustainable behavior a habit. Nevertheless, some of their attitudes towards sustainability and collaborative consumption exist due to inner motivation since the outcome of the action is perceived to result in personal benefits, e.g. warmer summers or more flexible solutions. Millar & Tesser (1990, p.86) state that individuals participating in an activity due to intrinsic motives are more likely to act on their attitudes and thus have a higher consistency. The participants announced to be more willing to perform a behavior when the attitude is stemming from intrinsic motives and where they clearly understand the result of the behavior. In accordance with the 30:3 syndrome presented by Cowe & Williams (2000), the participants admitted to partly disregard their positive attitudes of sustainability when the personal benefits are difficult to identify. Conflicting attitudes can thus occur between the external motives; a concern for the impacts on the rest of world and the internal motives; warmer summers. Since an attitude formed by inner motivations is usually stronger (Ajzen, 1985, p.22; Millar & Tesser, 1990, p.86), that attitude will outweigh the one formed by external motives resulting in an inconsistency. Social norms are additionally a reason for individuals to use before-or after justifications to explain a certain attitude or behavior (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Caruana et al., 2015, p.1). Hence, the authors believe there is a risk that the participants expressed positive
attitudes towards collaborative consumption due to its environmental benefits as a consequence of social norms to justify their stance.

**Social Norms**

Continuing on social norms, the participants in the focus group 20-30 reflected on the change in people’s preferences to prefer non-ownership solutions to influence their own attitude towards ownership. Whereas ownership was previously associated with a high status, experiences seem to be more valued in today’s society. As a result, the participants now perceive ownership as an unnecessary burden that can be avoided with the help of collaborative consumption. This is in alignment with the TRA and TPB (Ajzen, 1985) where social norms are described to be a major influencer both on individual’s attitudes and intentions. The participants admitted that many of their purchases are made as a way of bragging or showing off, which indicates that the pressure from social norms could explain the attitudes towards certain brands. However, the participants could not apply this to collaborative consumption since they do not perceive the alternatives to be commonly used. Hence, the authors believe that the participants’ intention to use collaborative consumption alternatives is not as strong due to the lack of social pressure. Whereas the sharing economy is described to include two main elements, inefficiently used assets and individuals with an incentive to share (Ranchordás, 2015, p.416), the authors believe that none of the participants possess sufficient incentives to use collaborative consumption alternatives. However, the authors assess that the participants in the focus group 20-30 possess a stronger incentive to share compared to those in the focus group 30-60 since non-ownership based solutions was expressed to be more suitable for their lifestyle.

**Existing Beliefs & Preferences**

The participants continued to declare a preference for using companies or services with benefits such as a minimized effort or a cheaper price. A positive attitude is expressed regarding sharing activities as long as it does not become too much of a hassle. The perceived convenience factor of a behavior is expressed to outweigh other benefits such as economic-or resource savings. Minimizing the effort could thus diminish the multiple attitudes and thereby increase the consistency. In addition, the participants revealed an unwillingness of spending money if they cannot evaluate the final outcome, which according to Luzar & Cosse (1998, p.429) makes it harder to predict a behavior. The participants expressed a willingness to pay a higher price only if the product is associated with a better quality, higher value or personal interest, which is in line with Aaker’s (2014, p.1) statement about the power of brands. Collaborative consumption’s access to a wide range of brands thus increases the difficulty of charging premium prices since the consumer can not as easily form the needed specific associations. Continuing, the TRA states that an intention to perform a behavior consists of both a perception of the final outcome and a perceived pressure stemming from social norms (Ajzen, 1985, p.12). Although both factors are perceived as determinants, one could have a stronger impact within a certain context (Ajzen, 1985, p.13). For instance the participants in the focus group 30-60 expressed that the final outcome was considered more important when traveling with children, while all participants described that social norms are taken more into consideration when traveling with friends. Hence, the authors believe that the participants’ hesitancy of trying collaborative consumption alternatives...
to be partly due to their incapability of identifying the final outcome and their perception of the situation.

