



Exploring consumer attitudes to alternative models of consumption: motivations and barriers



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ABSTRACT

The transition to more sustainable production and consumption patterns and levels requires changes in mainstream business models. These are typically based on linear production processes and the throw-away mentality. Alternative business models are often based on ideas of circular flows of products and materials, in both production and consumption phases. Alternative modes of consumption include models for extending the lives of products (e.g. through reselling of second-hand goods), access-based consumption (e.g. renting and leasing), and collaborative consumption (e.g. sharing platforms). Consumers are crucial in the success of these models. However, knowledge about consumer attitudes towards alternative consumption models is scarce, particularly for furniture and home products. Therefore, the goal of this study was to examine consumer attitudes, motivations and barriers relating to the three models, with particular emphasis on furnishing products. Data was collected through interviews with experts and an online survey of consumers, and the study was conducted in collaboration with IKEA, furniture retailer.

The results demonstrate that consumer attitudes vary greatly to the consumption models and depending on the product group. Attitudes towards buying second-hand furniture and short-term renting are largely positive, while attitudes to long-term renting are negative. Collaborative consumption has higher acceptance for seldom-used products.

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1. Introduction

Western consumption patterns are unsustainable: if the world's 7 billion inhabitants had consumed in the same way as the Swedish population does today, we would need 3.25 Earths to support this lifestyle (Axelsson, 2012). Products are designed with short lifespans and are swiftly consumed and discarded. It is often more expensive to repair products than to buy new (Watson, 2008). Since the beginning of industrialisation, and especially in the 20th century, the throwaway mentality has become part of Western society (Cooper, 2013). It is an essential part of the linear model of production that is based on continuous influx of unlimited virgin resources, and is fuelled by continually increasing consumption. In contrast to the linear model, the idea of a circular economy is based on resource and product reuse, repair and upcycling (EMF, 2012).

Growth in the circular economy is decoupled from the use of finite resources, and business models rely on increased longevity, renewability, reuse, repair, upgrade, sharing of resources and dematerialisation (Accenture, 2014).

On the consumption side, several models for reducing resource use can be distinguished (Mont and Heiskanen, 2015). The first model is the consumption of second-hand products. By buying used products instead of new ones, resources and impacts stemming from production and waste management can be reduced, while prolonging the use phase of products (Blocket, 2013). Products with the highest environmental impact during extraction or production phases are particularly suitable for reuse. Furniture is an example of a product with the highest environmental impact in the extraction phase (tree logging), which makes furniture and interior design products suitable for reuse (Berlin, 2012). The second model is access-based consumption, which shifts the emphasis from selling product ownership to selling product use or its functions (Mont, 2008). Incentive is created among producers to design durable products, since the profit centre is not the product per se but the functional units it delivers. The more robust and durable the

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product, the higher the number of functional units that can be sold (Mont, 2002; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). The third model is collaborative consumption. This is an emerging phenomenon that reduces consumption of resources in the use phase by sharing, exchanging, swapping and bartering (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Collaborative consumption is a fast-growing movement that involves millions of people worldwide, who share products, e.g. clothing, cars, apartments and tools, as well as skills, time, finances and services (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010).

To enable the circular economy, it is vital that future consumers are willing to accept and use products through different models of consumption. However, little knowledge is currently available about how consumers perceive these alternative consumption models generally, and even less is known about consumer attitudes towards buying second-hand, or renting or sharing furniture and home products (Gullstrand Edbring, 2015). While some studies have investigated consumer attitudes towards individual consumption models for specific product groups (e.g. Meijkamp, 2000; Catulli, 2012), no studies have compared consumer attitudes to the three alternative consumption models. In addition, very few studies have investigated attitudes of young consumers to different consumption models (e.g. see for clothes Gwozdz et al., 2014).

This study aims to fill these gaps by addressing two research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of young consumers to the three models of consumption?
2. What are the underlying motivations and obstacles relating to changing young consumers' consumption behaviour towards these alternative consumption models?

We examine these research questions in relation to furniture and home products. Section 2 comprises a literature review, Section 3 describes the data collection methods, and Section 4 presents an analysis of findings on consumer attitudes, their relevant motivations and obstacles regarding engaging with alternative consumption models. Section 5 draws conclusions from our research and outlines future research directions.

2. Literature analysis

There is a limited but slowly growing body of literature on consumer attitudes towards alternative ways of consuming products, rather than buying them in the traditional way.

Attitudes towards buying second-hand products are shown by a number of studies. The main drivers for eBay users buying second-hand products are practical and economic reasons; very few people are driven by environmental reasons, as demonstrated in a survey of eBay users (Clausen et al., 2010). A number of studies of young consumers' attitudes to second-hand clothing also confirm that the economic rationale is the primary driver of both selling and buying used clothes (Kim and Damhorst, 1998; Joung and Park-Poaps, 2013; Gwozdz et al., 2014).

Some studies found no link between environmental attitudes of young consumers and second-hand purchasing behaviour (Joung and Park-Poaps, 2013). Other aspects seem to outweigh the environmental aspects in the consumption of clothing, e.g. style, price, and colour (Butler and Francis, 1997; Niinimäki, 2010). An interesting motivator for buying second-hand clothes was found by Clausen et al. (2010) – the preference for high quality used products over newly produced lower quality products. Guiot and Roux (2010) identified that some consumers are also driven by a desire to distance themselves from a wasteful commoditised lifestyle and see benefits in consuming less. Another driver is the desire to express their personality by buying second-hand products and then

restoring and personalising them (Guiot and Roux, 2010). Clausen et al. (2010) also showed that the main drivers for selling second-hand clothes were the desire to dispose of products that were no longer of use and to be able to sell products when the life situation of the consumer changed.

Barriers against selling used products through eBay included the difficulty of understanding the online system and that the financial compensation was not worthwhile compared to the effort involved (Clausen et al., 2010). Guiot and Roux (2010) also identified barriers to buying second-hand products, for example perceived risk associated with such products as household appliances, computers and TVs, which stems from lack of confidence in the seller, lack of information about the state of the product, and lack of guarantees. No studies on motivations and obstacles relating to consumers' attitudes to buying second-hand furniture were found in academic literature. The only available study on reusing furniture focused on office furniture (Besch, 2005), where drivers and barriers for clients are very different from consumer attitudes towards buying second-hand home furniture.

