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Master Thesis

Drivers of Participation in Collaborative Consumption Ventures

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1. Abstract

Collaborative Consumption is a term used to describe the notion of sharing and joint utilization of goods and services. Being deeply rooted in anthropology, the phenomenon of joint consumption is currently experiencing a form of renaissance on the internet, as online communication is beginning to lower the hurdles of geographical, social and emotional distance associated with sharing activities of an individual's direct social circle. Although evidence suggests that the collaborative consumption market bears huge profit potentials, little research seems yet to have been conducted to foster the understanding of people's motivation to engage in such sharing networks. To address this gap, the following research study reviews the literature on a diverse set of academic fields such as consumer behaviour, sharing, anthropology, sociology and increasing returns, based on which proposition are presented aimed at clarifying the influence of selected factors on people's sharing behaviour. Grounded on these propositions, the study provides a conceptual model designed to improve the understanding of people's motivation to actively participate in collaborative consumption ventures. In this context, special focus is set on the supply of goods in 'pure' sharing systems in which no immediately observable exchange takes place. In an attempt to expose the assumptions made to preliminary scrutiny, focus group research has been conducted with frequent users of the Dutch collaborative consumption network *Peerby*. Findings suggest that there seems to be interaction effects between different constructs, as individuals tend to consider them jointly rather than independently when deciding whether to engage in sharing or not. Furthermore, the need for development of richer definitions of constructs used, to aid better understanding of potentially influential factors and set a solid basis for future theory testing, is uncovered.

2. Introduction

Collaborative Consumption is a rapidly emerging trend of the new digital age, which is becoming increasingly popular all over the world (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a; Botsman, 2012). While the joint consumption of goods is not a novel, but a rather old anthropological phenomenon deeply rooted in human society (Price, 1975), this new societal trend induces an ever-increasing amount of people to use internet platforms to share goods and services (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a). Having always been a medium for virtual exchange of information (Leiner et al., 2009), it is not surprising that the internet nowadays also plays a central role in the facilitation of offline exchange. Online communication has changed the rule of the game by broadening the scale of what is possible. Individuals are now virtually connected to a wide range of people both in their neighbourhood and all around the world, making the possibilities for sharing and collaboration almost endless. In this context, it must however be noted that the expansion of online collaborative consumption networks in different parts of the world is proceeding at different rates, as usage thereof is highly dependent on factors such as technical infrastructure. With income differentials being only one of many explanatory factors of the 'global digital divide' (Chinn & Fairlie, 2007), worldwide internet penetration had only reached a mere 34.3% in June 2012 showing significant deviations from this average value in different regions of the world, ranging from 78.6% in North America and 15.6% in Africa (Internet World Stats, 2012). While DiMaggio & Hargittai (2001) argue for the five most important drivers of digital inequality to be skill, the purposes for which the technology is employed, equipment, autonomy of use and social support as they have a direct influence on internet penetration, Skinner et al. (2003) suggest that not only penetration as such, but also access quality can impact participation in online networks. For those people who enjoy access, it has however become possible to offer their goods and services to strangers on platforms such as Peerby.com or Airbnb.com instead of sharing resources only with their direct social circle such as friends and family members. By

now even many companies are beginning to adapt to the current movement towards an access-driven and away from an ownership-driven mind-set, and are adjusting their offerings accordingly (Rifkin, 2000). BMW's 'Drive Now' initiative or the collection of rental tools offered in branches of the building supplies store chain 'Bauhaus' serve as good examples of this development in the German market.

Despite the fact that the estimated annual market value of collaborative consumption ventures is currently sky-rocketing, suggestive of a huge profit potential in a still largely unsaturated market (Forbes, 2013; MIT Sloan Experts, 2011; The Economist, 2013), an evaluation of current academic literature suggests that the field is still widely unstudied. For instance entering the combined search term *"collaborative consumption"* into the search engine Google serves as a nice illustration of this assumption, as a regular search provided roughly 491.000 sources compared to only 641 on Google Scholar in January 2014. Based on the observation of the embryonic state of the phenomenon in scholarly literature, it is assumed that there is currently insufficient academic insight aiding collaborative consumption based businesses to shape their value propositions. In better understanding what motivates people to share their belongings and offer services on such collaborative consumption platforms, founders and network operators could more successfully tailor their offerings to the people's needs and wants, and as such retain current users while attracting new ones. While this study by no means aims to find a lasting solution for this interesting and relevant problem, it however attempts to contribute towards the issue at hand by helping to move closer to a solution. By making use of exploratory research techniques, the following two research questions will thus be addressed:

1.) *To what extent is it possible to synthesize existing literature from different fields to craft first explanations for people's motivation to participation in collaborative consumption ventures?*

2.) *Is it possible to develop a preliminary conceptual model based on the findings in academic literature and identify potentially missing concepts?*

The beauty of collaborative consumption lies in the idea that it becomes more and more valuable to individuals the more people join, resulting in a self-enforcing mechanism which unfolds once the wheel has successfully been put into motion. The more favourable a collaborative consumption platform is thus perceived by individuals, the more likely they are to join and as a result make the platform more attractive to others, causing them to join as well. From a business perspective, research on consumer behaviour in the context of collaborative consumption will likely bring about profit increases as a result of rising demand for more tailored platform solutions.

From an academic point of view, exploratory research and theory building are often used as building stones established to provide a solid basis for future theory testing and more rigorous quantitative studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Silverman, 1993). In making first observations and collecting qualitative data, the path towards a better understanding of the phenomenon of collaborative consumption in the digital age can be smoothened.

In an attempt to shed light on the status quo in terms of current academic research on the topic of collaborative consumption and related fields, a thorough literature review has been constructed to serve as a theoretical background and basis for theory building. While going through existing literature, the emphasis of the study was limited to 'pure' collaborative ventures, which provide no directly apparent reward for the sharer, in order to set focus and

adhere to the given time constraints. Based on the most relevant factors found in literature from different research domains, a conceptual model was constructed. The model is aimed at summarizing possible explanatory elements for both the supply and demand for products and service offerings on sharing platforms, and the resulting likelihood of sharing at individual level and collaborative consumption venture success at the aggregate level. To provide some empirical backing for the developed theories and to set the direction for further research in the field, focus group research was then conducted with active users of the Dutch collaborative consumption venture Peerby which operates on the basis of 'pure' sharing principles. The findings were then interpreted and used to give concrete managerial advice to Peerby as to how the platform could be improved in order to further stimulate and encourage people to offer their belongings on the site for others to share. Finally, the limitations of the study were highlighted and suggestions for further research were given.

3. Literature Review

With collaborative consumption being a very recent phenomenon, only a limited amount of research seems to have been conducted in the field up until now. Consequently, the combination and consolidation of literature from different, related fields was regarded useful in the attempt to grasp a better understanding of the nature of collaborative consumption, the phenomenon of sharing and potential drivers of and barriers to such behaviour.

3.1 General Approach

Confronted with a vast amount of potentially relevant academic fields to consider, research was initially anchored in the existing literature on sharing, ownership and access (e.g., Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2007, 2010; Benkler, 2004; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010), taken mainly from highly ranked journals such as the *Journal of*

Consumer Research or the *Journal of Marketing*, as well as some of the few published works on collaborative consumption itself (e.g., Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, 2010b). Given the state of theory on the topic at hand, many academics are still engaging in qualitative research and theory building rather than testing. There are however a few exceptions, such as the investigations conducted by Moeller & Wittkowski (2010) or Lamberton & Rose (2012), in which preliminary qualitative studies are used to build hypotheses which are then examined in quantitative studies using statistical evaluation techniques. As such, the study at hand is based on a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative research papers, of which most engage in qualitative, non-empirical theory building while some already attempt quantitative, empirical theory testing. This selection of sources simultaneously hints at the direction this research study takes, as it makes use of qualitative research techniques to attempt theory building in form of the construction of a conceptual model and strives for preliminary validation on basis of focus group outputs.

Throughout the next research phase, anthropological and sociological studies on sharing behaviour in communities (e.g., Marlowe, 2004; Peterson, 1993; Price, 1975) were also studied and taken into account. Despite stemming from a completely different academic domain, such studies were believed to add interesting new perspectives to the idea of sharing and collaborative consumption, especially in the attempt to shed light on the origins and early stages of joint consumption and community sharing. Additionally, these studies uncovered stimulating contradictions to the view presented in purely economic based literature on issues such as the level of altruism present in sharing activities.

Finally, an economic and mathematical perspective was taken on relevant factors such as network growth and size (etc., Arthur, 1989, 1990; Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Kretschmer et al., 1999; Madden et al., 2004) by studying research papers published in reputable journals such

as *Mathematical Social Science* or the *American Economic Review*. With collaborative consumption ventures being highly dependent on large, active user bases, this field of literature was assumed to provide relevant insights into the mechanisms behind the functioning and growth of such platforms. In light of the study's goal of contributing towards academic insight supporting collaborative consumption based businesses in successfully shaping their value propositions, the necessity of understanding the notion of network size and increasing returns discussed in this literature was clearly evident.

The following literature research is thus based on a very diverse, yet quality-controlled sample of literature which combines a wide range of different research areas in order to provide a comprehensive and value-adding overview of the topic at hand. In order to smoothen the path towards a solid understanding of what collaborative consumption is and why it has evolved as a viable alternative to ownership, the notion of consumer access to resources is briefly elaborated on upfront. While the concept of collaborative consumption is discussed in more detail thereafter, to provide an initial basis for discussion it should be thought of as the joint consumption of goods and services between two or more people, which provides these individuals with the benefit of decoupling access from ownership.

3.2 Consumer Access to Resources

There are numerous ways in which individuals can gain access to products or resources they desire. The most direct and obvious one is of course to purchase the item and hence take full ownership of it. In such an economic exchange, prices are either publicly displayed or negotiated on the spot between the seller and the buyer. To ensure the absence of reciprocity in such prototypical market exchange settings, money is usually used as a medium for exchange so that "when the exchange partners complete their transaction they need never again encounter each other" (Belk, 2010, p. 718).

Similarly, individuals can take ownership of products through barter, or in other words the exchange of items with other individuals. Botsman & Rogers (2010a) even claim that "the idea of the exchange of goods or services for other goods and services without any money changing hands is the oldest form of economic trade" (p. 156). Barter was already an established part of human culture and interaction in the ancient world and was long used as the prime medium of exchange before the introduction of coins and paper money during the renaissance (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a). However, the most problematic issue with barter is what Jevons (1875) refers to as a *double coincidence of wants*. "The first difficulty of barter is to find two persons whose disposable possessions mutually suit each other's wants. There may be many people wanting, and many possessing those things wanted; but to allow an act of barter, there must be a double coincidence which will rarely happen" (Jevons, 1875, p.3). Despite this obvious "ineffectiveness of barter" (Starr, 1972, p.290), making it much less flexible and universally applicable than prototypical market transactions involving money, it has nonetheless not died out as a phenomenon. Bartering for instance experienced a noteworthy revival during the Great Depression and is currently again becoming increasingly popular in the context of collaborative consumption ventures (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a) as a result of the emergence of modern technology and virtual communication.

Gaining temporary ownership of a product is also possible through renting agreements which provide individuals with the access to a product or service for a limited period of time in exchange for money. In such cases, the fee charged for the rental period often includes a deposit payment which protects the rightful owner from having to bear the costs of any damage which might be caused by the renting party. However, no such protection is usually present in the context of lending or sharing, which evokes the question as to what motivates people to share. In this connection, especially the conditions under which individuals are willing to engage in *sharing in its purest form*, namely sharing without asking for any directly

observable compensation in return, are of particular interest and will thus be the subject of investigation of the following research.

Economically speaking, sharing goods or services with others without direct compensation does not only fail to create direct value, but can even be argued to destroy value for the individual who offers to share. The deterioration of object value through use, loss of time or the risk associated with potential damage are examples of factors which might lead to such value destruction which the sharing party is not compensated, let alone rewarded for incurring. Nonetheless, such sharing initiatives are not uncommon in society. They are mostly found in closely-knit communities (Price, 1975) but are nowadays even increasing in popularity between strangers through the rise of the internet on websites such as freecycle.com (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a). Despite approaching the topic from a different angle, namely the analysis of capitalistic systems and profit making, Small (1925) supports this idea that the "something-for-nothing motive" (p.439) is deeply rooted in human society. Similarly, Tencati & Zsolnai (2012) are convinced that "human beings are more than egotic machines: their intrinsic disposition is relational and collaborative" (p.346) and they propose that this view is confirmed by and reflected in the emerging collaborative trends and initiatives in today's society.

Price (1975) provides a good example of community sharing by analysing the behaviour and habits of the Washo Indians from the central Sierra Nevada around Lake Tahoe (p. 15 ff.). The study gives interesting insights into the drivers and "rules" of sharing behaviour in tightly-knit groups and thus helps to at least partially facilitate the understanding of why people share with others. According to the case study, both social and geographical distance seem to play an important role in the context of community sharing since "[Sharing decreased] as kinship and residence distances increased" (p. 16). The notion of social distance

as an important factor regarding the likelihood of sharing activities to take place is also picked up on by Belk (2010), who differentiates between "sharing in" and "sharing out". Sharing in generally refers to sharing activities within the "aggregate extended self" (p. 725) such as family, while sharing out describes the act of "giving to others outside the boundaries separating self and other" (p. 725), and thus "preserves the self/other boundary and does not involve expanding the sphere of aggregate extended self beyond the family" (p. 726).