7.2.3 Evaluation

Strategies

Olshavsky & Granbois (1979) claim that many purchases occur without any prior decision process, which is reinforced by the findings of this study. In accordance with Engel et al. (1986, p.23), the participants declared that their decision-making process is dependent on involvement, number of alternatives and context. However, they continued to add another element; personality. They explained that some purchases are very spontaneous and that the process is neglected although they are still due to an emerging or perceived need. The participants in the focus group 20-30 admitted that a spontaneous purchase often occur due to a strong appeal towards the product or service, which contradict the EBM model stating that a high involvement result in an EPS strategy (Engel et al., 1986, p.23). Instead it was explained that the longer process, EPS, is taking place when the participant wants to avoid unnecessary purchases or when there is a wide range of options. Furthermore, the participants of the focus group 30-60 added that an EPS occur in regard to their own interest and the perceived economic risk. All participants further admitted that they are vulnerable to discounts and time pressure causing them to neglect many of the steps in the process, resulting in an LPS strategy (Engel et al., 1986, p.36). Additionally, they declared a willingness of repeatedly purchasing products or choosing companies due to a satisfaction of prior purchases, thus applying the RPS strategy. Considering the abovementioned, the authors conclude that the participants apply the three strategies, EPS, LPS and RPS developed by Engel et al. (1986) depending on the context. Fazio (1986, p.207) continues to state that a person’s interpretation of a situation is needed in order to translate an attitude into action. The authors believe that the various strategies could generate both advantages and disadvantages for collaborative consumption firms. The likelihood of choosing a collaborative consumption option diminish if the participants are satisfied with previous purchases and thus apply an RPS strategy. However, the firms can gain a competitive advantage if they manage to convince the consumers to apply an EPS strategy by displaying the positive personal, environmental, social and economic outcomes. In addition, the authors believe the inconsistency to partly be a consequence of the participants’ inability of interpreting the situation and estimating the final outcome. Hence, to fully understand the non-users’ thought-process, the authors find it to be of great importance to examine the entire context where the decision regarding a collaborative consumption alternative is taking place.

Choice Criteria

Engel et al. (1986, p.31-32) claim that personal values and social influences will shape the consumers’ preferences and thus form certain choice criteria. If the attributes of a certain product or service are in line with the criteria, the individual is more likely to go through with a purchase. The participants expressed a strong preference for flexibility and the ability to adapt a product or service to their own specific needs. The participants in the focus group 20-30 possess a fear of commitment generated by social pressure, creating a choice criterion for products offering a high mobility. Hence, the authors deem that collaborative consumption firms should use this to their advantage by
emphasizing the benefits of non-ownership since it is contributing to a greater freedom. An actual purchase will follow as a natural step if a firm manages to deliver a message that aligns with an individual’s choice criteria (Engel et al., 1986, p.33). Since collaborative consumption firms offer attributes that are valued by the participants, e.g. matching preferences to the purpose, the authors believe that this should be emphasized in their marketing message. However, the participants declared that other external factors, e.g. time and context must be considered when examining non-users’ choice criteria regarding collaborative consumption alternatives. The EBM Model states that an evaluation to determine satisfaction occurs in all three strategies; EPS, LPS and RPS (Engel et al., 1986). However, the consumers make greater demands on the product or service to meet their expectations if an EPS or LPS have been applied rather than if the decision relies on previous purchases (Engel et al., 1986, p.33-34). The findings in this study reinforce these theories since the participants possess lower expectations when making spontaneous purchases compared to purchases demanding more effort. All participants declared a preference of repeatedly purchasing products from certain brands as it is believed to minimize the effort and is expressed to encompass an assurance of what to receive. Due to the minimized effort associated with RPS, the authors believe that it is convenient for the participants to fall back on that strategy when taking decisions. The participants’ confession of lacking knowledge regarding the processes within collaborative consumption would thus inevitably require a higher level of active reasoning generating a need for the extended problem solving strategy. This could thus create a barrier for collaborative consumption alternatives since the findings indicate that the participants prefer a decision-making strategy that requires low effort.

7.2.4 Performing the Behavior

Habits

Whereas theories such as TRA and TPB state that behavior is an outcome stemming from a conscious choice, other studies (Bargh, 1997; Sheeran, 2002) discovered that a person’s present behavior could be explained by habits and past behavior. In alignment with Bargh (1997, p.2) stating that automatic processes first and foremost determine behavior, all participants believe that habits could be used to explain the majority of an individual’s behavior. The participants admitted staying true to a habit as long as it is perceived to generate a positive outcome. They continued to discuss those vital elements in people’s lives, such as accommodation and means of conveyance are more resistant to change. Since the majority of the collaborative consumption firms are operating in these industries the authors believe that this could be a disadvantage. Behaviors that the participants have become comfortable with were further expressed as one of the main reasons for not acting on their positive attitude towards collaborative consumption, resulting in them becoming inclined abstainers (Sheeran, 2002, p.6). However, the findings discovered that the participants possess multiple attitudes, which increase the likelihood to rely on previous behavior. The participant might thus possess an intention to participate in collaborative consumption, but when the time of action approaches habits take over. In order to break a habit, the participants believe that a more flexible and convenient solution to the problem has to be presented. Thus, the authors again conclude that collaborative consumption firms need to emphasize the attributes valued by the participants to make individuals reflect on the potential alternatives rather than rely on their routine behavior. The participants further expressed that some habitual behaviors are broken out of intrinsic motives, whereas some habits
are explained to be broken due to an enforced behavior. Ajzen (1985, p.12) states that an individual’s willingness to perform a behavior is dependent on the associated positive or negative outcome. Hence, in order to break their old routines the authors believe that non-users must be able to clearly recognize the success of the new behavior that collaborative consumption urge.

