

Ride Sharing in Denmark

An explorative study in collaborative consumption



Master's Thesis

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Resumé: Samkørsel i Danmark

Nærværende speciale undersøger praktiske og sociologiske forhold for at opnå en større forståelse af samkørsel i Danmark. Undersøgelsen bygger på kvalitativ metode, og indsamling af primær empiri forgår ved semi-strukturerede interviews af både grupper og enkeltpersoner kombineret med deltagende observation under samkørsel. Endvidere undersøges samkørsel i praksis gennem GoMore. Specialet benytter sig af teoretiske elementer om bilen som forbrugsobjekt, om forbrugerens forhold til transport, om kulturelle og socioøkonomiske aspekter af samfundet, om deleøkonomi og postmoderne forbrugertendenser, samt teori fra forbrugeradfærd angående deling, tillid og risikovillighed.

Undersøgelsen viser, at GoMores set-up med profiler og anmeldelser af brugere i høj grad er medvirkende til, at brugerne tør stole på fremmede og køre med dem. I modsætning til at blaffe, hvilket opfattes som dumdristigt og farligt. Samkørsel opfattes derimod i langt højere grad som sikkert, primært fordi det er formidlet gennem en veletableret service, hvilket bidrager til graden af tillid, som brugerne har til hinanden og konceptet. Derudover føler brugerne sig yderligere sikre ved samkørsel i dansk kontekst, da de oplever samfundet generelt som værende trygt. Samkørsel er også et klart alternativ til offentligt transport, der opfattes som både dyrt og ufleksibelt. Samkørsel opfattes ikke som et langvarigt alternativ for passagerene, men som en midlertidig god løsning. Chaufførerne benytter det både af økonomiske og af etiske grunde for at hjælpe andre.

Den største barriere for samkørsel er den intime deling af rum og oplevelse med fremmede mennesker, hvilket kan udløse stort ubehag. Det kræver en vis udadvendthed og tilpasning, og brugeren skal legitimere over for sig selv, at de stoler på fremmede. Dette gøres, ofte ubevidst, ved på forskellig vis at søge tilhørsforhold til andre brugere fx ved kendskab til personen gennem brugerprofiler, men også gennem positive oplevelser.

Forskning viser, at bilejere i høj grad er følelsesmæssigt tilknyttet til deres bil, og det udgør en stor del af deres identitet. Brugere identificerer sig umiddelbart ikke med samkørsel på samme vis, ej heller med deleøkonomien generelt. Dog har positive sociale oplevelser mellem brugerne stor betydning for dem. Miljøhensyn spiller heller ingen afgørende rolle. Samkørsel handler i første omgang om praktiske aspekter, især pris og fleksibilitet, hvilket er den overvejende årsag til, at brugere vælger at prøve det. Dog er det de symbolske og i allerhøjeste grad de sociale aspekter, der er årsag til, at brugerne er glade for samkørsel og gerne fortsætter med at benytte det.

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1. Introduction and thesis objective

The car as consumption object holds strong symbolic value and has been subject to detailed and plenty analysis. Sharing of cars through car sharing organisations has existed since the 1980s, but ride sharing is a rather new concept that has not been researched as thoroughly.

Ride sharing is when as a driver offers seats in his or her car on a planned trip, which the driver would have otherwise taken alone. Passengers pay for the seat and the facilitation of rides is primarily done through Internet platforms (GoMore, 2015). Ride sharing differs from car sharing, as car sharing is defined as two or more people sharing the ownership of a car. In larger set-ups, there are car sharing organisations, where members collectively own a pool of cars and pay a monthly fee for membership (Jonsson, 2007).

Ride sharing is also part of the new consumption tendency of collaborative consumption: *"In the 20th century, we were identified by what we owned; in the 21st century, we will be defined by how we share (...)"* (Belk & Llamas, 2012:643). Investigating this topic is especially timely and relevant, as it is a growing and extensive consumer trend. In 2013, the five main sharing economy sectors generated \$15bn in global revenues. By 2025, the potential revenue opportunity of these sectors is estimated to be \$335bn (Nielsen, 2015; PWC, 2014).

Ride sharing is a concept that in a pro-environment, pro-social manner saves resources by the use of underutilised consumer resources. It could appear simple and an obvious solution of transportation. But there are many practical and sociological factors that play a role, when strangers share a ride together. There are many challenges that users and providers need to understand and overcome in order for it to be successful.

Thesis objective

In present thesis, I set out to **investigate the practice of ride sharing in Denmark**. What are the values, norms, emotions and desires that participants attach to the practice of ride sharing in Denmark? In particular, I look at how Danes go about ride sharing in their everyday lives.

Drawing upon qualitative analysis, this study will shed light on the drivers and barriers of ridesharing in Denmark. A deeper knowledge and understanding of the ride sharing practice can be useful and important for future development, and it serves to illuminate influential factors and challenges, as ride sharing is carried out in practice.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

Firstly, there is clarification of concepts and a review of the socio-cultural context followed by the methodical approach. Then, the theoretical basis is presented and thereafter, analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. Lastly, a conclusion summarises the findings followed by potential research perspectives.

1.3 Clarification of concepts

Collaborative consumption is a movement, where consumers collaborate on making the most of resources and often with an environmentally friendly focus. It happens through sharing of underutilised resources or through pooling of resources. It is most often facilitated through Internet platforms (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). **Car sharing** is when two or more people share the ownership of a car. It is especially practical, when there is only periodically need for a car, and it is cheaper and easier than owning a car alone. It can be done privately or on a larger scale through a **Car Sharing Organisation (CSO)** (Jonsson, 2007). In CSOs there is usually a larger pool of cars and through fees, members pay to gain access to the car pools. The organisation is the owner and holds the responsibility for costs and maintenance. Sometimes members work a few hours a month and take care of the cars together, and in larger organisations, there are employees who take care of the car pool (Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999). Standing on the side of a road and getting picked up by a random driver that passes by is **hitchhiking**. It is done for free or for a small symbolic price, and it started in the 1960s derived from the left movement of the time. It was associated with hippies, students and a laid-back, eco-friendly lifestyle. There has been a decline in hitchhiking and today it is not a common mode of transport (Chesters & Smith, 2001). **Ride sharing** is the concept of a driver who brings other people on a planned trip instead of driving alone with empty seats. In return, the passengers pay for the ride, a price that is most often lower than that of other transport alternatives. It is usually organised by a service, who in return takes a small amount of the payment (GoMore, 2015). With the Internet, the opportunities for facilitating such coordination of shared rides are made easier and thus more extensive

2. Setting the scene

2.1 *The rise of a new economy*

The Internet has brought new and practically endless ways of communication and opportunities for sharing. Users have been given the possibility of contributing and connecting with each other and thus opening up for active participation and sharing. The economic downturn in 2008 also

contributed to a growing interest for new ways of consuming. Many consumers now choose not to own items, but rather gain access or rent instead, and many choose to lend or rent out items that they own, when they are not using it themselves (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). The financial crisis and the increased focus on scarce resources have, combined with technological progress and social media, created a space for new activities based on sharing (Erhvervsstyrelsen, 2014:2). This new trend has been called many things, e.g. collaborative consumption, the Mesh, co-consuming, sustainable consumption, peer-to-peer economy, gift economy, relation economy, trust economy, we-economy, sharing economy and much more (Belk, 2013; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014; Skytte, 2014a; Skytte, 2014b and others). The main idea is sharing. Instead of everyone acquiring their own car, lawn mower, wet suit etc, the idea is to make it easier to combine underutilised resources via the Internet (Hesseldahl, 2014). Despite different names, the key ingredient in this type of consumption is that a space is created "(...) *where people offer and share underutilized resources in creative, new ways*" (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014:279). This will also be the frame of reference for present thesis. For the duration of this paper, the term used to describe and discuss the topic will be collaborative consumption.

2.2 Collaborative consumption

"Collaborative consumption is people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation" (Belk, 2013:1597). There are many examples of this today. There are renting (e.g. Air Bnb), content sharing (e.g. Spotify), dream sharing (e.g. Quirky, Indiegogo), help sharing (e.g. Task rabbit) or gift sharing (e.g. Homeexchange, ReSecond)¹ (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Skytte, 2014a). These categories underline the more concrete, tangible aspects of the collaborative consumption. Another important aspect is the social aspect: *"(...) we are starting to recognise that the constant quest for material things has come at the expense of impoverishing relationship with friends, family, neighbours and the planet (...) We are shifting away from the 'what's-in-it-for-me'-attitude and going towards the 'what's-in-it-for-us' state-of-mind* (Botsman & Rogers, 2010:44). Collaborative consumption does not only save resources, it also has the potential to bring people together at the same time. There are several views on how altruistic a service or a concept must be in order for it to fit under the concept of collaborative consumption (Belk, 2013; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Skytte, 2014a; Skytte, 2014b). Some distinguish between whether a service or concept only creates greater opportunities for sharing and making/saving money, or whether they actually contribute to reducing consumption of

¹ www.airbnb.dk, www.spotify.com, www.quirky.com, www.indiegogo.com, www.taskrabbit.com, www.homeexchange.com, www.resecond.com

resources. Present thesis does not engage in this discussion and therefore refers to collaborative consumption on a larger scale.

