



**Bachelor Thesis, 15 credits, for a
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration:
International Business and Marketing
Spring 2019**

Where do we draw the line?

How far different cultures are willing to adopt
the concept of the sharing economy

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Title

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Keywords

Sharing economy; Hofstede; Culture; National culture; Cultural dimensions; Sharing

Abstract

In the recent decades a new type of economic system based on collaborative consumption has increased in popularity. The new cost competitive model challenges the traditional business model that has fueled the hyper consumption, which the 20th century is known for. This research focuses on how national cultures impact the development of this new economic system, in order to understand how much people of different cultures are willing to share. A conceptual model was created to try to understand cultural influence on sharing. Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been used to measure and compare the empirical data, that was collected through five focus groups representing four different countries: Sweden, France, China and United States. Out of the six cultural dimensions, it was found that the indulgence dimension together with power distance might influence people's willingness to share. Indulgence was also found to explain socialization as a motivational factor together with power distance and long-term orientation. In conclusion, four different sharing sectors were analyzed, and it was found that transportation and clothing was considered shareable, disregarding national culture. Accommodation might be dependent on national culture since the focus groups that were supposed to be indulgent showed resistance to share, while the restraint groups showed a greater willingness. Technology was not considered shareable by any group. Furthermore, three motivational factors, that might be depend on national culture, was identified. These are environment, socialization and technology. An additional four motivational factors were identified, but these might be independent of national culture. These four are personal, economical, trust/safety and convenience. Lastly, additional findings showed that similar genders have similar willingness to share across cultures which makes it a topic of interest for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to

FELIX TERMAN

For his endless support, guidance, and enthusiasm throughout this study. His engagement and valuable advice helped us overcome many obstacles along the way, for which we very grateful.

ANNIKA FJELKNER

For her endless support in linguistics, structure and grammar. We also want to thank her for her assistance with finding participants for this study. Last but not least, we want to thank her for making us laugh, even when we were exhausted.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

For coming with valuable input and for their time spent revising this thesis.

PARTICIPANTS

The time they took to help us with our study and the valuable responses they gave. We also want to thank them for their engagement in helping us to find additional participants.

Kristianstad 2019

Tim Hammarlund

Viktor Sjunnesson

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1. Introduction

This chapter will start with a background presentation of the sharing economy to explain the relevance of this new economic system. Next, the problematization will discuss why culture is a perspective that could be of interest when the sharing economy is studied, but also, to explain the research gap that this study tries to address. Lastly, the research question and purpose of this study will be presented.

1.1. Background

The consumption pattern of the early 21st century is not durable. Resources are consumed at an unsustainable rate, and there is an urgency to reverse this behavior (Gansky, 2010; United Nations, 2019). According to NASA (2019), an increased average temperature could result in extreme weather conditions, and evidence can already be seen such as the wildfires in the year of 2017 and 2018 (BBC, 2017; Watts, 2018; Victor, 2018). A change is needed in order to transition to a sustainable future, and one of these changes could be to redesign the mainstream business model. That is, to redesign the dominant linear product life cycle (Edbring, Lehner & Mont, 2016 in Zvolska, Palgan, & Mont, 2019). Research shows that consumers have become increasingly aware of how they consume products. There is a trend among consumers to minimize their environmental impact (Gansky, 2010; Andrew & O'reilly, 2010; European Union, 2013). Therefore, the 21st century is seen to shift from the 20th century's hyper-consumption towards sharing (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Hyper-consumption is defined by Paris (2009, p.306) as "objects of desired consumption purely for the sake of consumption". This means that people feel an urge to buy objects just because they can (Paris, 2009). Sharing, on the other hand, is not a new phenomenon (Sundararajan, 2016), but a new economic system based on payments for shared products and services have experienced rapid growth (Schor, 2014). This new economic system is often referred to as the sharing economy (Richter, Kraus, Brem, Durst & Giselsbrecht, 2017; Sundararajan, 2016; Schor, 2016; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016).

The awareness of our impact on the environment is growing (United Nations, 2019) but the rapid growth of the sharing economy can be explained by more than environmental aspects. Other aspects are increased internet access, low marginal cost-competitive business model, and urbanization. Increased internet access has facilitated the upcoming of sharing platforms (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018; Schor, 2014) which can be used by both corporations and consumers (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Richter *et al.*, 2017; Hamari *et al.*, 2016; Belk, 2014). The sharing economy also creates a low marginal and cost-competitive business against traditional business models (Sundararajan, 2016), and according to Ehret, in Rifkin (2014), “the capitalist market economy will be replaced by a collaborative common” (Ehret, 2015, p. 67). According to Richter *et al.* (2017), urbanization is one driver behind the growth of sharing economy and McLaren and Agyeman (2015) say that most consumption in the coming decades will take place in urban areas. UBER and Airbnb are market leaders in sharing platforms within their respective sectors. UBER works as a taxi company in the transportation sector and Airbnb works as a hotel provider in the accommodation sector. Sharing platforms exist in other sectors as well. One example is TaskRabbit, who focus on smaller everyday tasks such as cleaning but also tasks such as assembling furniture (Forbes, 2019). Together with the Internet and a cost-competitive business model, the *environmental aspect* (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010), *economic aspects*, (Sprei, 2018; Richter *et al.*, 2017; Amirkiaee & Evangelopoulos., 2018), *social aspects*, (Richter *et al.*, 2017; Amirkiaee *et al.*, 2018) and *convenience aspects* (Sprei, 2018) are all part of the sharing economy’s rapid growth.

The transition from hyper-consumption to collaborative consumption through sharing economy can be explained by a change in consumption patterns and consumer behavior. Consumption patterns and consumer behavior are in turn affected by culture, referred to as “mental programs” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 5). Consumption patterns express cultural belonging both consciously and unconsciously. Culture can, therefore, be seen to influence consumers consumption patterns whether they are aware of it or not (McCracken, 1986). Previous research shows that culture affects participation in the sharing economy (Gupta, Esmailzadeh, Uz, & Tennant, 2019). Vörén and Westerlund (2018) also suggest that cultural differences could be a dimension that could affect

attitudes towards the adoption of the sharing economy. Amin and Thrift (2007) argue that economic life is subjected to cultural input and practices on multiple levels, thus making economy and culture interdependent.

1.2. Problematization

There is increased usage of sharing platforms in sectors such as *travel, car sharing, finance, staffing,* and, *music and video* streaming, and they are estimated to increase from \$15 billion in 2015 to \$335 billion by 2025 (PWC, 2015). For example, UBER reported a turnover of \$11.3 billion in 2018, with a growth rate of 43% (Zaveri, 2019). Airbnb reported revenue of \$2.6 billion in 2017, which is an increase in their revenue by almost 50% (Forbes, 2018; Bosa, 2018). The potential upside for these sharing platforms could be explained with that a large population on a small geographical area has made it easier to share with neighbors (Richter *et al.*, 2017). Zvolska (2019) refers to Davidson and Infranca (2015) and McLaren and Agyeman (2015) that the majority of the sharing economy organizations is situated in urban areas and therefore calls them “Urban Sharing Organizations” (p.667). Sharing has also been found to be problematic in the countryside since it is impractical to share between neighbors who live far away from each other (Edbring *et al.*, 2016).

Urbanization has contributed to the success of the sharing economy, but in order for businesses to continue with the success, they need to know people’s preferences and consumption patterns. These preferences and consumption patterns within the urban areas can be influenced by culture, which makes businesses dependent on local consumer culture (Shaw & Clarke, 1998). Whether consumers will adopt the sharing economy for the environment or not falls under the discussion of ethical consumerism, that there is an attitude-behavior gap. When consumers face the option to buy ethical and environmentally friendly products, other aspects, such as, brand loyalty and purchasing inertia make consumers continue to buy the same products as they did before (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011). Pelsmacker, Driesen and Rayp (2005) also saw that attitudes toward ethical products are not reflected in the consumer buying behavior. The ethical

gap can be explained through four factors: *behaviour, willingness to commit, habits and prioritizing of ethical concerns* (Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2014). Culture determines people's behavior and habits (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010) and willingness to commit and prioritize ethical concerns goes under what McCracken (1986, p. 72) calls "the blueprint" for human activity. Therefore, culture could arguably influence the continuous development of the sharing economy.

According to McCracken (1986) culture constitutes the world by giving it meaning, and people categorize and distinct class, gender, status and occupation through culture. He also says that "clothing, transportation, food, housing exteriors and interiors, and adornment all serve as media for the expression of the cultural meaning that constitutes our world", (McCracken, 1986, p. 78). More continuously updated and much cited cultural research is Hofstede *et al.*'s. (2010) national cultural dimensions. They refer to culture as "mental programs" or "software of the mind" (p. 5) and these mental programs affect individuals' characteristics within national culture. Individual characteristics have been found to be linked to psychological ownership. That is to feel what is mine, efficacy and effectance, self-identity and to have a place (Pierce, Kostova & Dirks, 2003). What is mine connects to feelings, emotions and when people attach these emotions to objects it creates a reluctance to share (Belk, 2009). Furthermore, Ashmore, Thoreau, Kwami, Christie and Tyler, (2018) found that different national cultures react differently to objects with symbolic values, such as choice of transportation. Since changes in consumption behavior, provided by the sharing economy, can be influenced by culture (Shaw & Clarke, 1998; Hofstede *et al.*, 2010), we argue that differences in psychological ownership could give valuable insights in the development of the sharing economy.

National culture is debated and Beck (2000) argues that there is a shift into the "second age of modernity" (p. 79) where national states will transition into "world society" (p. 80) or in the author's words "the cosmopolitan society" (p. 84). This means that differences between cultures start to become less apparent and that there is a shift towards a global homogeneous culture. Another study, made by Berry (2008), focused on acculturation and globalization. This study predicts that there is a chance that there will be a

development of a homogeneous culture. A culture where less dominant cultures will become more alike dominant cultures. However, later research by Cleveland, Rojas-Méndez, Laroche and Papadopoulos (2016) propose against a homogeneous culture and suggest that globalization has instead increased the importance of national identity. The debate of national culture has created a diffuse picture, but some part of Hofstede's cultural dimensions has been found in 97.5% of 121 cultural measurement tools (Taras, Roney & Steel, 2009), and is to the best of our knowledge the most accurate model to measure cultural differences.

The sharing economy has previously been studied through the lens of national culture (Watanabe, Neveed & Neittaanmäki, 2016; Ashmore *et al.*, 2018; Gupta *et al.*, 2019) where Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been used to compare national cultures (Muñoz-Leiva, Mayo-Muñoz, & De la Hoz-Correa, 2018; Ashmore *et al.*, 2018). The six cultural dimensions are *power distance, masculinity versus femininity, collectivism versus individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long term versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint* (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). To mention a few studies, Ashmore *et al.* (2018) aimed to look at what type of transportation people in different national cultures chose, and why they chose that particular transportation mode. Furthermore, Muñoz-Leiva *et al.* (2018) wanted to analyze which factors influenced consumers adoption of home-sharing platforms. They suggest that future research within the sharing economy should focus on the use of additional cultural dimensions, such as collectivism versus individualism and masculinity versus femininity. Also, Vörén and Westerlund (2018) studied the sharing economy and millennial attitudes towards sharing platforms since the generation was believed to be important for the sharing economy. The authors found that millennials' attitudes toward the sharing economy were not conclusive, because the participants' different cultural contexts influenced their attitudes and engagement on sharing platforms. The authors suggest that it would be valuable if future research would group consumers with similar cultural backgrounds.

Previous research offers insights into which factors that motivate people to engage in sharing economy. Edbring *et al.* (2016), present three different factors that drive people

to engage in the sharing economy, and these are economic factors, environmental factors, and social factors. Richter *et al.* (2017) also found economic- and environmental factors as drivers. Stephany (2015) found economic drivers and Sprei (2018) found environmental drivers. However, there are some obstacles that create resistance to the sharing economy as well. Those obstacles are, for example, trust issues (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018) and fear of not having products when they are needed (Edbring *et al.*, 2016).

There is a lot of research still to be done within the sharing economy and many gaps to fill (Edbring *et al.*, 2016). Previous research on the sharing economy proposes that it is important to allow consumers a voice in which activities that should and should not be a part of a future based on sharing (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018). Furthermore, research to examine motivators and compare attitudes of young people in different countries have been acknowledged to be of interest. It is also of interest to examine people's reasons behind their actions in order to minimize obstacles and to create encouragement, to engage in the sharing economy. This is preferably done by including people from different nations with different cultures and attitudes towards the environment and consumption (Edbring *et al.*, 2016). The gap identified in this paper is that there is, to the best of our knowledge, no research on which activities consumers are comfortable with and in which sectors sharing is accepted. Therefore, this study focuses on to explore what and how much consumers from different national cultures feel comfortable sharing.

1.3. Research question

How much are people willing to engage in the sharing economy from a national cultural perspective?

1.4. Research purpose

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the transition towards the sharing economy. Through studies of the sharing economy from a consumer perspective and what they are

prepared to share, this paper aims to offer suggestions on which sectors to focus on in order to make more people engaged in the sharing economy, in different national cultures.

2. Research Methodology

This chapter starts with an argumentation of why constructivism and interpretivism are suitable for this study. This is followed by discussions about the research approach and why the abductive approach is most suitable. Further on, the theories that are used throughout this dissertation will be presented shortly. One cultural model has been used when selecting participants and one conceptual model have been created in order to provide a holistic view of how national cultures might influence the sharing economy. Lastly, the choice of methodology will be presented and argued why it is suitable to use qualitative data in this study.

2.1. Research philosophy

When research is conducted, it is important to reflect on philosophical assumptions that might influence the practice of the research and the theoretical conclusions. There are two different understandings of philosophical assumptions. These are our understanding of reality, and our understanding of how we can know reality, commonly known as *ontology* and *epistemology*. Ontology can be divided into objectivism and constructivism. Objectivism means that social phenomena are independent of social actors while constructivism explains that social phenomena are dynamic and continually affected by social actors. Since this study focuses on culture which influences both the participants and the researchers, it is argued that constructivism is suitable (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018).