It is suggested that only sharing in classifies as an act of true sharing, as it is altruistic in nature and expands the domain of common property to the "extended self". Sharing out in contrast is simply seen as a form of access, as the division of resources among discreet economic interests is non-altruistic and much closer to commodity exchange, since it preserves the self/other boundary (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2010). This standpoint is however counter argued by a number of anthropological studies which offer evidence for the belief that sharing is in fact never truly altruistic in nature (Marlowe, 2004; Price, 1975). While the economic domain attempts to conceptualize the nature of sharing in isolation, anthropologists acknowledge that sharing usually takes place in a social environment in which individuals have to fear the consequences of their behaviour. Subsequently, it is often hard to detect the level of altruism an act is subject to. While an economist might conclude that a certain behaviour classifies as altruism because no apparent exchange has taken place, a more careful look from a sociologic perspective could reveal this to be untrue. Despite not being immediately observable to outsiders, future reciprocity might still be expected by the sharing party, turning the act into a non-altruistic one. This logic can also be argued to be transferrable to the domain of online communities facilitated by the internet, in which such expectations could also likely emerge as the social character of a network intensifies.

This idea of sharing being mostly non-altruistic in nature, even amongst relatives or closely connected individuals, is nicely exemplified in the study of Price (1975). He states that for

instance in Washo tribes “the person who would not share with others of the same household, or who was generally stingy would not be included in the networks of sharing and would be ‘talked out’ of his household” (p. 16). Social pressure thus seems to play an important role in community sharing activities – rather than sharing based on generosity, individuals share to avoid punishment as the consequence of selfishness and stinginess. Price’s finding is also supported by a number of other sociological studies, such as the one conducted by Marlowe (2004) on Hadza hunter-gatherers. Sharing is deeply rooted in Hadza society as “Hadza say that people who do not share are bad people and that they will move away from them” (p. 85). However, it is interesting to see that Marlowe found them to be more willing to share in large than in small camps. He explains this phenomenon by stating that “being accused of stinginess in a large group could be more dangerous than being accused by one or two people in a small group, which might explain why people felt compelled to make higher offers in large camps” (p. 85), which supports the theory of sharing being enforced through social pressure and the fear of punishment rather than generosity. Peterson (1993) further undermines this school of thought with his research on demand sharing, which states that “despite the prevalence of an ethic of generosity among foragers, much sharing is by demand rather than by unsolicited giving” (p. 860). Taking Lester Hiatt’s study of Anbara Aborigines in Australia from 1982 as a source, Peterson explains that “below the melody line in praise of generosity among the Anbara people of Arnhem Land, a grumbling about their stinginess, neglect, and ingratitude also was evident. Public pressure on individual Anbara to share was virtually irresistible, so various counterstrategies were adopted by the diligent to prevent exploitation by the lazy or manipulative” (p. 860). The need for social pressure to enforce sharing conformity in a community setting thus seems to be a widespread, if not even universally applicable phenomenon. Nonetheless it should be noted that social pressure or the need for social acceptance is highly dependent on the given social cohesion and ties. Consequently, the phenomenon is expected to be more likely to occur in such tightly knit

communities and weaker in many of today's rather anonymous societies. However, as online sharing networks begin to develop a more social character resulting in the formation of societal 'sub-groups', the idea also regains relevance in the context of collaborative consumption ventures.

Given such strong empirical support in the academic literature as well as the indisputable logic of the argument, the aspect of social acceptance is expected to have a significant effect on individual behaviour in the context of sharing. Even though not all people care about the approval of their actions by others to the same degree, it is assumed that high levels of social acceptance for sharing will increase people's likelihood of offering their belongings for others to share. The following proposition is thus formed from the discussion:

Proposition: ***People who experience high levels of social acceptance of sharing in their environment are more likely to show an increased willingness to share their belongings with others.***

In light of all arguments discussed above, the question as to why individuals nonetheless increasingly engage in non-reciprocal sharing activities online leading websites such as freecycle.com, peerby.com or couchsurfing.com to experience a remarkable 'hype' in recent years, seems even more intriguing to investigate. To set an appropriate basis for discussion, the following subsections will firstly introduce the concept of collaborative consumption and then elaborate on incentives and impediments to share based on existing literature.

3.3 Collaborative Consumption

There is much evidence for the fact that consumers as well as companies are increasingly starting to perceive and make use of sharing as a sustainable and profitable alternative to

ownership (Belk, 2007; Rifkin, 2000). While sharing as "an activity that is more characteristic of the interior world of the home rather than the exterior worlds of work and the market" (Russell Belk, 2010, p.716) finds it origins in tightly-knit, well-connected communities which Price (1975) refers to as "intimate economies" (p.3), sharing between strangers is also starting to become the norm. Online communities and sharing systems are growing in popularity and were estimated to account for an annual market value of more than US$ 100 billion in 2010 (Lamberton & Rose, 2012).

Despite the fact that sharing communes and joint usage have always been a societal phenomenon, the term *Collaborative Consumption* was first shaped by Felson & Spaeth in 1978, who defined the phenomenon as "events in which one or more persons consume economic goods or services in the process of engaging in joint activities with one or more others" (p. 614). This definition emphasises the communal consumption or sharing of a single good or service amongst the members of a certain community. The authors suggest to further divide the term into three distinct subcategories, namely direct, system-hookup and segregated collaboration. Firstly, *direct-contact collaboration* means that collaboration partners consume jointly at the same time and place. Secondly, *system-hookup collaboration* describes situations where collaboration partners consume simultaneously while being in different places. Finally, *segregated collaboration* characterizes collaborative consumption activities where collaboration partners cooperatively consume a good or service at different times as well as in different places. Consequently, Felson & Spaeth (1978) suggest that "collaborative consumption may or may not involve direct physical contact between collaborators" (p. 622).

Having emerged from intimate, tightly-knit communities, the concept of collaborative sharing has however evolved rapidly in recent years, mainly fuelled by the rise and growing importance of the internet. While sharing activities in communities were generally found to be

decreasing with greater spacial distance in previous research (Price, 1975, p.13), meaning that people usually tend to share more frequently with others who are close to them both in terms of geographical distance as well as emotionally, this seems to be a somewhat outdated view in the age of digital communication and the internet. Trust as the basis for sharing activities, which could formerly only develop in real communities, can now be built between strangers using the power of technology (Botsman, 2012). Furthermore, the idea that "sharing is a principle that cannot be applied very well to large integrated populations because it is socially based on intimate linkages and bio-social attributes" suggesting that "small enough size is an important factor in the viability of [sharing] communes" (Price, 1975, p.7), no longer seems to hold true in all cases. It is however important to notice that the above discussed arguments are not meant to suggest that physical, social and emotional distance have ceased to influence sharing behaviour. Numerous studies show that these dimensions of distance in fact do play a significant role in social sharing behaviour (Marlowe, 2004; Peterson, 1993; Price, 1975). What has changed is the mode of communication – online interaction has significantly widened the scope of sharing possibilities and has brought about ease in the sense that things which could previously not be communicated across spacial or social gaps now can be (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Peer reviews or ratings for instance aim to build virtual trust, rendering distances or social ties less important, allowing for a totally different form of collaborative consumption to emerge via the internet (Botsman, 2012).

The internet can thus be argued to have revolutionized the landscape of sharing activities as it has enabled the emergence of "'many to many' peer interactions" which means that "sharing and collaboration are happening in ways and at a scale never before possible" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p. xv). Already in 1975, Price acknowledged the possibility that artificial intelligence might be able to overcome the limits of the human brain and thus enable sensitivity to individual differences and the establishment of 'personal' bonds in larger groups

and communities (p.7). The emergence and growing popularity of collaborative consumption networks in today's society serves as proof for Price's predictive assumption and emphasizes the fact that web 2.0 has changed the way in which the modern society engages in sharing activities. Albinsson & Perera (2012) also suggest that "an increase in collaborative consumption, which contrasts with the individualistic-oriented North American and Western European consumer culture, indicates that consumer preferences, albeit yet for a relatively small segment of the entire population, are undergoing a transformation" (p.303). Fuelled by the possibilities arising from modern technology, we seem to be slowly but surely moving away from individualistic, short-term oriented purchasing behaviour towards a more communal, sustainable model. In line with this train of thought and despite its currently still limited reach, Botsman & Rogers (2010b) argue that "collaborative consumption is not a niche trend, and it's not a reactionary blip to the recession. It's a socioeconomic groundswell that will transform the way companies think about their value propositions – and the way people fulfil their needs".

In this comparably more recent work, Botsman & Rogers (2010b) define collaborative consumption ventures as "systems of organized sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping" which give participants "the benefits of ownership with reduced personal burden and costs (…)", picking up on Moeller & Wittkowski's (2010) notion of *burden of ownership*. While in essence this definition is not much different from the one Felson & Spaeth (1978) present in their study on community structure and its effect on collaborative consumption behaviour, it takes a much more concrete approach on the distinct nature and different possible forms of such collaboration consumption activities. In order to provide a tool for classification of the numerous types of collaborative consumption ventures which currently exist, Botsman & Rogers (2010a, 2010b) suggest three distinct categories, namely *Product Service Systems (PSS), Redistribution Markets* and *Collaborative Lifestyles*.

Product Service Systems "enable companies to offer goods as a service rather than sell them as products" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010b). This means that consumers gain access to the benefits of the product or service without having to own it outright, such as in the case of car sharing. Another example to consider is for instance Océ's concept of 'managed print services' which allows institutions such as universities to outsource their printing solutions. Rather than buying and maintaining their own, Océ offers these companies to rent the latest printer models and pay only for the actual usage and servicing (Océ, 2013). Such offerings provide alternatives to costly ownership, regular maintenance and eventual repurchase to clients, and new business opportunities for providers. In terms of participation intention, Katzev's (2003) study revealed people's willingness to engage in such systems to be highest when their demand for the product or service was occasional and the financial saving they expect to realize were worthwhile.

In an attempt to explain the growing popularity of Product Service Systems, Bardhi & Eckhardt (2012) argue form an experience economy perspective by stating that "instead of buying and owning things, consumers want access to goods and prefer to pay for the experience of temporarily accessing them" (p. 881). Botsman & Rogers (2010a) even describe this phenomenon as a societal shift in mind-set, where people are increasingly moving away from an ownership oriented mind-set towards a "usage mind-set" (p. 71). In line with this, Rifkin (2000) argues that businesses, exemplified for instance by Océ, have already sensed and picked up on this trend and are "well along the way towards the transition from ownership to access" (p. 44). Rather than only focusing on the sale of the physical product (e.g. a car or a book), Rifkin explains that companies "increasingly turn customers into clients and sell access to the 'experience'" (e.g. driving a car or reading a book). This creates a win-win situation for both customers and companies. Effectively, such businesses 're-sell' the

same product multiple times, resulting in multiplied profits and customer contacts. This in turn results in multiplied opportunities for "additional sales, for strengthening a brand, for improving a competitive service, and for deepening and extending the relationship with customers" (Gansky, 2010, p.5).

Following this train of thought, it becomes clear that products and services are closely coupled in Product Service Systems in the sense that by shaping the product, the service is shaped as well, requiring joint consideration and design. Public transport systems provide a good example for joint product service development since the physical product alone (e.g. functional buses and trams) do not ensure a functioning system without adequate service support (e.g. convenient routes and timings). In an attempt to avoid congestion, it is necessary to look at the integral system instead of each aspect in isolation. An alignment of product and service offerings is thus of crucial importance to the working order of Product Service Systems.

Redistribution Markets facilitate the (re)distribution of used or pre-owned goods "from where they are not needed to somewhere or someone where they are" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p.72), meaning that essentially ownership is redistributed. While some of these communities operate on a monetary basis (e.g. eBay), others are based on free exchange of unwanted goods (e.g. Freecycle). But regardless of the exact nature of the exchange, "a redistribution market encourages reusing and reselling old items rather than throwing them out, and also significantly reduces waste and resources that go along with new production" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p.72/73). This means that despite the practical aspect of shifting resources from where they are no longer needed to where they are needed at affordable rates, the concept of redistribution markets additionally benefits society by fostering sustainability and the sensible use of scarce resources. Even though the aspect of sustainability is often only "an

unintended consequence of collaborative consumption" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p.74), its importance should not be neglected in view of the strongly negative societal and individual consequences of overconsumption. Albinsson & Perera (2012) support this viewpoint by stating that "the need for sustainability is exacerbated by increasing levels of global consumption and the associated increase in demand for goods and services in international markets" (p. 303).

Finally, in *Collaborative Lifestyles* "people with similar need or interests are banding together to share and exchange less tangible assets such as time, space, skills and money" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p.73). Again, such initiatives take place on both a local level (e.g. Landshare) and global level (e.g. Airbnb). Since collaborative lifestyle sharing is usually characterized by high levels of human interaction and is mostly concerned with intangible products, it is often regarded as requiring even more trust than other types of collaborative consumption ventures. By labelling the phenomenon 'lifestyle', the literature however introduces a bias since this term implies active engagement triggered by belief. Such bias might stem from the author's conviction that such systems are highly efficient and the resulting attempt of propagation thereof. Engagement in Collaborative Lifestyle communities might however also be caused by factors such as convenience (e.g. finding cheap and central place to stay via Airbnb), leading to the consideration of relabeling the phenomenon to a less emotionally laden, more neutral term such as 'Collaborative Conduct'.