Likewise, the participants argue that it induces a false assurance of the expected quality by repeatedly purchasing products from a specific brand, creating a habitual behavior. This is due to the awareness and strong associations that the consumer possesses towards the company or brand, referred to as brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993, p.2). The participants expressed that their awareness of collaborative consumption firms to be recently created due to a false belief of them being new established. Hence, the authors suspect that the concept has not yet taken root as a long-term memory resulting in the participants’ inability to form a brand awareness or image of the firms. The lacking awareness and associations could thus be a cause for the attitude-behavior inconsistency. Fazio (1986, p.212) claims that attitude accessibility is vital at the time of behavior, meaning that if associations are not activated when encountering a certain situation the individual cannot rely on attitudes. Thus, the incapability to form brand-specific associations with a collaborative consumption firm might be the cause for the firms to not even be considered an option at the time of action.

**Inner Motivation**

The participants recognized their own behavior to contribute to what they refer to as “The crazy consumption” existing in today’s society. However, they admitted that the negative consequences are not prominent enough for them to change their behavior regardless of their positive attitude. This in alignment with Sheeran (2002, p.9-10) who claims that multiple behaviors performed to achieve a goal often result in a lower chance of achieving an attitude-behavior consistency. The final result of each action is thus harder to distinguish and often result in neglecting certain behaviors, compared to when a goal could be reached by a single action. Participants of both focus groups concluded that a high degree of inner motivation must exist in order to participate in a behavior, agreeing that a higher inner motivation is possessed if the result of the behavior is perceived to affect them directly. This is in accordance with Millar & Tesser (1990, p.86) stating that individuals who are self-focused and participate in a behavior due to intrinsic motives are more likely to stay true to their attitudes and create a higher consistency. The authors deem that this could be one explanation for why the participants are neglecting some sustainable behavior, as they cannot relate to the negative consequences stemming from their behavior. Ajzen (1985, p.22) further claims that individuals not guided by inner motivation are more receptive to external factors since their attitude is not held with the same confidence. This aligns with the findings that some participants unwillingly participate in certain behaviors. The attitude-behavior inconsistency will in these cases no longer depend on the individual being an inclined abstainer but rather a disinclined actor. The participants further revealed likelihood to transform a behavior if the personal benefits are perceived to be high enough. Thus, a behavior that is perceived as too time consuming or requiring too much effort is avoided to the extent possible by the participants of the focus group 30-60. However, they also admitted that they are willing to change their behavior if benefits such as economic winnings are perceived to outweigh the increased effort. The authors believe that this could explain some attitude-behavior inconsistency among this focus group since they
do not perceive the economic savings to be sufficient enough with a collaborative consumption alternative. Hence, the convenience of using familiar alternatives outweighs the effort of changing their existing behavior. This reinforces Widlok’s findings (2013, p.16), which states that the behavior of sharing is driven by intrinsic motives. Therefore, the authors conclude that participation in collaborative consumption has to be due to intrinsic motives in order to increase the attitude-behavior consistency. The perceived benefits must induce significant advantages in order to strongly influence the non-users’ behavior.

Social Norms

As already mentioned, all participants admitted that the behavior of others influences their intention to perform a certain behavior and thus also increases the likelihood of actually performing it. This is in accordance with Ajzen (1985, p.12) who claims that the power of subjective norms will influence an individual’s behavior. This is reinforced by the findings of this study, where the participants not only admitted that social norms can encourage a behavior by strengthening an already positive attitude but can also cause them to become a disinclined actor. The participants explained that the expectations of others cause them to take part in certain behaviors although they possess a negative attitude, or even perform the behavior without any reflection. In contrast to Ajzen’s purposive theory (1985), the findings can be connected to Fazio’s Model (1990) that claims that reflective thinking is not vital for attitude-behavior processes since it rather relies on the individual’s immediate perception of the situation. Fazio (1986, p.212) further strengthen the findings of this study by claiming that even if a behavior contradict the individual’s attitude, social norms will result in a performance of the behavior anyway. These theories could explain the participants’ absence from collaborative consumption even though they possess a positive attitude. Participating in collaborative consumption is not yet perceived as a social norm, hence, the participants might not reflect on this behavior but rather perform a behavior more in line with the social norms. The participants of the focus group 20-30 further highlighted the importance of social norms by comparing the behaviors of different generations. They perceive the younger generation’s actions to be a reflection of society’s expectations on a high mobility, creating a fear of long-term commitment. By highlighting how collaborative consumption adhere to social norms; the authors believe that it will become a more natural choice that does not require as much reflection at the time of action.