Consumer perceptions towards access-based consumption (renting, hiring or leasing products without owning them, also called product service systems) depend on the type of product (Baumeister, 2014). The dynamics of the relationship between consumer and provider, combined with ease of access, are the key success factors for consumer satisfaction in access-based consumption (Raja et al., 2013). Trust towards providers of functions or services is another critical element in forming attitudes towards leasing or renting (Catulli et al., 2013; Schmidt et al., 2014; Armstrong et al., 2015).

Catulli (2012) highlighted the importance of the institution of ownership for how people treat the leased products. On the other hand, a study of ZipCar users shows that people do not develop a sense of ownership to the products in an access-based consumption model because of the temporary nature of involvement with the product (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). Flexibility and guaranteed access are important success factors of product service systems and renting/leasing systems that greatly affect consumer attitudes.

However, people define flexibility in different ways, or rather different features of the offer have different value to people in terms of flexibility. For example, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) demonstrate how consumers perceive car pools as more flexible than private car ownership, while Baumeister (2014) shows that people perceive private car ownership as more flexible than being a member of a car-sharing scheme. Rexfelt and Hiort af Ornäs (2009) highlight the importance of increasing the flexibility of access-based modes of consumption, by offering consumers a chance to try out the concept before a contract is entered into, thereby reducing consumer risk perception.

Baumeister (2014) confirms that risk perception declines as consumers become more accustomed to access-based consumption. Access-based consumption also faces a number of barriers. For example, a study of leasing schemes for children's products, e.g. prams and car seats, shows that although in general attitudes are positive, people have concerns about insurance, trust and responsiveness of the company (Catulli, 2012). Consumers are also sceptical when it comes to hygiene and risk of infection, as well as health and safety issues (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). Catulli (2012) also shows that consumers are often uncertain about the rules in the event of the leased or rented product breaking or becoming damaged.

Both Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) and Baumeister (2014) show that consumers feel they have to be more careful about products that they do not own. The study of product service systems for office furniture, in which organisational clients rent furniture and receive service that includes furniture maintenance, repairs and

upgrades, shows that the main barrier was the difficulty in comparing the price of buying furniture to the total cost of renting it (Besch, 2005).

Attitudes towards collaborative consumption and shared use of products have changed tremendously in the last five years. The Internet has spurred the market for sharing resources from products to services, to facilities and land, skills and finances. Internet platforms have drastically reduced transaction costs in matching suppliers with consumers, and have made it easy for individuals to share their resources with others through monetised (e.g. AirBnB) and non-monetised exchanges (e.g. Landshare).

While people have always shared resources with each other, mostly within the immediate family (Belk, 2010), nowadays it is also strangers who share and exchange resources. Their motives differ significantly depending on whether the exchanges are monetised or not. In non-commercial platforms, participants are driven by the need for contact and reciprocity, the desire to belong to a community, and pro-sustainability reasons. Taking a political stand, for example against capitalism, by abstaining from consumption, has also been shown to be a major driving force for people (McArthur, 2014). In several studies, the desire to reduce consumption-related waste was also identified as a driver for engaging in sharing schemes (Burgio et al., 2014).

In commercial platforms, participants show less interest in reciprocity or responsibility towards others, but are mostly driven by economic interests and convenience (Zvolaska, 2015). The quest for new products and the desire for variation also drives sharing behaviour. Botsman and Rogers (2010) note that the motivation to share resources varies greatly, depending on the product. Where the value of a product decreases significantly after first use, for example films, books and toys, the product is more likely to be shared (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). The most critical obstacle for collaborative consumption is lack of trust in other people, as identified by Botsman (2012) and Schor (2014). Different mechanisms are being developed on the Internet to help increase trust between all the participants.

As the literature analysis indicates, practically no studies have explored consumer attitudes towards buying second-hand, renting/leasing or sharing furniture and home products, especially attitudes of young consumers. In addition, although many studies are available about drivers and barriers relating to the three alternative models of consumption, no study has been identified that analyses motivations and obstacles relating to young people engaging with the alternative models for furniture and home products.

3. Method

The empirical material for this study was collected in qualitative semi-structured interviews and a quantitative survey of young IKEA consumers. The goal of the interviews was to improve the understanding of young consumers' attitudes towards different consumption models outlined in the previous chapter, and to identify product groups within furniture and home product category that are most suitable for the different consumption models.

A total of nine interviews were conducted, each lasting about 30 min. An interview guide was prepared, but the interviewees were allowed to deviate from it in order to capture nuances not accounted for in the interview guide (Bryman, 2008). Three men and six women between 23 and 29 years old were interviewed. All the interviewees were chosen deliberately on account of their age (20–35 years); they also had their own households and had purchased furniture and home products at IKEA. This deliberate selection increases the likelihood of obtaining information relevant to the study (Eneroth, 1984). Interviews were recorded and partially transcribed. We then followed an inductive content analysis as

described in Elo and Kyngäs (2008), i.e. we first created a large number of categories, then collapsed similar categories into fewer 'higher' level categories. The categories were created for both product groups and for attitudes, motivations and obstacles. The established categories were then discussed with IKEA in order to gain their professional feedback.

Based on these categories a survey was developed with the help of the survey company *Quicksearch*. The survey contained mostly quantitative, but also some qualitative questions, which is a recommended setup for a survey intended for a large population size (Troost, 2007). The questions were answered using a 6-item Likert scale, and some allowed additional comments. The even number of response options forces the respondent to take a position, as no neutral option is available (Troost, 2007). The survey population consisted of all Swedish members of the IKEA Family consumer panel aged 20–35. This corresponded to 5942 individuals, all of whom received an invitation from IKEA to participate in the survey, and 1159 individuals (19.5%) responded to the survey. This response rate is at the high end of IKEA Family consumer panel surveys, which tend to be between 10% and 20% (Quicksearch 2015, Personal communication).