The epistemological consideration can be divided into two positions, *positivism* and *interpretivism*. Positivism claims that reality exists objectively and externally. Therefore, data should be collected through direct observation of phenomena or measure them through instruments, such as surveys. Interpretivism says that reality is constituted by human actions. Interpretivism is concerned to understand human behavior and to find answers to how and why social actions and processes happen. In contrast, positivism wants to present an explanation of human behavior (Bell *et al.*, 2018). Since this study

has a focus to understand how much different national cultures are willing to engage in the sharing economy, an interpretive position is suitable.

2.2. Research approach

There are two different research approaches that are common logic of inquiry, *deductive* and *inductive*. A deductive approach is a common relationship between theory and research, associated with the research philosophy positivism. The approach seeks to deduce a hypothesis and test it empirically. An inductive approach allows the researcher to change the research method and research question throughout the investigation. An inductive approach often uses a grounded theory approach to generate theories (Bell *et al.*, 2018). In recent years an approach, called *abductive* approach, has grown in popularity. According to Mantere and Ketokivi (2013, in Bell *et al.*, 2018, p. 24) the approach “involves seeking to identify the conditions that would make the phenomenon less puzzling, turning surprising facts into a matter of courses”. The abductive approach is a mix of inductive and deductive. It uses logical explanations to build theories, like inductive and tries to explain the world, like deductive. Since the research area of the sharing economy is a relatively unexplored area, we argue that an abductive approach is the most suitable of the three approaches. The abductive approach also gives the opportunity to test theoretical ideas with the social empirical world, in a back-and-forth process (Bell *et al.*, 2018).

2.3. Choice of theory

Theories and models about the sharing economy and culture are presented in the theoretical framework. These theories and models have been used throughout this study and we also included publications, journals, and books. Hofstede’s national cultural dimensions (2010) have been debated and used in order to better understand differences between national cultures. Suggestions and concerns have been taken into consideration in order to make the analysis less biased. Furthermore, Richter *et al.* (2017) present a framework of the economic system the sharing economy that has been used to understand the economic system of sharing economy.

2.4. Choice of methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used to gather empirical data (Bell *et al.*, 2018). In qualitative methods, words and subtle messages are analyzed, while in quantitative methods numbers are analyzed (Denscombe, 2016). This study is a cross-cultural study and since the focus is to explore and understand cultural differences in the sharing economy on a deep level, a qualitative method is suitable.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter explains and presents all the theories this study is based on. To understand the sharing economy, it is important to understand the concept of sharing. Therefore, this chapter will start to present different definitions of sharing. Then, the economic system of the sharing economy will be explained. The framework will cover different definitions, which activities that are included in the sharing economy and what it means to engage in it. This is based on a framework created by Richter et al. (2017). Furthermore, discussions of why it is important to have a cultural perspective will take place. The chapter will also present different methods to measure culture and discuss why this dissertation choose to use Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The section that follows will connect the sharing economy with culture and present earlier research on the sharing economy from a cultural perspective and which methods and theories that have been used in those. Lastly, the framework will be summarized in a conceptual model that will tie the different parts of the framework together.

3.1. What is sharing?

Attitudes and feelings toward sharing derive from our childhood where we learn how to think about property and ownership. This affects the willingness to share but so does also the emotional attachment to certain things. We are less likely to share possessions that we care about and are linked tightly to (Belk, 2009). The term 'sharing' itself has multiple meanings and the Cambridge dictionary explains sharing as "to have or use something at the same time as someone else", "to divide food, money, goods, etc. and give part of it to someone else" and "to tell someone else about your thoughts, feelings, ideas, etc." (Cambridge, 2019). Belk (2007, p. 126) defines sharing as "the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use". According to Belk (2009), sharing tends to be a communal act that links us to other people. It is not the only way in which we may connect with other people, but it is a potentially powerful one that creates feelings of solidarity and bonding. This is also acknowledged by Berger (2013, in Wan Ismail, Othman, Rahman, Kamarulzaman, & Rahman, 2018, p. 4) who say that sharing can be

seen as “social grooming that deepens our emotional connections”. In that sense, sharing could be seen as a necessity in social, economic and cultural dimensions. The feeling of being dependent differs between cultures and it can affect the willingness to share resources (Belk, 2009).

The main difference between sharing and the sharing economy is that the latter is partly based on economic benefits (Richter, *et al.*, 2017). Also, sharing creates bonds among people while economical exchange rarely does (Belk, 2009). Therefore, it can be argued that there is a necessity to share economically, socially and culturally, while participation in the sharing economy is out of free will.

3.2. The sharing economy

The sharing economy is an economic system that is believed to represent the 21st century instead of hyper-consumption that dominated the 20th century. This economic system is based on shared consumption instead of private ownership (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). There is yet no unified definition of the economic system called the sharing economy. There are other concepts and explanations similar to the sharing economy, such as *collaborative consumption*, *the mesh*, and *collaborative economy* (Sundararajan, 2016).

Collaborative consumption is defined by Hamari *et al.* (2016, p. 2049) as “the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services”. Richardson (2015, p. 121) provides another definition and says that collaborative consumption is “peer-to-peer access to goods and services”. The key word in collaborative consumption is peer-to-peer, which limits it to not include corporations and governments. The mesh focuses on selling the same product repeatedly and the concept promotes sharing and access over private ownership (Gansky, 2010). Collaborative economy is defined as “an economic model where ownership and access are shared between corporations, startups, and people. This results in market efficiencies that bear new products, services, and business growth” (Owyang, Tran, & Silva, 2013, p. 4)

Hamari *et al.* (2016) state that the sharing economy can be seen as an umbrella concept. Collaborative consumption, collaborative economy, and the mesh are sub-areas that are included under the umbrella. Hence, the sharing economy has a wider definition than the other concepts and Stephany (2015) describes it as to take underutilized products and make them available for others, thereby minimize the time they are not used. This could mean that less people would need to own products. The sharing economy could potentially also make more products and services available to people with lower income. Also, Stephany's (2015) definition allows for the interpretation that everyone from consumers and corporations to governments can participate in the sharing economy. Sundararajan (2016) concurs and states that one characteristic of the sharing economy is high-impact capital. High-impact capital explains that the sharing economy strives to maximize efficiency and allows products and services to be used at full capacity. The remainder of this paper will focus on the sharing economy because it offers a broad perspective, but it also allows research from all different sub-areas to be used.

There are many different forms of sharing within the sharing economy. Those forms include everything from share/lease/rent cars (Sprei, 2018) and clothing (Albinsson & Perera, 2009), to share information (Belk, 2014), accommodation (Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018), and funding (Hamari *et al.*, 2016). The sharing economy has gained increased popularity for several reasons. One reason is the economic crisis in 2008, where people suffered major economic losses which made people price sensitive (Belk, 2014). Sprei (2018) and Hamari *et al.*, (2016) also state that the economic benefits with the sharing economy are a driver for its success. Another reason for the growth of the sharing economy is the environmental downfall and global warming (Belk, 2014). Also, the sharing economy has become available due to extended internet usage. The Internet allows for easier communication and facilitates sharing in ways that were not possible before (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Richter, *et al.*, 2017; Hamari, *et al.*, 2016; Belk, 2014; Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018)

Previous research covers different benefits and problems with sharing products and services. For instance, one benefit the sharing economy offers is sustainability. Sharing

reduces the need for large quantities of products to be produced, instead the focus shifts to use products more efficiently (Sprei, 2018; Richter *et al.*, 2017; Stephany, 2015). Furthermore, economic benefits are recognized by several researchers and argued for. Economic benefits can be harnessed through lower fixed costs for companies and through lower investments for consumers (Richter *et al.*, 2017). Even though consumers and corporations realize economic advantages, there are risks of economic losses for governments in form of less tax revenues due to lower consumption (Hira & Reilly, 2017). However, Hira and Reilly (2017) also say that the sharing economy could help to bypass corruption because sharing is a potential way to shift the social norm. To bypass corruption would help governments with corruption problems to save money.

One problem that is addressed with the sharing economy is that cheaper and easier access to accommodation abroad may increase how much people travel. This could, in turn, have a negative impact on the environment (Muñoz-Leiva, *et al.*, 2018; Owyang *et al.*, 2013). Sprei (2018) also realizes the problem with cheaper and easier access but in the transportation sector. He says that people who do not own a car may see car sharing as more accessible than to go by bus. Accessibility together with cheaper transportation may increase how much people use cars which could impact the environment negatively. However, Sprei (2018) also says that shared vehicles have the opportunity to lower the number of vehicles driving on the roads. This would offer an improvement for the environment and decrease the transportation sectors climate impact. When the benefits of the sharing economy are considered, it could be argued that they outweigh the mentioned disadvantages.

Richter *et al.* (2017) present a framework for the sharing economy, that consists of four steps, (see figure 1) which gives a holistic view of the economic system. Sundararajan (2016) strengthens this as he presents a similar vision of sharing economy. The figure is explained in the following three sections.

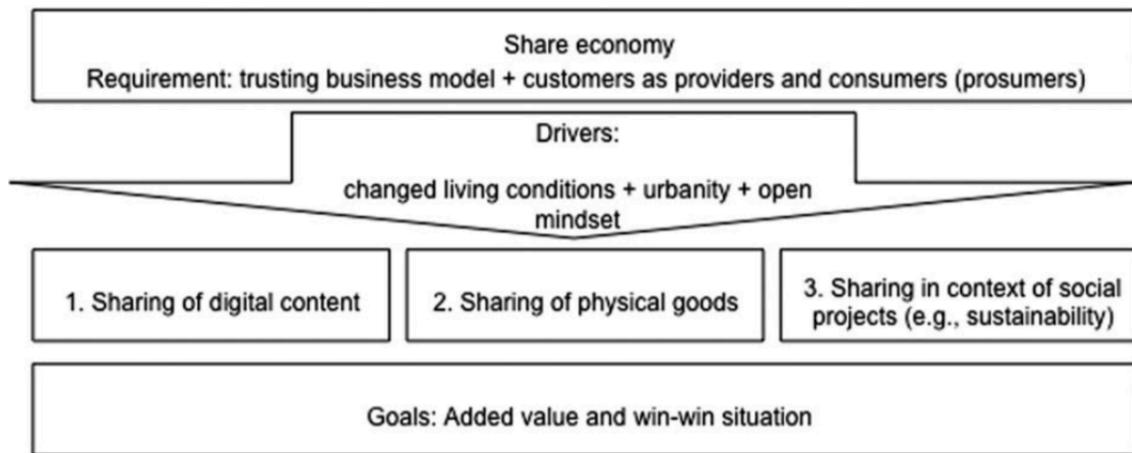


Figure 1. Framework of the sharing economy (Richter *et al.*, 2017)

Firstly, the foundation of the sharing economy is a business model that can be trusted. This means that the business model needs to be reliable and transparent. The sharing economy is also dependent on a shift in the role of the consumer who now becomes both supplier and consumer (Richter *et al.*, 2017). According to Sundararajan (2016), one characteristic of the sharing economy is that networks are *crowd-based*. This means that individuals play a central role in the exchange of goods when capital and labor become decentralized. The lines between personal and professional have become in-explicit. For example, activities that were earlier considered personal are now commercialized, such as to lend money peer-to-peer.

Secondly, Richter *et al.* (2017) identified three drivers in the sharing economy. The first driver is changed living conditions, for example, increased accessibility to the Internet which has given the opportunity to create new platforms and markets. Sundararajan (2016) agrees that the sharing economy is largely market-based. New markets are created that make it possible to exchange products and services peer-to-peer. This shift in marketplaces is also acknowledged by Hira and Reilly (2017), but it is criticized as it creates unfair competition for already established companies. The second driver is that more people live in urban areas where access to sharing is easier. The third driver is that people have become more open-minded than before and accept changes (Richter *et al.*, 2017).

Thirdly, there are three categories where sharing is common, *digital content*, *physical goods and services*, and *in social projects*. Lastly, the bottom line in the framework is that the sharing economy aims to add value and create a win-win situation which is beneficial for everyone (Richter *et al.*, 2017). The framework does not cover differences in sharing activities between national cultures or different levels of acceptance. As discussed in the problematization, the sharing economy might be influenced by culture and it is, therefore, relevant to explore and study the framework from this perspective.

3.3. Culture

McCracken (1986) suggests that culture constitutes our world in two different ways. Firstly, culture works as a lens which people look through and determine how a phenomenon will be “apprehended and assimilated” (p. 72). Categories that culture creates are the distinctions of *class*, *gender*, *status*, *occupation*, *time*, *space* and *nature*. All humans create their own unique vision of the world, thus mental rules that seem natural within their own culture are set.

Secondly, culture works as a “blueprint” (McCracken, 1986, p. 72) for human activity that specifies behavior and actions according to a specific pattern. These patterns work as a ranking, distinguishing and interrelating system within the culture. Both cultural categories and cultural principles are what constitutes the cultural world and affect consumer goods through the two arrows *advertising* and *fashion system* (see figure 2). At the second step in the figure, consumer goods affect individual consumers through four instruments of meaning, that point downwards in the figure, which are, *possession*, *exchange*, *groomings*, and *divestment rituals* (McCracken, 1986). This means that goods contribute to the culturally constituted world or in McCracken’s (1986, p. 74) words, “In short, goods are both the creations and the creators of the culturally constituted world”. Culture also works as a way to create meaningfulness to the world, and according to McCracken (1986, p. 78) “Clothing, transportation, food, housing exteriors and interiors, and adornment all serve as media for the expression of the cultural meaning that constitutes our world”. Transportation, housing and clothing are all sectors that are active

in the sharing economy (Sprei, 2018; Albinsson & Perera, 2009; Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it can be argued that these sectors might all be influenced by culture. More recent research also shows that culture can be expressed through the choice of transportation (Kuiper, 2013). Southerton (2001) found that kitchen consumption can be linked to identity. Also, clothing among adolescents is influenced by identity, both personal and social (Badadoui, Lebrun, Su & Bouchet, 2018).