Lamberton & Rose (2012) introduce a *Typology of Sharing*, which characterizes sharing activities according to their exclusivity and rivalry (p.110). *Figure 1* provides an illustration of this sharing matrix.

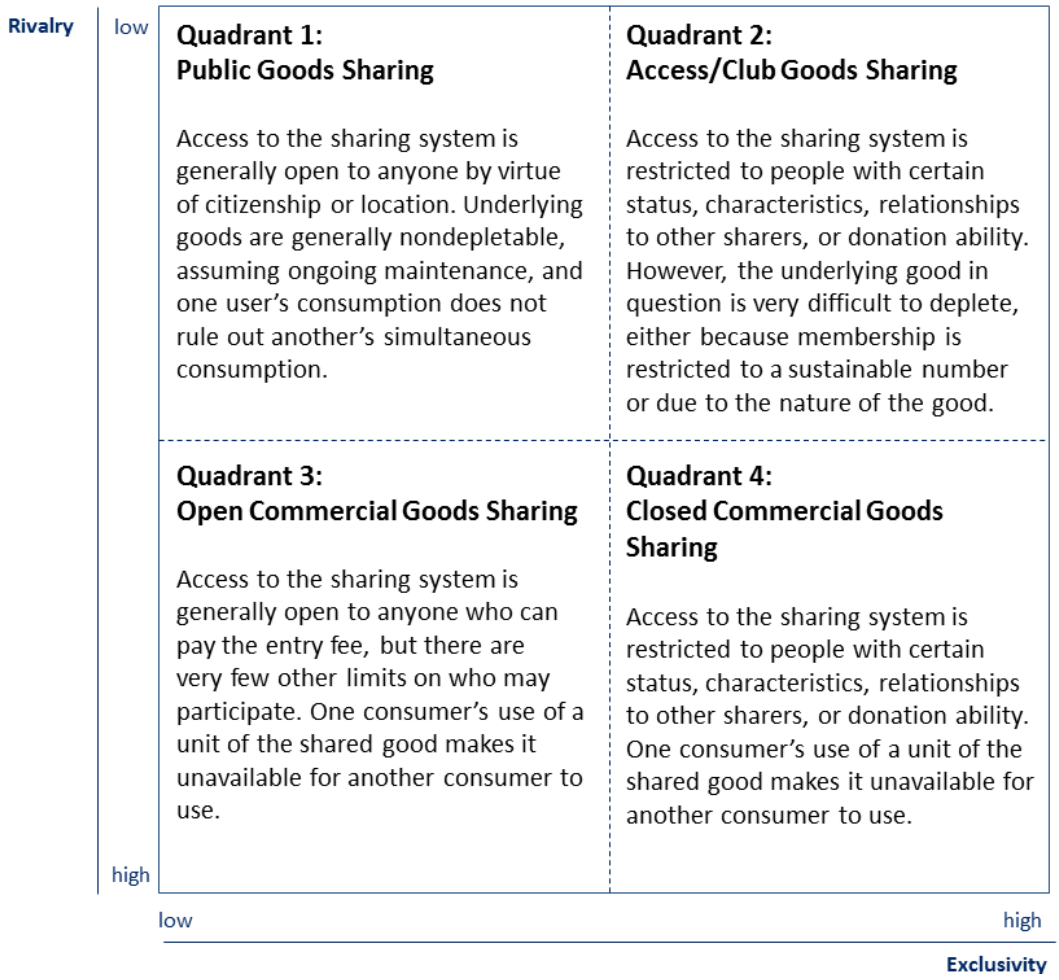

***Figure 1**: Typology of Sharing*

Most collaborative consumption ventures can be argued to fall into Quadrant 3, which is subject to low exclusivity and high rivalry. Low exclusivity means that "access to the sharing system is generally open to anyone who can pay the entry fee [if applicable], but there are very few other limits on who may participate", while high rivalry suggests that "one consumer's use of a unit of the shared good makes it unavailable for another consumer to use" (Lamberton & Rose, 2012, p.110). Especially in light of the notion of high rivalry, such systems gain attractiveness the more people participate, since this guarantees a wider offer of products and services. In other words, "the benefit [of collaborative consumption ventures] grows exponentially the more people share" (Russell Belk, 2010, p.727), which is why low

exclusivity is often necessary to reach a "critical mass" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p.79) or "tipping point" (Gladwell, 2006) and consequently achieve such economies of scale.

Regarding the drivers of collaborative consumption activities, Botsman & Rogers (2010a) note that across all types of venture "motivation can range from saving money to making money, from convenience to meeting friends, from saving space to saving time, from feeling part of a community to 'doing the right thing'" (p. 73/74). This means that the incentives to engage in collaborative consumption activities are diverse, but as Belk (2010) points out, often "what appears to be sharing is actually more of a self-interested commodity exchange" (p. 728). Sharing in its purest form generally denotes that nothing is expected in return. Consequently, not all examples of collaborative consumption can be regarded as acts of 'pure sharing', since they are partly driven by rewards such as monetary incentives. As previously discussed, it can however be considered naïve to assume that such 'pure' acts of sharing are always entirely altruistic in nature (Marlowe, 2004; Price, 1975). While there might not be any immediate exchange observable to outsiders in certain sharing activities, it nonetheless cannot be excluded that there might be implicit expectation of future reciprocity present in such settings.

To set the stage for improved understanding of the phenomenon at hand first a general overview of the nature of sharing activities will be provided. Besides discussing potential incentives and impediments to share, related concepts will be explained and defined to clearly carve out what sharing is exactly.

3.4 Sharing

"Not only is sharing critical to the most recent of consumption phenomenon like the Internet, it is also likely the oldest type of consumption" (Belk, 2010, p.730). Therefore, the

observation that it is currently experiencing a new 'hype' of even 'renaissance' should not distract from the fact that it has always played an important role in human interaction. Price (1975) supports the idea that sharing is deeply rooted in human anthropology by stating that "[Sharing is] the most universal form of human economic behaviour, distinct from and more fundamental than reciprocity" (p. 3) and that is "has probably been the most basic from of economic distribution in hominid societies for several hundred thousand years" (p.12).

But what exactly is sharing? While Price (1975) takes a very broad approach by classifying sharing as a "general term for common use or distribution" (p.4), Benkler (2004) describes sharing as "nonreciprocal pro-social behaviour" (p.275) and Belk (2007) sees sharing as "the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving and or taking something from others for our use" (p. 127). In his later work "Sharing" (2010) Belk however questions the completeness and precision of such definitions and instead suggests a classification of exchange activities into *sharing*, *gift giving* and *commodity exchange (market exchange)* with the help of pre-defined prototypes (p.717). According to him, such prototypes are a more valuable tool for work around the blurry boundaries which exist between these different types of consumer behaviours than are strict definitions (p. 720). In light of the diverse views on these constructs presented in existing literature, it has been deemed necessary to take position by briefly discussing their distinct differences and similarities in the following paragraph.

3.4.1 Sharing, Gift Giving and Commodity Exchange

Despite having much in common since all three terms describe a voluntary exchange of goods or services between people, these concepts must nonetheless be regarded as distinctly different in some aspects. While Giesler (2006) uses the terms *gift giving* and *sharing* interchangeably, Belk (2010) suggests drawing a clear distinction between the two even though he admits that the dividing line is sometimes imprecise. In this context he refers to gift

giving ceremonies such as wrapping and trimming, which are used to clearly separate gift giving from sharing and also suggests that a "gift imposes an obligation of reciprocity, [whereas] sharing does not" (p. 718). This view is also supported by Widlok (2004), who states that "sharing is not only unbalanced but a completely one-sided transfer and therefore not reciprocal at all" (p. 61). Price (1975) however suggests that this seemingly nonreciprocal nature of sharing might stem from the fact that some people are generally in a better position to give than others and that especially in intimate, tightly-knit communities it is perceived as sufficient if each individual gives what is possible rather than what would be equivalent in return for what they received (p.6). Nonetheless, Belk (2010) concedes that "there is also potential overlap due to the ability of both sharing and gift giving to bind the giver and recipient" (p. 718). Price (1975) even goes so far as to say that gifts can be seen as an "extension of sharing patterns beyond the ordinary social contexts of sharing" (p. 21) and are as such just a more intense form of sharing in close social relationships.

In contrast to this, c*ommodity exchange* usually involves strangers, which means that typically no emotional bond is formed or reinforced (p.717). Money is used as a medium of exchange which is regarded as "fungible, non-singular, alienable and impersonal" (p. 719) and therefore any notion of reciprocity is removed from the exchange activity. In addition to that, Belk (2010) explains that *gift giving* and *commodity exchange* are also distinctly different from *sharing* as they involve a transfer of ownership while "mutuality of possession is an important characteristic of sharing" (p. 720). While sharing is thus often rooted in necessity in the sense that things are jointly used by communities to make more efficient use of (scarce) resources, it has the potential to also foster the emergence or reinforcement of interpersonal bonds. Price (1975) hence concludes that "sharing is as much emotional as it is rational" (p.5).

Making a clear distinction between the three types of consumer behaviour discussed above can be seen as a precondition for understanding what exactly sharing is, why it is occurs and what motivates people to share. Belk (2010) supports this notion of necessity to distinguish by stating that "we make a (…) mistake if we assume that all consumer behaviour is either *gift giving* or *economic exchange*. Sharing is a more subtle, and likely more pervasive, mode of consumer behaviour that has gone largely unrecognized or misrecognized" (p. 730). On the basis of this clarification, factors which might foster or hinder sharing activities will be discussed in the following.

3.4.2 Incentives to Share

The participation in sharing systems provides people with the benefits of product usage without imposing on them the burden of ownership (Lamberton & Rose, 2012). In line with the general assumptions of utility theory, people naturally tend to show an increased interest in sharing when the costs of sharing are minimized while the benefits are maximised (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007). While supporting this train of thought, Lamberton & Rose (2012) suggest to further break down these two aspects into more specific subpoints to better understand the consumer's internal decision making process of whether to engage in a sharing activity or not. The "costs of sharing" are subdivided into *price of sharing*, meaning the price of the shared item such as an access fee, *technical costs*, meaning all nonmonetary costs associated with engaging in a sharing activity such as time spent on learning how to use the product and *search costs*, namely cost incurred "through the money or effort needed to determine which product to purchase or which sharing program to enter" (p. 111). It is important to notice that in the context of sharing, for instance technical costs might in fact be much higher than in the case of ownership, since the consumer might incur them repeatedly when adjusting to different features of shared products (e.g. repeatedly adjusting to new cars in car sharing systems).

Similarly, the "benefits" or "utilities" are also segmented into several sub-categories namely *transaction utility* or the "deal value perceived in a sharing system" (p. 111), *sources of utility related to flexibility*, meaning the lack of limitations of using a sharing system, *storage utility*, which refers to the storage advantage obtained through sharing, *anti-industry utility*, meaning psychological satisfaction derived from not supporting traditional market mechanism and finally *social utility* in the form of "approval by reference group" (Lamberton & Rose, 2012, p.111).

Being a substantial aspect of any type of economic transaction as well as most human decision making processes, the cost-benefit trade-off is proposed to play a central role in explaining individual sharing behaviour. Consequently, the proposition reads:

Proposition: ***The lower the perceived costs and the higher the perceived benefits associated with a sharing activity, the more likely people are to get engaged in it.***

People choose to engage or not engage in activities based on their perceived costs and benefits, which is why this aspect in the context of sharing has an impact both on the supply of as well as the demand for shared goods and services. Having to go through a complicated process to offer own belongings online (technical costs) might for instance limit supply, while a lack of transparency of obtainable benefits or products offered (search costs) might limit demand. The cost of sharing consequently does not only influence the individual likelihood of engaging in sharing activities, but also has an impact on the system level as it is assumed to moderate both supply and demand for sharing. Therefore, the following is proposed:

<u>Proposition</u>: ***The cost of sharing moderates both the supply of and demand for goods in sharing activities. As costs of sharing are high, the impact is assumed to be negative while it is assumed to be positive as costs of sharing are low.***

Collaborative consumption ventures which lower the costs of sharing on their network might thus be able to attract and sustain an active user base.

Despite the fact that all 'benefit' subcategories suggested by Lamberton & Rose (2012) add interesting new through-provoking impulses regarding people's motivation to share, only some of them are directly or indirectly captured in the propositions suggested throughout this literature review. While *storage utility* and *flexibility* fall under the aspect of convenience, *social utility* is treated as part of social acceptance. *Anti-industry utility*, despite being intriguing as a concept, was chosen not to be considered due to a lack of support for this theory in other academic literature taken into account.