In literature a 20% response rate is an acceptable response rate for electronic surveys, but this figure can be boosted to about 30% by repeat reminder emails to non-respondents (Nulty, 2008). This is reported in many studies, but these are often based on electronic surveys of students, who have greater attachment and responsibility to their school or teachers who send the electronic surveys. In the case of IKEA it is reasonable to assume that consumers do not have the same level of attachment and the sense of responsibility or duty to fill in electronic surveys as students do. Also the sample size of studies based on investigations of students is usually much lower than the total number of respondents in our study – 1159. Consequently, our assessment is that the 20% response rate is acceptable for this kind of investigation. The survey was open for two weeks and a reminder was sent out after one week to increase the response rate.

The survey population (85% women) is representative of the overall composition of the IKEA Family members (80% women) (IKEA 2015, Personal communication). Even though this distribution is not representative of the Swedish population as a whole, it provides valuable insight into furniture consumption, not least because IKEA is the dominating furniture retailer in Sweden and a large global player. A study by Lippincott (2011) states that IKEA consumers and non-IKEA consumers in Sweden have an equal level of interest for sustainability issues, so the IKEA panel can be regarded as being representative of the Swedish population, at least with regard to sustainability issues. The statistical analysis of survey results was conducted with the help of the survey company *Quicksearch*.

To investigate attitudes, the respondents were asked whether they would consider buying second-hand, renting or sharing various home furnishing products. Since consumption of second-hand products is a relatively established alternative consumption mode, we chose to explore its driving forces on the basis of pre-determined options identified in literature analysis and interview material. Only respondents that indicated that they had bought second-hand furniture were asked to answer the question. The pre-determined options were economy, uniqueness, environmental reasons and other. The answers were then categorised by age and education level. Literature indicates that people have different attitudes towards buying second-hand products depending on the type of product, so the subsequent questions concerned attitudes to buying specific product categories second-hand: beds, kitchen furniture, table/chairs and mattresses/bed sheets/towels, wardrobes, soft toys and white goods. The responses were rated on a

Likert-type scale between 1 (very negative) and 6 (very positive) with additional options 'Do not know' or 'Have no opinion'.

Respondents who were very positive (6) or very negative (1) were able to explain the reason behind their specific attitudes in open comments. The open comments were analysed using qualitative content analysis. [Trost \(2007\)](#) advises against having too many open questions in a survey because the material can be difficult to manage, so open comments were only offered to respondents who answered either 1 or 6.

The other two consumption modes – access-based consumption and collaborative consumption – were not available as categories in the literature, so these had to be identified through inductive research. Survey data for the two consumption modes helped identify attitudes of respondents in relation to different product groups. For access-based consumption, the same product groups were used as for the second-hand consumption mode, while, for collaborative consumption, products more suitable for sharing with other people were included, i.e. home improvement tools, garden furniture and specialised products for the kitchen such as baking forms and pans.

Identification of categories of drivers and barriers for the two consumption modes involved the use of interview material and the open comments of survey respondents. The material produced by the open comments comprised 250 pages of text, divided into answers where respondents were very positive or very negative to a certain consumption mode and in relation to various product groups. This material was analysed in terms of respondents' attitudes and classified into motivations and obstacles relating to respondents' engagement with the different consumption modes (second-hand, rent, share). Recurring themes/attitudes were identified and the frequency of their occurrence in the open comments was recorded (See [Figs. 1–7](#)).

4. Analysis of findings

The analysis of empirical material comprises interview transcripts, compilation of data from the consumer panel survey, and the analysis of open comments from the survey. In this section, attitudes, motivations and barriers relating to each model are described.

4.1. Second-hand consumption

4.1.1. Attitudes

The results of the survey show generally positive attitudes towards the consumption of second-hand products for the home. A majority of the survey respondents have purchased second-hand products, but attitudes differ significantly depending on the product. Sixty-three per cent of respondents were very favourable towards buying tables and chairs second-hand, while 67% reacted very negatively to buying mattresses, sheets or towels second-hand. This difference in attitudes towards products made of soft versus hard materials was also highlighted in previous research ([Granström, 2010](#)). An interesting difference in attitudes can be discerned between younger consumers and slightly older consumers. The youngest group of respondents (age 20–24) increasingly replace products due to the availability of new products on the market or because they are no longer attracted by the products they already have. The slightly older respondents (25–35 years) are more likely to replace products when the products are worn out or broken.

4.1.2. Motivations

The main reasons for respondents to buy second-hand products are presented in [Fig. 1](#). These categories of motivations have been

Motivations for second-hand consumption identified in the survey

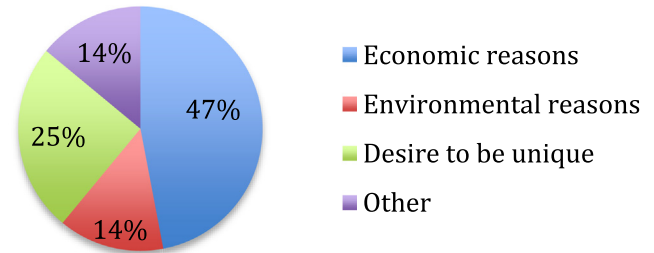


Fig. 1. Motivations for second-hand consumption identified in the survey of 1159 respondents (Source: QuickSearch 2015).

identified from literature analysis and were used in the survey of 1159 respondents.

4.1.2.1. Economic reasons. Previous studies identified economic motives as a strong driving force behind consumption of second-hand products ([Williams and Paddock, 2003](#); [Clausen et al., 2010](#); [Joung and Park-Poaps, 2013](#)). Our study supports previous research, as 47% of respondents stated that the main reason for the consumption of second-hand furniture was economic. "My main reason is to save money" was a recurring response in the interviews. Among students, this driver was even stronger, as 62% were motivated primarily by economic reasons. There was also a difference between genders: 58% of male respondents were motivated by economic motives, while 46% of women saw economic motives as their main behavioural driver. The qualitative content analysis of open comments in the survey shows no clear tendency that respondents wanted to distance themselves from the consumption society as highlighted in several previous studies ([Williams and Paddock, 2003](#); [Guiot and Roux, 2010](#)). However, several consumer comments show that this rationale is not alien to them: "It is cheap and we do not contribute as much to the consumption society".