Perceived Control

The TPB extended the original TRA by adding perceived sense of control as a mediating factor that can explain the attitude-behavior inconsistency (Ajzen, 1985), which is much in line with the findings of this study. The participants speculated that factors such as language barriers or lack of knowledge regarding the process diminish the individual’s perceived control over the situation, resulting in an inability to perform and neglecting the behavior. One participant even revealed that an attempt to participate in collaborative consumption had been made but the limited number of users was perceived as a factor beyond the participant’s control, hence the behavior was not carried out. This is in accordance with Sheeran (2002, p.10) who claims that an opportunity to take part in a behavior must exist for an individual to feel a sense of control, along with the necessary knowledge, ability and resources. The participants of
the focus group 30-60 who focused on sustainable behavior also raised the lack of opportunities to participate in certain behavior. They believe that the lack of options hinder their behavior regardless of their intention to act in a sustainable manner. Furthermore they expressed that although they possess a positive attitude towards sustainability, their perceived lack of result from their sustainable behavior creates a sense of incapability and thus impact their intention to perform the behavior. Besides the perceived control these findings are also in line with Sheeran’s statement (2002, p-9-10) that an attitude-behavior inconsistency is more likely to occur if it requires multiple actions to reach a goal. The participants of the focus group 20-30 also highlighted the lack of results as a barrier for performing a certain action and suggested breaking down a final goal into sub-targets to be able to concentrate on single actions rather than multiple. They further elaborated that the lack of resources can hinder a behavior. The findings of this study suggest that the participants possess a positive attitude towards collaborative consumption alternatives partly due to the perceived lower price than traditional options. Nevertheless, the authors believe the non-users to neglect the behavior since the price range between the alternatives can differ significantly and they can thus encounter a higher price than expected.

Participants of both focus groups claimed that their perception of the situation, including the perceived risk and the occurrence of unexpected happenings, will impact their behavior, which is in accordance with Fazio (1986, p.207). Thus if the participant defines the situation as risky, the conflicting attitudes towards the concept will be more prominent making it more likely that an attitude-behavior inconsistency will occur. The participants further believed that the behavior is dependent on whether the individual possesses a more daring or hesitant personality, which is in contrast to Ajzen (1985, p.14) stating that personal characteristics do not significantly affect an individual's behavior. The authors conclude, in accordance with the participants’ opinions, that an examination of the context could explain the attitude-behavior inconsistency. The authors believe that a family traveling with a newborn or small children would not chose an alternative associated with uncertainty and high effort, which are further reinforced by the participants. Hence, the authors deem that the inconsistency might not be explained by different personality traits but rather due to a rational reasoning, which is a characteristic human behavior (Möhlmann, 2015, p.194).

7.3 Summary of Analysis

In regard to the purpose of the study the authors did not, in contrast to previous studies (Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016), aim to identify and discover the drivers and barriers of using collaborative consumption. Nevertheless, the study revealed both drivers and barriers for using collaborative consumption although the authors were unable to rank the significance of the various factors. Instead, it was discovered that the context influence which driver or barrier is most dominant, suggesting that the situation must be taken into consideration when examining the attitude-behavior inconsistency. It was not until the authors examined the context surrounding an individual facing the option of using a collaborative consumption firm that multiple attitudes towards the concept were revealed. The authors thus deem that a conflicting attitude can be more prominent in certain situations, creating a barrier for acting on the intention. Following below is a summary of the barriers that can explain
the inconsistency of non-users and how the authors interpreted their meaning in regard to the context.

All individuals in the study acknowledged a preference of purchasing products and services demanding low effort, thus neglect an EPS strategy to the extent possible. The preference of owning certain products was revealed to be due to the high convenience ownership entails. A collective ownership was on the contrary associated with a higher effort and with a risk for additional problems. The authors deem that the burden associated with choosing a collaborative consumption alternative creates hesitancy making the participants neglecting the behavior. Additionally, the authors discovered both the interviewees and the participants of the focus groups to frequently make inaccurate assumptions regarding collaborative consumption, hinting their absence to be a consequence of insufficient awareness and knowledge. The individuals further disclosed lack of trust to be one of the reasons for not participating in collaborative consumption. However, when examining the context, the authors interpreted its meaning to concern a lack of understanding of the processes and did not necessarily involved a distrust towards the peer-provider or the firm. Since all of these identified barriers are dependent on the situation, a collaborative consumption firm cannot expect that overcoming these dynamic barriers will result in a consistency. Instead, the authors discovered that the firms should focus on abiding factors that are applicable in various situations; intrinsic motives and social pressure.
8. CONCLUSION

The chapter begins with presenting the authors’ general conclusions in an attempt to answer the research question. This includes a revised model of the previously presented research model introduced in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the quality criteria will be discussed in regard to the research and the societal concerns will be considered. Finally, the authors will conclude the study’s practical and theoretical contributions of the study as well as recommending further research in the area.