Besides this basic notion of cost-benefit analysis, previous research also suggests a number of other factors which drive people's willingness to share and engage in sharing activities. Intuitively, the available quantity of what is shared can be considered to be of crucial importance. According to Belk (2007) people are generally happy to share things which they have plenty of or even enjoy unlimited access to, but tend to become more selfish and possessive when supply is, or is at least believed to be fixed. He however suggests that sharing might nonetheless take place in cases of limited supply "when it [the product or service] would otherwise go to waste" (p. 135), meaning that the initial owner cannot enjoy the benefits of the good or service him- or herself for whatever reason. Abundance of resources can thus be seen as a general driver of sharing activities. Consequently, it is proposed that that an individual with abundant access to a particular resource would generally

be more willing to share it with others. While abundance might not trigger engagement in sharing activities directly ("I have a lot, therefore I should share") as it stands in interplay with factors such as an individual's possessiveness, it nonetheless lowers the associated cost of sharing one's own property with others. Therefore, it can be argued to impact the supply of goods and services in collaborative consumption ventures. The following is proposed:

Proposition: ***People who experience resource abundance are generally more likely to offer their belongings for others to share.***

In their empirical study through the questioning of members of a German online peer-to-peer sharing system, Moeller & Wittkowski (2010) found two other factors to be statistically significant with regards to positively influencing people's willingness to rent rather than own products – *trend orientation* and *convenience orientation*. Even though the focus of their paper is specifically set on renting rather than sharing, it can nonetheless be considered to be relevant in this context since renting is simply a specific form of sharing as stated by Belk (2007, p.127).

Trend orientation, defined as an individual's desire to consume or obtain access to the most novel and innovative products is found to positively influencing a person's willingness to engage in renting activities, which implies that an increased trend-consciousness can be regarded as fostering a person's likelihood of renting (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010, p.185). In line with this argument, it is proposed that high levels of trend orientation positively influence and individual's demand to engage in sharing networks. The concept plays into the idea of a rising "experience economy" as Pine & Gilmore (1998) term today's service economy in which an increasing amount of companies is trying to "wrap experiences around their traditional offerings to sell them better" (p. 98). People's preference to temporarily access

rather than purchase products, incentivised by the want to follow the latest trends (*trend orientation*) at affordable rates, seems to have risen substantially in recent years. Companies such as *Bag Borrow or Steal* (which offers rental services of ladies' luxury goods such as handbags or jewellery) are highly successful, providing evidence for the idea that trend orientation is in fact an important consumer motive. This justifies the proposition that the possibility of fulfilling product wants by borrowing items rather than owning them outright positively influences people's demand for sharing network engagement. The proposition thus reads:

Proposition: ***People who are subject to strong trend orientation are more likely to show demand for engagement in sharing activities.***

Similarly, *convenience orientation*, which Morganosky (1986) describes as the desire to accomplish a task with the minimum amount of energy consumed in the shortest time possible, also seems to have a positive effect on consumer's renting behaviour. Rather than a privilege, ownership is often regarded as a "burden" by people who for instance do not have the physical space to store a product as suggested by Babione (1964). Moeller & Wittkowski (2010) further clarify the term "burden of ownership" by subdividing it into four subcategories of inconvenience, namely product alteration or obsolescence, incorrect product selection, maintenance / repair of the product and paying the full cost for something which is only infrequently used (p. 179). Consequently, convenience is proposed as being a potential diver of consumer's willingness to share rather than own. The higher the perceived convenience of borrowing something is to an individual, the higher the demand for the engagement in sharing activities over owning is expected to be. The following is thus proposed:

Proposition: ***The need for convenience makes people more likely to engage in sharing as an alternative to ownership.***

It is however important to notice that convenience needs to be viewed as a two-dimensional factor. Firstly, it refers to the extent to which an individual perceives the sharing activities to be convenient in terms of time spent on search and transaction, meaning the ease of use. While this aspect can be argued to be highly system-driven, meaning that it should be regarded as a moderating factor, it will nonetheless be discussed on the individual level throughout this research paper. This is because the perceived ease of use and the resulting time and effort spent on engaging in a sharing activity is like to vary between people, depending for instance on their tech-savviness or familiarity with a certain platform. Secondly, the term convenience refers to the extent to which the actual sharing arrangement is opportune to the individual engaging in in. Examples of convenience in this context could for instance be the geographical distance to the closest "Drive Now" vehicle available, or the extent to which available Airbnb listings in a chosen location match an individual's demand and expectations.

In an attempt to identify further incentives for consumer sharing beyond the boundaries of the immediate family or "intimate economy" (Price, 1975), Belk (2007) initially differentiates between sharing of tangible and intangible goods. Unsurprisingly, he suggests that in the case of intangibles the reluctance to sharing is generally much lower than in the context of sharing tangibles, due to the fact that "we do not lose them by sharing them" (p. 136). The rise of the internet has fundamentally helped to facilitate sharing of information and knowledge in digital form, smoothing the path to a "global community of sharing, communicating, and giving, with a free flow of information providing equality of access" (p. 133). Especially the sharing of knowledge can generally be seen as a classic 'win-win' situation since the initial "owner"

does not lose the knowledge by sharing it with others, but rather multiplies it. In this connection, such practices often even facilitate a more rapid emergence of new knowledge in a certain field (e.g. when academics share their insights with each other in order for others to build upon them for future research). Despite adding an interesting angle to the discussion as to what motivates people to share, the research paper at hand does not differentiate between sharing of tangibles and intangibles in an attempt to provide clarity and simplicity to the greatest extent possible in this complex, multidimensional field.

Belk (2007) proposes another incentive for sharing intangibles aside the concept of "cheap altruism", namely the "imperative for constant movement" (p. 133). This again taps on the concept of reciprocity in the sense that people might feel that they need to engage in further sharing activities when someone has shared something with them, even if it does not necessarily involve the same person. This behaviour can be regarded as a positive reinforcement of prosocial behaviour in the form of engagement in voluntary sharing activities without obtaining a direct personal benefit from it. The proposition thus reads as follows:

Proposition: ***People who have been offered to share someone else's belongings are more likely to offer their belongings for other to share as well.***

In light of the meagre support for this theory in other sources of academic literature, this argument is however proposed not to have a strong enough explanatory power to be considered further in this research despite its thought-provoking nature. Being characterized by intrinsic motivation, it can however be argued to be tightly coupled with the idea of emotional benefit as a driver of pure sharing activities discussed hereafter.

Finally, the sharing of both tangibles and intangibles seems to be fostered by the psychological factor of feeling part of a community, which can extend significantly beyond Price's (1975) "intimate economy". This inner satisfaction arises when "we feel a shared identity with others – whether in our neighbourhood, group, city, state or nation – feel a common sense of moral obligation towards them" (Belk, 2007, p.135). This concept is especially relevant in the context of things which per se cannot be owned individually but only in common, such as planetary resources. Walsh (2011) even argues that the greatest benefit of collaborative consumption and sharing is the social aspect. He believes that "in an era when families are scattered and we may not know the people down the street, sharing things – even with strangers we've just met online – allows us to make meaningful connections". To a greater or lesser extent, the academic literature thus suggests that people seem to obtain an emotional benefit from sharing their belongings with others. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition: ***People who experience an emotional benefit from sharing are more likely to share their belongings with others.***

3.4.3 Impediments to Share

Despite the many advantages associated with sharing, there are also a number of factors which commonly impede sharing behaviour. In line with Belk's (2007) previously discussed argument of resource abundance as a stimulator of sharing activities, Lamberton & Rose (2012) argue that perceived product scarcity risk, defined as "the likelihood that a product or product-related resource will be unavailable when a consumer desires them", directly determines sharing propensity. The stonger people believe that a good will not be available to them when needed due to the engagement in a sharing arrangement, the less likely they are to participate in sharing communities. Assuming that the majority of (commercial) sharing

systems do not provide the luxury of *collective consumption goods*, defined by Samuelson (1954) as goods "which all enjoy in common in the sense that each individual's consumption of such a good leads to no sub-traction from any other individual's consumption of that good" (p. 387), Lamberton & Rose (2012) shape the term *rivalry*. It is used to describe the phenomenon that one person's use of a shared good diminishes the availability of that same good to other people in a sharing system. Furthermore, in the context of hindrances to sharing Lamberton & Rose (2012) also stress the importance of *exclusivity*, defined as the "degree to which access to the product can be controlled and restricted to a group of consumers according to some criteria" (p. 110). This is to say that when some individuals in a sharing system enjoy privileged access to the shared goods or services, this will most likely have a negative impact on the willingness of other, non-privileged individuals to participate in the same sharing community. Exclusivity is thus proposed to either enhance or inhibit the demand for the participation in sharing networks, depending on individual preferences. Taking the argument of size into account, limiting the number of participants allowed is rather expected to hinder sharing propensity. The less exclusive a sharing network therefore is, the more successful it is expected to be in terms of size and growth. It is therefore proposed that:

Proposition: ***Exclusivity of sharing networks positively or negatively impacts people's demand for engagement depending on their individual preferences (appreciation or disregard of exclusivity).***

Belk (2010) approaches the issue of impediments to sharing behaviour from a more psychological angle by evaluating people's values and mind-sets, and the implications of such characteristics on the willingness to share. One of the most important aspects in this context is a person's *possessiveness and attachment to possessions*, as according to Belk "people are more reluctant to share things to which they have a strong emotional attachment" (p.727).

Such behaviour of materialistic attachment and the importance of control of possessions, as thoroughly investigated by Kleine & Baker (2004), are clear obstacles to the smooth functioning of sharing systems. This claim is for instance also supported by Richins & Dawson (1992) who found in their investigative study on materialism that people who show significant materialistic behaviour placed a lower emphasis on personal relationships, were more willing to spend on themselves rather than on others and were unsurprisingly also less likely to give or lend possessions to friends and relatives compared to less materialistically oriented individuals. In this context, Arsel (2010) suggests the fear of contamination to be one potential explanatory factor for possessive behaviour, or rather the unwillingness to share things with others. Gregson & Crewe (2003) come to similar conclusions which propose that people often tend to have negative associations, such as feelings of disgust, with the reuse of someone else's belongings. The degree to which this in fact applies to a given situation is however suggested to be both dependent on an individuals' perception or general attitude, as well as the nature of the object which is being shared (e.g. the sharing of tools will most likely be perceived as being less problematic than the sharing of underwear).

The strong affirmation of the explanatory power of the phenomenon of possessiveness in the academic literature on sharing leads to the proposition that high levels of possessiveness negatively impact people's willingness to share their belongings, lowering the supply potential of goods and services in collaborative consumption networks. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition: ***The higher the level of possessiveness people experience, the lower their likelihood of sharing their belongings with others.***

Furthermore, Belk (2010) also discusses the idea of independence and the potential loss thereof in sharing systems as an impediment to sharing. He argues that "some people seek to

avoid feeling dependent on others who are willing to share their resources" (p.728) and as a result sole ownership might be preferred by some. This factor can be argued to be closely coupled with the idea of rivalry and exclusivity. People who do not want to feel dependent on others in a sharing network essentially fear rivalry, meaning that the anxiety for unavailability causes them to prefer ownership over sharing solutions. This individualistic nature of dependency, opposed to the network-driven nature of rivalry and exclusivity as discussed above, is precisely what shapes the difference between the two factors. Consequently, dependency is proposed to make people reluctant to use sharing networks on an individual level, as access to certain resources might then be dependent on other people's behaviour (e.g. the owner of the product or other people who have access to it), while rivalry is proposed to have the same effect on the network level in the sense that the higher the rivalry of a sharing network is, the lower the demand for getting involved is expected to be. Therefore:

Proposition: ***The stronger the feeling of dependency on others, the less likely people are to make use of sharing networks to borrow goods.***

Finally, the concept of trust seems to play a highly influential role in the context of sharing impediments. While trust could also be argued to serve as an incentive to share if present at a high level, it will here be discussed from the opposite perspective. This is because the presence of trust is commonly regarded as a precondition for sharing rather than an incentive, while a lack of trust in individuals of a sharing community is likely to lead to a decrease in sharing behaviour. Akerlof (1970) helps to underline the importance of trust in transaction settings by stating that "Informal guarantees are preconditions for trade and production. Where these guarantees are indefinite, business will suffer (…)" (p. 500). Dishonesty in a market environment is in his eyes generally associated with great costs, since it often leads to honest dealings being driven out of the market (p. 495). On the flipside, Brown & Morgan

(2006) suggest that in solving the "trust problem", companies can gain a substantial competitive advantage over other players in the online space, an argument which further stresses the need for serious consideration of this issue.

A lack of trust in sharing communities is especially common in the field of online communities which commonly connect "parties who have never transacted with each other before" (Jøsang et al., 2007, p.618). Many collaborative sharing networks have thus begun to introduce *online feedback mechanisms* (Dellarocas, 2003) and *reputation systems* or *collaborative sanction systems* (Jøsang et al., 2007). Such mechanisms are designed to assist users to build trust in other members they have never met in person and consequently facilitate transactions between strangers. Such systems aid the decision making process of whether or not to engage in a transaction and simultaneously provides users with an incentive to comply with the community regulations and demonstrate good behaviour (Jøsang et al., 2007).