2.3 Denmark: socio-cultural context and post-modern values

Collaborative consumption is not a tendency that has come forth in all corners of the world. There are fundamental conditions that must be present in order for a society to move in this direction, i.a. a certain amount of welfare and resources. Inglehart² discusses three types of societies according to wealth and economic development. Based on Maslows theory³, it is stated that in poorer societies, the main focus is on material goods. However, when wealth increases, focus will shift towards post-modern, self-realization values. The postmodern society has greater focus on and room for individual autonomy, diversity and self-realization. In a post-modern society, there is a tendency of valuing quality of life over material goods as a relatively high living standard is already achieved. It is a society, where people start to take responsibility for their surroundings through i.a. increased focus on CSR, ecology and ethical problems. Post-modern values can then give priority to environmental protection and other cultural issues, even when this conflicts with economic interests (Inglehart, 1997). Therefore, it is only in wealthier countries, such as Denmark, that the post-modern values are found and so the conditions for sustainable and collaborative consumption are present here.

A well-known categorisation of welfare societies is that of Esping-Andersen⁴. He distinguishes between three welfare models; the liberal, the conservative and the social-democratic, where Denmark is the latter. The social-democratic welfare model is unique for the 'de-familiarizing' of welfare responsibilities, as the principles of this model is the responsibility of the state to insure equal opportunities for every citizen (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Many welfare services are thus free of charge and are financed through a proportional taxation system. This makes Denmark an obvious place to investigate areas of collaborative consumption. The way in which society is designed constitutes an ideal framework to investigate it and for it to develop and grow. First of all, there are already great traditions of sharing. Denmark has one of the world's highest tax incidences⁵, and it is a commonly accepted idea that those with more resources share them for the benefit of all. The Danish welfare model includes many publicly shared institutions such as

² Ronald F. Inglehart (1934), political scientist, research focus on cultural, economical, political and social values. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Inglehart

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

⁴ Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1947), sociologist with focus on welfare states. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B8sta_Esping-Andersen

⁵ <http://ias.au.dk/taxation/the-danish-tax-system/>

hospitals, public schools, libraries, parks, roads etc⁶. Furthermore, Denmark has great focus on sustainability, among others things through energy efficiency (Skytte, 2014a; Skytte, 2014b). It is interesting to see if and how these societal elements influence collaborative consumption.

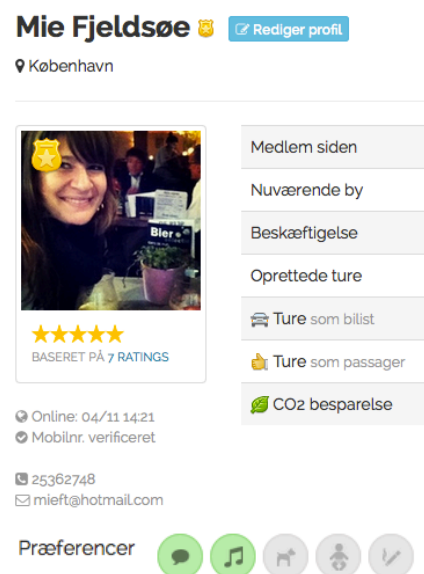
2.4 Ride sharing

Sharing of rides is a good example of collaborative consumption and there are several reasons to investigate this area. The car is a largely underutilised resource, as *"(...)the average car in North America and Western Europe is in use 8% of the time"* (Belk, 2013:1599). The car as consumption object has been very well researched, and it is a strong symbol of both social and economic development in a society. *"How we move becomes a statement of class, identity, personality, environmental values and wealth (...) as well as a practical means of simply completing everyday tasks"* (O'Regan, 2012:131). Ride sharing represents many of the elements from collaborative consumption. Sharing a ride is a way of saving resources to benefit the environment by using underutilized resources more efficiently. There is the opportunity of both earning and saving money for the individual user, and there is the social aspect of meeting new people who also engage in this form of consumption. Furthermore, the transport area is something that is relevant to the majority of a population at some point.

2.5 GoMore

The basis of the investigation of shared rides is the online platform [GoMore.dk](http://www.gomore.dk). GoMore was founded in 2005 and has since grown to be the leading portal for car and ride sharing in Denmark. There are currently more than 350,000 users on the platform in Denmark⁷, and the site is also operating in Sweden, Norway, France and Spain⁸.

To be registered as a user, one can use a Facebook account or register by e-mail and name. The ID is verified through mobile number. On the user profile, personal information as well as ride information can be seen. As a registered user, one can offer rides or book a seat as passenger on an



Picture 1: GoMore Profile

⁶ <http://www.skat.dk/skat.aspx?old=2068705&vld=0>

⁷ www.gomore.dk

⁸ 'Formiddag på P4' - nov. 18th 2015, 10-11, interview with GoMore - <http://www.dr.dk/p4kbh/formiddag-pa-4-eren/>

offered ride. Rides can be booked in two ways. One is by fast booking, where the seat is automatically accepted. The driver can also choose approval-booking, where passengers request a seat on the ride and must be approved by the driver before the booking is complete. GoMore charges a 10% service fee for facilitation.

For each ride, users can choose to explicitly enter their availability and needs e.g. specific pick-up and drop-off places. Furthermore, there are different criteria that can be either preferred or not, e.g. conversation, music, pets, children or smoking. After each ride, drivers and passengers have the possibility to review one another. On a scale from 1 to 5 stars, a review is given and can be further supported by a remark. Reviews and remarks are public for all users to see.

3. Methodology

In this section, the methodical approach will be described in regards to method, theory and empirical data. The approach is determining for the creation of knowledge and the explicit review of the chosen approaches contributes to validate the findings.

3.1 Practice theories

As a means of investigating the thesis objective, theories of practice are used. They fit well with a subject that holds elements from both humanities and social sciences. *"...It could be argued that practice theories have come to occupy salient theoretical spaces across the social sciences and humanities"* (Halkier, Katz-Gerro, & Martens, 2011:3). It is furthermore a suitable way of investigating areas within consumption, as it is a broadening of consumption sociology (Halkier et al., 2011; Warde, 2005). It is particularly relevant when investigating consumption not only in terms of purchase, but rather in terms of enjoyment of goods, services and resources (Halkier et al., 2011:4), which are elements that are present in ride sharing. There is not a clear-cut definition of practice theories, but the much quoted and used reference is that *"a practice (...) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge"* (Reckwitz in Halkier et al., 2011:4-5). Practice theory is not *one* coherent theory, but there are different theoretical versions. However, they all have a common focus on how social action is carried out (Halkier & Jensen, 2011). Practices are seen as configurations of a number of analytically equally important and interconnected dynamics, whereby practices become collectively organized and certain activities become recognizable as belonging to a specific practice (Warde, 2005:133-136). The thesis will investigate these interconnected dynamics in order to create a deeper

understanding of ride sharing. Ride sharing involves the bodily activity of going from one place to another using the car as means of transportation. There is both physical and social sharing of spaces with fellow passengers and thus several levels of mental activities between users. Previous to that is also the arrangement of booking rides followed by understanding and learning of rules and codex of the practice in order to be able to properly and successfully participate in it. Cars and car use are also deeply embedded in our life styles. It is incorporated in various traffic systems and in daily activity of transportation. Ride sharing is an emerging practice in Denmark, partly emerged from the older practice of car sharing and partly as a sub-practice of collaborative consumption.

Practices are coordinated by social dynamics, which holds both tacit and discursive processes, cover both bodily and mental processes and deal with material things as well as immaterial processes (Warde in Halkier & Jensen, 2011:104). Practice theory is particularly useful in consumption research and in carrying out of empirical studies. In present thesis, the practice of ride sharing is researched through the different elements that constitute the practice. It is done by observation of the practice to see how it is carried out and by interviews with participants to understand values and meaning.

3.2 Research design

The purpose of this thesis is explorative in its nature and qualitative research is about exploring what people do and feel. The aim of this thesis is to create a deeper understanding of the processes that occur in ride sharing, and the use of qualitative methods is therefore perfectly suited to the purpose. Qualitative research is flexible in its approach to knowledge building because the phases of data collection and of data analysis take place interchangeably (Andersen, 2005). Qualitative studies generally do not invite statistical generalisations, as it is the case in quantitative studies. The small samples of qualitative studies make room for different generalisations, as *"(...)the researcher makes theorized claims about the patterns of categories and dynamics of the material, also called analytical generalization"* (Halkier & Jensen, 2011:113). In statistical generalisation, the sample results are made general by being valid for a large number of individuals, but in analytical generalisation, results are made general *"by becoming valid for categories related to social scientific concepts due to the theoretical relevance of the sample"* (Halkier & Jensen, 2011:113). Theoretical elements combined with empirical insights lead me to investigate the ride sharing practice. The project is founded in the inductive approach, in the sense that I draw conclusions and discuss generality on the basis of collected data. With the inductive approach, the basis is observations from real life context and general conclusions are

derived from that. Opposite this, is the deductive approach, where theory and hypothesis are created and are afterwards investigated. In practice, it is difficult to completely separate the two, as they occur simultaneously in the investigation process (Andersen, 2005; Thurén, 2008).