8.1 Final Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to gain insights into the attitudes and behavior of non-users within the concept of collaborative consumption. These insights would be used to answer the research question; “How can a collaborative consumption firm increase the attitude-behavior consistency?” and thus increase the number of users. Although the participants of this study displayed positive attitudes towards collaborative consumption at first examination, the findings revealed that multiple contradicting attitudes towards the concept exist. The authors conclude that the perceived benefits of ownership still outweigh the positive attitudes towards non-ownership solutions. The firms thus need to increase the incentive of using these alternatives to minimize the gap between the multiple attitudes. As it is today, the participants disclosed that the usage collaborative consumption alternatives are associated with more effort since traditional options allow them to rely on an RPS strategy. To minimize the effort, the firms need to educate the non-users regarding the various processes and how they differ from the behavior the individuals are accustomed to. Educating non-users could further minimize the gap between the contradicting attitudes since the authors discovered that the participants possess many inaccurate assumptions of the concept. In order to make individuals consider collaborative consumption as an option and break their current habits, an EPS strategy must replace the RPS strategy. Since collaborative consumption firms were found to align with many of the participants’ values and preferences, a conducted EPS strategy would provide the firms with a competitive advantage. Furthermore an EPS would invoke a reflection of the choice, creating a brand awareness and attitude accessibility of collaborative consumption. These were found to be important aspects since the positive attitude towards collaborative consumption is irrelevant if it is not conjured at the time of action.

The findings further revealed that individuals mainly respond to either intrinsic motives or social norms when changing a behavior. In consideration of these findings the authors conclude that collaborative consumption firms could increase the attitude-behavior consistency by applying two various strategies; enhancing the intrinsic motives or creating a social pressure. The authors discovered that the ability to match preferences with purpose and convenient solutions are valued by the participants, suggesting that collaborative consumption firms should highlight these attributes to increase the intrinsic motives. In contrast to previous studies surrounding drivers and barriers, the environmental benefits of collaborative consumption were not found to be a significant driver. This aligns with the findings of this study that exterior motives are not a strong enough incentive for changing a behavior. However, since a sustainable concern is considered a social norm in today’s society, the authors still conclude that
collaborative consumption firms should emphasize the environmental contributions. It was discovered that the participants respond well to social pressure since it can even convince them to perform a behavior they possess a negative attitude towards. On that account, the authors recognized this as another strategy that the firms could apply in order to increase the consistency. The authors recommend the companies to encourage current users to display their participation in these activities to achieve a social pressure. A higher exposure on various online-platforms and social media will convince the non-users by creating a perception of the concept being commonly used. In regard to the findings and final conclusions, the authors revised the previously presented research model presented earlier in this study. The modified model explaining how to transform a non-user into user within the collaborative consumption is presented below.

![Figure 5. The Revised Concluding Model](source: The Authors)

Whereas theories suggest that individuals’ attitude and behavior are modified in response of social influencers, the authors did not discover the individual’s responses to significantly differ between the interviews and the focus groups. The findings from the interviews were instead with some modification reinforced by the participants in the group study. Nevertheless, some differences regarding the responses were identified. Whereas the interviewees mainly expressed positive outcomes of collaborative consumption, the participants in the focus groups declared after a discussion that it could induce negative consequences as well. The findings point to the fact that the participants are driven by intrinsic motives and thus more likely to stay true to their own attitudes. Hence, the authors conclude that a group setting does not notably influence
individuals’ expressed attitudes and justifications are therefore not an explanation for the attitude-behavior inconsistency.

8.2 Contributions

8.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

The authors have already concluded the scarcity of existing research combining the concept collaborative consumption with attitude-behavior consistency. The authors thus aimed to contribute with insights that could be applied both theoretically and practically. Current research has been conducted by quantitative methods, whereas the authors hoped to discover additional insights by applying qualitative methods. It was revealed that the findings of this study to some extent reinforce existing perceptions of why individuals chose not to participate in collaborative consumption. Nevertheless, in contrast to previously identified barriers, the authors concluded that the inconsistency between attitude and behavior to mainly be dependent on the lack of intrinsic motives or social pressure. Furthermore, as the study was conducted in two parts by applying two different methods examining whether a group setting impacted the individuals’ responses, the authors contributed with new theoretical insights regarding the attitude-behavior inconsistency within collaborative consumption. The authors thus deem that the study managed to make theoretical contributions that could be used for further research in order to deepen the knowledge regarding consumer behavior within sharing activities.