Feldman et al., (2006) evaluate further ways to counteract two common forms of non-compliance in peer-to-peer sharing systems, namely *free-riding* and *whitewashing.* Particularly the issue of *whitewashers*, defined as "users who leave the system and re-join with new identities to avoid reputational penalties" (p. 1010) has attracted the attention of numerous researchers due to the disastrous effects they can have on the viability and sustainability of online peer-to-peer systems. Not only does such behaviour harm honest, compliant users, but simultaneously "hinders the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms" (Dellarocas, 2003, p.25) and thus creates a vicious circle. Friedman & Resnick (2001) offer two ways of handing this problem they refer to as "cheap pseudonyms", namely obstructing the practice of changing online identities through authentication mechanisms and making exit/re-entry strategies unprofitable by imposing upfront costs on new sign-ups. This approach

is also found to be effective by Feldman et al., (2006) who suggest that "penalizing all newcomers may be effective in discouraging whitewashing behaviour" (p 1017). Further complementing each other's research, the unavoidable efficiency losses described by Friedman & Resnick (2001) which arise from imposing such upfront costs are however found to only reduce system performance in communities with a high turnover rate by Feldman et al., (2006).

On a more individual level, Botsman (2012) argues for growing the importance of personal reputation as an incentive to act honestly. In her speech held at TEDGlobal in 2012, she argues that "reputation is a currency that will become more powerful than our credit history in the 21st century", tapping into the notion of social endorsement. Not only can functions such as online peer review systems help to make collaborative consumption networks more transparent in the sense that they allow people to judge the trustworthiness or competence of strangers in a given context – Botsman advocates the idea that in the age of the internet, an individual's online reputation has the possibility to translate into actual, long-lasting value in the real world. She gives the example of highly ranked members of platforms such as taskrabbit.com being able to charge higher prices for their offered services than lower ranked members. Market functioning can thus be enhanced, meaning that achieved transparency in a virtual setting can have a game chancing impact. With reputation being defined by Botsman as "the measurement of how much a community trusts you", reliable peer review systems doubtlessly have the power to overcome potential mistrust in collaborative consumption networks and online communities in general. Eventually, she argues, virtual trust might even be able to transform the way we trust one another face-to-face (Botsman, 2012).

Trust can be described as faith and belief in others and the extent to which people are confident that others are reliable in terms of what they promise. Especially in sharing

networks where strangers often need to interact with each other as if they knew one another, trust is an important moderating force, especially relevant to product or service supply. People who doubt that borrowers will treat their belongings well and return them as promised, will most likely refrain from participating in such sharing networks. Consequently, the more transparent and secure such platforms are set up to be (e.g. with relevant trust mechanisms in place), the higher the likelihood of people to offer their belongings on it is expected to be. In light of this argument and based on the strong theoretical support for the importance of trust in the context of sharing activities, it is proposed that trust or a lack thereof can foster or hinder collaborative consumption network performance. It is therefore proposed:

Proposition: ***Trust or the lack thereof in sharing networks respectively has a positive or negative impact on people's likelihood of sharing their belongings with others.***

3.5 Increasing Returns – Putting Collaborative Consumption into Motion

Sharing initiatives, especially in the context of collaborative consumption ventures, require a "critical mass" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010a, p.79) of people who continuously participate in these initiatives for these initiatives to flourish and become attractive. Collaborative consumption is thus much based on a large, active user base, the achievement of which can be considered as the main challenge in putting the wheel into motion. The logic of the so-called *network effect*, defined from the economic perspective as "the effect that the number of users who are in the same network has on the utility of a product" (Kretschmer et al., 1999, p.61) serves as a source of explanation for this train of thought. There are many examples of products or services "for which the utility that a user derives from consumption of the good increases with the number of other agents consuming the good" (Katz & Shapiro, 1985), such as fax machines, the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia or social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. "New subscribers joining a network increase the utility of current subscribers"

(Madden et al., 2004, p.136), and as such create endogenous growth in the sense that past subscription rates tend to have a positive effect on new subscriptions (Economides & Himmelberg, 1995).

Such behaviour can, according to Kretschmer et al. (1999), be explained from different perspectives. From an economic or managerial standpoint, "herding behaviour" causes people to "prefer to do what other people do, particularly in areas where the quality of goods is uncertain" (p. 63). People reply on the choices their peers have made and thus often blindly follow the masses, assuming that because 'everybody else' chose it, it must be the best choice. When approaching the phenomenon from a sociological angle however, a more subtle explanation, namely the need to share social experiences, helps to understand such self-enforcing feedback loops. "We do not want to read the books nobody else reads (…). We want to discuss, rave, slaughter and define ourselves by the things we like." (p. 63), which naturally causes us to take a bearing on other people's choices.

Self-enforcing network effects or so-called increasing returns cause people to prefer products or services which have already gained popularity and market presence in some way. While from a socio-psychological perspective, such occurrences do not per se affect the competition, since for instance reading one book does not stop us from reading another (Kretschmer et al., 1999, p.63), they have the potential to escalate into monopolistic competition in other areas. Technology information markets for instance serve as a good example for potentially arising network-effect caused monopolies (Arthur, 1996), where markets become locked in. He explains this by using operating systems as an example, where the more clients are using it, the more applications will be provided by the supplier, which will in return again cause more clients to use the operating system, making the development of additional applications even more attractive to the supplier and so on. Consequently, being both client- as well as supplier-

driven, such network effects often accelerate quickly into self-enforcing feedback loops (Kretschmer et al., 1999) which are difficult, if not even impossible to break. It is for this reason, that Arthur (1996) also emphasises the dangers associated with increasing returns by stating that "Increasing returns are the tendency for that which is ahead to get further ahead, for that which loses advantage to lose further advantage. They are mechanisms of positive feedback that operate – within markets, businesses and industries – to reinforce that which gains success or aggravate that which suffers loss" (p.100). While further fostering the success of already successful ventures, increasing returns thus potentially have the effect of driving other players out of the market and as such "generate not equilibrium but instability" (Arthur, 1996, p.100). In his work on the impact of increasing returns on competing technologies, Arthur (1989) labels this phenomenon *potential inefficiency*, describing that "increasing returns might drive the adoption process into developing a technology that has inferior long-run potential" (p. 117).

Once a company has gained a substantial foothold in an increasing returns based market and manages to get ahead of the competition for one reason or the other, this advantage is magnified, resulting in a potential for market lock in. According to Arthur (1989), the struggle for such market leadership is often highly unpredictable by nature, since even seemingly insignificant events might cause one venture to gain an initial adoption advantage and consequently become more appealing to a wider proportion of adopters in the aftermath (p. 116). With the term *non-predictability* of increasing returns, Arthur (1989) thus aims to capture the idea that "ex-ante knowledge of adopters' preferences and the technologies' possibilities may not suffice to predict the 'market outcome'" (p.116), since many unforeseeable and unpredictable events might equally influence the final outcome. The success of VHS tapes in the struggle for the dominant position in the VCR market against Beta, as discussed by Arthur (1994), serves as a good example for both potential inefficiency

as well as non-predictability. Having been introduced roughly around the same time with an approximately equal market share, corporate manoeuvring, various external circumstances and some luck eventually tilted the competitive race towards VHS. As a result, VHS tapes virtually took over the entire VCR market despite arguably being the technically inferior product – a development which could not have been foreseen at the outset.

With his research on increasing returns in the context of industrial locations, Arthur (1990) digs deeper into the subject matter and comes to the conclusion that increasing returns in fact, if bounded, do not guarantee monopoly outcomes (p. 16). Since the scope of most (online) collaboration consumption ventures is however not directly bounded, monopolistic competition in their respective market niches is likely to occur. Airbnb.com can be regarded as a good example, since the fact that it was one of the first companies to successfully tap into the market of peer-to-peer rental of unoccupied living space gave it a first mover advantage which will be hard to beat by potential competitors. The fact that already a large number of listings are offered on Airbnb by an even larger number of members, makes it more attractive for new sign-ups than other similar platforms. Since the business concept itself is not bounded as such, meaning that a larger number of participants will not harm, but rather add value to the business model, quasi monopolistic competition is likely to emerge, making it very difficult for newcomers to gain a decent foothold in this particular market.

Most collaborative consumption ventures can thus be considered to fall in the wide range of increasing returns based activities, since, as previously stated, they thrive on a large active user base. This is also where the beauty of collaborative consumption stems from – it becomes exponentially more valuable to users the more users join. The key challenge associated with collaborative consumption ventures is thus to get enough people on board to meet these needs. The larger the user base, the more attractive the systems becomes as a

whole – both for lenders and borrowers. As such, size often becomes self-enforcing based on the logic of increasing returns. The more users offer items on a sharing network and increase the supply, the more likely it is for borrowers to find what they need. Reversely, the more people are searching for things on the network, the more likely it is for others to offer more in an attempt to satisfy this demand. Based on the logic of the argument as well as the importance granted to the factor of size by academic literature on sharing and increasing returns, it is proposed to have a moderating effect on both the supply and demand of shared goods and services. Therefore, the following proposition is made:

Proposition: ***Increasing size of a sharing network positively moderates both the supply of and demand for shared goods, a large size makes sharing communities more attractive following the logic of increasing returns.***

Upon discussing a wide range of potentially influential factors in the context of engagement of sharing activities, leading to the inclusion as well as exclusion of certain factors from the discussion, a structured presentation of all propositions made seems required. Therefore, a big picture conceptual model was developed which will be elaborated on in the following section.

4. Conceptual Model

Several propositions were drawn from the analysed literature concerning factors influencing people's motivation to engage in sharing activities, which subsequently also affect the aggregated success of collaborative consumption ventures. These factors however stem from very diverse academic fields and no previous study seems to have yet tried to group them together into a coherent framework which displays the relationships amongst them and effects

on each other. To fill this gap, a conceptual model was developed which presents the findings is a structured way in order to facilitate understanding of the subject matter at hand.

As indicated throughout the literature review, not all of the factors discussed and tentative propositions posed were integrated into the final model. Reasons for exclusion ranged from the fact that certain niche trends, after careful evaluation, seemed to have little direct explanatory power with respect to the research question, to factors stemming only from one piece of literature analysed, but lacking sufficient backing from the remaining sources used. However, for each of the factors which were initially brought up as part of the literature review, a detailed explanation as to why it was included in or omitted from the model is given. Additionally, with the model's aim of facilitated understanding in mind, an attempt was made to construct it to be as complex as necessary, yet also as simple as possible, which also led to the exclusion of some interesting but only partially relevant factors and relationships. The notion of simplicity coupled with predictive power therefore played a key role in the selection of factors to be included. The model was thus not developed using all aggregated factors findable in current academic literature in related fields, but is rather based on a small range of carefully selected factors which were considered to be must influential and impactful.

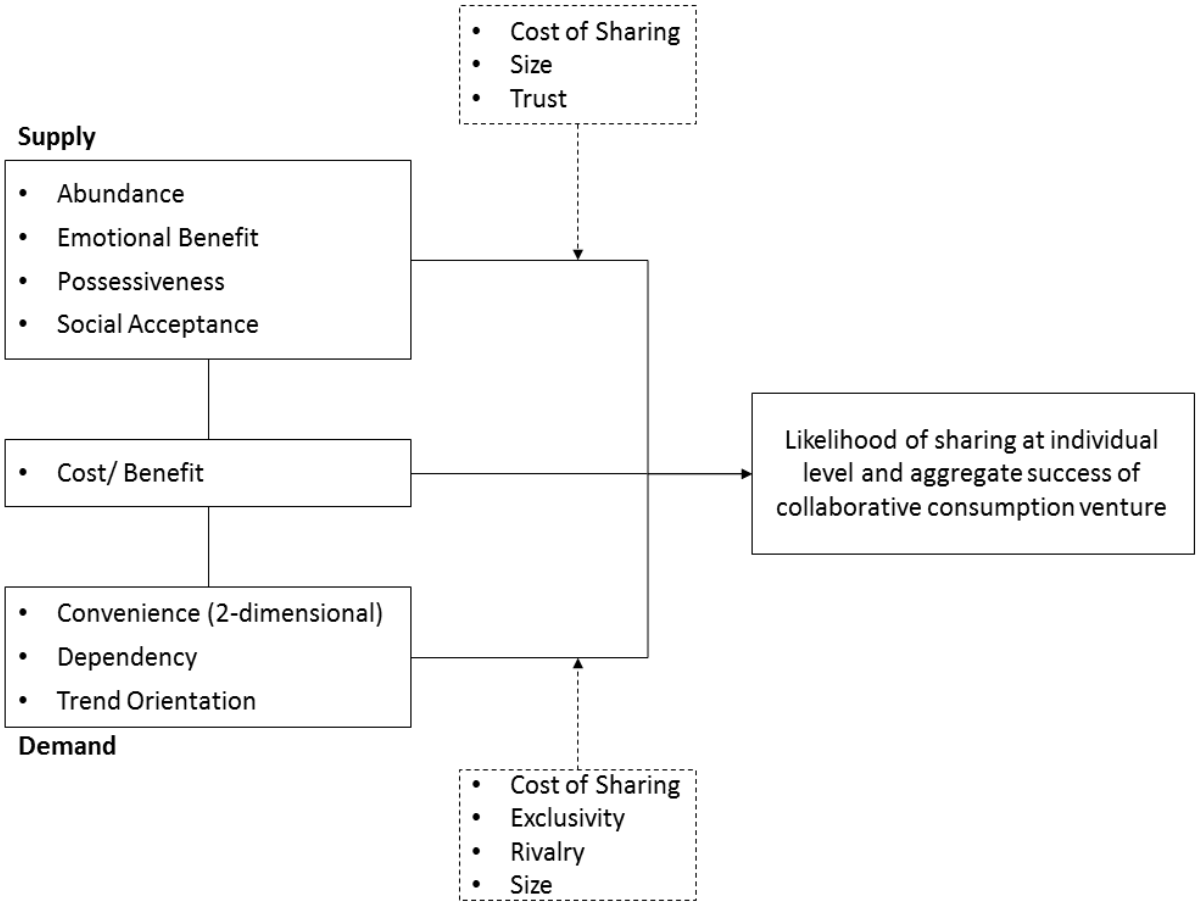

***Figure 2**: Conceptual Model – 'Pure' Sharing Behaviour and Collaborative Consumption Venture Success*

The developed conceptual model consists of a number of independent variables on the left, some moderating factors towards the middle, and a dependent variable on the right. All independent variables represent factors which might have an influence on a person's motivation to engage in sharing activities, meaning that they are *individually driven*. They are divided into 'supply' and 'demand' factors. The term 'supply' in this case denotes people's willingness to offer their belongings on sharing platforms and thus providing supplies to the community, while 'demand' represents people's willingness to or interest in renting other people's items, and consequently creating demand for such networks. The 'Cost/Benefit' trade-off marks the only exception here, as it is predicted to affect both the supply and demand side and is hence placed in the middle.