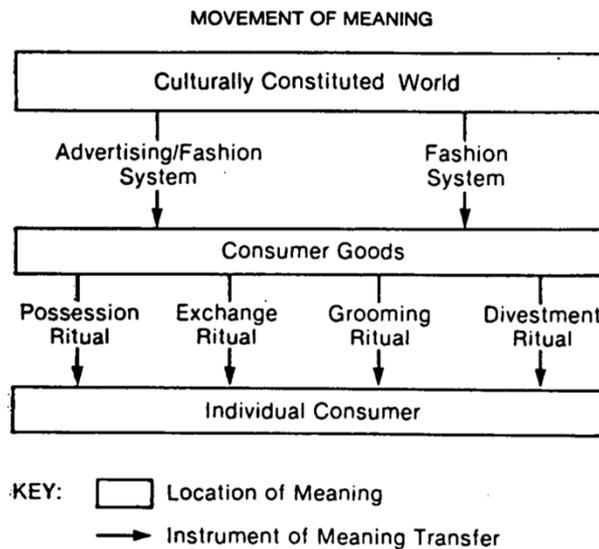


Figure 2. Movement of meaning (McCracken, 1986)

It is not an easy task to measure culture and there have been hundreds of attempts where researchers have tried to quantify culture in order to interpret it (Sun, D'Alessandro, Johnson & Winzar, 2014). For example, one association that has developed a database with the aim to help and facilitate the measure of culture is the World Values Survey Association (Inglehart, 1997). Inglehart and Welzel (2010), two scientists at the World Values Survey, claim that cultural differences can be explained by two major dimensions. The first dimension is *traditional values* versus *secular-rational values*, and the second dimension is *survival values* versus *self-expression values*. The two dimensions aim to explain differences between nations and provide a measurement tool for all areas that are of major concern for humans. Ludeke and Larsen (2016) suggest that the use of data from the World Value Survey is problematic since they found negative correlations between

the same trait as often as no correlation. The authors give the recommendation to use the data with caution.

A second way to measure culture is through Richard Lewis model that measures culture through behavior. The Lewis model allows for individuals to take a test in order to place them into a triad constituted of *Linear-active*, *multi-active*, and *reactive*. A person possesses all the qualities but will be more towards one of the three edges. The reason to use the model is mainly to understand cultural differences when cross-cultural businesses are conducted (Lewis, 2018). The model has been used to train over 70 000 people and has been awarded as the best online cultural profiler (Cross Culture, 2019). The Lewis model mainly considers communication skills and interaction skills (Jaakkola, 2009), and was therefore not relevant to use in this study.

Another researcher that has tried to make culture measurable is Geert Hofstede and this is the measurement tool that this study used. Hofstede developed a model that consists of six different cultural dimensions, where nations will score differently within each dimension. The model has been used to study and interpret cultural differences (Bang, Raymond, Taylor, & Moon, 2005; Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun, & Kropp, 1999; Gorman, 2006). Hofstede's cultural dimensions are also the measurement tool that has been used most frequently in studies that focus on culture (Sun *et al.*, 2014). The cultural dimensions also work as a foundation in the area of culture measurement. According to Taras, Roney and Steel (2009), 97.5 % of all 121 cultural measurement tools they reviewed have, at least, one dimension that is similar to Hofstede's. Jaakkola (2009) argues that Hofstede's cultural dimensions work well when different cultures are compared. Hofstede's model suits this study since the aim is to look at cultural differences and compare what different cultures think.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions is a debated topic, but even the researchers that are highly critical toward Hofstede agree that there is value to assume similarities within national borders (McSweeney, 2013). Touburg (2016) criticize Hofstede's model for being too general and that it does not take that cultures constantly change into account. An example

is Mexico, that changed from a collectivistic country to an individualistic country 25 years after Hofstede's model was proposed. A shift in culture does not happen overnight but over a longer period of time, which suggests that there could be a diversification within the country (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997).

However, a four-year study that used Hofstede's cultural dimensions shows that national culture influences professional work cultures. The study sought to explain if it is suitable to apply the same education across different national culture, known as a 'one size fits all' program. Pilots who work in a highly regulated and a highly technologically advanced environment have been believed to leave their national culture behind in favor for a universal behavior. The study showed that national culture was still relevant for the pilots and that the "one-size-fits-all-training is not appropriate (Merritt, 2000 p. 299).

Some speculations about cultural transfer, such as increased travel, migration, and increased media usage can be seen as a critique against Hofstede. However, the same author that criticize Hofstede says that research should not overstate the development of cultural transfer. Furthermore, the author also says that "national similarity are strong and both the institutional and the cultural foundation of the European nation-states are still firmly in place" (Kuiper, 2013, p. 29). Globalization has given people a wide variety of influencers and role models, which in turn can influence and transfer cultural values between nations. This strengthens McCracken's (1986) findings that fashion systems and advertisements do transfer meaning of culture to individual consumers. Alongside with the transfer of culture, research suggests that the world moves toward a homogeneous "cosmopolitan society" (Beck, 2000, p. 84). This means that national culture could be something that belongs in the past.

According to Kuiper (2013), the amount of research about cultural diversities is still not common. Furthermore, at the same time as this study was made, another study about the sharing economy and culture that use Hofstede's cultural dimensions was published (Gupta *et al.*, 2019). The authors conducted a survey to study the individual's intention to rent products on a consumer to consumer basis. Gupta *et al.* (2019) focus on why

people choose to rent or rent out products but not how much or what people are willing to share. Also, House (2004) conducted a comprehensive ten-year research program where cultural differences in 62 societies were studied, called the global leadership and organizational behavior effectiveness (GLOBE). They developed a model that is an extension of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and that tries to explain organizational behavior and leadership. However, Hofstede criticize the GLOBE program's method and says that it is only meaningful "when the issue is simple, such as family relations" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 42). National culture is still considered valuable to assume (McSweeney, 2013) and, to the best of our knowledge, the majority of cultural studies have used some parts of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Taras *et al.*, 2009). Also, previous research on sharing economy from a cultural perspective uses Hofstede's dimensions (Gupta *et al.*, 2019; Ashmore *et al.*, 2016; Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018). Hofstede's national cultural dimensions is also argued relevant in this study since national culture is one of the things with the greatest power to influence the speed of innovation in different countries (Gretzel, Kang & Lee, 2008). Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be further explained in the next paragraph.

3.3.1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

According to Hofstede *et al.* (2010), people carry specific patterns of thinking, acting, and feeling, which is similar to McCracken's (1986) cultural principles. Most patterns stem from each individual's childhood but are also learned and adopted throughout life. Hofstede *et al.* (2010, p. 5) refer to these patterns as "mental programs" or "software of the mind", and this software is usually known as culture. Culture is learned and not inherited, such as the "human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, and shame" which is referred to as "human nature" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 6). In contrast to McCracken's model (1986), Hofstede developed a framework in 1984 to measure different national cultures through four different dimensions (Hofstede, *et al.*, 2010). These are power distance, masculinity versus femininity, collectivism versus individualism, and uncertainty avoidance. Later on, long-term versus short-term orientation was added. Hofstede *et al.* (2010) later also added a new dimension and named

it indulgence versus restraint, however, the new dimension has not been reported in academic literature. The dimensions are further explained below.

Power distance measures the relationship between employees and their superior, in other words, it measures the dependency of relationship within a country. Countries can be divided into two different poles. On one side, employees that are afraid of their superior, and on the other employees that are not afraid. Employees that are afraid see their superior as “paternalistic” (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 61) while employees who are not afraid see the authority as a consultative superior (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Masculinity versus femininity measures work goals such as earnings, recognition, advancement, but also management, cooperation, living area, and employment security. Masculine societies are defined as societies with clear gender roles. Men are supposed to be tough, assertive and focused on “material success” (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 140), while women should be modest and focus on the quality of life. On the other hand, feminine societies are characterized as a society where emotional gender roles overlap. Men and women are both modest and focus on the quality of life (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Collectivism versus individualism measure the ties between individuals within a country. Individualistic societies have loose ties between individuals, and every individual is expected to look after themselves and their family. The opposite pole is collectivistic societies which are characterized with strong ties between individuals and “we” is placed before “I” (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 113). It is important with connection to a group and to protect each other with unquestionable loyalty in a collectivistic society (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Uncertainty avoidance measures the approach to uncertainty within a country and can be defined as how far a country’s members feel threatened by unknown or ambiguous situations. Uncertainty avoidance can be expressed through the need of structure to make the future predictable and written and unwritten rules (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Long-term versus short-term orientation measure the characteristics of persistence, thrift, status order and the sense of shame. On the other hand, short-term orientation measures reciprocation of gifts and favors, the respect for traditions, protection of one's face, and individual stability. The dimension can be defined as long term orientation focuses on future reward and do not value leisure, while short term orientation focus on the past and present (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Indulgence versus restraint measure happiness, life control, and importance of leisure. Indulgence can be defined as the allowance for gratification of human desires, often related to enjoyments in life. The opposite pole, restraint, can be defined as controls of gratification through strict social norms (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

3.4. The Sharing Economy from a cultural perspective

The sharing economy has earlier been studied through Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Muñoz-Leiva *et al.* (2018) discovered that uncertainty avoidance affects consumers' willingness to share accommodation through new sharing services. The authors found evidence that people within countries with a high level of uncertainty avoidance are more skeptical to accept new sharing platforms. Gupta *et al.* (2019) also found that high levels of uncertainty avoidance discourage people from sharing their own possessions. On the contrary, countries with low levels of uncertainty avoidance will adopt new sharing platforms faster than countries with a high level of uncertainty avoidance (Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, Ashmore *et al.* (2016) argue that there is a correlation between Hofstede's cultural dimension and choice of transportation. They found that countries with high power distance and collectivistic mindsets are less likely to switch to sustainable modes of transportation. For instance, there is a symbolic value connected to own a car, since this is a way to demonstrate economic capacity. Gupta *et al.* (2019) used all six dimensions from Hofstede's cultural dimensions in their analysis to compare differences

and see how the dimensions affect people's intention to rent products and services. They discovered that people who live in collectivistic and masculine countries are more willing to engage in peer-to-peer exchanges, both through rent out their own things as well as rent products from others.

Previous research about sharing economy from cultural perspective has used national culture as a measurement tool, although national culture has received critique because it generalizes too much. However, the amount of critique on national culture is limited (Kuiper, 2013) and there is still a value to use Hofstede's national cultural dimensions (Merritt, 2000) if diversification is taken into consideration (McSweeney, 2013).

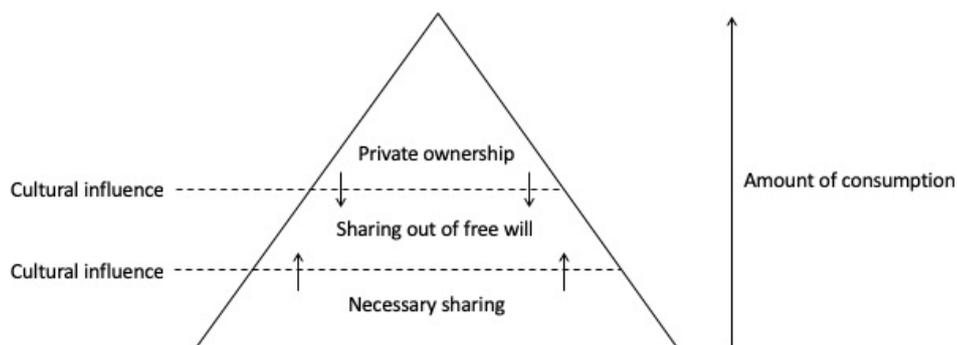
3.5. Culture's influence on sharing – a conceptual model

In order to better understand how the sharing economy can be influenced by culture, a conceptual model is proposed (see model 1). The model consists of three levels. *The bottom level* is necessary sharing, *the middle level* is sharing out of free will and *the top level* is private ownership. First, the bottom level is what both Belk (2009) and Berger (2013, in Wan Ismail *et al.*, 2018) calls a communal act that creates feelings of solidarity and bonding. Sharing can be seen as something necessary socially, economically and culturally. Second, the middle level is the economic system that is commonly referred to as the sharing economy. There is an economic benefit attached to the sharing economy (Richter, *et al.*, 2017), and in this way, it differs from sharing (Belk, 2009). Third, the top level is the economic system where individuals own most of their products and is associated with hyper-consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

The different levels represent different amount of consumption, lowest at the bottom of the pyramid and highest at the top of the pyramid. This is represented by the arrow that points upwards farthest to the right in the model. The three levels in the pyramid are separated by two dotted lines which represent cultural influence. Nations that are characterized as high in consumption belong to the 'private ownership' level. The nations in the top of the pyramid will have to decrease their consumption, shown by the arrows

that point downwards in the pyramid, in order to shift to the sharing economy and reach the second level of the pyramid. Culture is in this model a factor that influences nations in the sense of what is acceptable to share, and how much people within the nation are willing to give up their private ownership. Nations that are characterized as low consumption belong at the bottom level. These nations will have the opportunity to increase their consumption, and potentially increase their standards of living, represented by the arrows that point upwards in the pyramid. When moving up the pyramid, culture, in form of the dotted line between the middle level and the top level will influence how much people refrain private ownership, such as status symbols e.g. cars (Ashmore *et al.*, 2018).

The model should be considered as a holistic model where this study will look at the cultural influence between different nations. By using The World Bank's measurement of 'Household and NPISHs Final consumption expenditure per capita' (The World Bank, 2019) the model is used as a map that tries to show if different consumption levels might culturally influence willingness to share differently. This research focuses on the two upper levels and examines the cultural influence between private ownership and sharing out of free will. This study does not explore the movement from the bottom level to the middle level and it is, therefore, an assumption that culture influences this movement. This opens up for future research to study countries that share out of necessity.



Model 1. Conceptual model of culture's influence on sharing

4. Empirical Method

This chapter will discuss and explain the research method that is used in this study. First, a presentation of different research designs and strategies will be introduced. This is followed by a discussion of why a comparative design, with a cross-cultural approach, is suitable for this study. Secondly, the data collection method will be presented and a discussion of why focus groups are relevant for this study. Thirdly, the focus group guide used in the focus groups will be presented and argued for, followed by a discussion of the selection of participants. The fourth part of this chapter explains how the data was analyzed. Lastly, ethical considerations will be presented.