8.2.2 Practical Contributions

In regard to the research question, the research aimed to contribute with knowledge of how firms can increase the attitude-behavior consistency within collaborative consumption. The findings stemming from this research did to some extent reinforce the barriers identified in previous studies. However, the authors concluded that these were not the main reasons explaining the inconsistency within collaborative consumption. Instead, the authors managed to discover new insights regarding how to transform the non-users’ positive attitudes into behavior by enhancing either the intrinsic motives or by creating a social pressure. Therefore, by focusing on the strategies presented in this study the firms could avoid spending unnecessary time and money on overcoming the supposed barriers. The findings provide the collaborative consumption firms with knowledge of how the consumers’ decisions can be influenced in order to successfully conduct business based on sharing activities. Since collaborative consumption is considered to provide positive environmental, social and economic outcomes, the authors deem the findings of the study to be contributing with practical inputs for companies aiming for a sustainable consumption. Previous research confirmed the occurrence of attitude-behavior inconsistency within sustainability and the two strategies could therefore be applied in those contexts to increase individuals’ sustainable behavior.

Additionally, the authors managed to make practical contributions for traditional companies as well. The insights of the consumers’ preferences could be used in order to enhance these features in their existing offers and thus strengthen the relation to their customers. Furthermore, the concluding model is applicable to traditional firms as long as the sections referring to collaborative consumption and sharing are replaced. The
findings could also be beneficial for start-ups to adapt their business model so it aligns with the customers’ preferences.

8.3 Quality Criteria

8.3.1 Reliability

Reliability is associated with natural science and quantitative studies. However, the concept could be applied to research with qualitative methods as well by examining the sustainability of the findings (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.270). It is complicated and confusing to determine whether or not the findings could be perceived as reliable. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.71) present four questions that could be used to evaluate the findings, varying depending on the researchers’ viewpoint. Since the thesis has adopted the constructionist stance, Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.71) recommend focusing on two of these questions. First, the researchers should examine if the same insights can be obtained by others studying similar contexts. Furthermore, the researchers transparency regarding the data collection and the interpretation of the findings should be evaluated. In addition, it is of importance that the researchers are aware of potential errors and biases that could occur during the research process. Firstly, depending on the purpose of the study there is a possibility of participant or subject error (Saunders et al., 2009, p.156), e.g. if a study aims to investigate individuals’ energy, the level of energy might be affected by the time or day of the study. Additionally, participant or subject bias may occur if the participants are uncertain about their actual anonymity and might therefore provide answers they believe are expected. The researchers’ way of presenting the questions, own behavior and interpretation of the responses could also contribute to observer error and bias (Saunders et al., 2009, p.157). To confirm that the responses had been interpreted accurately, the authors used probing techniques and direct follow-up questions in both the interviews and focus groups. In addition, the authors have throughout the process discussed and elaborated on how to interpret the collected data. To maintain consistency and avoid misinterpretations to the extent possible the authors processed all empirical material conjointly. The authors deem the risk of subject or participant error to be small since the participants’ attitudes towards collaborative consumption are not likely to vary depending on time and day. Due to the short time frame of the data collection, there is a low possibility that new information has emerged that significantly has affected their attitudes.

On the contrary, the findings may to some extent not fulfill the terms of reliability since they are depending on the participants’ present attitudes. Studies aiming to replicate this research might therefore attain conflicting or additional insights since attitudes are highly individual and are sensitive to societal shifts. The inductive approach of the thesis in combination with unstructured interviews creates a problem in replicating the study exactly. The questions used in future studies might thus not correspond with the ones in this study. The authors have clearly described the process throughout the study that will make a future replication to the extent possible. Nevertheless, research conducted by qualitative methods are not always intended to be repeated but rather aim to demonstrate a phenomenon at the collected time, respecting its dynamic constellation (Saunders et al., 2009, p.328). On that account, the researchers believe the findings to be reliable in regard to existing attitudes towards collaborative consumption.
8.3.2 Generalizability / Transferability

It is of great importance to consider if the findings could be applied to other contexts and individuals beyond the actual study, which is referred to as the study’s generalizability (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.263). This is also known as the external validity and is mainly relevant to consider when conducting research within a specific organization since the findings might not be applicable to other companies (Saunders et al., 2009, p.158). Furthermore, the generalizability within qualitative studies is sometimes referred to as transferability and is believed to be depending on the perceived authenticity of the findings and if they are considered to be applicable outside the context from which they originated (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.263). However, researchers disagree whether or not empirical findings derived by qualitative methods could be transferred to other contexts. This could be related to either the empirical or the theoretical generalization. The empirical generalization refers to if the findings are applicable to the part of the population fulfilling the sample criteria but did not participate in the study. The theoretical generalization on the other hand raises the concern if the derived findings and concepts could be assigned to a broader context (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.264). Despite the qualitative methods used within the study, the authors deem the findings to be both theoretically and empirically generalizable to various extents. However, the authors affirm that the findings might not be completely generalizable due to the stated limitations of the study. Considering the occurrence of attitude-behavior inconsistency in other contexts beyond collaborative consumption, the authors believe the provided insights could be applied to other situations. The derived model from the study purposes that individual’s attitude and behavior are either driven by intrinsic motives or social pressure independent of the context, e.g. the inconsistency regarding installments. Hence, the authors assess the theoretical generalizability to be achieved. Continuing, empirical generalizability is fulfilled since the findings are believed to reflect individuals residing in other parts of Sweden and similar countries. However, this requires the culture and the traditions of the other country to be equivalent to Sweden. Nevertheless, the findings might not be generalizable to individuals beyond the investigated age groups. The circumstances of their upbringing might differ too much in comparison to the chosen sample. In order to increase the generalizability of the findings the authors believe they would have needed a greater and more geographically spread sample. Still, the findings are assessed to be generalizable for other non-users with a positive attitude towards collaborative consumption residing in Sweden.