In contrast to this, all moderating factors are based on network performance, making them *system driven*. Some moderating factors such as size impact both the supply and demand side alike, whereas some others are specific to the one or the other. In addition to individual attitudes, opinion or preferences accounted for by the independent variables, people are also expected to be influenced in their sharing behaviour by these network driven moderators. Sharing platforms which are good at controlling such factors are thus expected to be more successful in the endeavour to motivate people to share their belongings and make use of shared goods.

The resulting *dependent variable* of the model is the likelihood of individuals to offer their own goods or borrow other people's belongings on a particular sharing network, and the resulting aggregated success of this collaborative consumption venture. The developed conceptual model thus aims to draw a big picture perspective on the different factors which play a role in the complex field of sharing behaviour. It aims to capture the interplay between individually driven supply and demand and network driven moderators which can have a positive or negative effect on the sharing behaviour of individuals, in an attempt to give insights into the likelihood of sharing at the individual level, as well as the resulting aggregate success on the system level.

Since little research seems yet to have been conducted in the field of collaborative consumption and pure sharing behaviour on the basis of interactions with strangers, the model was not developed to be tested on the variable or relationship level since theory in the field seems to be at a too early stage for this. Rather, it was developed to serve an exploratory purpose and to reduce complexity of the subject matter. It must be acknowledged that certain explanatory factors which were not discussed in the literature analysed might still be missing. Additionally, it is also crucial to understand that this model has predominantly been

developed to map the nature of 'pure' sharing behaviour. Consequently, it would need to be slightly adjusted in terms of variables included if it was to be used to also give insights into sharing behaviour in other, for instance monetarily incentivised collaborative consumption ventures such as Airbnb. To account for the time constraints this study is subject to, an initial research focus was laid on the supply side of the model, which was put through a first empirical investigation in the endeavour to understand what really triggers people to offer their belongings on sharing networks.

Finally, it must be understood that the propositions made and summarized in the conceptual model cannot be tested due to the lack of clear empirical definitions of the terms used, as well as missing measurement tools. While the logic behind the integration of the concepts can be regarded as defendable, the translation of such relationships into solid hypotheses would nonetheless pose serious difficulties, as the terms themselves have not yet been strictly defined. Consequently, hypotheses potentially unrelated to the original propositions would be tested, resulting in misleading outcomes. Therefore, it seems appropriate to first conduct further exploratory research to better understand the meaning of the suggested concepts before attempting validation.

5. Research Design and Methodology

The aim of this research was to explore and uncover people's motives to engage in 'pure' forms of sharing, namely sharing their belongings without receiving an immediate observable compensation in return. In line with the exploratory intention of the developed conceptual model, the idea was to open the 'black box' of pure sharing behaviour to gather new insights into the nature of the suggested factors and the logic behind their relation to one another. Eisenhardt (1989) supports this approach by arguing that "theory building is begun as close as

possible to the ideal of no theory under consideration and no hypotheses to test (…) because preordained theoretical perspective or propositions may bias and limit the findings" (p.536).

5.1 Case Selection – Peerby.com

As a result of the chosen research direction, a stetting or case was needed in which to further investigate what had been developed. Thomas (2011) defines case study research as "analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates" (p. 23). Case studies generally aim to understand the "dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.534) and gain a "rich picture" (Thomas, 2011, p.23) by approaching the issue from different angles and seeing it in its completeness. While case studies might lack generalizability due to the fact that they are only based on one or few scenarios, their strength mainly lies in theory building and the likelihood of generating novel theory as a result (Eisenhardt, 1989). In allowing "investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009), it was assumed that case study research would provide the perfect setting for the investigation of people's sharing behaviour in 'pure' sharing networks.

Eisenhardt (1989) stresses the importance of adequate case selection "in which the process of interest is 'transparently observable'" (p. 537), to allow for future research to replicate or extend the emergent theory. In the case at hand, a collaborative consumption network in which no monetary exchange takes place, which is easy to enrol for as both supplier and user, which is sufficiently large and is used by a substantial amount of users in accessible geographic proximity was searched for. As a platform fulfilling all of the above mentioned

criteria, *Peerby.com* was approached regarding their interest in a potential research collaboration.

Peerby is a Dutch online start-up founded in Amsterdam in 2011 (CrunchBase, 2013), which has spread substantially since then and has by now accumulated a considerably large active user base in most bigger cities in the Netherlands. It enables signed-up members to borrow things from people in their neighborhood and in return offer things they own for other people in their neighborhood to make use of. To sign up, people simply have to indicate their name, email address and address so that Peerby can identify their exact geographic location and subsequently place them into the Peerby-community of their local neighborhood (Peerby, 2013). 'Suppliers' can virtually offer any kind of service or item on the website, which will then be displayed to other members of their local Peerby-community. Interested users can send a request to the supplier of the item or service, who then evaluates whether to grant access or not and arranges a pick-up time and location with the borrower if applicable. Users looking to borrow things on Peerby can either search through the list of current offers, which generally provides a description of the item offered as well as the geographic distance to the supplier, or post a request in the attempt to find a neighbor who is willing to lend out the needed item.

Intrigued by the possibility to gain deeper insights into the reasoning behind their clients' interest in using Peerby and their willingness to offer their belongings to strangers on their platform for free, Peerby agreed to cooperate. In exchange for potential managerial implications and concrete suggestions on how to further improve the sharing platform in order to make it even more attractive to users, Peerby thus offered to provide the contacts of current Maastricht-based users of their sharing community. Since Peerby currently does not collect any data from their users except for a person's name, email address and home address, the

company has little insights into the nature of their user base and can thus greatly benefit from any type of research providing them with additional user information. To gather the needed primary data on Peerby users, the focus group technique was selected as the preferred data collection method.

5.2 Exploratory Research

Exploratory research is conducted when little is known about the field at hand or there is a lack of available information on how similar problems or research questions have formerly been approached or solved. This type of research is used to gain familiarity with the investigated phenomenon and the nature of the problem, and is thus mostly of qualitative nature. Ideally, it serves to provide a basis for subsequent theory building and hypothesis development and testing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Exploratory, qualitative studies generally aim to "provide illumination and understanding of complex psychological issues and are most useful for answering humanistic 'why?' and 'how?' questions" (Marshall, 1996, p.522). Collaborative consumption can be considered to be a field where exploratory research is needed, since very little research seem yet to have been done and published about this rather recent phenomenon. Consequently, gathering data to develop a better understanding of how collaborative consumption networks flourish and what makes them attractive to people is necessary to be able to build theories and test them. With very limited information currently available and only a poor understanding of the research matter, the most logical approach to primary data collection is to gather qualitative data through direct user contact. Techniques such as observation, focus group research or interviews can help to uncover previously unknown facts, patterns and relationships which can be then be tested by more rigorous research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009).

5.3 Focus Group Technique

The focus group technique is a qualitative research method which comprises in-depth interviews conducted with a small group of people in a single location, and is widely used by researchers for collecting exploratory data (Bloor et al., 2001). Focus groups typically consist of a number of homogenous consumers who "have been recruited because they share certain characteristics" (Solomon et al., p.122), usually based on their expertise in the area on which data needs to be collected (Krueger & Casey, 2001). The reason as to why it is useful to have a homogenous focus group is "to be able to distinguish the range of perspectives within a customer segment from fundamental differences across segments" (Knott, 2008, p.106). A focus group session is usually led by a moderator and aims to bring the selected people together to discuss on a particular topic or concept of interest to the researcher. The goal is to gain insights into the respondents' opinions, interpretations, impressions and viewpoints (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009) during a structured, yet open conversation about the issue at hand. "The interview is an 'unstructured-undisguised' research format, meaning that the purpose of the study is clear but that the responses are open-ended" (Knott, 2008, p.104). Consequently, the moderator plays a crucial role in steering the discussion such that the participants are kept on track, everybody participates, no one dominates, and the needed information can be extracted. In addition to evaluating what people actually say, experienced moderators might also find important cues in other observations, such as a participant's tone or body language (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Consequently, focus group sessions are often video- or audio-recorded by the moderator to not miss out on such 'hidden cues', better be able to keep track of what is being said and go back to the results again at a later stage. Solomon et al. (2010) even claim that "focus group facilitation is a real art that requires discipline, patience and a strong sense of when to sit back and listen and when to jump in and direct the discussion." (p. 122). It is however important for the moderator never to become an "integral part of the

discussion" (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009, p.181) but instead simply steer the discussion to ensure that participants are not unconsciously driven into the one or the other direction.

The exact number of participants needed for successful focus group research varies according to different sources. Solomon et al. (2010) for instance propose five to nine, Bloor et al. (2001) advocate six to eight, while Sekaran & Bougie (2009) suggest eight to ten. It is thus important to understand that the ideal number of participants is usually highly dependent on the topic being discussed, as well as the characteristics of the participating individuals (Krueger & Casey, 2001). Furthermore, researchers might sometimes find themselves in a position where they simply need to work with the amount of people who show up (Bloor et al., 2001). In the context of individual interviews, Knott (2008) suggests that there are diminishing returns to additional people interviewed, meaning that after exceeding a certain number, the added value in terms of new insights gained diminishes and eventually vanishes. Correspondingly, it can be assumed that focus groups are subject to a similar pattern as too few participants might result in limited discussion (Bloor et al., 2001) or cause a single individual to dominate the session, while too many participants might give each individual too little air-time, causing them to get bored and inattentive (Knott, 2008; Morgan, 1995).

The main advantages of using focus group research is that it usually offers an inexpensive way to collect fairly dependable primary data within a short time frame relative to individual interviews (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Additionally, the potential creation of synergies amongst participants, referred to as the "group effect" by Carey (1994) can be regarded as a main benefit of making use of the focus group technique. Morgan (1996) explains that "what makes the discussion in focus groups more than the sum of separate individual interviews is the fact that the participants both query each other and explain themselves to each other", meaning that the possibility for participants to openly agree and

disagree with each other and thus feed on each other's ideas can be considered a main strength of the focus group technique. In line with this argument, Knott (2008) adds that an opportunity for snowballing is also a potential source of value in group interview techniques as compared to individual interviews, since "statements by one individual in the group trigger ideas in several others" (p. 104). Furthermore, Morgan also points out the possibility for the moderator to directly ask focus group members to clarify the reasons for the presence of opposing views within the group, which is doubtlessly more fruitful than the attempt to find patterns of and explanations for behavioural differences between outcomes of individual interviews. Finally, it is suggested that the participation in focus groups might often be experienced as more stimulating by participants compared to several other types of research methods such as structured, less spontaneous group interviews (Bristol & Fern, 1996).

There are however also drawbacks associated with focus group research. Despite the fact that only qualitative data can be collected through focus groups, one needs to keep in mind that due to the non-random, non-scientific selection of participants, responses might be biased in the sense that they do not reflect the interpretations and opinions of the population at large and can thus not be regarded as being fully representative (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). At early stages of research, this is however not a necessity, since developed theory is usually tested for internal consistency and logic rather than external validity, just like in the case at hand. In fact, focus groups are often used as an "adjunct to other methods, deliberately chosen to complement, prepare for, or extend other work" in order to "generate preliminary information on new or under-researched norms or behaviours" (Bloor et al., 2001, p. 18). The real value and strength of focus groups thus lies "not simply in exploring what people have to say, but in providing insights into the sources of complex behaviours and motivations" (Morgan, 1996, p. 139).