4.1. Research design and strategy

According to Bell *et al.* (2018), there are five different research designs: *experimental design, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design, case study design, and comparative design*. Since this study focuses on comparing differences between cultures, in regard to people's willingness to engage in the sharing economy, it is suitable to choose a comparative design. The comparative design works in both quantitative and qualitative research (Bell *et al.*, 2018) and the data was collected cross-sectional.

There are also two distinctions in comparative design that are important, and they are called *cross-cultural approach* and *intercultural approach*. The cross-cultural approach compares cases between various countries while the intercultural approach focuses on the "interaction between people and organizations with different national/cultural backgrounds" (Bell *et al.*, 2018, p. 69). This study uses a comparative design with a cross-cultural approach because it studies the case of the sharing economy between different national cultures. Bell *et al.* (2018) suggest that qualitative research is needed when research is conducted in a comparative way, where several cases are studied and compared. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) recommend a case study strategy when the question, how, is sought to be answered, which is the purpose of this study.

A research purpose can be defined as either descriptive, exploratory or explanatory and it needs to be defined when formulating the research question (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The research question is: “How much are people willing to engage in the sharing economy from a national cultural perspective?”. Since this study aims to seek new insights, an exploratory purpose fits the question. When exploratory research is conducted there are three principal ways to gather data. These are to search in literature, interview experts and to conduct focus group interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Out of the three principals, focus groups were chosen and the reason for this is explained in the chapter 4.2.1. Also, an exploratory research purpose gives the opportunity to change direction as new data is collected (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

4.2. Data collection

Primary data was collected through focus groups. *Reliability, authenticity, and accuracy* were taken into consideration when the data was collected. Reliability means that the research was conducted in a consistent manner and that it is possible for others to evaluate the procedures that were used. Authenticity refers to that the topic that were supposed to be studied, were studied and accuracy refers to that the research highlighted the phenomena that the study refers to. This is in accordance with Lind (2014).

4.2.1. Focus groups

Previous research on the sharing economy has focused on surveys and interviews which has generated greater insight in the area (Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018; Ashmore *et al.*, 2018; Gupta *et al.*, 2019). According to Denscombe (2016) surveys are good to generate quantitative data but lack the depth and detail that other research methods could provide, such as interviews and focus groups. Interviews generate insight on an individual level, but according to Kitzinger (1995), focus groups are more suitable when researchers want to understand how ideas develop and operate within a cultural context. Therefore, we argue that the use of focus groups increases the probability to answer our research question.

A focus group is a form of group interview that aims to help identify group norms and cultural values. The number of participants can vary and according to Kitzinger (1995), an ideal group is between four and eight people. It is also argued that too many focus groups are a waste of time since saturation usually occurs between three and twelve focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Focus groups should also be conducted in a relaxed and comfortable setting (Kitzinger, 1995). At the focus groups sessions, coffee and cookies were offered to the participants, and the moderator had a low-key dress code. This was done to attain a comfortable and relaxed setting which is important in order to encourage the participants to talk with each other freely (Litosseliti, 2003, as referred by Ahrne and Svensson, 2015). One advantage with focus groups over interviews is that the participants discuss and challenge each other's thoughts and views. This increases the chance to obtain realistic answers due to that the participants have to consider and perhaps alter their views (Bell *et al.*, 2018).

4.2.2. Focus group interview guide

Krueger and Casey (2014) state that a focus group session should consist of five different types of questions. These five types of questions are, *opening questions*, *introductory questions*, *transition questions*, *key questions* and *ending questions*. The focus group guide that we have constructed (see appendix 1) is based on this framework. To start the focus group, the moderator began with an opening question and asked the participants to introduce themselves. It is important to ask an easy question first to get everyone to say something and get past the first shyness (Krueger & Casey, 2014). When everybody had presented themselves, the moderator continued by asking an introductory question. This question introduced them to the subject of sharing. The participants elaborated on what they thought about when they heard the word sharing. With this question, the moderator could get a first insight into what the participants thought about the subject (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

Before the key part of the focus group interview was reached, transitions questions were used in order to move the topic from the more general closer to the investigated subject

follow-up question about it. The reason for asking about the environment is that even though there is an ethical gap (Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2014), previous research has identified it to be a motivational factor (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010). This makes it interesting to see if we could find any additional insights to the environmental aspect. At the end of the focus group, an ending question was asked to conclude the discussion. According to Krueger & Casey (2014), there are three types of ending questions. The '*all things considered*' question, the '*summary question*', and the '*final question*'. A combination of all three questions were used and it started with a short summary from the moderator about the most important topics, followed by a question if something had been missed or if there was something that should have been discussed. This is important because it decreases the risk of missing important aspects (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

4.3. Selection of participants

To use Hofstede's cultural dimensions favorably, certain countries were chosen to cover a wide range of different levels of the cultural dimensions (see figure 4). Five focus groups were conducted with 23 participants from four different countries. The chosen countries were Sweden, France, China, and the United States (US). Sweden's masculinity level is five while China has a masculinity level of 66. The US scores 91 in the individualism dimension while China scores 20. The differences between the maximum and minimum level at all cultural dimensions made it easier to see if the dimensions had an impact on the result.

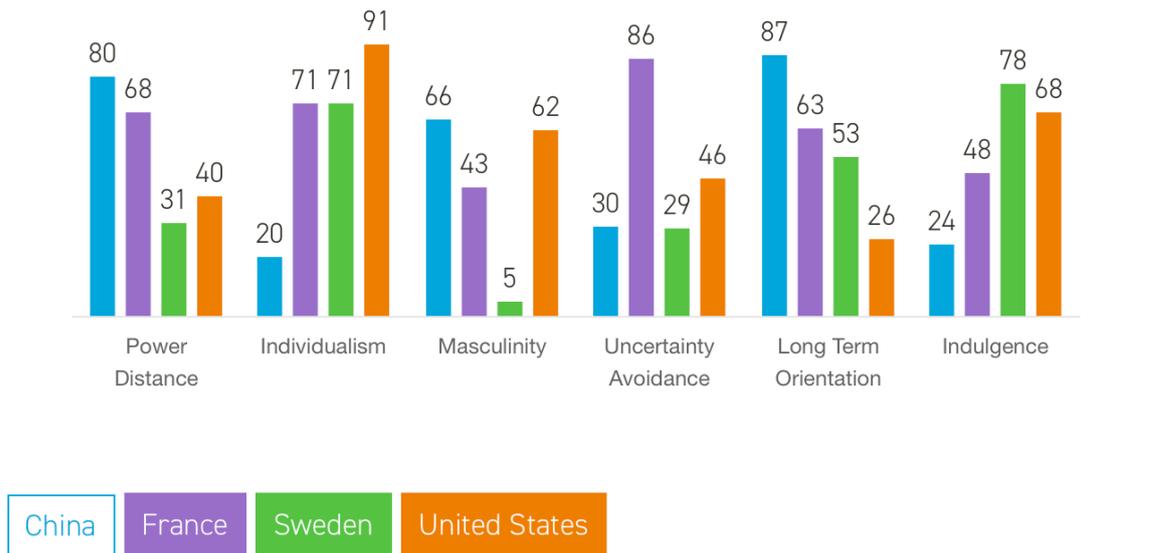


Figure 4. Hofstede's cultural dimensions: China, France, Sweden, USA (Hofstede-insights, 2019)

Since the capital and time of this research were limited a convenience selection was used to find participants. The selection of participants was done at Kristianstad university since it offered a wide range of Swedish and international students. By only including participants that are students and that belong in the same age group (20-30 years old), we hoped to isolate culture as the only variable that varied. It can also be argued that most of participant were a part of the middle class, but this also lower the number of variables that varied. A satisfactory number of participants were found at the university that covered the desired nationalities. A satisfactory number of participants were found to conduct two Swedish groups, one French group, one Chinese group, and one US group. Additionally, it was suitable to use a convenience selection since the research is of small scale, the collected data was qualitative, and the research is of an exploratory character (Denscombe, 2016).

According to Kitzinger (1995), it is recommended to strive for homogeneity within each focus group in order to enhance the sharing experience. In order to ensure the national culture with each participant, a control question was asked during the selection. The question asked which country the participants and their parents were born and raised in. To ensure that the participants were born and raised in the same country as their parents,

we hoped to increase the chance to find participants that could represent their national culture. We also asked the control question to take globalization and increased diversity within countries into consideration (e.g. McSweeney, 2013; Beck, 2000). Out of 23 participants, there were two deviations (see table 1). One of the American participants had Swedish parents but were born and raised in the US. However, before starting the focus group the moderator asked whether he considered himself American or Swedish. The participant answered that he considered himself an American. The second deviation was in the French group, where one participant had one British parent. The same question was asked this participant, and the answer was that she considered herself French.

Table 1. List of participants

Participant	Country	Gender	Age	Country parents were born in
A	Sweden	Male	20	Sweden
B	Sweden	Male	24	Sweden
C	Sweden	Male	24	Sweden
D	Sweden	Male	22	Sweden
E	Sweden	Male	24	Sweden
F	Sweden	Female	25	Sweden
G	Sweden	Female	21	Sweden
H	Sweden	Female	22	Sweden
I	Sweden	Female	27	Sweden
J	France	Male	26	France
K	France	Male	21	France
L	France	Female	21	France
M	France	Female	19	France
N	France	Female	20	France/UK
O	China	Male	24	China
P	China	Male	21	China
Q	China	Male	22	China
R	China	Female	28	China
S	China	Female	24	China
T	USA	Male	27	Sweden
U	USA	Male	21	USA
V	USA	Female	21	USA
W	USA	Female	20	USA

Furthermore, two Swedish focus groups were conducted in order to have a mix of gender between the groups. Due to that it was difficult to find participants initially, the first Swedish group consisted of four males. In order to get a satisfactory mix, a second Swedish group was conducted with a majority of four females and one male. The other groups were mixed sufficiently from the start. Five focus groups were conducted with at least four participants in each group. This is in line with the recommendation from Kitinger (1995) and Bell *et al.* (2018).

4.4. Execution

In the beginning, the participants were greeted, introduced to the topic and told what was expected from them. A form was given to the participants where they filled in age, gender, occupation, and where their parents were born. This was done for the purpose of documentation and to compile a table of selected participant. Three focus group interviews were held in English and two were held in Swedish. This was done in order to create a comfortable atmosphere for the Swedish participants. We divided the work so that one acted as moderator while the other took notes. To complement the notes, each session was recorded, transcribed and coded accordingly to Denscombe (2016) and Bell *et al.*'s (2018) recommendation. In order to not compromise the results, the involvement of the moderator was set to a limit. The moderator only interfered with the group to ask the next question, or if the group missed a certain important aspect. This was done with limited body-language and without encouraging words in order to influence as little as possible (Bell *et al.*, 2018). Video-recording was considered for the sessions in order to pinpoint who said what, and also to analyze body language. However, since it is important that the session is conducted in a relaxed setting (Ahrne and Svensson, 2015), a camera was not considered suitable. Instead, the participants introduced themselves in the beginning so that the transcriber knew the names of the one who were talking.

The focus group was based on discussions between the participants, but it also worked as a workshop. The key part of the session included that the participants discussed what could be shared and write down everything they could think of on post-it cards. Their task was thereafter to place their cards on a paper and rank them from least shareable to most shareable (see figure 3). This was done to let the participants think freely, with minimal influence from the moderator, about what they are willing to share. When they had ranked their own cards, the group was asked to draw a line. This line was to separate the items they are willing to share from the items they are not willing to share. Also, it created a clear result of where the groups of different national cultures drew the line. Lastly in the key-part, pre-written post-it cards were handed out by the moderator, to be placed upon the same paper (See appendix 2). But this time, the participants were asked to also consider the line they drew before. This was done in order to make sure that no important sharing activities had been left out, and to ensure that there was enough material to

compare between all the groups. At the end of the session, the moderator thanked the group and explained what happens to the data that had been gathered (Bell *et al.*, 2018).

4.5. Data analysis

According to Denscombe (2016), it is important to prepare and organize the data before it is analyzed. This can be done through coding and indexation. Therefore, the primary analysis was to interpret the transcribed material, notes and transfer the findings into a data rectangle which is influenced by cross-sectional research.

The analysis was divided in two different parts. The first part was to create a data rectangle about which sharing items the groups could think of and whether they thought them as shareable or not (see figure 5). The second part was to compare which motivational factors each country addressed, and why they thought certain items are shareable or not (See figure 6).

After the focus groups, the first thing that was done was to transcribe the collected data. When all data was in written form, we started to sort the data into three different categories. The first category was if the participants could agree that an item or service was shareable. The second category was if the group could agree that an item or service was not shareable. The third category was if the participants could not agree whether an item or service was shareable or not. This was done in order to create an overview of how much each group are willing to share. When all items had been categorized, we looked for what they had said about the item that could answer why they had placed it as shareable or not shareable. When all information had been gathered, we started to search for similarities and dissimilarities between the groups' answers (see appendix 3). This was done with the help of the three categories that was created earlier, with the addition for other categories (marked as the question mark in figure 2), which made it more convenient to compare the groups. Lastly, a table was created where the data was compiled to show what the different groups thought (see table 2). This was the first part

of the analysis, and it helped to find the data needed to answer which items each group was willing to share.

Table 2. What is shareable?

	Transportation	Accommodation	Clothing	?
Country A				
Country B				
Country C				
Country D				
Country E				

In the second part of the analysis we tried to identify what motivational factors the different groups addressed when they decided whether something was shareable or not. Quotes were collected from the transcriptions and all quotes that addressed the same topic were grouped under a common category in another data rectangle (see appendix 3). This was done in order to analyze why the groups answered the way they did and if we could see similarities between them. This was later compared and analyzed with Hofstede's cultural dimensions to see whether national culture had an impact of what makes people want to share.