8.3.3 Validity

Additionally, in order to determine if the research entails empirical evidence with a certain level of quality it is relevant to examine its validity. Although it is a term mostly used for quantitative studies, it is commonly occurring in qualitative studies, sometimes referred to as credibility or transferability. The term validity is referring to both internal and external validity, evaluating if the researchers are examining the declared topic and if the findings are relevant for people or contexts beyond the study (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p.273). It is thus important to consider the chosen research method and its appropriateness to ensure validity of the findings (Saunders et al., 2009, p.157). In consideration of the purpose aiming to investigate how a collaborative consumption firm can increase the attitude-behavior consistency, the authors deemed that qualitative methods were needed in order to understand the participants true attitudes. Validity
would thus not be achieved with quantitative methods since the authors estimated the risk of receiving dishonest answers would increase. Additionally, the likelihood of discovering the range of their attitudes would be minimized by a quantitative method.

Lewis & Ritchie (2003, p.274) present five subcategories that should be considered when evaluating the findings. The researchers should initially examine the chosen sample, first and foremost referring to if the sample contains any bias or if the representatives were chosen accurately. The next to consider is whether the respondents had the opportunity to disclose their opinions based on the asked questions. The remaining subcategories to deliberate are if the researchers have recognized and entitled the concepts in correct manner, if the empirical findings have been displayed in correspondence to the original answers and if the study provides adequate evidence for the final conclusion. The authors have earlier elaborated whether the results from the study is generalizable or not, the external validity will thus not be discussed any further. However, the researchers deem the findings to partly fulfill the internal validity criterion since there is a risk for bias as individuals’ true attitudes are hard to investigate. Nevertheless, to ensure the validity the authors have continuously justified the applied research methods to guarantee their appropriateness in regard to the research question.

8.4 Societal Considerations

The purpose of the study aims to understand how a collaborative consumption firm can enhance the attitude-behavior consistency and increase the amount of users. The authors thus need to consider how the findings might impact the economy on a macro level and how they could affect the competitors; traditional companies. Obstacles such as legislations are already imposed to impede the expansion of collaborative consumption firms. An increased number of consumers choosing collaborative consumption as an alternative might thus from a business perspective contribute to various economical effects in the society. An increased usage of collaborative consumption would first and foremost contribute to a reduced consumption forcing the traditional companies to cut down their workforce in order to survive. This would thus have negative consequences on individuals’ disposable income creating a downward spiral. Alternatively, the expansion of collaborative consumption could attract people to become self-employed operating within this industry. This would still threaten traditional firms but individuals’ disposable income would most likely remain unchanged. In regard to the abovementioned consequences, the authors believe this could be an explanation for the resistance of the traditional firms. Furthermore, the findings could be applicable to start-up companies, helping them to adapt their business model to be more in accordance with the strategies used by collaborative consumption firms and pose yet another threat to the established traditional companies. The authors further acknowledge that certain companies have been exemplified by names, however, the context in which they were revealed are perceived to not cause any negative effects.

Disregarding the possible macroeconomic effects, an expansion of collaborative consumption would contribute to a decreased consumption and more sustainable solutions. This would serve the society as whole by inducing environmental benefits. Furthermore, the authors do not deem that the findings will be harmful to individuals in the society. Although attitudes can be a sensitive topic to investigate, it would mainly impact the participants of the study. The authors have however done everything in their power to avoid this. A risk exists that the population might take offend considering the
authors’ attempt to generalize the findings to everyone within the investigated age group. However, this risk is estimated to be small since the topic examined and the attitudes towards it are not considered to be very sensitive.