Since the aim of this research is exactly to shed light on such 'complex behaviours and motivations' in the field of 'pure' sharing behaviour, Morgan's argument explains one of the main reasons as to why the use of focus groups was selected as the data collection technique to be used in this context. Listening to other people who are subject to a similar environment (e.g. same town and neighbourhood, similar demand) talk about their motivation to share on Peerby in this region, was hoped to ideally trigger participants to subconsciously discover further aspects of their personal motivation in addition to what they consciously consider to be the driving factor(s) behind their actions, and share these with the group as a result. The assumption made is that the motivation behind such altruistic behaviour might in fact be too complex for people to consciously understand in all aspects, despite being actively involved in it themselves. Consequently, the previously explained synergy effect in focus groups was assumed to help to uncover such hidden motives and subsequently clarify these to both the participants and moderator. Individual interviews or more structured group interviews, which do not allow for the emergence of open discussion to the extent that the focus group technique does, would thus according to this logic not be as effective and fruitful in the given context.

In addition to that, it must also be noted that in the context of this research, the focus group session was held in order to allow participants to comment on the analysis previously conducted on the basis of existing literature, with the aim to extend and deepen rather than validate the aggregated knowledge (Bloor et al., 2001). Since research endeavours in the currently emerging field of collaborative consumption are still in their infancy, concrete results to be validate first need to be developed, rendering the need for knowledge extension and deepening, as well as theory building increasingly necessary. Building on Bloor et al.'s (2001) conviction that "focus groups may be the best method by which to carry out such an exercise, in that they minimize interviewer bias" (p.71), the choice of conducting a focus group session in the context of this research was further confirmed.

5.4 Sample Choice and Research Execution

Sampling for qualitative studies is very different from sampling for quantitative studies as the goal of such research endeavours is focused on an improved understanding of complex human issues rather than generalizability, meaning that "an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question" (Marshall, 1996, p.523). While random sampling is commonly used for quantitative research as it provides a solid base for the generalization of findings across a certain population, it is not the most effective technique for gaining a deeper understanding of issues related to complex human behaviour. Marshall (1996) lists a number of both theoretical and practical explanations for this, such as small samples sizes leading to sample errors and resulting biases, a possible deficiency in knowledge about the characteristic under study of the entire population, or the fact that some informants can be regarded as being 'richer' than others in terms potential contribution to the research issues.

There are many distinct methods to approach qualitative sampling, but in practice considerable overlap between such techniques can often be observed (Marshall, 1996), which also applies to the research at hand. Generally, a judgement sample technique was used which aims to select "the most productive sample to answer the research question" (Marshall, 1996, p.523). In order to gain a solid understanding of people's motivation to share their belongings with other people without being directly compensated, only users who had already shared their belongings on Peerby repeatedly ($x > 1$; with x being the amount of successfully completed sharing transactions in the supplier role) were filtered out. However, elements of convenience sampling, which involves selecting sample subjects which are most accessible to the researcher, are also evident since the sample was only drawn from the current pool of active Peerby users in the Maastricht area in order to be able to stick to the time and budget constraints subject to this research. Users fulfilling the above mentioned requirements were

then contacted via email and invited for a focus group session taking place at a private home in the centre of Maastricht. The email was written in a rather casual tone to suit Peerby's image and imitate the phrasing on their website. People were informed about the fact that the research would be conducted as part of a master thesis, but with the aim to provide suggestions to Peerby based on the outcomes of the session in order to enable further improvement of the platform. Sessions were offered in both English and Dutch to ensure that all people who were interested in participating in the focus group session would get the chance to do so. Based on the participants' preferences, the actual session was however conducted in English.

To incentivise people to participate in the session (Krueger, 1994), the provision of free food and beverages was promised. In addition, the chance to be able to provide input and thus contribute towards the continuous improvement of the Peerby website was pointed out. Especially the latter argument was expected to have a positive impact on the contacted people since the fact that they regularly share things on Peerby suggests that they enjoy the website and would probably like to see it improved according to their suggestions in the future. All participants who indicated that they would like to take part in the focus group session were invited to join. Eventually, six Peerby users were willing and able to be part of a focus group session at the proposed times and thus took part in the research.

To ensure the comfort of the participants, the setup of the session was rather informal with calm background music, a relaxed atmosphere, food and beverages. The seating of participants was arranged in such a way that people were sitting in a circle to enable everybody to see all of the other contributors, as suggested by Krueger & Casey (2001). Upon arrival, participants were first introduced to the moderator and each other, and then familiarized with the goal of the session and the research as a whole. People were encouraged

to ask any question they might have at any point in time and were asked to share all ideas they might have regarding the topic of discussion. Finally, participants were asked whether they would be uncomfortable with the session being audio recorded and the results being shared with Peerby, but everyone agreed with the suggested procedure. Upon completion of the session, which lasted approximately one hour, the recording was scripted to allow for better analysis of the results obtained and provide better access to the data collected to both Peerby and future researchers.

6. Data Analysis and Results

Given the academic nature of the research, transcribing the audio recording of the focus group session was regarded a necessity. Even though Krueger (1994) suggests that transcription is not necessary in all cases, Bloor et al. (2001) explain that analysis on the basis of listening to an audio recording is not sufficient for academic research as "attempts at analysis without transcription will lead to loss of much of the richness of the data and will risk a selective and superficial analysis" (p. 59). The used transcription technique was mainly based on practices described in publications on qualitative data analysis and focus group research methodology (Bloor et al., 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Knott, 2008; Silverman, 1993). Given the expenditure of time suggested to be needed to conduct state of the art transcription which captures all recorded speech (Bloor et al., 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), certain cutbacks however had to be made in order to meet the time constraints subject to this study. Therefore, certain short passages of the audio record during which participants made comments which were not directly relevant to the analysis to be conducted (e.g. jokes or further explanations of a certain topic based on the inquiry of another participant) were not fully transcribed. Despite posing a drawback to the study at hand, efforts could however be made to prefect the transcript at a later stage in the future if regarded necessary, as the original

audio recording is still available. Silverman (1993) attempts to justify such imperfections in in transcription by stating that regardless of all efforts made, "there cannot be a *perfect* transcript of a tape-recording. Everything depends upon what you are trying to do in the analysis, as well as upon practical considerations involving time and resources" (p.124). Ultimately, the researcher needs to make a decision with regards to what level of transcription seems suitable for analysis purposes. While transcription could have been outsourced to a third party in order to ease the given time constraints, the decision to personally conduct the transcription was consciously made, as this is suggested to be a helpful tool in familiarising oneself with the collected data and gathering first ideas for analysis (Bloor et al., 2001).

In the further analysis process, indexing was used as a technique to make the scripted data manageable for interpretation and sense making. It is a commonly used method in qualitative data analysis aimed at clustering data extracts into distinct groups which relate to themes, topics or hypotheses developed in the research (Bloor et al., 2001; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). All factors on the supply side of the conceptual model (*abundance*, *emotional benefit, cost/benefit* and *social acceptance*) as well as their moderators (*cost of sharing, size* and *trust*) were used to build the broadest indexing level. No direct references were however made to the notions of *size* and *cost/benefit* during the focus group session, leading these factors to be untouched by this analysis. Solely on the basis of one focus group session, this does however by no means suggest that they can be considered irrelevant in the given context. Applicable parts of the script were allocated to the remaining indexes accordingly, and new indexes were formed for those passages which did not fit into any of the themes derived from the conceptual model. The list of new indexes includes *instinct*, *familiarity*, *resource efficiency & sustainability* and *reciprocity ("imperative for constant movement")*.

Before going into further detail regarding further steps taken, each of the additional indexes will briefly be elaborated on in order to provide a solid basis for further discussion.

- *Instinct* refers to the natural intrinsic motivation which drives human beings to act communally and altruistically, for instance by sharing their belongings, knowledge or skills with others.
- *Familiarity* describes the extent to which an individual is acquainted with a certain platform or the functionality of collaborative consumption networks in general, and how this effects their motivation to share actively on such networks.
- *Resource Efficiency & Sustainability* terms the degree to which an individual sees the possibility to act environmentally friendly and in a sustainable fashion as a main motivation for sharing.
- *"Imperative for constant movement"* (Belk, 2007) is a term taken from the analysed literature to describe a person's feeling of needing to share own belongings with other people once someone else has shared something with them, even if not the same person is involved in this act of 'repayment'.

In an attempt to further specify the ideas and concepts developed in each of the index areas, further subcategories were developed which helped distinguish between the notions addressed in each of the collected statements. A broad, simplified overview of the outcome can be found below:

Index	**Subcategories**
Abundance	• Coordination & Time Management • Idle Capacity
Emotional Benefit	• Helping out • Happiness

Possessiveness	• Emotional Attachment
	• Product Characteristics
	  ○ Breakability / Fragility
	  ○ Exclusivity & Contamination
	  ○ Monetary Value

Social Acceptance	• Community Punishment

	• Exclusion • Loss of Reciprocity • Approval and Disapproval • Feeling of Guilt • Habituation / Acclimatization
Cost of Sharing	• Network Notifications • Listing of Belongings

Trust	• Geographic Proximity
	• Social Proximity
	  o Mindset
	• Entry Barriers
	  o Extensive Profiles
	  o User Validation
	• User Accreditation Mechanism
	• Peer Review / Feedback
	  o Lifestyle
	  o Occupation

Instinct	• Intrinsic Motivation • Freeriding
Imperative for constant movement	---
Resource Efficiency & Sustainability	• Scarcity • Media Pressure
Familiarity	• Understanding of Functionality • Good Experiences

As can be seen, most of the concepts which were believed to play a role in the context of people's motivation to engage in 'pure' sharing behaviour did in fact pop up in the discussion with the focus group participants. The participants' explanations of own sharing behaviour thus resonated with the factors suggested in the model, leading to the preliminary conclusion that existing literature can in fact be taken as a starting point for theory development in the relatively recent field of collaborative consumption. Even a couple of new factors which have not been touched upon by the literature studied, or were based on subjective judgement of the researcher not included into the developed model, such as the "imperative for constant movement" suggested by Belk (2007), were uncovered. Given the abundant possibilities of resulting outcome investigation, again only a partial focus was drawn in the attempt to be able to contribute novel findings to existing literature. With the study's aim of exploring the nature and logic of the suggested factors and digging deeper into potential "sources of complex behaviours and motivations" to again use Morgan's (1996, p. 139) words, it was decided to

explore the conceptual extension of the suggested factors grounded on the data collected during the focus group session. The sessions resulted in elaborate discussions on the participants' motivation to share on platforms like Peerby and brought about confrontation with concrete examples and situations in which these people had undergone certain decision making processes on whether to share an item or not. Subsequently, it became apparent that there was a need to develop a deeper understanding of what these concepts actually entail in order to the able to fully grasp the nature of their explanatory power. While the suggested factors are held on a rather conceptual level in academic literature, assumingly aiming to reduce perceived complexity, the idea that these constructs involve more than what is usually described began to unravel during the process of the focus group session. The initially suggested factors driving the developed conceptual model were thus conceptually scrutinized in an attempt to untwine their respective components in order to gain a deeper theoretical understanding of their nature and thus their explanatory power on the case at hand.

The carved out subcategories from the raw data collected during the focus group session were thus compared and contrasted to the characteristics allocated to the given factors as discussed in the literature to highlight the additional facets revealed through exploratory research. The following discussion of the research findings attempts to exemplify and disclose the applied methodology and outcomes extensively on the case of one of the factors, namely the independent variable *possessiveness*. The selection of this specific factor was based on the belief that it is among the most interesting to discuss in terms of direct managerial impact as well as novel insights gained, meaning that it constitutes the factor from which most can be learnt.

7. Discussion

The notion of possessiveness is in existing literature tightly linked to the concept of emotional attachment to possessions (Belk, 2010), which triggers people to be reluctant to share (Kleine & Baker, 2004). One possible explanation for this phenomenon is the idea that possessions can be perceived by individuals as an extension of the self. People believe that belongings have the power to tangibilize a person's history and even provide some form of immortality when objects remain associated with a person after death (Belk, 1988). In line with the arguments presented in the literature, participations of the focus group session indicated that they would be unwilling to share objects which they have a strong emotional bond to, as the following passage taken from the transcript shows:

"(...) the emotional attachment that I have to it, the relationship I have with a product. For example a gift from my parents or a friend I would probably be very reluctant to share…but if it is anything that I just bought at some point and that I am not emotionally attached to I would totally be willing to share it."

In the case at hand, it is not only the extension of the self that plays a significant role, but rather the extension of the 'other', the person the owner associated with the object (Richins, 1994). Being exposed for instance to a gift received from a mother might cause a child to experience the feeling of motherly affection, making the object emotionally valuable and unsuitable for sharing in the eyes of the child. In contrast, something that is free of emotional value to a person is usually regarded as more suitable for sharing, as can be derived from the following statement:

"I shared my backpack once (...) but since it's more of a practical thing and I have no relationship to it I didn't mind lending it."