4.6. Ethical consideration

According to Bell *et al.* (2018), there are four main ethical principles that must be taken into consideration. The first principal is to prevent that the participants are harmed from the research. The participants can be harmed in many different ways, such as *physical, harm to participants development and self-esteem, stress, and harm to career prospect or future employment.* The second principle is to make sure that the participants have enough information about the study to decide whether they want to participate or not. The third principle is the need to protect the participants right to privacy. The fourth, and final principle is to prevent deception. Deception means that the researchers present their

research in a way that does not concur with what the research really is. It is important for the authors to be transparent and open what the study is actually about (Bell *et al.*, 2018).

The participants were provided with sufficient background information about our research so that they understood the purpose and methods. It was also explained to the participants why they were asked to participate, what they had to do, and the amount of time they had to spend. The participants were ensured anonymity. Furthermore, all participants were 18 years or older, gave their consent to participate and be recorded. They were ensured that they were not forced to participate, and that they could withdraw of their approval to participate could be done at any minute. The recorded material was stored no longer than necessary and was deleted once it was used. This was decided with the recommendation of Denscombe (2016) and Bell *et al.* (2018).

5. Empirical findings

This chapter will present the findings of the focus groups. Firstly, the chapter will start to discuss the findings in each national focus group that participated and present what each group thought of the sharing economy. Secondly, four different sectors of sharing will be discussed and whether these sectors are shareable or not. Thirdly, this chapter will present motivational factors that have been addressed in the focus groups and why the participants are willing to share something or not.

5.1. Sharing activities divided by country

Each section will present where the participants drew their line on the least to most shareable figure during the focus group session (see figure 3). This will be followed by what each focus group thought was shareable and not shareable through their own post-it cards as well as ten pre-written post-it cards. Additionally, a short explanation from each focus group is presented on what makes something shareable.

5.1.1. Sweden

The first Swedish group placed their line in the middle of the least to most shareable figure (see appendix 5). Among their own cards, the group placed transport and vacation houses as most shareable. Other items that were considered shareable was tools and books. What was considered as least shareable was clothes, phones, and housing. Of the ten pre-written post-it cards, all transportation modes were placed as most shareable. Casual clothing and sportswear were placed as least shareable while party clothes could be shared, but it was placed close to the line. Accessories were placed on the line because the group was divided whether it was shareable or not. The first Swedish focus group based their willingness to share on how personal an item is and how frequently an item is used.

The second Swedish group placed their line to the left of the middle in the least to most shareable figure (see appendix 6). Among the groups own post-it cards, knowledge, transport, and accessories were placed as most shareable. Clothes were also placed as shareable but closer to the line. As least shareable the group placed hygiene products and everything within their home. Among the ten pre-written post-it cards, the group placed all transportation modes, accessories and party clothes as most shareable. Sportswear was placed as the least shareable item while housing was placed on the line. Casual clothing was considered shareable but was also placed close to the line. The second Swedish group based their willingness to share on how personal an item is and whether they knew the person they were sharing with.

5.1.2. France

The French group placed their line more towards to the left on the 'least to most shareable' figure (see appendix 7). Among their own cards book, gardening tools and cars were placed as most shareable. Housing, swimming pools, and wi-fi were also placed as shareable. As least shareable the group placed toiletries, clothes, and phone. Of the ten cards that were given out by the moderator, all transportation modes were placed as most shareable. Party clothes are considered shareable but was placed close to the line. Sportswear was placed as the only item on the left of the line as least sharable. Casual clothing and accessories were placed on the line and the participants argued that there are more subcategories and that some of them might be shareable while some are not. According to the French group what makes something shareable or not is depending on hygiene and how personal the item is to you. Participant J said, "How much you think it's your own property, like personal". This shows that private ownership might be determined by what is perceived as personal.

5.1.3. China

The Chinese focus group drew their line left of the middle on the least to most shareable figure (see appendix 8). Among their owns cards the group placed tools and books as most shareable. Bikes, housing, and cars were also placed as shareable, but cars were

placed close to the line. As least shareable the group placed their phone, girlfriend/boyfriend and clothes. Among the ten cards provided by the moderator, the Chinese group placed public transport, party clothes, and bicycles as most shareable. Housing, accessories, cars, and motorcycles were also placed as shareable, but motorcycles and cars were both placed close to the line. Only casual clothing and sportswear were placed to the left of the line. Cars are considered shareable but was placed close to the line. The Chinese group would rather share accommodation and furniture than cars and motorcycles and participant O said “I want to have my car available at all time. Ok, if I want to go somewhere, I want to be pretty sure that I can just drive and go”. This shows a concern of decreased accessibility and flexibility.

Furthermore, the Chinese group based their willingness to share on frequency, personal belonging, and safety. Participant R said that “When it’s more personal, the less you want to share. And if this something is essential to us, for example, tools and books we don’t need it to live, we more likely want to share it.”. This shows that items that are essential to the group are less likely to be shared compared to items that are used less frequently.

5.1.4. USA

The US focus group drew their line slightly to the left of the middle on the least to most shareable figure (see appendix 9). Among their own post-it cards, they placed tools, books, bikes, and self-driving cars as most shareable. Entertainments, services, and jobs were also placed as shareable but closer to the line. As least shareable the group placed food, electronics, and clothing. Housing was placed on the line and the group mentioned vacation houses can be shared, but the main residence is not considered shareable. Among the ten post-it cards provided by the moderator, the group placed public transport, accessories, party clothes and bicycles as most shareable. Cars and motorcycles were also placed as shareable but closer to the line. Sportswear is considered the least shareable item. Casual clothing is also considered not shareable but was placed closer to the line. The US group base their willingness to share on that they want to feel comfortable. When asked what makes something shareable the group agreed that they want to feel

comfortable. They mentioned that sharing underwear is outside of their comfort zone. Participant U said that it comes down to how big circle a person has being comfortable to share. He also used the word private when he talked about how comfortable he is with sharing things. Participant V said that he is not comfortable with sharing his phone but maybe his computer. The cost was another factor that was mentioned.

5.2. Areas that are Shareable or not Shareable

In order to get an overview of what the groups considered shareable and not shareable, all different items and sharing activities were categorized. Additional to three categories transportation, accommodation and clothing, a fourth category was identified since it was mentioned by all focus groups. This fourth category is called technology and includes phones, wi-fi, laptops and other kinds of electronics (see table 3). The four categories are also displayed on the least to most shareable figure, where flags represent what each focus group think is shareable within each category. The only thing to consider is the placement of the flags on the horizontal axel. The vertical line divides the model, where the right side is shareable, and the left side is not shareable. How the flags are placed vertically is not relevant (see figure. 5, 6, 7, 8).

Table 3. Shareable and not shareable areas

	Transportation	Accommodation	Clothing	Technology
China	Shareable	Shareable	Shareable/Not shareable	Not shareable
Sweden 1	Shareable	Not shareable	Shareable/Not shareable	Not shareable
Sweden 2	Shareable	Shareable/Not shareable	Shareable	
France	Shareable	Shareable	Shareable/Not shareable	Shareable/Not shareable
USA	Shareable	Shareable	Shareable/Not shareable	Not shareable

5.2.1. Transportation

All focus groups placed transportation on the right side of their line, which shows that they are willing to share transportation with each other (see figure 5). In this figure, the accumulated willingness to share transportation is displayed, where China ranked their

transportation lower than the other groups. The US had some concerns with motorcycles, which is why they are placed between the Chinese group and the other groups. Both Swedish groups and the French group showed a willingness to share transportation in several categories and did not separate motorcycles, bicycles, and cars from each other. Participant O, in the Chinese group, was concerned with the time it would take to receive a car in the sharing economy. When the group asked him if he could change his mind if he had two cars, he replied that “You don’t have the control of the time, that others are using your car”. This may show a perceived risk of inconvenience and decreased flexibility. Participant O also expressed problems with sharing his motorcycle and said that “you want to modify it, you want to have it as a form of coolness”. This might show a personal attachment and symbolic value with ownership of a motorcycle.

The US group had many experiences with UBER, and they thought that it was a good service to use. When the moderator presented the future scenario, the group agreed that self-driving cars would be the most shareable since you do not need to customize it. The group also agreed that motorcycles are less shareable as participant T in the US group said, “motorcyclist they tend to like their motorcycles, like, it’s their baby”. This shows that the US group together with the Chinese group saw transportation as less shareable.

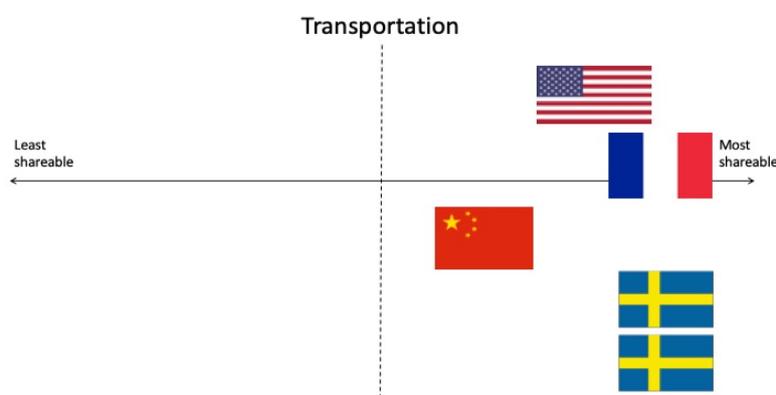


Figure 5. Sharing transportation

5.2.2. Accommodation

All focus groups, except the first Swedish group, placed accommodation to the right or on the line, which shows that they accept to share their living space in various forms (see figure 6). This figure represents where the groups placed the card housing. There were discussions in all of the groups of how much of the living space that can be shared. The first Swedish group, who placed housing to the left of the line was strongly against sharing their house and living space while the second Swedish group could see themselves sharing if they knew the person. The French group was happy to share their apartment, especially to friends and family. Participant J from France said that it made him feel good to offer his apartment to people since they would not need to find a hotel. The Chinese group was more divided about sharing their house or apartment because the risk to have their habits disrupted, but at the same time, they thought it could be a good social thing. The US group could imagine sharing their living space and rent out rooms if they had a spare one to save. Furniture was considered shareable by all groups, except for the second Swedish group, with the reason that they want their own home. However, all groups showed a willingness to share gardening and construction tools with the explanation that tools are not used or needed all the time.

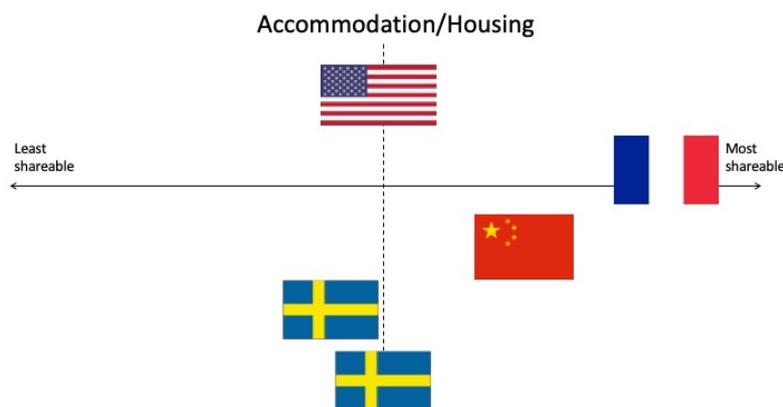


Figure 6. Sharing accommodation/housing

5.2.3. Clothing

The groups were divided if clothes are shareable or not. There are similarities between the groups, but differences can be seen between the sub-categories within clothing. All participants expressed that they are willing to share party clothes, such as prom dresses, suits or tuxedos. Clothes that are not used frequently with a high purchase price seem to be more shareable. However, casual clothing was two-parted. The first Swedish group did not think that casual clothing was shareable. The second Swedish group and the French group did not like the idea to share casual clothing. However, they concluded that they can share and borrow from and with their family members and close friends. The Chinese group and the US group cannot imagine sharing their casual clothes with anyone either. They feel that it is private property and want to keep it to themselves. Further on, sportswear is unanimous between the groups as something that is not shareable. All participants think that it is disgusting, and the hygiene factor seems to play a big role.

Figure 7 represents where the groups placed casual clothing. Since all groups are unanimous about that sportswear is least shareable, and party clothes are something that is shareable, casual clothing shows the differences between each group.

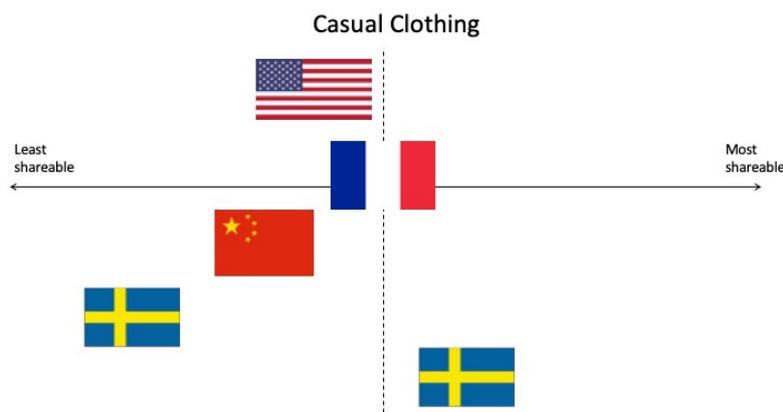


Figure 7. Sharing casual clothing

Differences could also be seen about sharing accessories. The second Swedish group and the French group were divided here as well but are in general positive to the idea. If the

accessories have some personal meaning, then they would not want to share it. Otherwise it was argued that it is positive to be able to change between a greater variety of accessories. The Chinese group and the US group are positive toward sharing accessories. There were positive reflections and both the groups see possibilities to increase their range of items. The two Swedish groups differed on accessories where the first Swedish group, consistent of only males, are not willing to share while the second group, with a majority female group, are. Something that was noticed during the two sessions was that the only male in the second Swedish group has a similar view on accessories as the first Swedish group.