3.3 Empirical methods to investigate the practice of ride sharing

Qualitative interviews

The purpose of the qualitative interview is to understand the day-to-day life from the perspective of the respondents. It is a relevant tool in this investigation, as the purpose of the thesis is to collect knowledge on the behaviour, thoughts, feelings and values of respondents in order to better understand the practice of ride sharing. Qualitative interviews give the possibility of concentration and exploration. They cannot be standardised, because it is impossible to predict the course of a qualitative interview. The qualitative interview is a conversation with structure and purpose, but where the questions are without a specific category for answers. It is a professional kind of conversation technique, where the conversation is controlled as little as possible. Knowledge is created through interaction between interviewer and respondent. It holds the possibility of a dynamic dialogue, where the interviewer can ask clarifying questions and thus expound on statements, explanations and points. Furthermore, it gives the interviewer the possibility to collect new knowledge, which can then lead to new questions in other interviews and also lead to new, relevant theoretical areas (Andersen, 2005; Kvale, 1997).

The semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is an often-used way of collecting qualitative data. This structure was chosen in order to meet the need of knowledge in the most rewarding way, as semi-structured interviews allow a good amount of latitude. This type of interviews can take several forms and there is great variation in terms of the degree of structure, controlling of the conversation, openness and purpose. I already had some knowledge on the subject, but I found it to be relatively complex, and this type of interview left room for me to learn more, and it held the possibility of a dynamic dialogue, where clarifying questions could be asked if necessary. Most of the questions were not strictly planned with a fixed order. Instead, they were open and the order of them could easily change depending on the direction in which the respondents were going. Respondents were informed that they did not have to keep strictly to the asked questions, but rather if anything else crossed their minds whilst talking, it would be very much appreciated that they shared their thoughts. This to make sure that new subjects and knowledge

could come forth, so that the investigation would not be limited to the prepared questions and subjects only (Andersen, 2005; Kvale, 1997). The flow of topics and questions could vary greatly depending on the individual respondents and on the different rides.

The interview guide

In order to be well prepared and to make sure that the subject was investigated as planned, an interview guide was created (Andersen, 2005; Kvale, 1997). The guide is structured through headlines that in key words briefly indicate subjects according to theory, intended for the interviewer only. It is then followed by actual questions that are to be presented to the respondents. When creating the questions, some questions were more concealed than others. From the literature reviews, I had learned that previous studies of car use prove that when investigating non-instrumental reasons for car use, better results occur, when the aim of the study is not too apparent. "(...) *people might not be willing to admit that using a car fulfils many symbolic and affective functions, and that car drivers are inclined to justify and rationalise their behaviour*" (Steg, 2005:148). I was very aware of that when both creating and asking questions regarding car use. I sometimes chose a more covert way of asking, and I would allow respondents to answer on a personal as well as on a general level, so they could distance themselves if needed and thus answer honestly without rationalising too much. During the interviews, however, respondents were very honest and open about their emotions and attitudes, and combined with my preparation in regards to this, I did not experience it as a critical problem to the quality of the answers. As will be further elaborated on below, the interview guide was revised several times. Most extensively after the pilot interview, and little adjustments followed the later interviews. All of it leading to the final edition, which can be found in appendix A. There was, of course, some differences in the questions asked, depending on whether the respondents were drivers or passengers, car owners or not, which was also noted in the interview guide. However, many questions were directed at the ride sharing experience in general. There will be differentiated between the types of respondents in the analysis, whenever relevant.

Interview settings

The interviews were conducted as a mixture between group interviews, personal interviews, field studies and participant observation, which will all be further elaborated on in the following. The majority of interviews were done during a shared car ride. This was a suitable choice, as the thesis set out to investigate this exact practice. It held the possibility of doing relevant interviews in order to gather information on the meanings, values and feelings of users. At the

same time, it gave me the possibility of studying the phenomenon as it unfolds in its natural environment through participant observation (see section on participant observation below).

For most of the interviews, the driver and thus organiser of the ride was notified beforehand about the interview. This to make sure that he/she would not be unpleasantly surprised and therefore maybe decline and prevent an interview from taking place. The other passengers were asked directly on the trip if they would like to participate. By not informing the respondent beforehand, they had no time to think too much about answers or to construct answers, which they would see socially appropriate (Andersen, 2005). As the purpose of the project was to explore the practice in real context, I found it sensible not to notify passengers beforehand. This would change the situation from being predominantly a normal shared ride, and instead turning it into mainly an interview. A negative effect to this method could be that respondents would not have enough time to think thoroughly about the subject and thus give well-considered answers (Andersen, 2005; Kvale, 1997). However, as the rides were all more than three hours long, there was plenty of time to re-think the questions and add information, if it occurred to the respondents later on during the ride. There was of course a risk that passengers would decline participation in an interview because they had no prior notification, but no passengers did so, and everyone expressed only positive emotions towards and interest in the idea. In regards to the two personal interviews, the respondents were of course notified beforehand (see section on personal interviews below).

It was explained to the respondents that the interview would be recorded, but only for the purpose of later summarizing, and they were informed that they would stay anonymous. Anonymity can contribute to making respondents feel safer when expressing feelings and values, as they do not have to fear being confronted with their statements by others afterwards. Furthermore, in order to prevent the respondents from thinking about giving 'correct' answers or answers which they would see as socially acceptable or desirable, they were informed of the purpose of the thesis on a very general basis only. They were informed that the interviews were for an investigation of ride sharing on a general level. They were informed that there was no such thing as right or wrong answers, but that simply their own personal experience and attitude was of interest. Unlike most interviews, where the interviewer does the 'ice breaking' specifically for the purpose of the interview, the 'ice breaking' between all respondents were done before the interview started. All respondents had planned the shared ride beforehand and were thus introduced to each other and to the interviewer as participants of the shared ride, not as participants of an interview. This contributed to a more natural ride sharing setting.

In order to not start off too abruptly, the interviews began with easy and harmless questions in order to create a safe atmosphere for the rest of the interview (Andersen, 2005). The interview begins with questions regarding age and occupation, as well as questions on the extent to which respondents have experience with ride sharing. The interviews were brought to an end, when the interviewer assessed that no further knowledge would come from the situation. An unusual aspect of the interviews was that the respondents and interviewer did not go their separate ways immediately after the interview was finished. All the rides were longer than the official interviews, and so it left time for the respondents to reflect further on what was discussed and to put forth ideas and thoughts "off the record". Conversations after the official interviews contributed greatly to the collection of data. It gave me great opportunity for observing complementary conversations and behavior, which will be discussed further below in regards to participant observation. In total, more than 24 hours of ride sharing supports the investigation.

Group interviews

The main source of data collection was thus group interviews combined with field studies, as respondents were interviewed on a shared car ride. Interviews in groups stimulate interaction into more descriptive and elaborated statements. Group interactions also lead to emotional and spontaneous statements, and so the purpose of the group interviews was for the respondents to reflect on each other's point of views and perhaps discuss new and unexpected subjects with each other. Conversations that would have otherwise not occurred, if there were only one respondent. Respondents often commented on each other's stories and experiences with ride sharing, which was very positive for the collection of data. Furthermore, group interviews are often seen as more interesting and exciting for the respondents compared to individual interviews (Andersen, 2005; Kvale, 1997).

A disadvantage of group interviews may be that respondents restrain themselves from saying certain things that may not agree with the rest of the group, may offend someone in the group or may be too personal. A way of avoiding this was to frame some discussions through findings from previous interviews. This would allow conversations to be about 'other people' or 'people in general'. It would free respondents from restraining themselves in order to not offend the others or to protect themselves. This was especially convenient in regards to dislikes, complaints and the like.

Personal interviews

As additional support to the group interviews, two personal interviews were conducted. The reason for this was twofold: Firstly, in order to expound on certain elements and findings from group interviews. There are several advantages of group interviews, but it can also be difficult to give each respondent full attention. Personal interviews leave time to fully elaborate on and explore every answer from the respondent. Secondly, it was done to see whether new knowledge would come forth, knowledge that was maybe too personal or intimate to discuss in a group. Group interviews can cause respondents to hold back information or perspectives that do not agree with the rest of the group or that is too personal to be discussed in a group. However, the personal interviews did not bring forth findings that were significantly different from the findings of the group interviews, but it did contribute to elaboration of certain aspects.

Pilot interview and continuous adjusting

I started the collection of data by doing a pilot interview on a shared ride. I tested the questions from my interview guide to see if there were any neglected areas, to see whether or not I had chosen to focus on the right areas, and to see if I could restructure or otherwise improve the questions for gathering data later on. It proved very useful, as there were some areas, which were more important to the respondents than I had anticipated and vice versa. This gave me the opportunity to ask in depth questions about it and through that improve my interview guide significantly. An example of this is how I added a whole new dimension of questions regarding user reviews and expanded considerably on the area of in-group behaviour. There was constant revisiting and revising of the interview guide depending on the collected data from the respondents. In the early phase of the data collection, there was much to learn and investigate, and so new knowledge was acquired through theory and again through further interviews. Towards the end of the data collection, a clearer frame and structure of the interviews had occurred. Therefore, the interviews vary in length and content, and the first interviews and the last interviews will by default due to constant learning process be very different from one another (Andersen, 2005). There was thus a constant interplay between theory and practice, which was an ideal way of collecting data and achieving insight to ride sharing.