4.1.2.2. Environmental reasons. [Cheng-Jui and Shuo-Chang \(2011\)](#) stated that people's views on environmental challenges play a major role in shaping their attitudes to environmental issues. In our survey, 19% of respondents agree completely with the question about whether they worry about the environmental and climate change problems, and 14% of respondents state that environmental reasons are their main driver for buying second-hand furniture. This finding contradicts the suggestion put forward by [Niinimäki \(2010\)](#), who points out that environmental aspects (for clothing) could only provide additional consumer value, but is not a decisive factor per se for people to buy second hand products. A closer analysis shows a link between concerns for environmental problems and individuals' propensity to buy second-hand products. This phenomenon is explained in literature as the human desire to achieve a balance between attitude and action in order to reduce cognitive dissonance ([Whitmarsh and O'Neill, 2010](#)). Fear of hazardous substances in newly produced goods is another environmental motivator for people to buy second hand products: "It's disgusting with all these chemicals, paints and glues in new products. It's better to wash second-hand products in 90 degrees so all bacteria die".

4.1.2.3. Desire to be unique. The desire to be unique and to express one's personality, highlighted by [Guiot and Roux \(2010\)](#), has been identified in our survey as the second most common motivation for

consumption of second-hand products for the home. For 25% of the survey respondents, this was the main driver. Interviewees also identified it as an important motivation: *“To be completely honest, the primary reason is to be a bit unique. When it comes to furniture I’m less concerned about the environment and sustainability. It’s enough that furniture lasts so long. I think it’s great if the interior is nice and unique; you don’t want your home to look like everyone else’s. And of course it’s a big bonus to use second-hand furniture”*. The growing interest in second-hand furniture is also supported by the do-it-yourself trend expressed in furniture restoration and personalisation projects carried out either at home or, increasingly, in maker spaces (Guiot and Roux, 2010). This explanation is also supported in open comments in our survey such as *“I like old, somewhat worn objects that can be easily renewed with colour”*.

4.1.2.4. Other: high quality, non-availability, specific design and fun. The three categories of motivators described had been identified in the literature analysis. The category of ‘Other’ has been explored through the content analysis of open comments in the survey. Four additional categories were identified: high quality, non-availability, specific design and fun. Fig. 2 shows the number of times various motivations were mentioned by respondents in the open comments.

An important driver identified in open comments and in Clausen et al. (2010) is the preference to buy high quality second-hand furniture rather than newly produced products of often lower quality (92 respondents). This motivation was especially evident in the product categories of tables, chairs and shelves, and also wardrobes and kitchens. The following quote illustrates it well: *“Better quality old solid wood furniture yet modern at the same price. Rather old, substantial and good brand and quality than the new and quickly produced”*. Another motivation for buying second-hand for 51 respondents was the fact that a product was no longer produced or available in shops: *“I was looking for a specific product that was not sold in the new collection”*. Forty-eight people expressed an interest in furniture from 1950 to 60s: *“Second-hand is the only way to get hold of furniture from 1950s and 1960s, I love it!”*

Finally, people also expressed that buying second-hand products is simply fun and cool: *“Cool with second-hand! Can find real bargains. A fun family activity”*. High quality and fun were also mentioned in the interviews: *“It’s better quality and more special, it can also be fun to have some old pieces”*. One driver for buying second-hand products identified in the study by Guiot and Roux (2010) – to create social contact – was not mentioned by our respondents.

4.1.3. Obstacles

The three most often mentioned barriers to buying second-hand products in open comments were concern for hygiene, pests and desire for new products (Fig. 3).

Additional motivations for second-hand consumption



Fig. 2. Additional motivations for second-hand consumption, besides economic and environmental reasons and uniqueness, identified in open comments (Source: Quicksearch 2015).

Obstacles to second-hand consumption

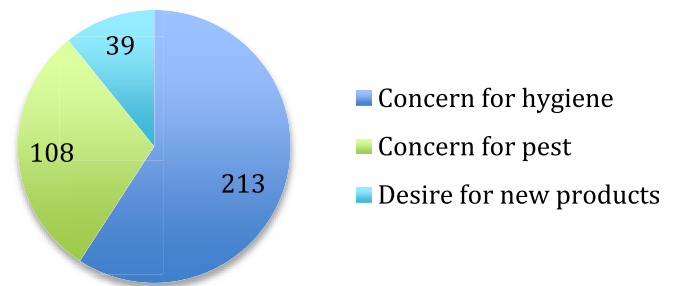


Fig. 3. Obstacles to second-hand consumption identified in open comments (Source: Quicksearch 2015).

4.1.3.1. Concern for hygiene. The main obstacle to people buying second-hand products in our study was that it was perceived to be unhygienic. The words *“unfresh”* and *“unhygienic”* were mentioned 213 times in the open comments in the survey. Respondents associated the word ‘unhygienic’ with various health aspects and with allergies, especially for product groups that contained textiles. This barrier was also evident in 8 out of 9 interviews: *“Bed, it’s a total no-no. I think it’s a bit unsanitary; it’s too close to you. You use it every day and those who had it before had it every day. I’m very sensitive when it comes to stuff like that”*. Our findings support results reported in literature (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012).

4.1.3.2. Concern for pests. Perhaps less explicitly stated in literature was another barrier identified in our survey (mentioned 108 times in open comments) and interviews – fear of bringing home pests in second-hand furniture. This fear was especially pronounced in the case of furniture and home products with textile and upholstery. Some interviewees were even hesitant to use second-hand wardrobes: *“I know that the risk of getting bugs with it is great. It often stands in the bedroom and it is difficult to check it carefully before purchase”*.

4.1.3.3. Desire for new products. A desire to buy new products instead of second-hand was mentioned as a barrier in 39 open comments: *“I like the feeling and smell of new gadgets”* and *“I want to have something of my own and new”*. Interviews revealed that many people are still unaware that second-hand is an alternative to buying new products: *“I didn’t think so much that there was an alternative to buying new”*. One of the important barriers to buying second-hand identified by Guiot and Roux (2010) is that second-hand products do not come with guarantees and insurance. This obstacle was explicitly mentioned in open comments when people purchase complete kitchens, probably because of appliances that are expensive and sometimes difficult to replace in the event of failure.