5.2.4. Technology

All focus groups mentioned either electronics or phones but only four focus groups put phones or electronics on the least to most shareable figure. All the participant did not feel comfortable sharing their phone with anyone else, because it is considered to be too personal. A phone contains personal information, and everyone feel a personal attachment to their phone. The first Swedish groups and the US group also expressed a personal attachment to their computer, but both the groups mentioned the positive side to rent computers through their universities. However, the electronic items are too personal to share, but services such as Wi-Fi and apps like swish were mentioned as shareable by the French group. Both the Swedish groups also mentioned that they like to share services such as Netflix. The figure represents that the US group, the Chinese group, and the Swedish group, placed all their post-it cards, that could be categorized as technology, towards least shareable. The French group differed from the other groups because they placed wi-fi and video-games as shareable, hence France is closer to the middle (see figure 8).

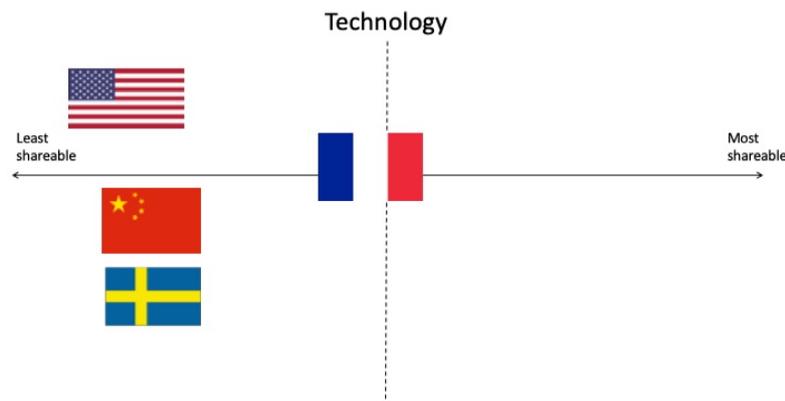


Figure 8. Sharing technology

5.3. Motivational Factors

There are motivational factors to why people want to engage in sharing activities and similarities can be seen across nationalities. There are four motivational factors that all participants addressed, and after that, there are an additional four largely impactful factors, but they were only mentioned by some groups. The four factors that all groups have in common are *personal*, *safety/trust*, *economic* and *convenience*. The other four that were mentioned are *frequency*, *social*, *technology*, and *environment*. The quotes that follow was supported and agreed by the whole group, or above 50% of the participants within that group.

5.3.1. Common Factors

One common factor is personal, and it was one of the first factors that were mentioned in every group when asked what makes something shareable or not shareable (see table 4). According to all groups, personal connection to an item makes it less shareable. There is a fear within the French group and the US group to share their phones because it is seen as too personal with a lot of personal information on it. Both Swedish groups and the Chinese group were thinking more generally.

Table 4. Personal factor

Participant	Quote
D (Sweden)	"It depends on how personal it is, I would say."
I (Sweden)	"How personal it is."
L (France)	"You don't want to share it with everybody because there are private things on there."
O (China)	"A more personal object and you don't want to share it."
U (USA)	"you're not gonna wanna share a lot of these private things"

A second factor that was mentioned was the economic factor. Money is identified by the groups to have an impact on what and why they want to share certain items. The economic aspect was discussed from a number of different perspectives and included both cheaper consumption and the possibility to save money (see table 5). The second Swedish group, the French group and the US group, all see the potential for access to cheaper products. The first Swedish group mentioned the possibility to save money while the Chinese group think about the economic aspect generally.

Table 5. Economic factor

Participant	Quote
B (Sweden)	"Imagine how much money you can save."
H (Sweden)	"It is often cheaper as well."
M (France)	"It's cheaper, I think"
O (China)	"I think it is most the economic motivation."
W (USA)	"I think it's cheaper."

The third common factor that was mentioned by every group was safety/trust. The groups discussed the essence of being sure that you can get back the item you share in good condition, as seen in the quote from the French group (see table 6). The US group and Chinese group expressed their concerns about other people exploiting these sharing systems, to inflict harm. The participants of the second Swedish group said that they can share more with people they know and trust. Friends and family can stretch the boundaries

of what is shareable. The first Swedish group expressed that their home is their safe place and want to keep it to themselves (see table 6).

Table 6. Trust/safety factor

Participant	Quote
A (Sweden)	"It's a safety to get there"
E (Sweden)	"you can share with someone you trust."
N (France)	"If you share something and at the end the person gives it back to you and it's broken."
Q (China)	"I think that safety is a very important thing."
W (USA)	"You could get into the wrong car because people have been known to do that."

The fourth common motivational factor is convenience. The aspects of time, flexibility and comfortability are the main topics of the discussions (see table 7). All groups acknowledge convenience, but the Chinese group and the US group discussed it to a greater extent than both the Swedish groups and the French group. The reason for this could have been that both the Chinese group and US group had more previous experience with sharing platforms. The US group, in particular, are enthusiastic about the convenience of UBER.

Table 7. Convenience factor

Participant	Quote
B (Sweden)	"Sharing tools would be quite handy"
I (Sweden)	"It is really smooth." - Talking about UBER
K (France)	"It is more useful." - Talking about sharing bikes
R (China)	"It saves our time, it's very convenient." - Talking about sharing economy
T (USA)	"It's also easier." - Talking about UBER and Lyft

5.3.2. Other Factors

Frequency was mentioned by the first Swedish group, the French group, and the Chinese group. They are all unanimous that the more frequent an item is used, the less shareable

it is. The Chinese group discussed how much they used or needed an item as a reason to why they would not share. They lifted books as an example of an item that is not needed all the time, and it is, therefore, more shareable (see table 8).

Table 8. Frequency factor

Participant	Quote
B (Sweden)	"How much you use the items."
J (France)	"I think you can share what you can go without for some time."
R (China)	"Tools and books, we don't need it to live, we more likely want to share it."

The second factor, social, was discussed by the French group and the Chinese group. The social aspect is lifted in the sense of both to socialize more with others but also to feel good about yourself. The Chinese group also likes sharing things because it offers the opportunity to meet new people (see table 9).

Table 9. Social factor

Participant	Quote
L (France)	"I think people use share things because they want to socialize a little bit more."
O (China)	"I actually prefer Airbnb better than hotel, because you meet local people when you travel."

The third factor, technology, was mentioned by the French and the US group. The participants in both groups discussed the necessity for platforms to facilitate the sharing between people (see table 10). When the US group discussed what could make them change their mind of what is shareable, it was mentioned that a system that makes it easier to share phones could possibly make them change their minds. The French group thought it is important with more sharing platforms if they are going to share more things.

Table 10. Technology factor

Participant	Quote
K (France)	"To share something with another people we need a platform to join the customer and the owner."
T (USA)	"If you had a system that stored an image of your phone."

The fourth factor that was discussed was the environment. All groups talked about the environment but mainly after the moderator asked about it. Only the first Swedish group and the French group talked about that sharing could be good for the environment, before the moderator asked about it. The first Swedish group focused on greater resource allocation while the French group focused on decreased consumption (see table 11).

Table 11. Environment factor

Participant	Quote
C (Sweden)	"I think that it may have to do with the environment and resources. Use resources better."
N (France)	"I think there is also environment, like not everyone has a bike or has a car. You are sharing with each other so it's more sustainable to the end."

6. Analysis

This chapter will start with an analysis of the four sharing sectors discussed in chapter 5.2. with the use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. This will be followed by an analysis that continues to use the cultural dimensions in order to try to understand the motivational factors, frequency, social, technology, and environment. These are the other factors, that were the factors differed between the groups and are presented in chapter 5.2.2. Furthermore, the conceptual model – culture's influence on sharing, will be tested. Lastly, additional findings that could be a foundation for further research will be presented.

6.1. What is shareable

Out of Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, the result might imply that indulgence, which, for example, measures the importance of leisure, may affect people's willingness to share. What can be seen is that housing divided the groups where the Chinese group and the French group can imagine sharing their home while both the Swedish groups and the US group are more negative towards it. Sweden and the US are both indulgent countries, while China is a restraint country and France is somewhere in the middle (see figure 3). Indulgent societies value leisure time (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010) which could mean that people from indulgent countries, such as Sweden and the US, may potentially spend more time in their homes than people from more restrain countries, such as China and France. Therefore, it could be a reason why the participants from Sweden and the US are less willing to share their homes. One motivational factor that also was discussed was the frequency of which something is used. It could be argued that if the Chinese group and the French group spend less time in their homes and uses it less frequently, it could potentially mean that they are more willing to share it.

This study found that uncertainty avoidance may not be a dimension that influences people's willingness to share. This is in contrast to previous research about the sharing economy that shows that uncertainty avoidance has an impact on consumers' willingness to share accommodation. High level of uncertainty avoidance is said to make people

unwilling to share, while low uncertainty avoidance does the opposite (Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018; Gupta *et al.*, 2018). France has the highest level of uncertainty avoidance (see figure 4), and the French group placed accommodation as most shareable of all groups. China has one of the lower scores of uncertainty avoidance (see figure 4), and the Chinese group also placed accommodation as shareable. Sweden and the US also score low in uncertainty avoidance (See figure 4), and both Swedish groups and the US group placed accommodation as less shareable, which is contradictory to previous findings (Muñoz-Leiva *et al.*, 2018; Gupta *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, even though the uncertainty avoidance is different between the nations, all the groups were willing to share transportation. The Chinese group is least positive to share transportation, and this might also imply that uncertainty avoidance does not influence people's willingness to share, since China has one of the lowest scores. Other factors or cultural dimensions may cause differences in what people are willing to share.

Initially, what could be seen was that the focus groups from feminine countries could potentially be less willing to share accommodation and casual clothing. Sweden is the most feminine country of all the measure countries in figure 4. The first Swedish group are less willing than the other groups to share accommodation and casual clothing. However, the second Swedish group, placed accommodation on the line in the least to most shareable figure, just as the US group. The second Swedish group was also the only group that placed casual clothing as shareable. According to Hofstede *et al.*, (2010) feminine societies do not have distinct gender roles, which means that a feminine country such as Sweden should not show distinct gender roles. The results showed differences between genders between the two Swedish groups when accessories were discussed. This makes the findings difficult to interpret with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

No similarities can be seen between what can be shared and individualism. The US is ranked as the most individualistic country, while China is a collectivistic society (see figure 4). Both the US group and Chinese group are similar to what they want to share, which makes it hard to interpret the amount of impact the dimension have on the groups. Accommodation was the only category where the two groups differed. Furthermore, the

Swedish groups and the French group differed from each other, even though they have the same individualistic score (see figure 4). A Collectivistic country values “we” over “I” (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p, 113) and it could, therefore, be argued that the Chinese group is more willing to share housing because they want to take care of the groups that they are part of, through sharing their housing. However, the French group ranked housing as shareable as well, which could make the findings uncertain.

Findings in the focus groups could suggest that power distance might influence willingness to share. In the figures (5, 6, 7) it can be seen that the Chinese group and the French group are quite similar in how much they want to share transportation, accommodation, and casual clothing. Both China and France have high power distance while Sweden and the US have a low power distance (see figure 4). However, differences could be seen between the Swedish groups. The second Swedish group wanted to share more things than the first Swedish group and the Chinese group. Since Sweden has a low power distance level, this made the results less accurate, hence the careful suggestion that power distance may influence willingness to share.

This study cannot see that the long-term orientation dimension might influence what is shareable in different nations. To the best of our knowledge, previous research that has studied sharing economy from a cultural perspective have not used or found anything that might suggest that long-term orientation could influence sharing. The US is short-term oriented while China is long-term oriented (See figure 4), but both corresponding focus groups placed their post-it card similar to each other on the least to most shareable figure. The differences in accommodation cannot show that long-term orientation may influence the willingness to share. France and Sweden score similar in long-term orientation between China and the US, but the Swedish focus groups and the French focus group placed their post-it cards on opposite sides of Chinese group and the US group (see figure 6). This could potentially mean that there are other factors than long-term orientation that may influence people’s willingness to share.

6.2. What motivates sharing

Eight different motivational factors were identified in the focus groups where four of them, personal, economic, trust/safety and convenience, were mentioned by all of the groups. This might show that these motivational factors might be dependent on something else than national culture. The other four factors, frequency, social, technology and, environment, were also addressed but not by all groups. These will be analyzed further since they might show differences between cultures and why they were mentioned.

6.2.1. Frequency

Frequency as a motivational factor might not be influenced by any cultural dimensions. The US group and the second Swedish group were the only groups that did not mention how often an item is used will influence their willingness to share. When the US group talked about whether casual clothing was shareable or not, participant W said, “Casual clothing I think no, because you have normal outfits to wear regularly.” This was not acknowledged by any of the other participants. However, the quote could potentially show that frequency could be a motivational factor, but since this study looks at national culture, the individual opinion might not correspond with the group. The second Swedish group did not mention frequency. But as participant F said, “Think about if you were going to wear something one day, but then someone else already took it. Then you would be like, oh”. The other participants agreed, which could show that they are concerned about the risk of decreased accessibility to their clothes. This is one of the obstacles mentioned by Edbring *et al.*, (2016), that there is a fear to not have access to products when they are needed. The reason behind this concern could potentially be how often they use their clothes but there is no indication that this is a correct assumption. The two Swedish groups are divided, and Sweden, France, and China score differently in each cultural dimension. This makes it hard to see that any cultural dimension might influence why the groups consider frequency as a motivational factor or not.

6.2.2. Socialization

Socialization as a motivational factor might be explained by the different scores in the Indulgence dimension. China is a restraint country and France is in the lower half close to the middle while Sweden and the US are both indulgent (see figure 4). It might be argued that an indulgent country needs less social interaction from work since indulgent countries are less controlled by strict social norms (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). In a restraint country, socialization through leisure might be less common which could make sharing activities a way to meet and socialize with other people. The focus groups that mentioned socialization as a motivational factor were the Chinese and the French focus group. This might imply that a country with a lower indulgence score might be more likely to share in order to socialize.

Another dimension that may potentially explain socialization as a motivational factor could be power distance. China and France have high power distance while Sweden and the US have low power distance (see figure 4). This might be connected to indulgence, which can be seen in figure 4 where the country with a high score in power distance had a low score in indulgence and vice versa. What might influence socialization as a motivation factor could be that the higher hierarchy and structural inequalities that are accepted, the lower the amount of socialization at leisure activities might be needed. Conversely, low power distance and high indulgence might increase the amount of socialization during leisure time, which potentially make additional socialization less necessary.