Participant observation

To further support the data from interviews, participant observation was an important part of the data collection. This approach allowed me to gather primary data on behaviour in a natural environment, and it has allowed me to observe behaviour, routines and codex of shared rides. Observation is a way of investigating things that cannot be directly asked about nor perhaps

explained. It explores elements that are instinctive and non-conscious, and it allows for the researcher to notice behaviours and patterns, which respondents may not have noticed themselves (Kristiansen & Krogstrup, 1999). Participant observation provides less information on 'why' compared to qualitative interviews, which is why it must be supported by interviews. However, observing allows the researcher to see 'how' and to observe behaviour that participants may be unaware of, that they do not know how to put into words, or that they may feel embarrassed to discuss. Furthermore, it was an ideal way of finding new and relevant areas to investigate. I was able to observe certain behaviours on one ride and could then ask questions regarding those observations on the following rides. A weakness of this method is the observer bias, as I am the investigator who chooses what and how to observe and process information. However, with every interview and ride, I was aware of the research purpose. I went on six shared rides in order to make both interviews, but also to engage in participant observation and observe the mechanisms, processes and elements that occur in ride sharing. Respondents were not informed that I was investigating behaviour as well, as that could possibly make them think too much about their actions and restrict their behaviour. Furthermore, I went on one shared ride as an observation ride only, to see if any other mechanisms or details would come forth on a completely authentic ride without an interview. The observation ride showed no significant differences in behaviour compared to rides with interviews.

Participants, representativeness and validity

18 respondents participated in the collection of data. Selection criteria for respondents were few, as they were found through random bookings of shared rides. The two respondents used for personal interviews were not found through a shared ride, but through personal network. As the purpose of the thesis was to explore a practice, there was no need for specific criteria with respondents. The only requirement for all participants was that they had engaged in ride sharing. Consequently, respondents are not representative for the Danish population as a whole, but they are valid in this study as the aim is to give an insight to the practice of ride sharing. Some respondents had their first ride during the interview, but most respondents had several experiences with ride sharing, and so the frame of reference is more than 400 rides in total. It is worth noticing that despite no selection criteria, respondents turned out to represent a wide variety in age, sex and occupation. Below is a table (table 1) that shows the rides and participants used to gather data.

No.	Date	Respondent	Age	Occupation	Sex	Rides	Duration	Type
1	aug 16th	A (driver)	54	musician	F	20+	26 min.interview	shared ride, group interview
		B	28	journalism, student	F	100+	/3,5 hour ride	
		C	32	self-employed, shipping	M	30+		
2	aug 20th	D	28	shop assistant	F	20+	15 min.	personal interview
3	aug 21th	E (driver)	45	chief supplier	F	50+	32 min.interview	shared ride, group interview
		f	58	cashier	F	1	/3,5 hour ride	
4	aug 26th	G (driver)	32	freelance writer/ teacher	M	15 +	24 min. interview	shared ride, group interview
		H	28	PR/communications assistant	F	50+	/3,5 hour ride	
		I	25	junior attorney	F	2		
5	sep 4th	J	24	dental hygienist	F	1	24 min.	personal interview
6	oct 11th	K (driver)	28	building technician	M	2	35 min. interview	shared ride, group interview
		I	24	nurse, student	F	2	/3,5 hour ride	
7	oct 13th	M (driver)	39	economist	M	20 +	51 min. interview	shared ride, group interview
		N	62	kinder garten teacher	F	10+	/3,5 hour ride	
		O	23	office assistant	F	50+		
8	oct 19th	P (driver)	57	insurance broker	M	50+	39 min.interview	shared ride, group interview
		Q	32	cand.ling.merc.	F	20+	/3,5 hour ride	
		R	24	law student	F	30+		
9	oct 22th	S (driver)	48	architect	M		3,5 hours	shared ride, observation study only
		T	36	self-employed, PR	F			
		U	20	HF, student	F			

Table 1.

All interviews are enclosed on USB (appendix B), except interview no. 2, as it was accidentally deleted after summarising.

3.4 Processing, structuring and interpretation of data

When processing and structuring collected data, there are several factors that must be taken into account. *“Any transcription from one context to another involves assessment and several decisions”* (Kvale, 1997:163)⁹. Every interview was recorded in order to not miss any important details. Notes were also taken throughout the interviews and immediately afterwards, reflections, key words and observations were written down as well. As I was doing the

⁹ My translation. Org: *“Enhver transskription fra en kontekst til en anden indebærer en række vurderinger og beslutninger”*

interviews myself, there was also an understanding and interpretation of answers happening while the interviews took place. Shortly after each interview, the recordings were listened to and written into summaries. They were not directly transcribed due to limits of time. Summaries were made where relevant points and quotations were gathered. Answers were structured under the themes and headlines from the interview guide. As most interviews were performed in a moving car, there was natural noise on all recordings. On some of them quite much. This made it, however, most critical that the summarising took place shortly after the interviews, so that the memory of the ride and statements was still fresh in my mind in case something was difficult to hear on the tape. Handwritten notes from the interviews also helped with this (Kvale, 1997).

To structure the data, I made use of meaning condensation, meaning interpretation and narrative structuring (Kvale, 1997). When transcribing or summarising, a decision is made to either write down statements word by word exactly as they were spoken or to allow for rephrasing and clarifying changes. I have chosen to trim and improve spoken statements in order to make them easier to read and understand. In order to find the appropriate way of processing data, the purpose of the research must be at focus. The purpose of these interviews was finding a meaning in a larger perspective and not finding meaning in the wording itself. As the statements are used to gather information on the general perceptions of the respondents, the statements are valid even though they have been adjusted (Kvale, 1997). I therefore also rarely include emotional aspects of statements directly such as words like 'uhm', giggling, hesitation, body language etc. Including aspects like this is most often relevant in linguistic or psychological analyses (Kvale, 1997) and so they are not directly relevant to the research question at hand. However, these aspects are moderately included in quotations, if they were particularly distinct or pronounced and therefore functioned as important knowledge and information in itself. The interpretation of meanings goes deeper than the mere statements and it places them in a broader frame of reference. When interpreting, the interpreter goes beyond what is said with the purpose of developing structures of meaning, which perhaps are not directly visible from mere statements. It is placed in a context with the help of the theoretical frames of the thesis. In this way, greater meanings and new perspectives are created (Kvale, 1997). For some respondents, the use of narratives was relevant. Some respondents expressed feelings, experiences and points of views through stories from ride sharing experiences, some of which are included in the analysis.

A way of securing correct interpretations can be to allow respondents to review their transcribed answers. This is, however, very time-consuming and so there was not resources in this project to do so. In order to secure that I have understood the answers from respondents correctly, I made sure to ask clarifying questions during the interviews, whenever there was doubt. It can be difficult to control whether something has been processed and interpreted correctly. However, by explicitly presenting the procedure and explaining the context in which data is processed, there is transparency in the process, which serves to validate it further.

3.5 Translation

Every interview was carried out in Danish and was translated into English during summarising. Thus, all quotations used in the analysis are in English. This is in order to make the reading of the analysis fluent and not disturbed by a constant switch of language. Whenever there is translation, there is also interpretation and the risk of data being lost or misinterpreted. However, as I have carried out all interviews, I know the material and the context first hand, which minimises the risk of misinterpretation. Furthermore, through my education I have been trained in translation and I am therefore aware of challenges and potential pitfalls to avoid meaning being lost.

3.6 Information search

Information search mainly took place in the many databases of the CBS library system. Academic journals, research, investigations, books and articles form the basis of the information search. Firstly, knowledge regarding collaborative consumption in general was gathered in order to find potential relevant areas to investigate. Thereafter, information regarding the transport area was explored and finally research on sociological aspects of consumer behavior. The research objective was created from this, reflecting an area which would be interesting to investigate further. The early pilot interview also served to find out whether there were any neglected areas, which could then be further researched and included in the following interviews to complete the project.

3.7 Theory of scientific method

The research approach contains elements from both humanistic sciences as well as social sciences, as the boundaries between the two are not clear-cut and they are often combined (Collin & Køppe, 2003). The social sciences are present in this thesis as societal *behaviour* is investigated, and the humanistic approach is present as *interpretational processes* are affected by the context in which they are created (Ankersborg, 2011).

The aim of all research is to find a kind of 'truth' and to enlighten how something takes place in a certain 'reality'. The perception of said truth and reality, plus the way of finding this out, greatly depends on scientific approach (Ankersborg, 2011). From my point of view, this means that the on-going learning and understanding, which develops during the process, influences every decision made. I acknowledge the fact that a project of this kind is influenced by the context in which it is created, and that I as the investigator play a central role in this. My pre-understanding and my academic background affect choices of literature, structure of thesis, investigation design as well as analysis and interpretation. Hermeneutics are therefore central to this thesis. The truth is influenced by the investigator and so my pre-understanding influences every analysis and interpretation. Central to this is the concept of *the hermeneutical circle*. It refers to the relation between the part and the whole, which are always connected in an on-going process of understanding (Collin & Kjøppe, 2003; Thurén, 2008). Something can only be understood in the light of what one already knows. It is not so that something cannot be interpreted, rather it stresses that the meaning of something must be found within its context (Øhrgaard & Nørgaard, 2004). Thus, there is a constant balancing of theory and practice, part and whole, pre-understanding and new knowledge (Thurén, 2008).

3.8 Critical reflections

The hermeneutical approach is criticized, because it cannot be completely controlled whether the sender has interpreted correctly. The hermeneutical cognition can thus be seen as somewhat uncertain. However, I am aware of these preconditions, and I am explicit about my pre-understanding and its influence on results. The validity in interpretation is secured, as I make it transparent what I have done and how (Kvale, 1997; Thurén, 2008). Choice of theory and interpretation of it is also naturally influenced by my pre-understanding. Also here, my approach is to be open for interpretations of data, which do not necessarily fit the theory or the expectations that I have due to my pre-understanding.