4.2. Access-based consumption

4.2.1. Attitudes

The results of the survey show that attitudes towards renting home furnishings are generally negative in all product groups examined, although for some product groups attitudes are less negative than for others. This supports results presented in Baumeister (2014). Products where respondents were ‘very negative’ to renting or leasing were home textiles (42%), followed by beds (38%) and kitchens (36%). Products that respondents were most favourable about renting were appliances (14%) and tables, chairs, and shelves (13%). Our study also revealed that attitudes

towards renting products for a shorter time differ considerably from attitudes to renting for a long time: 62% of respondents would consider renting home furnishings for a short time. People also have positive attitudes towards short-term renting of products for an event or a party: a majority of respondents were very positive towards temporarily renting tables and chairs, 46% were very positive towards renting tableware and 44% towards renting table linen and decorations. This positive attitude towards temporary renting of products highlights one of the main motivations for people to rent products, i.e. its temporary use.

4.2.2. Motivations

The main reasons for respondents to engage with access-based consumption models such as renting are presented in Fig. 4.

4.2.2.1. Flexibility. Flexibility is one of the important drivers for access-based consumption models as identified by Catulli et al. (2013), who show that individuals may feel a sense of freedom by only having access to the products when they need them. Our results support this finding, but mainly for temporary solutions: “It’s practical to rent things instead of buying for a party or wedding.” When it comes to product groups, such as white goods and kitchen, that are used on a more permanent basis, many respondents have a positive attitude to long-term renting, because in this case they outsource maintenance and repair of these products when they break or replacement when they become out-dated: “less concern with repair” and “increases the chances that what you are using is the latest climate-smart product”. Similar reasoning was identified in the interviews: “I think it’s convenient with certain things. Like our dishwasher, if we break it we will get a new one because we rent it from our landlord”. This may indicate that products that require maintenance and upgrade, e.g. products with fast innovation cycles, are more attractive for consumers to rent, but not to own, as also reported by Rexfelt and Hiort af Ornäs (2009).

4.2.2.2. Economic reasons. Even in the access-based consumption model, economic reasons are one of the prevailing ones. Respondents feel that it is cheaper to hire than buy the product: “You can skip the direct investment costs and there is an opportunity to change after the rental period if you’d rather have something new”. Several respondents used this rationale in relation to more expensive product categories, e.g. kitchens: “Renting is good for having a fresh functional kitchen without having to buy one for a lot of money”. A similar explanation was offered in Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012).

4.2.2.3. Temporary nature of use. The reason that respondents see temporary renting as more positive can be explained by the

following quote: “It would be interesting if I lived somewhere temporary, for example if I went abroad for six months”. The analysis of data shows that the older the respondents, the more negative attitude they have towards renting products temporarily. In the youngest age category (20–24 years), 49% of respondents were interested in renting entire home furnishings temporarily while, in the oldest age group (30–35 years), only 34% were interested in this option. The reason for this may be that younger people have not settled down yet and most of the respondents were students. As one interviewee expressed it: “I think it is a very smart option for the younger generation who move around a lot, who do not have a fixed home or even want a permanent home yet”.

In her research of office furniture, Besch (2005) highlighted that one obstacle to access-based models of consumption was that clients might not wish to enter into long-term agreements because furniture might become obsolete in the near future. In our study we have not identified this obstacle. On the contrary, the possibility to change furniture was highlighted as a motivator for the respondents to rent: “It feels good to be able to replace it when you get tired of it, without feeling bad, or needing to throw it away or sell furniture that is still in good condition just because you want to change the style”. The quote illustrates that many respondents would like to renew their home décor more frequently, and many report that renting makes it more acceptable and less environmentally problematic. Indeed 38% of the survey respondents were positive to subscribing to a service that would change home décor on a seasonal basis.

4.2.2.4. Environmental reasons. Some respondents see renting as a preferable option for environmental reasons: “Good for the environment, cheap and easy to update”. However, they do not consider that furniture update has potential environmental disadvantages, if it occurs too frequently, at least in terms of transportation-related impact. In the product category ‘children’s products’, consumers also associated possibility to rent with being environmentally friendly: “Children grow fast and then it makes sense for the environment to be able to rent stuff that is not used for a too long time, like a crib”. For these types of products, renting or leasing products might indeed be more environmentally sound than buying and owning (Mont et al., 2006).

The opportunity to test a product was identified as a driver for access-based consumption by Rexfelt and Hiort af Ornäs (2009), and was supported by our findings. It is seen as a way to choose products that best satisfy consumer needs: “In order to test what I want”.

4.2.3. Obstacles

The main barriers for respondents to engage in access-based consumption are presented in Fig. 5.

4.2.3.1. Desire to own. Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) state that product ownership is one of the main attributes of modern consumer culture. Consequently the institution and social norm of ownership is one of the main obstacles to access-based consumption (Mont, 2004a). This barrier was evident in the 263 open comments: “I want to own my things and to feel that they are mine” and in the interviews: “I don’t want someone else to own the things that I have in my home, they should be mine”. However, this obstacle might be less for products that are consumed merely for their primary function than for products that have high associated social status, such as cars, or emotional value, for example when consumers want to express personal style or identity through their consumption patterns (Mont and Plepys, 2003).

Motivations for access-based consumption

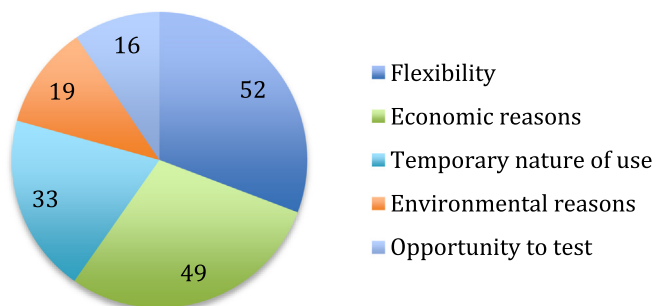


Fig. 4. Motivations for access-based consumption identified in open comments (Source: Quicksearch).