A third cultural dimension that might also explain socialization as a motivational factor is the long-term orientation dimension. China and France both have high scores in long-term orientation while the US has a low score and Sweden has an intermediate score (see figure 4). Both the Chinese group and the French group mentioned socialization as a motivational factor which could potentially imply that countries who are long-term oriented are more willing to share in order to socialize with others. According to Hofstede *et al.* (2010), long-term oriented countries do not value leisure while leisure is considered important in short-term oriented countries. This corresponds to what is said about

indulgence and power distance, that people who do not value leisure, might like to socialize through sharing activities.

6.2.3. Technology

Technology as a motivational factor might be explained by the uncertainty avoidance dimension. Technology was mentioned by the US group and the French group. France have a high score of uncertainty avoidance (see figure 4) and according to Hofstede-insights (2019), the French people need structure in their lives. Sweden and China have a low score in the uncertainty avoidance dimension and the US score below average but still scores higher than Sweden and China (see figure 4). This could suggest that countries with a higher level of uncertainty avoidance might be more motivated to participate in sharing activities where technology is more developed. According to Hofstede *et al.* (2010), uncertainty avoidant cultures seek structure to make the future more predictable. Developed technology might facilitate clearer structures which might be the reason that the French group and the US group mentioned technology as a motivational factor. This is also in line with Richter *et al*'s., (2017) framework of the sharing economy, where they suggest that a trusted business model is the foundation of the sharing economy.

6.2.4. Environment

Environment as a motivational factor might be explained by the masculine dimension. Findings from the focus groups revealed that the US group and the Chinese group, who both scores high in the masculine dimension (see figure 4), did only mention the environmental aspect after the moderator asked the groups to consider it. Even then the US group were more concerned with the negative impact the sharing economy could have for individuals. As participant U said, “you may have a really nice view, but do you want to spoil it by all these people coming out and building new houses so that they can partake in the new open market?”. According to Hofstede *et al.* (2010), individualistic countries emphasize “I” over “we” (p. 113) and the US is the most individualistic country in this study (see figure 4). This might explain why the US group sees the direct environmental impact, in form of more houses that might disrupt their way of living, instead of the

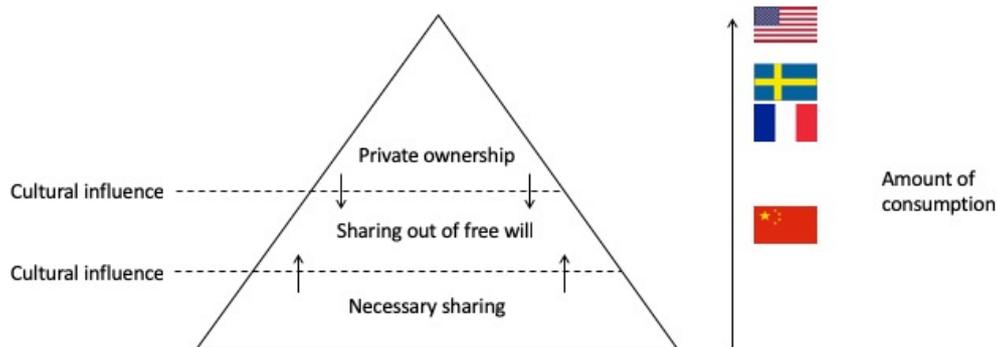
climate impact. When the moderator asked the Chinese group if they could change what they are willing to share for the sake of the environment, participant R said, “It depends on if you are an environment person or not” and participant O expressed that, “I don’t want to share my clothes to like save the environment”. This could mean that masculine societies might be less likely to share for the environment. Both Swedish groups and the French group are more feminine according to Hofstede’s cultural dimension (see figure 4), and they were the groups to mention the environment before it was addressed by the moderator. This could also mean that feminine societies might be more concerned with the environmental aspect than masculine societies when it comes to sharing.

6.3. Culture’s influence on sharing– A conceptual model

All focus groups seemed to experience a cultural influence between the middle- (sharing out of free will) and top level (private ownership) of the conceptual model (see model 2). What was common between the groups was that they consider economic as a motivational factor and mentioned expensive items as shareable. Since all participants except of one were students it might suggest that the individual ability to consume played a bigger role, in some aspects, than the participants’ national culture.

Other aspects might be explained by The World Bank (2019), which shows that China has the lowest score in the *Household and NPISHs Final consumption expenditure per capital* index, out of the four countries in this study (see appendix 8). The index measures the amount of private consumption per capita. The difference could be noticed in the Chinese group since the participants were faster to answer the questions about what they usually share. The other groups were hesitant, and they had to reflect in order to answer, while the Chinese group responded immediately. This could mean that the Chinese group are more accustomed to sharing economy than the other groups. Also, since China’s consumption per capita is lower than the other countries, it might suggest that the Chinese group can be placed in the middle level of the conceptual model (see model 2). However, participant O from China expressed an unwillingness to share his motorcycle because he associated it with status. This might suggest that he experience cultural influence to not

refrain private ownership. The US group might also experience cultural influence to refrain sharing of their motorcycle, which might suggest that the US group experience the same cultural obstacle to share as the Chinese group. The similarities might be explained with Hofstede’s masculine dimension where China together with the US is considered to be masculine societies (Hofstede-insights, 2019) which are more focused on “material success” (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p.140).



Model 2. Countries divided in the conceptual model of culture’s influence on sharing

6.4. Additional findings

Previous research found that there is a correlation between power distance and the choice of transportation. Countries with high power distance together with a collectivist mindset are less likely to switch to more sustainable transportation (Ashmore *et al.*, 2018). China is a country that scores high in power distance and low in individualism. Even though the Chinese group are willing to share transportation, they addressed negative aspects that the other groups did not. How the Chinese focus group placed the car on the least to most shareable figure might support Ashmore *et al.*’s., (2018) findings that collectivistic societies do not like to share their cars. China was also the only country that placed accommodation above cars, and they were divided in the group if they can or want to share cars.

The result from the Chinese focus group could not show that masculinity and collectivism may influence an individual's willingness share. A masculine society places emphasis on "material success" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 140), which means that masculine societies are materialistic and care more about possessions than feminine societies (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). In contrast, Gupta *et al.* (2018) found that collectivistic and masculine societies are more willing to engage in peer-to-peer exchange. However, in the category of transportation, both Swedish groups placed transportation as more shareable than the Chinese group. Sweden is both more feminine and more individualistic than China (see figure 4). This could potentially make Gupta *et al.*'s. (2018) results questionable. Furthermore, the only potential support is that the Chinese group placed accommodation as shareable but they ranked it lower than the French group. France is more individualistic but less masculine than China, which could also make the findings questionable.

Another interesting finding was that the discussions in the focus groups showed that there were differences between males and females regarding which items they wanted to share. Accessories were debated between genders and women were, in general, positive toward sharing accessories while men were negative toward it. This is interesting because it may provide insight that there are other factors that could impact the sharing economy apart from culture. All females that participated, even across cultures, had the same attitude and all males, also across cultures, had the same attitude. Differences in gender are not studied in this study, but since there were such clear differences it is interesting to address.

7. Conclusion

This chapter will start with a presentation of the conclusive remarks in this study. Next, the contributions of this study to the field of sharing economy will be discussed in the theoretical- and managerial implications section. Lastly, a short discussion of research that would be of interest to study in the future will take place.

7.1. Conclusive remarks

So, where do we draw the line? This thesis studies how much people from different national cultures are willing to share. Four sharing sectors were analyzed: transportation, accommodation, clothing, and technology. Firstly, the transportation sector is considered shareable by all the focus groups in this study. Secondly, accommodation was considered shareable by all groups, except for one Swedish group. The different opinions about accommodation may be explained by the indulgence dimension. High level of indulgence might lead to less willingness to share accommodation. Thirdly, clothing is not considered shareable by all groups, but when it was divided into subcategories the result differed. All groups agree that sportswear is not shareable, but party clothes can be shared. Accessories also divided the groups and differences could be seen between genders rather than national cultures. Finally, technology is not considered shareable by four groups out of five. The French group is more willing to share technology in form of services than the other groups, but phones and computers are considered not shareable as well. All participants, across cultures, agree that the phone and computer are too personal to share with someone else and was placed among the least shareable items. Also, all the nationalities that participated seemed to experience the cultural influence between the top level and the middle level (see Model 2).

To conclude, the transportation sector, that was considered shareable by all groups, might be an area to focus on, regardless of national culture, in order to make more students in middle class societies engaged in sharing economy. Another sector in sharing economy to focus on could be accommodation since it was considered shareable by groups with similar scores in Hofstede's cultural dimensions. It might be useful to focus on

accommodation in countries with low indulgence, high power distance and long-term orientation. In the clothing sector the groups were unanimous that party clothes are shareable, while sportswear are not. This might imply to not focus on sharing sportswear among students, but to focus on party clothes. The technology sector was not considered shareable by any group which might imply that focus should not be placed on students to share technology.

In the analysis, different motivational factors were discussed by the groups, and these motivational factors might provide insight on what people need to transition towards sharing economy. Four factors were mentioned by all groups and might therefore not be affected by national culture. These four factors are personal, economic, trust/safety, and convenience. The economic factor (Richter *et al.*, 2017; Amirkieae & Evangelopoulos., 2018) and the convenience factor have been mentioned as drivers in previous research (e.g. Sprei, 2018). The results from this study could potentially strengthen that these factors drive the sharing economy, but also that they might be common among students with different national cultures. Trust/safety is addressed by Richter *et al.*, (2017) but it is not seen as a driver, but it is seen as the foundation for the sharing economy. Personal has not been mentioned in previous research, but this research could potentially imply that the personal aspect is important to consider, regardless of national culture, since all groups mentioned it. So, to take these factors into consideration might ease the transition for students to engage in the sharing economy.

Three other factors that might be important to consider, and that might be dependent on national culture, are environment, socialization and technology. The environmental factor has been mentioned as a driver in previous research (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010) but this study suggests that it might depend on national culture whether the environment is a motivational factor or not. This study suggests that feminine societies might be more willing to share for environmental purposes than masculine societies, because the varied variable was culture and not age, social class or occupation. Socialization has also been seen as a driver (Richter *et al.*, 2017; Amirkieae *et al.*, 2018) but this study suggest that socialization might depend on national culture. This makes it interesting to consider socialization in societies with high power distance, low

indulgence, and long-term orientation, who might be more willing to engage in sharing activities to socialize. Social norms and strict rules might create a demand for platforms that facilitate socialization and meeting new people. Therefore, countries with low indulgence score, high power distance and long-term orientation could be interesting for sharing economy platforms that requires social interaction. Also, this study suggests that societies with high uncertainty avoidance may be less willing to share if there is little technology to facilitate sharing.

7.2. Implications

In the following section, the theoretical- and managerial implication that this study offers is presented.

7.2.1. Theoretical implications

This study provides additional insights to theory about the sharing economy. Firstly, it can be argued that Hofstede's cultural dimensions might be relevant to use as a measurement tool when culture is studied. Additional aspects were also recognized to influence what people might be willing to share apart from the cultural aspect. Secondly, this study also helps to increase the understanding of the economic system sharing economy for future research.

7.2.2. Managerial implications

This study contributes with understanding about the sharing economy for corporations how they might adapt to facilitate their expansion into the sharing economy. Corporations might reap benefits from the knowledge that countries with high uncertainty avoidance might need well-developed technology in order to engage in sharing. Furthermore, corporations might also have to consider the convenience to interact socially through their sharing platforms in countries that are characterized by low indulgence, high power distance, and long-term orientation. This is of importance since these societies might be more motivated to participate in sharing activities in order to socialize. Finally, this study might also help corporations to see what sharing activities people in different national

cultures are willing to engage in. This might facilitate for corporations to start businesses in relevant markets.

7.3. Limitations

Firstly, one limitation that could have had an impact on the result is that there were a limited number of students from each country available. This affected the research in the sense that two participants had at least one parent that was not born and raised in the country they represented, which in turn might have affected the result. Furthermore, it can be argued that people who can afford to go on an exchange semester belong in the middle class or higher. This could mean that the participants might have given a biased representation of their national culture. Secondly, another limitation was that the second Swedish group consisted of four women and one man. It would perhaps have been in our favor to have a group with only females since the first Swedish group participants were all males. This could perhaps increase the accuracy of the differences between genders which was noted between the groups. Thirdly, all participants lived in Sweden at the time this study was conducted. The international participants were in Sweden for a limited time, but even though it takes time for values and norms to change (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997), the participants could still have adopted some traits of the Swedish national culture which might have influenced the result. The last limitation that could have influenced the results was that one of the participants in the French group was not a student. This made profession another variable that varied to some extent.

7.4. Future research

Firstly, future research could include to study the sharing economy and the impact gender has. Since differences could be seen between genders and if they are willing to share accessories, it can be of interest to add the gender perspective and see how much impact it has. Secondly, multiple participants mentioned in the focus groups that they thought that the categories that were provided by the moderator was too wide. It could provide valuable insights if dividing each category into many subcategories and go in-depth in each category. Therefore, it opens up for primarily clothing and accommodation to be

more deeply examined. Thirdly, future research of the sharing economy could be conducted on countries with lower consumption that might experience the bottom level and are moving upwards to the middle level (see Model 1). This in order to see if there are any differences between the two cultural influence lines that are presented in the conceptual model of culture's influence on sharing. Lastly, the participants showed similar approaches toward sharing expensive items, which might be explained with the participants' profession, where all participants but one was students. Future research could include other professions to see if there are any similarities or differences.

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Appendices

This chapter contains all appendices that were referred to in this study.

Appendix 1.

The first appendix contains the focus group interview guide that was used in the focus groups. The same focus group interview guide was used in the Swedish-speaking focus groups, where the moderator translated from English to Swedish directly. The full focus group interview guide can be seen, starting on next page.

Hammarlund & Sjunnesson

Hello everyone, and welcome to this focus group!

First of all, thank you for participating and helping us with our bachelor thesis. As we presented in the invitation we will discuss the topic 'shared economy', and don't worry, we will explain everything you need to know. All you need to know right now is that Shared Economy is a new way of consuming and owning products, and we are interested in understanding the development of it.