3.9 Purpose

The purpose of present thesis is not to present a definitive truth, which is also not the purpose of the hermeneutical approach. The approach acknowledges subjective interpretation. Furthermore, interpretation is always exposed to random occurrences, either externally or internally from the interpreter herself. This does not mean that this thesis cannot be seen as finalized within the conditions of a master's thesis, rather it means that there is room for further interpretation and investigation of the results presented. The thesis is still a contribution to knowledge production within its field.

4. Theoretical basis

The theory contributes to defining the subject and the research scope. It is also determining for the elements in the primary data collection and it is part of the analysis and discussion, as the theory is discussed in relation to the empirical findings. A variety of factors are introduced in the following. There are elements directly related to the car as consumption object and to transport use, as well as elements on a general level in terms of consumer behaviour and sociological aspects connected to ride sharing. This to give a nuanced view on the ride sharing practice.

4.1 Transportation

Cars and 'automobility' have become subject of detailed and plenty analysis. Much research is based on and executed in the US, but there are many general elements that apply in other contexts as well (Gartman, 2004). The car is not just an ordinary consumption object. Two of the largest, most expensive and most important purchases in life are the home and the car. The car is one of the absolute strongest and powerful objects of consumption, and it holds much meaning and ideological importance (Featherstone, Thrift, & Urry, 2005; Flink, 1975). Therefore, it is relevant to investigate the different uses of it and connected meanings. Other modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling or flying are not included in the following, as they are not relevant, direct alternatives to the use of ride sharing.

The car as key consumption object

The car was invented in 1886 and is thus a very old consumption object. It is an object that is present and known almost everywhere in the world. Cars have high visibility and in 2014, more than 1 billion vehicles were on the world's roads (Voelker, 2014). The consumption and use of cars often mirror the economic and social development of a society (Featherstone et al., 2005; Flink, 1975; Gartman, 2004; Hole, 2007; Jensen, 1999 and others). "*[It] is a hybrid assemblage of specific human activities, machines, roads, buildings, signs and cultures of mobility*" (Urry, 2004:26). The car is considered not only a manufactured object, but also an item of individual consumption, a form of mobility and a dominant cultural discourse (Gartman, 2004). It is a key object and symbol of consumption, and it holds very strong symbolic value in society. "*There is a powerful socio-economic and technological complex at work sustaining the car...*" (Featherstone et al., 2005:1) and therefore also surrounding the different uses of it. It is thus interesting to investigate and understand the use of the car in ride sharing. There is large diversity in car cultures around the world and it is "*... subjected to a great variety of cultural uses, practices and*

coding" (Featherstone et al., 2005:5), which present thesis seeks to investigate in the context of ride sharing.

Cars and ride sharing

Sharing of cars is not a new phenomenon. As the car is one of the most expensive purchases consumers make, there is a logical incentive to seek cheaper alternatives to owning. Alternatives that can optimise use and minimise costs. *"From a consumer point of view, the advantages of the car sharing organisation are often described as considerable. As the fixed costs are shared between members, it's much cheaper to be a member of a CSO than to privately own a car (...)"* (Jonsson, 2007:149). CSOs were firstly introduced in Europe in the 1980s, mainly in the German speaking countries. It was introduced in the Nordic countries in the middle of the 1990s (Jonsson, 2007; Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999). As it was introduced before the Internet became standard in most western homes, booking was originally done by phone. Most organisations were small and local at first, but as the concept spread, it became larger organisational set-ups as well. By 1998, European car sharing had approximately 38,000 members (Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999). Today, the concept still exists, and it has developed extensively. The Internet makes it accessible on many levels and much easier to organise and so many different services has emerged, involving also private cars and ride sharing as provided by e.g. GoMore (see section 2.5). CSOs are mostly relevant for shorter trips and so *"car-sharing organisations close a gap in modes of passenger transport. CSO-car trips fit in between those with cab and rental cars"* (Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999:445). The main motive for membership of a CSO is when there is only periodic need for a car for shorter trips, but at the same time, not having access to a car at all would not be sufficient (Jonsson, 2007; Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999). Present thesis focuses on understanding the newer, alternative type of car sharing, which is ride sharing. Ride sharing differs from car sharing in the sense that it does not require fixed membership and a monthly service charge. Private drivers offer rides on trips, which they were planning to take anyway. Each individual ride is booked when needed and payment is per ride. Ride sharing is suited for longer rides and as such, it also serves as a direct alternative to public transportation.

Public transportation

Public transportation serves as one of the main alternatives to ride sharing, and it is therefore relevant to the investigation. The 20th century unfolded a shift from public transportation to the private car and so historically, the car was a way for the upper class to avoid the poor, who were forced to use public transportation. In public transportation, people are forced to be physically close to strangers. Although, there is the possibility of ignoring other people around and simply

focusing on one self only. Advantages of public transportation is that it is cheaper than owning a private car, it holds less responsibilities and gives passengers the possibility of concentrating on others things whilst being transported like e.g. working or reading (Jensen, 1999). However, it also creates a feeling of passiveness. Public transportation lacks the feeling of freedom and individuality that comes with a car. It forces passengers into fixed timetables and fixed routes and in a way it is a necessary evil (Urry, 2004). Studies show that the evaluation of public transportation rarely is particularly positive. It seems that psychological values are not strongly connected to the use of public transportation, whereas they are very strongly connected to car use (Steg, 2005). Ride sharing seems to provide the same cheap alternative as public transportation. Users can furthermore avoid the large amount of strangers when using ride sharing, but they are forced to acknowledge fellow travellers and engage in the social context of the shared ride.

Hitchhiking

Hitchhiking is another alternative to both car and public transportation, and it resembles ride sharing in several ways. It is therefore interesting to discuss the hitchhiking practice in connection to ride sharing.

Hitchhiking is a cheap alternative, as it is often done for very little or no payment at all. It is primarily done of social reasons without economic incentives (Chesters & Smith, 2001; O'Regan, 2012) and could be characterised as being an early type of collaborative consumption. However, today it is used very little and there are primarily negative associations connected to the practice (Chesters & Smith, 2001). Key aspects of hitchhiking are impulsivity, spontaneity and uncertainty and also the sharing of an experience (O'Regan, 2012:138). Hitchhiking had its glorious days in the 1960s and 1970s. Students primarily used it and it was viewed as an alternative culture associated with freedom, anti-establishment, environmentalism, nomadism, adventure, escape and discovery. Users would willingly trade speed, convenience and time for experiences, meetings and connections (Chesters & Smith, 2001; O'Regan, 2012). For a while, hitchhiking served as the cheapest transport alternative, but as public transportation became cheaper and special discounts for students were introduced, it reduced the incentives for hitchhiking and there was a clear decline in the practice (Chesters & Smith, 2001). Furthermore, there also seemed to incur a heightened sense of risk, which occurred after great media attention to bad episodes. After episodes of passengers being assaulted or even murdered, people started considering hitchhiking as unsafe and risky: *"(...)hitchhiking has entered an irretrievable downward spiral, in which hitchhikers have become by definition marginal, deviant,*

possibly criminal and certainly risky" (Chesters & Smith, 2001:6.1). A study from 2001 refers to the hitchhiking practice as being basically historic and something that is only used by those who have genuinely no other alternative. The potential benefits of hitchhiking, other than the financial, are described as *"social as well as environmental benefits, in promoting sociability and cooperativeness and enabling people to cross the barrier of fear and the barrier of selfishness"* (Chesters & Smith, 2001:5.2). These are all benefits that fit nicely into the area of collaborative consumption. The impulsive nature of hitchhiking is, however, also what makes people feel unsafe. To address this, there would have to be a degree of organising in order to reduce the risk, or at least the perception of it, and to give the impression of formality and control, which the practice of ride sharing can offer.

4.2 Car use, identity and meaning

In the following, the symbolic meaning and identity creation in connection to car use will be presented. There are potential differences in the symbolic meaning of car use, depending on whether there is ownership or sharing.

Consumption is a way for consumers to form identity as *"(...) meaning is drawn from the object and transferred to an individual consumer"* (Mccracken, 1986:71). The symbolic meaning from goods is transferred to the consuming person, and so consumption becomes a means of not only construction but also maintenance of identity. The car and the use of it transfer meaning to build up the identity of the user, which is then presented to others. *"Possessions help us manipulate our possibilities and present the self in a way that garners feedback from others (...)"* (Belk, 1988:159). Ownership as a concept holds strong symbolic value, because it is connected to certain stages of life and has been seen as preferable to e.g. renting. Historically, owning was seen first of all as the cheapest alternative, but also as providing a sense of independency and for being the 'right' option in life. *"It is embedded with rites to adulthood and bound up with discourses of choice and freedom. Thus, the owner has been elevated to a better type of citizen, neighbour, or even parent"* (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012:883). It is furthermore a way in which consumers can fulfil a sense of continuity and permanence in life (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Possessions are crucial to knowing who we are because we seek, express and confirm a sense of being through what we have. Consumer research have found and investigated extraordinarily high feelings of identity invested in material objects and especially in the car (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 1988; Elliott, 2004; Featherstone et al., 2005; Jensen, 1999; Jonsson, 2007; Sachs, 1983; Sheller, 2004; Steg, 2005; Urry, 2004; Wong, Hogg, & Vanharanta, 2012 and others). Ownership of a car holds heavy symbolic value and *"people seek vehicles to express/compliment their individuality"*

(Featherstone et al., 2005:7) and therefore, *"(...) the car is the major item of individual consumption which provides status to its owner/user through the sign values with which it is associated(...)"* (Chesters & Smith, 2001:4.3). It is therefore interesting to investigate if and how ride sharing creates and promotes identity for the users in the same ways.