Obstacles to access-based consumption

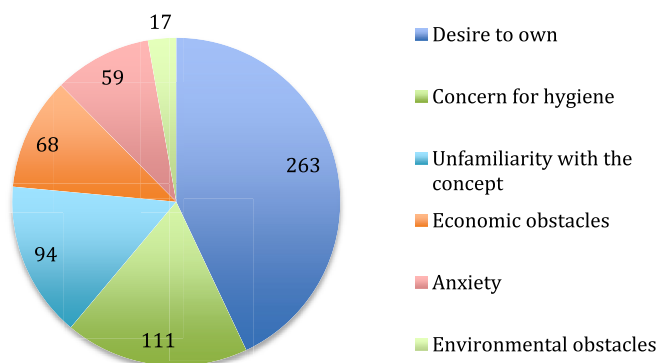


Fig. 5. Obstacles to access-based consumption identified in open comments (Source: Quicksearch).

4.2.3.2. Concern for hygiene. Similar to the consumption of second-hand products, hygiene was identified as a barrier for access-based consumption in 111 open comments. Respondents fear that products are not clean after other consumers used them before. Parallels can be drawn to the reasoning of [Bardhi and Eckhardt \(2012\)](#), who highlight fear of contamination with bugs and pests as an important obstacle. This fear is especially strong in the product group of children toys: *“I think children’s toys and beds should be clean and new due to the risk of infection”*. On the other hand, we do observe the mushrooming of toy libraries in many countries, where users can borrow toys for a short time ([Ozanne and Ballantine, 2010](#)).

4.2.3.3. Unfamiliarity with the concept. Ninety-four respondents had difficulty imagining how renting furniture could work in practice. Survey respondents felt that it was unnecessary to rent when they could buy furniture and home products. They were also concerned that renting might be too complicated to be practical. This obstacle has not been explicitly mentioned in the literature previously for furniture products, but has been highlighted for other product groups ([Mont, 2004b](#)).

4.2.3.4. Economic obstacles. [Besch \(2005\)](#) highlights that economic factors are the biggest obstacle for access-based consumption. Our interviews support this finding: *“I want to own, not rent. Renting is a loss deal for long-term goods. Only worthwhile for short use”*. Open comments in the survey showed similar feelings: *“There is no economic sense in it. Easy to put yourself in financial trouble if you rent a lot. And if things go down, you have a debt to the renting company”*. These quotes come from respondents who were very negative to the idea of renting home furniture. They go against the economic rationale of the respondents who were positive towards renting and who saw the possibility for economic savings by renting rather than owning. However, the latter were respondents who talked about the cost of short-term renting versus ownership. In the long run, renting is indeed a more expensive option ([Mont, 2004c](#)).

4.2.3.5. Anxiety. Some respondents are uncertain about consequences if they rent a product and it breaks: *“Somehow, I think I would be worried if they had not been my own things. I would go around being scared of breaking things. I would feel insecure”*. This supports the findings of [Bardhi and Eckhardt \(2012\)](#) and [Catulli \(2012\)](#), who note that consumers feel they have to be more careful with products they do not own themselves. Respondents also expressed fear of sanctions: *“I love to own my furniture. If I rent and it breaks, then I am to be ‘punished’ and I will have to pay a fine. Feels*

strange to rent ...” The fear of being penalised by the provider in case product is damaged was also identified by [Baumeister \(2014\)](#). Another aspect raised in interviews was the feeling of intrusiveness that people feel if a company owns their furniture or home furnishing: *“It feels intrusive in my home. There I want to feel safe and relaxed and to be able to control everything myself”* one interviewee stated. These quotes highlight the importance of open and trusting relations between provider and consumers, as identified by [Raja et al. \(2013\)](#).

4.2.3.6. Environmental obstacles. Some respondents had difficulties associating renting with being an environmentally sound option: *“I do not think it is positive either economically or environmentally. It does not mean that consumption is declining and I think it will be more expensive in the long run for consumers than paying for the furniture directly”*. [Baumeister \(2014\)](#) also argues that consumers do not see the access-based consumption model as being more environmentally sound than buying products. This is interesting, since another group of respondents saw the environmental soundness of renting as a driver rather than a barrier.

4.3. Sharing and collaborative consumption

4.3.1. Attitudes

This section explores respondents’ attitudes towards collaborative consumption of products. Since there is limited previous research on this concept, this part is more exploratory than the earlier parts of the analysis. As in previously analysed consumption models, attitudes towards collaborative consumption of products differ significantly depending on the product, as was identified by [Botsman and Rogers \(2010\)](#). For example, do-it-yourself tools are the product group that 40% of respondents had very positive attitudes to consuming together with other people. Kitchen utensils, on the other hand, were seen as not suitable for sharing with others by 31% of respondents. As regards sharing people’s own possessions, respondents were most positive towards sharing do-it-yourself tools, and most negative towards sharing or lending textile products, followed by kitchen utensils. People who indicated that they were renting their home to other people were more likely to be very positive to co-owning products; this tendency is seen in all the surveyed product groups.

4.3.2. Motivations

The main motivations for respondents to engage in collaborative consumption are presented in [Fig. 6](#).

4.3.2.1. Practical for seldom-used products. The main motivation for people to engage in collaborative consumption is for products that are used rarely. Interviewees in this study thought that it was positive to share products that were not frequently used, such as do-it-yourself tools and outdoor furniture: *“They are not used as often and are expensive to buy”*. One interviewee stated: *“It’s that kind of product that would be useful to have but I’m not prepared to buy it because it feels unnecessary. But if I buy it with others it feels more worthwhile”*. Sixty-nine survey respondents supported this view, since they would like to have access to products, but feel it is unnecessary to own everything yourself: *“It’s good if products are used a bit more often than when they are lying in a private cupboard most of the time”*. Our research supports the findings of [Botsman and Rogers \(2010\)](#), who noted that some product categories are more suitable for sharing than others; for example interest in sharing increases if the product in question loses its value once it has been used, which can be the case for do-it-yourself tools and garden equipment.

Motivations for collaborative consumption

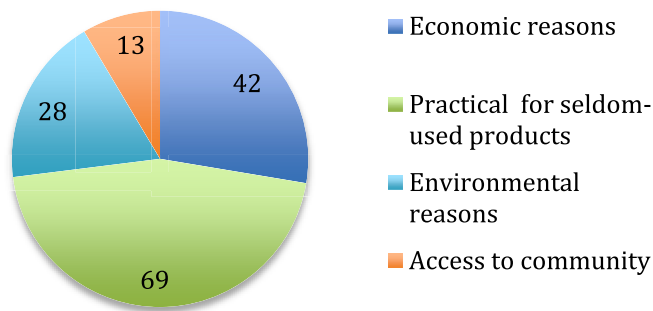


Fig. 6. Motivations for collaborative consumption based on open comments (Source: Quicksearch).