The notion of long-term relationships and control of objects (Chen, 2009) is another aspect discussed in the literature which was however not picked up on by the focus group participants, but rather opposed, as can be interpreted from the following statement:

"(...) when I'm not using them I don't mind if someone else borrows them"

In fact, additional factors were mentioned which the focus group participants perceived as being drivers of increased or decrease possessiveness and the resulting likelihood of sharing, but have not been discussed in the analysed literature. General product characteristics for instance seem to play a major role in the sense that they provide a solid base for decision making on whether or not to share. While the idea of exclusivity of certain items caused by fear of contamination is extensively discussed in the literature (Arsel, 2010; Gregson & Crewe, 2003) (*"Well I would definitely not share my toothbrush for example…so I think there will always be things that you would never want to share"*), other product features also seem to effect the decision making process of sharers. This assumption stems from the discussion of practical implications regarding product features and risk during the focus group session, exemplified by the following statements referring to the breakability of shared goods:

"(...) with these kinds of things, like the backpack, you have to be pretty stupid to break it" – "It can happen, but you really would have to do your best…"

The less fragile a product is, meaning the less risk a person bears regarding the likelihood of receiving it back in a damaged state, the higher the willingness to share is assumed to be. With fragility likely not being the only factor considered, this shows that despite subjective valuation, also objective valuation of a product plays an influential role in the decision

making process regarding the willingness to share, something that the analysed literature does not pick up on directly. For instance monetary value, which can be classified as another product characteristic was not regarded as a general hindrance factor to sharing (*"I usually don't really look at the monetary value of the product when sharing" (...) "For example I shared my backpack once which was actually quite expensive"*).

What is interesting to observe is that certain statement show how respondents consider certain factors jointly rather than independently. Picking up again on the idea of possessiveness and emotional attachment, a connection can be made to abundance. While abundance is generally assumed to make people more likely to share (*"So I think that when you have a lot of something you're also more willing to share it, right?"*), this might be overruled by a feeling of emotional attachment (*"Plus I think it really depends on the kind of thing that is being shared again…you know my grandma for example knits me a scarf every Christmas. But still I wouldn't want to share them because they are gifts from her…"*). The feeling of emotional attachment thus has a moderating effect on the consideration of abundance, showing the complexity of the behavioral construct at hand. Despite the fact that the factors are independent constructs as such, they nonetheless seem to be intertwined in the user's mind, leading to the question as to whether they can theoretically still be considered as independent factors. The apparent combined consideration of factors in decision making supposedly makes it difficult or even impossible to single out the effect of one factor in isolation, as for the individual the combination of factors causes him or her to get involved in a sharing activity. Theory testing in the field is thus assumed to turn out rather complex in nature, since factors would not only need to be tested for their direct, but also for their interaction effect.

The contribution of the empirical analysis of the research matter is thus the derivation of richer explanations of the nature of the different factors, as well as a better understanding of

the joint influence of factors on people's motivation to share. The level of richness reached through the empirical analysis stands in contrast to the level of richness obtained from definitions derived from the studied literature.

8. Conclusion

From an academic perspective, the field of collaborative consumption is still relatively new, which is why it has remained fairly unexplored up until now. This study made use of qualitative research techniques to build theory around possible motivations for individuals to engage in 'pure' sharing activities with a focus on the supply of goods. A conceptual model was built on the propositions derived from thorough analysis of literature from many different related fields, which was then compared to the outcomes of a focus group session conducted with members of the free sharing platform Peerby. The study makes some distinct theoretical contributions and suggests a number of managerial implications which might enable the improvement of Peerby's platform. Based on the exploratory nature of the study, plenty of opportunities for future research have been created which will ideally lead to the collection of further insights and the validation of current findings, some of which are presented in the following paragraphs.

8.1 Theoretical Contributions

Despite Whetten's (1989) remark that "it is often difficult to judge what is enough of a contribution" (p. 491) it is proposed that this study does in fact manage to make three justifiable theoretical contributions to existing academic literature.

Firstly, the study introduces a new perspective to the vast body of literature on sharing by setting a research focus on 'pure' sharing initiatives. While the general idea of sharing without

direct reciprocity is introduced throughout many existing studies, none of them directly try to explore the motives or drivers of such behavior. Despite the fact that the study at hand does not provide any proof for the actual influence of the suggested factors on such sharing behavior, it nonetheless sets a basis for further theory building and testing in the field.

Secondly, while individual factors which are assumed to contribute towards explaining people's motivation to engage in sharing activities can be found in various studies stemming from distinctly different academic fields, no attempt seems yet to have been made to combine and group these. The conceptual framework developed in this research study thus contributes to existing academic literature by providing a first overview of potential explanatory factors. This framework can be used as a basis for both additional qualitative investigation as well as qualitative testing at a later stage on both the factor as well as the relationship level.

Thirdly, the empirical analysis conducted uncovers additional facets of the suggested factors of the conceptual model. As such, richness is added to the meaning of these terms compared to the conceptual constructs presented in the studied literature. Broadening the understanding of the explanatory factors aids in judging their explanatory power and exposes certain interaction effects between factors.

8.2 Managerial Contributions and Implications

The conducted research also carries a number of managerial implications. Firstly, in contributing towards a better understanding of factors which influence individual's sharing behaviour, entrepreneurial ventures which are active in the field of collaborative consumption can be provided with important insights. As collaborative consumption networks rely on a large number of active sharers to function properly and unleash their full potential, learning about factors which incentivise or prevent people from sharing actively can be of immense

value. In learning for instance that possessiveness can have a negative impact on people's sharing behaviour, attempts could be made to initially promote the sharing of items people tend to feel less possessive about (e.g. cooking utensils). In the case of Peerby, this could for example be done by suggesting to users categories or groups of items they might want to share once their register as a user. People experiencing high levels of general possessiveness, for instance triggered by emotional attachment, might as a result be reminded that some items are subject to lower possessiveness than other, ideally leading them to offer these for others to share.

Secondly, understanding system-driven factors which moderate the relationship between these factors and the likelihood of sharing at the individual level is equally insightful on a managerial level. As such factors can be directly influenced by the company itself, this aspect most likely even has the most relevance in terms of managerial insights derivable from this study. In terms of important moderators, the study for instance revealed a significant importance of needed trust in sharing networks, which picks up on the argument of several studies analysed in the literature research (Akerlof, 1970; Dellarocas, 2003; Jøsang et al., 2007). People need to feel safe and want to see the risk of their belongings being damaged or not returned minimized. In an attempt to provide sign-up convenience to attract additional members, Peerby currently sets the hurdle of joining the network very low as little information needs to be entered to create an account. This however also results in the company having little information on the users collected and stored, which translates into little information being passed on to other users who subsequently do not know who it is they are sharing with. A lack of information generally decreases people's trust as uncertainty and risk is increased, assumingly making them more reluctant to share their belongings. Higher 'barriers to entry' to entering the network should thus be introduced to efficiently tackle the issue. Introducing a more extensive profile which 'shows' the person who stands behind it

might cause individuals to build more trust in the community. However, the trade-off of sacrificed sign-up convenience which might result in a decreasing number of people willing to get involved must also be kept in mind in this context. On a positive note however, such requirements might actually act as a sort of 'filter' which keeps out those people who are looking to abuse the system, but does not discourage those who are genuinely interested in the concept. Another potential way to increase the system's trustworthiness could be to offer identity verification. While this would provide sharers with a sense of security, people with a verified profile might have greater chances to have their requests fulfilled, resulting in a win-win situation. Finally, a peer review system could be introduced which allows people who have engaged in a sharing exchange with a certain person to leave a public comment on his or her experiences with that person. Members would then be able to base their judgement on something concrete, supposedly resulting in increasing levels of trust in the system and a higher willingness to share belongings.

Finally, in learning that the analysed factors might be subject to interaction effects also bears interesting managerial considerations. Similar to the idea of taking a look at the integral system rather than each factor in isolation as in the previously discussed case of Product Service Systems, this might also be a useful approach in the examination of drivers in collaborative consumption venture success. In understanding the interaction behind the different factors taken into consideration, founders of collaborative consumption ventures can better understand the reasoning behind their customer's decision making process and as such adjust their offering with these considerations in mind.

8.3 Limitations and Suggestions for further Research

This research study was designed and conducted to reveal the apparent as well as hidden motivations of participants to engage in 'pure' sharing activities on collaborative consumption

platforms, exemplified by the case of Peerby. While the study has shaped a comprehensive conceptual model and produced some empirical validation, it is nonetheless without flaws. Specifically, there are several shortcomings in the study at hand which relate to the qualitative nature of the research, the sample characteristics based on the sampling technique applied, and the bias with regards to data interpretation.

Firstly, the nature of qualitative data is associated with certain limitations which have been extensively discussed in academic literature. External validity (Miller, 1986; Seale, 1999) and internal reliability in the context of replicability (Singleton & Straits, 2010) are main concerns with regards to qualitative research. Practices such as taking small, non-random samples or single cases as basis for hypothesis building and theory development, often makes it difficult or even impossible to generalize qualitative research findings. While this is not per se a drawback as such, since qualitative research is more focused on uncovering complex social issues rather than providing generalizability (Marshall, 1996), it nonetheless needs to be taken into account when evaluating the results. The study at hand focuses solely on the behaviour of users of a single collaborative consumption venture, namely Peerby. The motivations for participation which were revealed to be important during the study might thus be closely linked to Peerby's business model, meaning that they might only partially be able to explain the motivation of people to participate in other collaborative consumption ventures. Users of other 'pure' sharing platforms such as couchsurfing.com could be assumed to be motivated by other or additional factors, such as loneliness or curiosity to meet new people. Additionally, conducting a focus group session with other Peerby users might lead to fundamentally different results, which taps into the issue of replicability.

Secondly, the chosen sample in this study is subject to bias. In addition to being non-random, which is however not considered to be a requirement in qualitative studies, it also possesses

characteristics of convenience sampling which is known to potentially result in reduced data quality (Marshall, 1996). While an attempt to was made to assemble a judgment sample by selecting only Peerby users who had already shared their belongings repeatedly on the platform, time and budget constraints as well as the need for ensured accessibility did not allow for people outside of the Maastricht area to be included. With the population of Maastricht containing a large number of students, the selected sample is rather homogeneous in terms of demographics such as age, ethnicity, educational background and income level, as well as psychographics such as interests and lifestyle. Conducting another focus group session with different Peerby users from different locations would thus most likely also reveal completely different outcomes.

Finally, the subjective nature of the interpretation of the data collected can also be regarded as a drawback of the study's findings, since no act of observation can be free from the underlying assumptions that guide it" (Seale, 1999, p.148). This viewpoint is also shared by Spiggle (1994) who states that the "interpretation of others' experiences is inherently subjective. No two investigators have the same store of experience or archive of source texts for mapping onto target texts" (p. 499). In an attempt to diminish the effects of interpretation bias, the focus group session was audio-recorded and scripted to provide a basis for re-interpretation by enabling other researchers to go back to the 'raw' data at a later stage. However, no video recording of the session was made to capture the participant's physical reactions such as facial expressions or posture, as this would have exceeded budget constraints due to the need for multiple cameras filming the participants from different angles. The interpretation of body language will thus remain biased towards the view of the initial researcher given the impossibility of re-evaluation by another party. Furthermore, as already indicated previously, the transcription is subject to certain omissions and thus does not strictly

fulfill the requirements of a complete academic transcript, which might have had a negative influence on the quality of the interpretations drawn.

Despite all drawbacks, the findings obtained through this research nonetheless provide a sound basis for further research to be conducted in this area. The conceptual model aids theory building in the field of collaborative consumption by providing a number of propositions which were additionally made subject to a first round of empirical validation during a focus group session. When making suggestions for further research, a distinction should be made between follow-up research aimed at providing further managerial advice to Peerby, and research conducted to contribute towards the advancement of the academic body of literature in the field of collaborative consumption.

In an attempt to further support Peerby, it might be advisable to firstly conduct similar focus group sessions composed of Peerby users with different characteristics (e.g. from different regions or other age groups) in order to capture a more representative sample of the entire Peerby user population. Based on the collected data, assumptions could then be drawn which can be assumed to be better reflect the overall 'voice of the user'. Additionally, collecting more quantitative data (e.g. through the sign-up on the website) or coding the existing quantitative data to run quantitative studies might also be a good way of gaining further insights into the characteristics, wants and needs of the Peerby user base in the future. For instance, an attempt could be made to investigate common characteristics of users who share regularly. Such insights could then be used to more directly target and attract such individuals in order to increase the attractiveness of the platform as a whole.

Additionally, there is plenty of opportunity to further contribute towards the academic body of research in the field. Firstly, the current findings might be refined and made more generally

applicable by engaging users of other collaborative consumption platforms in the data collection process. This approach might help to eliminate the Peerby-focused nature of the results and broaden the findings to be applicable to a broader range of collaborative consumption business models. Secondly, further investigation on the interaction effect of the suggested influential factors might help to reveal more detailed insights into people's decision making processes regarding sharing network engagement. Thirdly, since the study strongly focuses on consumer motivation to supply goods and services on collaborative consumption platforms, it might also be of interest to dedicate further research to the triggers of demand. Fourthly, spending more time on the development of a more systematic and elaborate literature review might aid a deeper understanding of the phenomenon at hand as the provided analysis of existing literature is characterized by certain limitations imposed through time constraints the study was subject to. Adding aspects for instance from the fields of sociology or anthropology has helped to enrich the study by providing additional perspectives to the strictly economic approach to sharing taken by some scholars from the business domain. Based on the contributions such literature has made to the study, it appears worthwhile to dive further into sociological, ethnographic, psychological and anthropological literature etc., and construct a more elaborate literature review based on the findings. The extracted insights might further facilitate our understanding of why individuals engage in sharing activities and shed light on the idea that there is more to it than mere utility maximization. Finally, qualitative validation of the factors considered in the model and added in the process of further qualitative studies might be of interest in the future.

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