Extended self

The reason why ownership of a car holds such a significant meaning for a consumer is related to the creation of the extended self: *"(...) knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves"* (Belk, 1988:139). The extended self is not limited to external objects, but also includes persons, places and group possessions (Elliott, 2004). Experiences can function in the same way (Belk, 1988) and therefore, the sharing of rides also has a strong symbolic meaning and can be contributing to identity creation. We can furthermore define ourselves through group identities by e.g. being part of a specific societal movement or culture and can express belonging and group membership through shared consumption symbols (Belk, 1988). *"Consumption as a social practice is a dynamic and relatively autonomous process which involves the symbolic construction of a sense of self through the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital"* (Elliott, 2004:133). Taking part in the collaborative consumption can create a sense of belonging and identity both in the actual ride sharing participation, but also in the more symbolic way of being part of this new consumption tendency in general. *"The extended self operates not only on an individual level, but also on a collective level involving family, group, subcultural, and national identities"* (Belk, 1988:160). Important is the fact that ownership of a car and therefore also deliberate 'non-ownership' holds many elements to investigate and interpret, as do also experiences with collaborative consumption. Furthermore, when we see objects and experiences as parts of ourselves, there is the risk of that self being interrupted or invaded by others in different situations and uses. This will be further elaborated on in section 4.5.

4.3 Dominant factors of car use

In the following, some of the dominant factors of car use will be presented in order to analyse and compare it in a ride sharing perspective. The car is no doubt a practical instrument and a means of transportation, but it contains much more. The car has always been a dominant element in what constitutes 'the good life', and so there are many factors at play when investigating the use of it (Sheller, 2004). These factors can be characterised as being either of an instrumental-reasoned (I-R) or of a symbolic-affective (S-A) kind. *"Car consumption is never simply about rational economic choices, but is as much about aesthetic, emotional and sensory*

responses to driving, as well as patterns of kinship, sociability, habitation and work" (Sheller, 2004:222) and thus, ride sharing has many dimensions as well. I-R factors are of a practical kind which includes e.g. speed, flexibility and convenience, and S-A factors deal with feelings and emotions connected to car use. The sign-values of car use are, among other things, speed, security, safety, sexual desires, career, success, freedom and family (Steg, 2005). "(...) *The utility of car travel is not only dependent on its instrumental value, but also on symbolic and affective factors*" (Steg, 2005:148). Research show that the I-R aspects are predominately valued less important than the S-A ones. This applies regardless of the purpose of the car use, and so it applies for commuters, frequent drivers as well as non-regular drivers (Steg, 2005). In the following, factors of both kinds will be elaborated on.

Freedom, independence and flexibility

The car is heavily associated with freedom and independence. Even non-users recognise these qualities in cars, as 50-60% of cyclists and users of public transportation agree (Jensen, 1999). The car is often seen as a private space where one can take a break from the world. In a modern society where people are expected to be online and available non-stop, it can be a place free from the job, colleagues, spouse, children etc. You can sing, talk to yourself, listen to music and do whatever you wish, and it is a place where you only answer to yourself (Jensen, 1999; Urry, 2004). "*Within the private cocoon of glass and metal intense emotions are released in forms otherwise unacceptable*" (Urry, 2004:31). And as such, the car can function as a safe space, where one is free to just be.

Car use also encourages flexibility. Freedom and flexibility are often associated with the possibility to move anywhere geographically and with a car, it is possible to go in any direction at all times (Gartman, 2004; Sachs, 1983). There is a seamlessness in car rides, which public transportation cannot seem to offer. As the car was introduced and later made available to many people, it resulted in more trips made. Most of the trips by car were not made by public transportation before. The flexibility of the car has thus encouraged new journeys to be made (Gartman, 2004). Furthermore, the car is a means of socialising and feeling included. It gives the feeling of liberty, empowerment and also social inclusion due to the possibilities that come with it. At the same time, it can be restrictive for the personal possibilities if one either cannot drive or has no access to the mobility, as "*(...)cars have been deeply integrated into the affective networks of familial life and domestic spaces, as well as friendship networks and public sociability*" (Sheller, 2004:230). It is therefore interesting to investigate if and how ride sharing is able to

provide the same feelings of independence, freedom and flexibility, or whether users are compromising.

Gender and masculinity

The car also has a very strong connection to masculinity. Earlier, the car underlined not only the inequality between different social classes, but also between the genders. *"In general, automobiles were defined as masculine, both because they provided mobility in the public sphere and because they were utilitarian and mechanical objects of production. Women were supposed to confine themselves to the private, domestic sphere (...) Consequently, car ownership and operation were considered culturally appropriate mainly for men"* (Gartman, 2004:174). The car was also associated with characteristics that are traditionally seen as masculine e.g. speed, horsepower, sexuality, money, prestige, omnipotence and virility (Sachs, 1983). However, with the increase in woman workers, it became increasingly normal for women to participate in this sphere. Firstly, as an integrated part of the household by picking up children or doing grocery shopping. Later, in connection to everyday life and work, and today it is normal and accepted for women to buy, own and use cars on the same level as men. There is, however, still a tendency for the car to remain male territory. A 2010 study shows that when couples drive together, men are four times more likely to take the wheel (Green, 2013). Therefore, not owning a car or not driving the car is potentially a gender issue also. Furthermore, there is still an inveterate tendency to hold on to masculine characteristics of cars and to make jokes about the lack of driving skills with women (Featherstone et al., 2005). Ride sharing may as well hold noticeable gender related issues in the same way as regular car use.

4.4 Post-modern tendencies and collaborative consumption

Post-modern tendencies, which are a large part of the wave of collaborative consumption, have caused changes in the view on consumption and therefore also on car use. This occurs especially within the symbolic-affective factors.

Freedom and social relations

Some of the most important motivation and barriers of car use are freedom versus limitation and independence versus dependence. However, the freedom and independence that the car provides ironically also creates a dependency on exactly that. The increasing amount of cars puts enormous pressure on the roads and creates traffic jams, which frustrates the users who waste their time in tailbacks. The independence and freedom are lost feelings, as you watch thousands of other commuters cramp together on the roads (Jensen, 1999). Ride sharing is

indeed a relevant alternative for consumers to consider in order to reducing the limitations that regular car use can potentially cause.

Another challenge in post-modern society is how individualisation and independency, which to a great extent is represented by the private car, also cause people to withdraw from the public sphere. More and more people spend much time alone in their cars. Furthermore, many people already only socialise with people that are similar to themselves, which makes it difficult to identify with both other drivers and also other people in society in general. It causes different lifestyles to compete against each other on the roads and in society (Gartman, 2004). *"(...)Car use has been heavily criticised due to a wide range of issues from the most obvious; polluting the environment, but also for transforming the townscape, enhancing stress and irritation in everyday life and even contributing to isolation in society"* (Jonsson, 2007:153). It could be argued that ride sharing brings the exact opposite of this as strangers, who would have perhaps otherwise never met, share a ride and an experience together in ride sharing.

Consumer ethics

Owning a car has traditionally been preferred over other alternatives, whenever possible. For some consumers, the view on ownership is starting to change and it is not necessarily the best solution anymore. *"Consumers are re-examining spending habits and rethinking their values, including the relationship between ownership and well-being"* (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012:883). Sharing a car and ride instead of owning can thus for some consumers fulfil the same needs as owning: *"(...) being a member of a car sharing organisation is to be treated as identity promoting for the users in the same way as owning a Jaguar is for the Jaguar owner"* (Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999:448). As such, there are strong signals in the way consumers choose to relate to the car and some consumers are starting to focus on the negative aspects of car use and therefore deliberately chooses other alternatives (Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999). For some consumers, the car ceases to be an object of fascination and instead it becomes common. The symbolic value of the car is thus starting to fade: *"(...)the distinct value of the car becomes subject to an inflationary process, thereby devaluating the symbolic power of the car"* (Sachs, 1983:359). For some groups, the car has become a symbol of over-consumption, and it has even become a sign of inferiority. *"In the green movement (...) the car has somewhat become a symbol of the downside of consumer society"* (Jonsson, 2007:153). It is associated with lack of responsibility for the environment or associated with an unhealthy lifestyle of laziness and neglecting the body (Gartman, 2004; Jonsson, 2007). The ethics of car use and especially its effect on the environment is thus becoming increasingly relevant. However, it often conflicts with the needs

of mobility and the coordination of family, networks and friends. There are several ethics involved in car use in everyday life and intense negotiating between these different points of views (Sheller, 2004). Research show that consumers find themselves in a social dilemma in the sense that they care much about protecting the environment and they realise how harmful private car use is, but at the same time, many cannot not imagine their own lives without a car (Jensen, 1999). It is not lack of information on the harmfulness of car use that causes people to use the car so much, rather it is the lack of better alternatives (Jensen, 1999). The sharing of cars and rides could serve as alternatives that meet the new needs of consumers today.