4.3.2.2. *Economic reasons.* Economic reasons were found to be one of the main drivers for all three alternative consumption models, supporting results reported in literature (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Forty-two respondents mentioned in their open comments that collaborative consumption is: “Cheaper for the individual and smart when you do not have lots of things lying around at home”.

4.3.2.3. *Environmental reasons.* Many respondents agree that sharing of products is good for the environment (28 comments): “It happens so rarely that a product gets worn out, so less production is better for the environment”. Once people have tested it, the degree of their positive attitudes increases: “I do it already. Very effective for both the environment and the wallet”. This finding is in line with Hamari et al. (2013) and with research by Eliasson and Jonsson (2011), who demonstrated that attitudes can change as a result of changed behaviour.

4.3.2.4. *Access to community.* One driving force that has been identified in 13 open comments of the survey is the desire to join a community of like-minded people and to generally increase social contact with other people. McArthur (2014) describes this motivation in connection to a platform Landshare: when the profit motive is removed other driving forces emerge. Open comments from the survey such as “You become more social with neighbours” and “Community and brotherhood is nice” exemplify positive attitudes of the respondents to sharing all the studied types of products. This indicates that social contact is something that can be seen as a catalyst for sharing resources regardless of the type of product.

4.3.3. Obstacles

The main obstacles to respondents engaging in collaborative consumption are presented in Fig. 7.

4.3.3.1. *Concern for hygiene.* Once again, hygiene was identified as a barrier to sharing (57 open comments), in the same way as it was for using second-hand products and renting. Both in the survey and in interviews this barrier was mentioned: “Since people might not share the same standards of hygiene, it feels disgusting and complicated!” However, this obstacle has not been identified in the literature review about sharing and collaborative consumption. Specifically in the product group of kitchen utensils, hygiene is the dominant reason for respondents’ negative attitudes.

4.3.3.2. *Desire to own.* Forty-nine respondents mentioned the desire to own as an obstacle for collaborative consumption, as in the other two alternative consumption models. The institution of ownership is deeply embedded into the very fabric of our society,

Obstacles to collaborative consumption

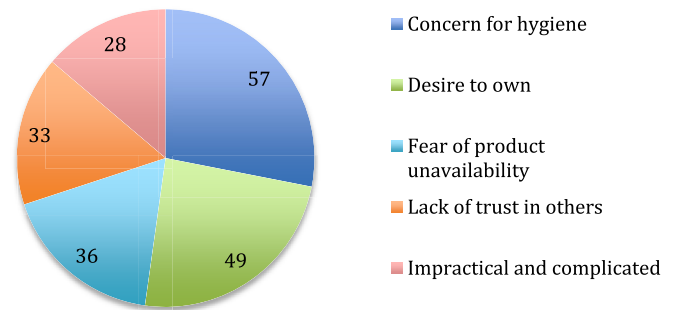


Fig. 7. Obstacles to collaborative consumption identified in open comments (Source: Quicksearch).

so it is not surprising that consumers feel so strongly about owning their material assets (Belk, 2007).

4.3.3.3. *Fear of product unavailability.* “Spontaneity is an important part of my life: I nail up a painting when I want, or fix the car when I want... I do not want to have to adapt to another person, especially someone who I do not know”. Lack of flexibility and access to products at any time is one of the important obstacles identified in 36 open comments. This is in line with what Belk (2007) describes as the pursuit of individual ownership. According to him, this quest is one of the factors that may potentially put a stop to the increased sharing of resources.

4.3.3.4. *Lack of trust in others.* Lack of trust is often seen as a barrier for collaborative consumption: “I would never lend to someone I did not trust. If a neighbour I did not know came up to me and wanted to borrow something, I would not lend it to him. To do so, I would have needed some type of trust to the person first”. As Belk (2010) indicated, sharing of resources outside the family is something that many people do not feel comfortable with. The following open comment illustrates this: “I enjoy cooking and love my kitchen – my gadgets are chosen with great care and love – some are inherited. I would never ever want to share them with anyone outside my family”. This shows that respondents were positive to sharing their belongings with strangers, but not if the product had a high personal value. To help increase trust some respondents talked about the need for a certain structure and a contract: “I think sharing is good, but you have to somehow sign a contract. This will help take care of things and people will take responsibility. And clear rules associated with the system, because otherwise some people will exploit the system, or be sloppy and break common things”. Botsman (2012) describes trust as one of the most important attributes of the sharing economy. Creating a clear structure and introducing mechanisms for peer review and feedback can greatly increase trust between people and thereby enable greater sharing of resources.

4.3.3.5. *Impractical and complicated.* The housing situation greatly affects whether people think sharing is a feasible idea or not. Respondents who live in the countryside or in a single family house said that they thought it would be impractical to share resources, simply due to distance to other people: “I live in the country; it is too far to the nearest neighbour”. Another aspect that contributes to the barrier of impracticality is the need to plan ahead: “It seems impractical. I think it requires too much planning to secure access to the right equipment when you need it”. These findings have not been explicitly reported on in literature.

4.4. Comparison of models

A number of similarities and differences can be found between the three alternative consumption models. *Attitudes* towards the different models differ significantly, with attitudes to purchasing second-hand products being mainly positive, while access-based and collaborative consumption evoke largely negative attitudes, depending on product groups. The reason for this appears to be the higher level of familiarity among the study population with second-hand consumption compared to access-based and collaborative consumption. This is also evident in the exception to the negative attitudes to access-based consumption when it comes to appliances, since many rental apartments in Sweden often come with appliances such as cookers, washing machines and fridges. In general, however, lack of ownership seems to negatively influence attitudes, the only exception being short-term use, i.e. equipment for parties and short-term rental of flats, such as by students.