8.5 Further Research

Several approaches and angles could be scrutinized in order to increase the knowledge of inconsistency within sharing activities. Existing research of the combination between attitude-behavior consistency and collaborative consumption is, as previously mentioned, an unexplored area. Hence, several methods and tactics could be applicable. Whereas the authors used an inductive approach in hope of discovering innovative findings, a deductive approach could examine if some of the barriers have a more vital role in provoking an inconsistency. In consideration of the peer-user perspective of the study, further research could investigate the peer-providers’ attitudes. A comparison between the discovered insights could therefore provide valuable information for collaborative consumption firms. The authors decided to only examine the attitude-behavior inconsistency of non-users with a positive attitude. Further research could thus explore the combination of the two concepts by examining former users and their motives for not repeating the behavior. Additional knowledge of how and why the individuals chose to no longer participate in collaborative consumption activities could provide highly relevant information for the firms. Since this study excluded one aspect of collaborative consumption, namely redistribution market, further research could include this form. Whereas the study only examined people’s attitudes and behaviors within the ages 20-60 years, exploring the combined concepts within the older or younger population could provide deviating knowledge. The study was based on insights gained from individuals living in Östersund and Umeå due to time and cost constraint. A cross-country study comparing areas where the adoption of collaborative consumption firms has been high versus low could be of interest in order to gain a broader perspective of the two concepts. In regard to the conclusions of the study, the authors recommend further research to examine intrinsic motives and social pressure in connection to collaborative consumption. It could be of great importance to investigate if and what kind of individual responds more to either intrinsic motives or social pressure. Hence, the firms would be provided by additional knowledge regarding how to achieve a higher consistency between attitude and behavior.
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Appendix 1: Introductory Letter

Introductory Letter

We are two students writing a degree project at Umeå School of Business and Economics. We are currently searching for individuals who would like to participate in our study regarding the concept “Collaborative Consumption” where people share access to resources among each other for a fee or other compensation. Hence no transfer of ownership is taking place. Companies within the concept are e.g. Airbnb, Uber, Zipcar or BlaBlaCar. Companies such as Tradera, Ebay and Blocket are excluded from the concept since it involves a permanent transfer of ownership.

We are looking for individuals who:
• Are between 20-30 years old and/or between 30-60 years
• Have a basic knowledge about the concept Collaborative Consumption or are familiar with companies based on the concept (Airbnb, Uber, Zipcar, BlaBlaCar, etc.)
• Never used any of the previous mentioned companies or other companies based on the concept “Sharing”
• Are positive to this type of consumption

What does your participation involve?
The study will take place during week 11-12 and you will either participate in an interview or in a focus group that will last for about 1-2 hours. During the interview a wide range of topics will be introduced where we aim for your personal opinions and listen to your reasoning which later will help us to develop a framework for the following focus groups. Only you (the interviewee) and the researcher (Emelie and Ida) will be present during the interview. The focus groups will however involve an interaction among 4-8 participants, aiming to build a deeper understanding of the concept.

The interview and the focus groups will be recorded and by your participation you also agree to this term.

Your participation is voluntary and you can decide to end the interview / leave the focus group at any time without any “clear” reason. Your answers will be processed, analyzed and integrated in the degree project, which later will be published in the “Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet (DiVA). We will ensure your anonymity and your answers will be processed so that you as individual won’t be identified.

Your participation is highly important for our study and we appreciate that you take your time to participate.

You are free to contact us if you have any questions or if you want to declare your participation. If you agree to participate please inform us if you prefer being part of the interview or in the focus group.

Best regards
Emelie Enmark & Ida Wånge
Appendix 2: Letter of Consent

Letter of Consent

Hereby I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I have received the introductory letter and understand and accept the terms of participation.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I, at any time, can choose to end the interview/leave the focus group.

I agree to the interview/focus group being recorded and that my answers will be incorporated in the study.

I understand that all data will be handled with confidentiality and my answers will not be traceable back to me.

I promise that I will not expose any of the other participants or any information that will be discussed during the session to anyone beyond the study.

______________________________
City and Date

______________________________
Participant's signature

______________________________  ______________________________
Emelie Enmark                   Ida Wånge
Appendix 3: Framework Focus Groups

Framework Focus Groups

Information that will be shared before starting the focus group:
- A short presentation of the authors and the purpose of the study
- The letter of consent must be signed proving that the participants have taken part of the introductory letter and accepted the stated terms
- Emphasize the confidentiality and that the participant at any time can choose to leave the discussion
- We aim for a natural discussion and are not making any individual judgment of the responses
- Show respect when others are talking and to their opinions
- Ask if any of the participants have any questions before the focus group will begin
- Short introduction of all the participants

Themes to address:

Attitudes:
- How did your initial contact with the concept of collaborative consumption or any firms occur?
- What do you think peoples’ perception of collaborative consumption is?
- What do you perceive as potential obstacles for using these alternatives?

Behavior:
- What do you think could motivate individuals to use these alternatives?
- In general, what do you think motivate individuals of changing a behavior and do you have any suggestion on how to successfully do it?
- What do you think prevent people from changing a behavior and trying new things?

Decision Making:
- Can you guide us through a typical decision-making process?
- How do you think people evaluate their purchases?
- What do you think will determine satisfaction?

Consumption:
- What do you perceive a sustainable consumption to entail?
- What do you think is required to motivate people to increase their sustainable behavior?
- How could collaborative consumption affect the environment?