A matter of access

There are many psychological forces that support ownership, but with the arrival of collaborative consumption, there has been a move in the direction of access instead: *"In many instances it is not the 'material' product that is desired by an individual, but the service it renders"* (Prettenthaler & Steininger, 1999:443). It can thus be argued that ride sharing provides the user with exactly what is needed at a given time without further complications. When it comes to access, it is concentrated on the possibility of gaining access to a certain object in a specific time frame. It is about access to a service or object that fulfils practical needs. Ride sharing provides consumers access to a transport service when needed. As such, the practice is not necessarily pro-social or altruistic as is often the case of sharing. Instead, access is underlined by economic exchange and reciprocity and less personal involvement compared to sharing. Access has been stigmatized as inferior compared to owning as being *"(...) wasteful, precarious, and limited in individual freedom"* (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012:883). Today, it is not necessarily seen as limiting for the individual consumer. Access has become very extensive, especially through it's digital form, which has brought about endless possibilities of easy access. Many consumers today view access as an easy and reasonable alternative to owning (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Skytte, 2014a).

A matter of sharing

Sharing is a key element in collaborative consumption: *"The ground the collaborative consumption occupies is a middle ground between sharing and marketplace exchange, with elements of both"* (Belk, 2013:1597). During the past few years, the perception of sharing in the minds of consumers has changed (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2014; Belk & Llamas, 2012; Belk, 2013; Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). It is not necessarily seen as inferior to owning. Sharing can be about more than just plain access to an object, as it often involves the sharing of an experience by the involved users and therefore, it can require larger

personal involvement than access. Sharing is traditionally associated with the interior world at home and not the exterior market (Belk, 2010). The arrival of the collaborative consumption has taken sharing away from the interior world and brought it out to be represented in the exterior market as well.

Many of the sociological elements of sharing are present in ride sharing. There is a distinction between the sharing of objects and the sharing of experiences, which is referred to as either tangible or intangible sharing (Belk & Llamas, 2012). Ride sharing involves both the sharing of an object and the sharing of a driving experience. Sharing is generally more likely to take place within family and friends than among complete strangers (Belk, 2010), which also makes ride sharing an interesting middle ground. When people offer to share something that must not necessarily be shared, it is called 'open-sharing' which is relevant in the context of collaborative consumption. As such, sharing holds the element of being pro-social and or even altruistic in its pure form which are elements that can be connected to collaborative consumption (Belk, 2013). The pro-social aspect of sharing can be of great importance to the consumers who choose to engage in this kind of consumption, and thus also in the case of ride sharing: *"(...) sharing can foster community, save resources, and create certain synergies"* (Belk, 2007:126). Generally, it is a behaviour that is unnatural when occurring between strangers. Therefore, sharing can bring both positive and negative consequences for users of ride sharing, and it can thus be one of the main challenges of the practice.

4.5 Challenges of ride sharing

As stated above, one of the key ingredients in collaborative consumption is sharing and there are challenges to the sharing of resources, which consumers have to deal with, when engaging in the ride sharing practice.

Contamination

A clear complication of sharing is the risk of others invading a part of our extended self (see section 4.2). This is referred to as 'contamination'. It can occur both intentionally and not and can be of both positive and negative nature. It is not concrete contamination as such (bacteria etc), but rather the symbolic contamination that the self can be exposed to from someone or something else (Belk, 1988). There are several ways that contamination can occur i.a. through violation of personal space, through direct bodily contact, through looks and stares, through noise, through talking, but also through smells and heat (Belk, 1988). An example of contamination being negative can be found in second hand clothing. Research show that regular

clothes like dresses or shoes are sellable and shareable, but clothing worn too close to the previous owner like e.g. underwear is almost impossible to sell second hand as the contamination is too heavy. An example of positive contamination is when friends share clothes. Not only do they share friendship, but they also share identities and create a strong bond between them by letting themselves be 'contaminated' by the possessions of the other (Belk, 1988). Contamination is thus most often positive when it occurs between people who know each other and share sympathy for one another. Positive contamination rarely occurs between strangers. Contamination of personal space and of self occurs, when sharing a car and a ride with someone you do not know. Therefore, the practice can be a threat to the self and it can be associated with severe feelings of discomfort (Belk, 1988).

Risk and trust between strangers

Another challenge to ride sharing is connected to trust and risk. Going on a shared ride with strangers requires trust in those strangers. When trusting strangers, there is an element of risk by voluntarily giving up control. This risk can be divided into two sorts, either objective or subjective. Objective risk is about the actual unpredictability of future events unrelated to human behaviour, which is present always and basically not something consumers can influence as such. Subjective risk focuses on the perceived unpredictability of future events that are subject to human behaviour, which is what happens in ride sharing. Therefore, it is mostly a matter of perceived risk rather than actual risk (Li, 2007). This, however, does not change the fact that it can be very uncomfortable to give up control and trust others. *"Due to the importance of trust and the risks involved, deciding whether to fully trust another individual or group is often difficult and psychologically uncomfortable"* (Betts & Elder, 2011:55). Research finds that elements such as willing vulnerability, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness are all part of trust (Betts & Elder, 2011; Li, 2007). It is a mechanism, which is crucial in many aspects of daily life in order to make everything flow. *"(...)trust is an indispensable social resource in modern societies because it helps to reduce social complexity and coordinate collective action"* (Kaina, 2011:282). There are different levels of trust, but generalized trust refers to trust in strangers, which is what is relevant for this investigation. Strangers are anonymous others, who we do not know personally and who we meet sporadically on more or less casual occasions (Kaina, 2011).

Investigating this in a Danish context is particularly interesting, as Denmark has an extraordinary high degree of trust in others. Studies show that 78 out of 100 Danish people

believe that they can fully trust other people¹⁰. It is very high numbers, and it is believed to be closely connected to the type of welfare society that Denmark has¹¹ (see section 2.3). As a consequence of the Danish welfare model, much of the mechanisms in society are built on trust and sharing and it requires a sense of solidarity, willingness to share and willingness to co-operate and actively accept differences (Chesters & Smith, 2001). Relevant to this is the 'dyadic effect' in trust. It means that there is a significant correlation between a person's trust predisposition and that person's feeling of being trusted by others (Yakovleva & Reilly, 2011:178). Meaning that if you are in a trusting environment and feel that others put faith and trust in you, you are more likely to trust others too (Kaina, 2011). This is a reason why ride sharing would potentially do very well in Denmark.

When dealing with generalized trust, institutions also play a central role as they are means of facilitating trust in strangers: *"The institutional approach to generalized trust creation is mainly based on the assumption that only institutions with certain features – such as impartiality, neutrality, equality before the law, or equality of opportunity – give people reason to trust strangers"* (Kaina, 2011:283). This means that when we find that institutions function in accordance with certain normative features, and we also believe that our fellow citizens think about these institutions in the same manner as we do, then we can trust people we do not know personally (Rothstein in Kaina, 2011:289). Furthermore, when we believe that violation of the rules within a certain institution results in fair and effective sanctions, it facilitates cooperation among people by minimizing the risks of the transfer of control (Kaina, 2011). The facilitation of ride sharing through a well-established service can thus reduce the discomfort and distrust that can be associated with sharing a ride with strangers.

In-group behaviour

The level of discomfort when trusting strangers can vary and it greatly depends on the knowledge and the amount of information that we have about the other part. Under some circumstances, we are forced to make decisions on trust based on no or very little knowledge of the other part. *"When such interactions happen, in order to predict the social situation, we turn to what little information we do have in order to ascertain whether we should trust"* (Betts & Elder, 2011:56). When this happens, we often base the trust on others on the group membership of

¹⁰ <http://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/derfor-er-danskerne-verdens-mest-tillidsfulde>

¹¹ <http://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/tillid-skaber-velfaerdsstaten-ikke-omvendt>

that other person and this is most often unknowingly. The trust will be founded in the beliefs we have regarding the groups we ourselves belong to, in-group, and the groups we do not belong to, out-group. "(...) we may behave differently if we know that the individual is a fellow in-group member" (Betts & Elder, 2011:56). In ride sharing perspective, this means that some sort of in-group relationship or understanding must be present in order for it to work. Providers of ride sharing will have to create some sort of collective or shared spirit, so that users feel just a small degree of in-group belonging, or users must find it themselves somehow.

Additional to trusting other users, driving in itself requires a high degree of trust and passengers very specifically have to trust the driving skills of the driver: *"Driving requires 'publics' based on trust, in which mutual strangers are able to follow such shared rules, communicate through common sets of visual and aural signals, and interact even with-out eye-contact in a kind of default space or non-place available to all 'citizens of the road'"* (Urry, 2004:29). All of this can constitute severe barriers to engaging in ride sharing.

5. Analysis and discussion

On the basis of the above theoretical aspects, the analysis and discussion of empirical findings are presented in five main areas with appertaining subsections. The main areas are:

Instrumental-Reasoned factors, Symbolic-Affective factors, Challenges, Ride Sharing in Practice and Observations. In the analysis, I empirically illustrate the range of motivations, emotions, desires and self-image that users attach to the practice of ride sharing. I look closely at the instrumental-reasoned factors of participation as well as the symbolic-affective ties that users develop with the practice. I will also dwell on the social challenges of sharing with strangers, and the trust that users must find in each other and in the system in order to participate in ride sharing. I focus on the practical arrangements that constitute the framework of a ride sharing service, as well as the importance of this set-up compared to uncontrolled, spontaneous hitchhiking. I will also discuss the influence of gender related issues and consumer ethics, and I present observations of ride sharing behaviour.