One of the main *motivations* for adopting the studied consumption models was economic reasoning. Both second-hand products and collaborative consumption were associated with economic benefits, as well as short-term access-based consumption. However, the economic incentive was less obvious for long-term renting. Apart from the economic reasoning, drivers for the three consumption models differed. Second-hand consumption fulfils a desire for uniqueness and individuality. Access-based consumption offers the benefit of flexibility, allowing consumers to temporarily have access to certain products, such as do-it-yourself tools and garden equipment. It also offers the possibility to test products before purchasing, thereby reducing the risk inherent in making an investment in an unfamiliar product, and the opportunity to replace products more often for reasons other than wear and tear (e.g. trends, curiosity). The collaborative consumption model distinguishes itself by the community factor it entails, which is valuable to some consumers.

There are many and varied obstacles to the adoption of the studied consumption models. All three models appear to be limited by the (perceived) lack of hygiene. This is most significant in relation to product groups that are intimate to the individual and/or hard to clean, i.e. beds or soft toys. Desire to own was an important barrier for access-based and collaborative consumption. In access-based consumption, this barrier was more abstract and general in nature (i.e. the safety of ownership from judgement by others), while in collaborative consumption it was also associated with trust in other members of a sharing community.

An overall observation from the collected data is that, across consumption models, attitudes, motivations and obstacles are dependent on the product group. This means that, for one and the same consumption model, attitudes, motivations and obstacles can differ significantly for different product groups. Factors relevant to this distinction are the material of which the products are made, the frequency of use, the perceived degree of intimacy in their use, and social and emotional values associated with the product.

5. Conclusions and future research

The aim of this article was to test the attitudes of young consumers towards the three consumption models – consumption of second-hand products, access-based consumption, and collaborative consumption – and to investigate motivations and obstacles affecting how people engage in these consumption models.

Our study shows that many people choose to purchase second-hand products instead of new ones when furnishing their home. However, attitudes differ considerably depending on the product being studied. People have less positive attitudes towards using second-hand products made of soft materials like upholstery and

fabrics than products made of hard materials, such as wood and metal. Items such as tables, chairs and shelves are seen as simple to restore and refurbish, which some people appreciate. However, there is a reluctance to use second-hand products with clear traces of the previous owners.

The main motivation for the consumption of second-hand products is economic. Many see the chance to save money; men are driven more by the economic argument than women. The desire to be unique and to express one's personality is something that many consumers see as their main motivation for consumption of second-hand products for use in the home. Another identified driver is the availability of products that are no longer available for purchase in traditional stores.

There is a small group of individuals who buy second-hand products for environmental reasons, although this driver is not as strong as economic factors and the desire to be unique. The individuals who are very concerned about environmental and climate change problems spend more on second-hand products. There are also consumers who primarily choose second-hand products in order to avoid chemicals, toxins and dyes that new products contain.

The biggest obstacle for people buying second-hand products for use in the home is that they are seen as unsanitary. There is a fear that insects and pests may be brought home with products, and that second-hand products could cause allergies. The hygienic aspect is mainly linked to the products that have padding and textiles, which the individuals feel are too intimate and are hard to keep clean. An additional barrier to consumption of second-hand products is that some people simply prefer newly produced products, so they do not see second-hand products as a viable alternative.

Many respondents were quite negative towards renting products for the home. Products that are used over a long period of time are not seen as suitable for renting, since the cost of renting might be higher than purchasing new furniture. Another obstacle is that it is hard for people to imagine how a system of renting furniture would work. However, respondents who are positive to renting furniture see value in being able to renew furniture more often without feeling guilty about their environmental impact. They also see renting as a chance to test a product before purchasing. Some respondents raised concerns that renting might be a worse option for the environment than purchasing, because it may not reduce production of new products, but rather speed up the rate of consumption.

One motivation for renting furniture is that it gives flexibility that ownership lacks. Flexibility in this case is connected to outsourcing product maintenance and repair to the service provider, by providing access to the product without the need to own it. However, materialism and the desire to own are serious barriers to the access-based consumption model. Ownership is an institution with inherent value in the modern consumption society. Fear of breaking rented products is also an often-mentioned barrier. People are uneasy about using rented products in the same way they use products they own since they are borrowed and must be handled more carefully. There is also a fear of health risks associated with renting products previously used by an unknown person.

Renting furniture and home furnishings for a shorter period of time is more accepted. Although this study only investigated respondents between the ages of 20 and 35, there is a greater inclination for younger individuals to rent an entire interior design for a limited period of time compared to older respondents. Many people are positive to renting products for special occasions, for example for a party.

As in the first two models, attitudes to collaborative consumption depend on the product being shared. Respondents are positive

towards sharing seldom-used products, and do-it-yourself tools is the product group that most people are willing to share.

Respondents who are positive towards sharing products are driven by economic, social or environmental factors. However, many feel insecure about lending their own products to strangers, so a lack of trust is a serious obstacle to sharing resources. Another identified barrier was concern about lacking access to products when people need them. Spontaneity and flexibility is an important factor for many people, so sharing products that require planning ahead seems to be a critical obstacle for many respondents. Sharing seems to be problematic for people living in the countryside or in single-family houses, since it is impractical to share products with neighbours who live far away from each other. The social contact and desire to be part of a community of like-minded people is a driver for some respondents while, for other respondents, potential conflict situations that may arise as a result of sharing products is perceived as a barrier. Finally, hygiene is an obstacle for all consumption domains examined in this study.

While conducting the study, several knowledge gaps were identified that need to be researched in the future. Research on sharing is still in its infancy. It would be useful to conduct similar studies in different countries and to compare attitudes of young consumers, their motivations and obstacles. Lack of trust in strangers and fear of conflicts that prevent people from joining collaborative ways of consuming is worth investigating further, including an analysis of existing and potential mechanisms to avoid conflict and promote settlement in the alternative consumption models. Another interesting area of research is the notion of ownership and how it is slowly changing among people participating in alternative models of consumption. It would be important to investigate in which contexts ownership is seen as more flexible than gaining access to products and in which areas it is less flexible. Finally, a promising path for future research would be to conduct comparative analysis of consumers with different sets of attitudes towards the environment and consumption culture, and to study their strategies for engaging with the alternative consumption models. Comparing the reasoning behind their actions and attitudes might provide insights into mechanisms for reducing obstacles and encourage people to join the three consumption models.

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