To help ourselves do the analysis afterwards, we wish to record the focus group. This would allow us to go back to what has been said and help us with our analysis, and ultimately lead to more accurate findings. We care for everyone's integrity and therefore no names will be used. Also, when the analysis is done and the thesis has been graded, the recordings will be destroyed. We hope that everyone accept this.

Let's begin!

Opening questions

We would like you all to introduce yourselves (Name, age, what you study, enjoy doing?)

Introductory questions

- What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the phrase sharing?
- What do you usually share?

Transition questions

Shared Economy is a economic concept that builds on collaborative consumption, meaning that the participants share their goods with each other in exchange for money, usually over an internet service. Trends shows that these kind of economic systems are gaining popularity and the revenues from these businesses are expected to increase. Common pioneers are the transportation service UBER and accommodation provider Airbnb.

- What previous experience do you have of shared economy, such as the services mentioned above?
- What can motivate people to participate in this economic system?

Key questions - Future Scenario

The year is 2050 and the rapid development of technology has enabled a new type of economic system that is based on sharing. The traditional role of ownership has turned into shared ownership. Cars have become shared ownership since the cars are all self-driving, house interior and exterior such as decoration are being shared, and no one owns their own clothes. It is all consumed through a form of a rental or 'pay to go' service, much like the transportation provider UBER, and accommodation platform Airbnb.

Phase 1

- What can be shared?
- → Together, write down what can be shared on a Post-it card and place it on the line that goes from *Least shareable* to *Most shareable*
- Now you have to draw a line together that marks what you are willing to share (draw the line).
- What makes something shareable or not shareable?

Phase 2

- The moderators will give out 10 post-it cards with different areas of sharing. Among these will be the areas transportation, clothing and accommodation which is considered to be how we express culture, according to McCracken. (Cars, bicycles, motorcycles, public transport) (Party clothes, casual clothing, sportswear, accessories) (Housing, furnitures).
- Question: Together, place these 10 cards on the same line.

Ending questions

What would make you change your mind? (Environment etc.)

Short summary from the moderator

- Have we missed anything, or is there anything that we should have talked about, but didn't?
- Can we improve something as moderator? You are the first focus group out of several, we want to improve, do you have any feedback?

Appendix 2.

This appendix presents the ten pre-written cards that were handed out at the focus groups to the participants.

Cars	Motorcykles	Bicycles	Public transport	Housing
Furnitures	Casual clothing	Party clothes	Sportwears	Accessories

Appendix 3.

This appendix includes the data rectangle the first part of the analysis was based on.

Item/Service	Country A	Country B	Country C	Country D	Category code	Why/Why not share?

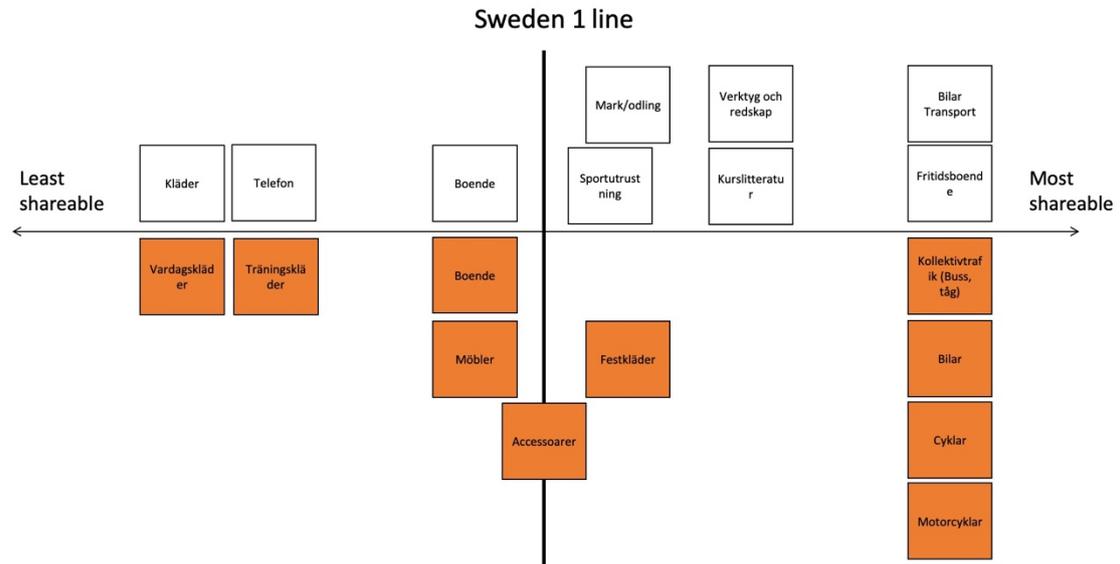
Appendix 4.

This appendix contains the data rectangle the second part of the analysis was based on.

Country/Motivators	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Country A					
Country B					
Country C					
Country D					

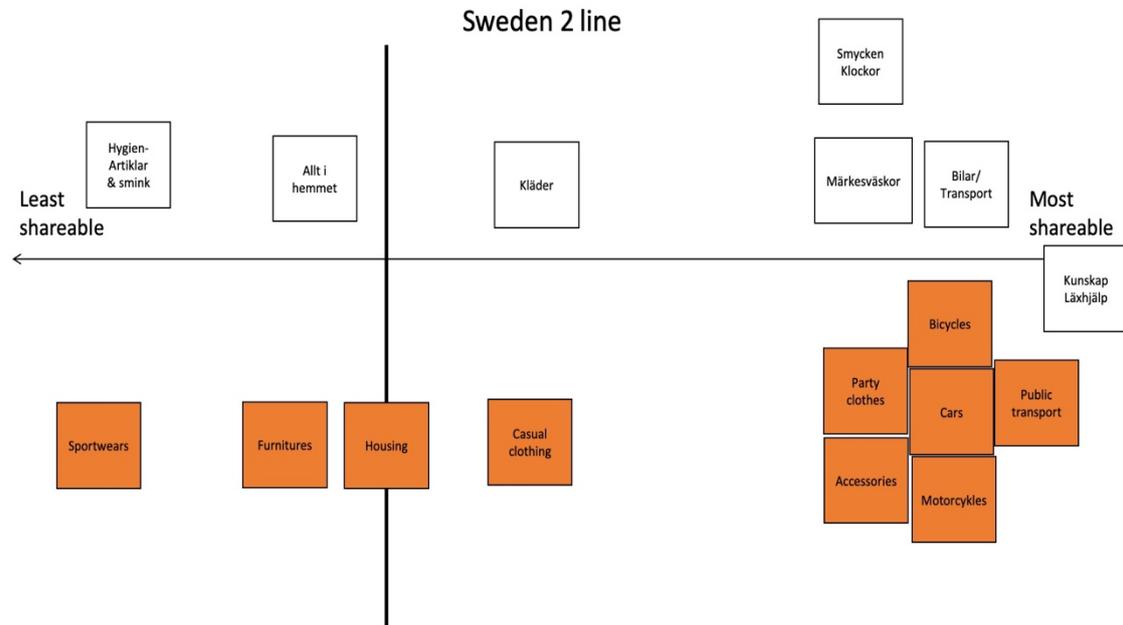
Appendix 5.

This appendix shows how the first Swedish focus group placed their own cards and the ten pre-written cards on the least to most shareable figure. It also presents where the group drew their line.



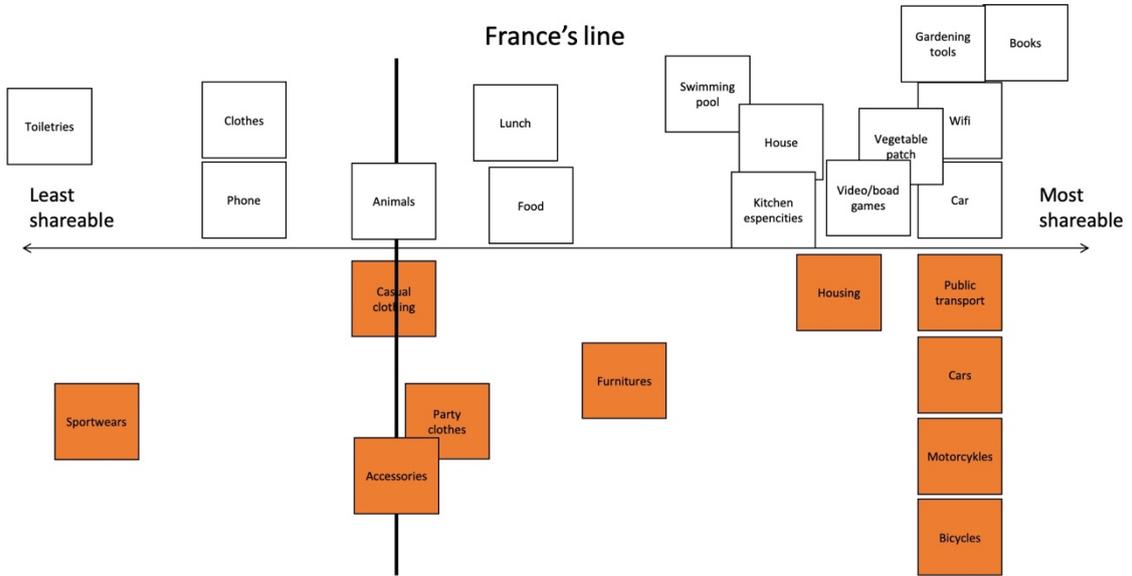
Appendix 6.

This appendix shows how the second Swedish focus group placed their own cards and the ten pre-written cards on the least to most shareable figure. It also presents where the group drew their line.



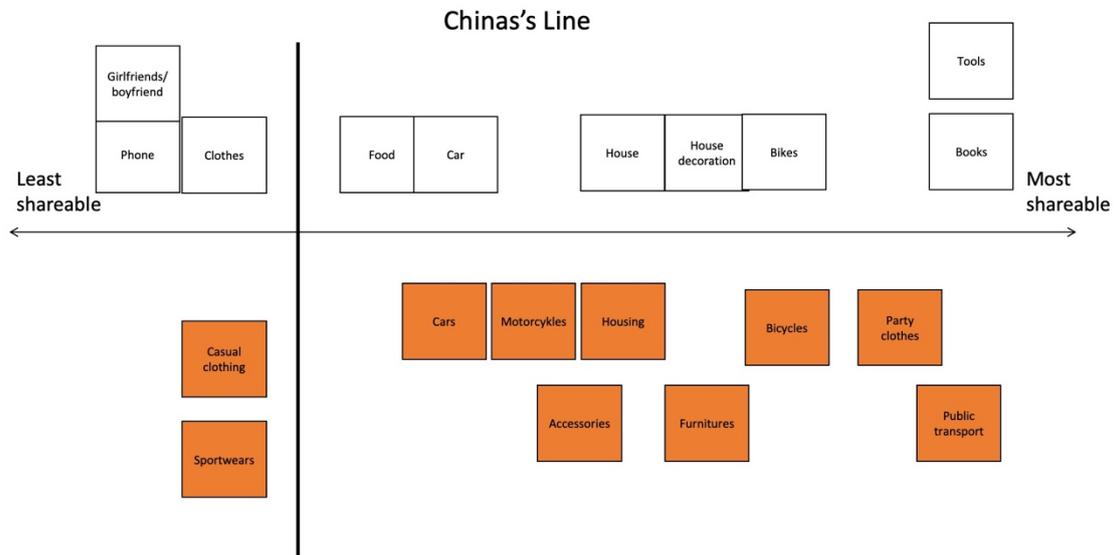
Appendix 7.

This appendix shows how the French focus group placed their own cards and the ten pre-written cards on the least to most shareable figure. It also presents where the group drew their line.



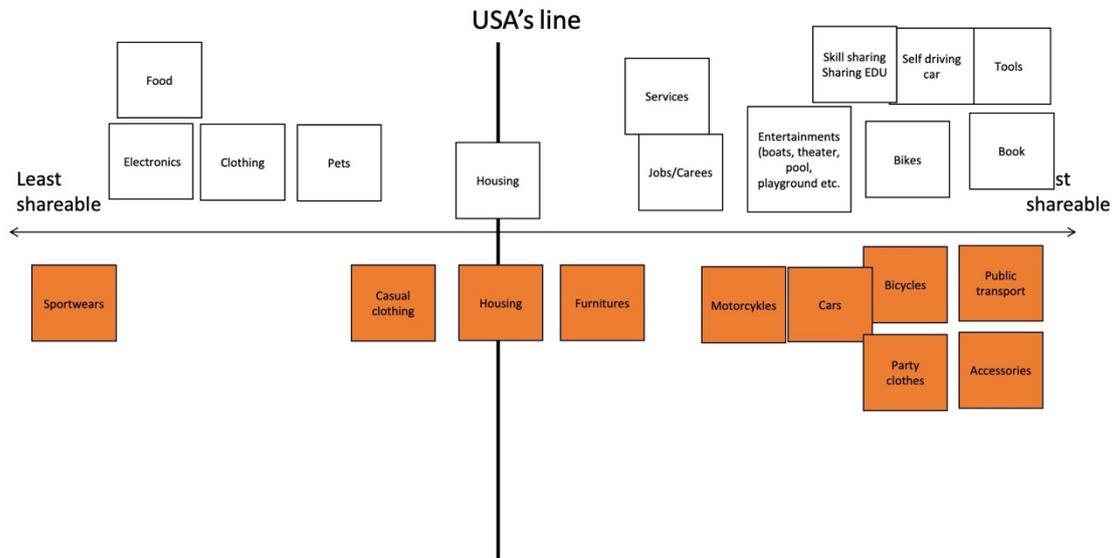
Appendix 8.

This appendix shows how the Chinese focus group placed their own cards and the ten pre-written cards on the least to most shareable figure. It also presents where the group drew their line.



Appendix 9.

This appendix shows how the US focus group placed their own cards and the ten pre-written cards on the least to most shareable figure. It also presents where the group drew their line.



Appendix 10.

This appendix shows the final consumption expenditure per capita of the countries that participated in this study.