Structure

The analysis consists of both quotes from respondents and conclusions of a generalised kind derived from interviews and observations. Respondents are referred to as follows: (Alias, sex, age). There are areas where there is significant difference between drivers and passengers, car owners and those who do not own a car. Clear distinctions will be made whenever it is relevant

to the subject that is presented. The terms 'passengers' and 'drivers' are used for the specific two, and the terms 'respondents', 'users' and 'participants' refer to users in general. There will be sub-conclusions to continuously sum-up.

Introduction

"It is just a very likeable concept" (K, male, 28). This is how a respondent states his immediate opinion on ride sharing. Just very likeable. The concept of ride sharing would seem very likeable to anyone who learns of it. It is difficult to dislike a concept that saves resources in a pro-environment, pro-social manner and on top of that saves the users money by the use of underutilised consumer resources. It seems simple. But when digging further into the practical and sociological aspects of shared rides, it becomes clear that the practice holds many challenges that users and providers need to understand and overcome in order for it to actually work not only in theory, but in practice.

5.1 Instrumental-reasoned factors of ride sharing

Ride sharing is primarily used for longer trips. All respondents find ride sharing to be a well-functioning solution for this transportation need. The basic concept of ride sharing creates advantages for everyone involved. Passengers often save both money and time compared to public transportation, and drivers can get part of their expenses covered. *"There are only logical and good reasons to take someone with you or to go with someone"* (K, male, 28) and *"it is a clear win-win for all parties, as I am going on this trip anyway"* (P, male, 57). Respondents recognise the waste of resources when there are only one person in a car travelling long distances: *"Basically, it makes absolutely no sense to go on such a long car ride on your own with three empty seats"* (P, male, 57). Furthermore, respondents express that the set-up of the service is simple and easy to use and therefore causes very little inconvenience: *"It is just such an easy and well-functioning concept. Everything goes so smoothly, you do not have any inconvenience with payment or such, it all just works for you through the site"* (P, male, 57).

Financial motives

Financial issues are a natural part of most use of transportation, and respondents all acknowledge that there is a clear financial aspect to ride sharing as well. This is especially the case for passengers, who all mention the money that they can save and the possibilities that it gives them when engaging in ride sharing: *"I could never go as much back and forth between Aarhus and Copenhagen as I currently do, if it wasn't for ride sharing. Public transportation is simply too expensive"* (B, female, 28). For many passengers, it is also financial considerations that

make them want to try alternative methods of transport in the first place: *"I am not a student anymore, so the bus and the train are totally expensive. That was my motivation for trying out GoMore in the first place"* (J, female, 24). There seems to be a common view of ride sharing being particularly relevant for students who generally have less money than people with full-time jobs: *"When I was a student, if something like this had existed, I would have been so happy. Few students can afford transportation with the prices today"* (M, male, 39).

For all passengers, there is a clear acceptance of the financial incentives and they all mention the money they can save as a clear reason for using ride sharing: *"I remember having a clear economic incentive for trying ride sharing"* (Q, female, 32). However, when it comes to the drivers, although they acknowledge the money that they can save, they all clearly express that it was not the main issue when they decided to engage in ride sharing. It seems to be completely acceptable that passengers wish to save money, but it does not seem to be as accepted for drivers to want to save or make money in the same way. Drivers all make it clear that it is not their main motivation but only a nice contribution. As one driver expresses it: *"I don't do it to make money. I actually think it is a bit rude and unfair if you try to make money from it. I always set the price as it actually is [for the ferry]. I pay for the gas myself, because I would have done that anyway without passengers"* (A, female, 54). However, there are obvious financial motivations with the drivers as well, as they also express that they would not bring other passengers for free. Some passengers even express that they see it as lack of decency, if drivers express that their main objective is to make money from ride sharing. *"It annoys me when people set the prices too high. They just haven't understood the concept then. I mean, it is supposed to be a cheaper alternative. I think it's totally unfair if someone only wants to make money from it. Then it's not win-win, which in my personal opinion is the whole idea of the concept"* (O, female, 23). However, on the Internet platform where rides are offered, users can see other alternative rides and prices, and so the price level for similar rides is generally stable. *"The prices are mostly fair. You can see other rides and compare prices, so if there is one that is more expensive, you don't take it. That keeps the prices at a reasonable level"* (C, male, 32). For some drivers, primarily those who offer seats when going on business trips, they express that it is also a matter of helping others, who may have less available resources than themselves: *"Whenever I go on business trips, I set up rides. Well I mean, it is not charity, I do take money for it, obviously. I could just go alone if I felt like it, but I want to do something for students. It is something I wish had been an option when I was young"* (M, male, 39) and *"I am going on this trip anyway. I might as well take someone with me and help them out"* (P, male, 57).

With every interview, it became clear that when discussing the financial issue of ride sharing, it is something that makes the drivers less comfortable. They prefer and are much more active when discussing other aspects of ride sharing. Whereas for passengers, it is not an uncomfortable subject and they find it to be a large part of their motivation for use. It is, however, totally accepted by passengers as well as drivers that the service provider (GoMore) takes 10 per cent of the price of a ride for facilitating it. Users feel that it is a fair amount to pay for the facilitation. Details on the features of the specific ride sharing service will be further discussed in section 5.4.

Flexibility and convenience

Car use provides users with a large degree of flexibility. Something that public transportation cannot seem to offer in the same way. It is clear that many passengers use ride sharing as an alternative to public transportation, as it is cheaper and also saves them time: *"I always check the GoMore page firstly, whenever I am going somewhere. I prefer that and so if there is a trip available, I take it. It's definitely my first choice"* (O, female, 23). Shared rides are booked for trips that would have otherwise been booked with train or bus. Many passengers also express that they prefer ride sharing to public transportation: *"The trips I take are definitely an alternative to public transportation. The trains are so expensive"* (L, female, 24). For some, it is a matter of finding the most favourable solution for their specific trip: *"I actually check both busses, trains and GoMore every time I have to go somewhere. Most of the time, I end up with GoMore, but if I find a profitable ticket with public transportation, then I buy it. But that rarely happens"* (Q, female, 32). Passengers also find ride sharing to have a large degree of flexibility as there are many different rides to choose from, and they find it simple and easy to use: *"It is just as easy as taking the train. They [GoMore] made it so simple that you really can't find an easier alternative. I keep thinking 'why did I ever take the train?'"* (H, female, 28).

Many respondents also prefer ride sharing to public transportation because of the convenience. There is a large amount of rides available, very often also at times where the possibilities of public transportation are fewer: *"Especially in the weekends, there are so many ride opportunities. You can always find one that fits your schedule with time and places"* (B, female, 28). Public transportation is often connected to lack of freedom and flexibility, and many people find the fixed timetables limiting and tiresome. Ride sharing seems to provide the needed flexibility despite the fact that there are somewhat fixed times for these rides as well. Rides are naturally only offered on times that fit the schedules of the drivers. Respondents express that the ride sharing service almost always has a ride that fits their time schedule, even very shortly before

departure: *"There is a huge amount of freedom to it. I often book a ride the same day that I am leaving, and I can always find a ride"* (B, female, 28). The possibility of finding rides very close to departure is something that both drivers and passengers like: *"I love that you can book the trips so close to departure. One of the times where I was a driver, the last available seat in the car was booked just an hour before departure. It is nice that it is so flexible and can be done so quickly"* (O, female, 23).

Ride sharing also gives passengers a large degree of freedom, as it holds little or basically no responsibilities for them. Many passengers explain that it is a relief not having to worry about any issues related to the car when using ride sharing. There is no worrying about parking, putting in gas, about payment, about booking of ferry or the like: *"If you e.g. are going to Copenhagen and staying there, you really do not want a car there. Parking is expensive, there are never enough spaces anyway, and it is just a headache. That's what is so brilliant about shared rides"* (O, female, 23). Most passengers express that ride sharing is faster, easier and also cheaper than other alternatives: *"I saved half the price compared to the bus. The financial aspect is very important, but very much also the flexibility"* (J, female, 24). Furthermore, most respondents express that a car provides a much larger degree of comfort compared to public transportation: *"I prefer going by car, as it is just much more comfortable than train or bus"* (R, female, 24) and *"The bus takes longer and departure is even earlier. So it is faster and a more suitable time for me with the ride sharing. I can leave later and be there earlier"* (J, female, 24). One passenger, however, noted that it can sometimes be an issue with luggage on shared rides. With public transportation, there is always room for whatever size luggage you may want to bring and a car can have limited storage options: *"I often travel with quite a large suitcase between Aarhus and Copenhagen, and not all rides have room for that. Whereas on the bus or train, you can take as much luggage as you want"* (J, female, 24). Passengers also express that privacy can be a positive feature of public transportation. Some express that sometimes it can be nice that you do not have to talk to anyone and that you can mind your own business for the entire trip: *"I like that you can just be yourself on the bus or train. I don't have to consider other people at all"* (J, female, 24).

For the drivers, there seem to be the same consensus that shared rides are easy. Drivers do not feel that a shared ride is compromising their degree of flexibility, freedom or convenience. Many of them express that there is hardly any difference between the trips they would have had alone and the shared rides in regards to these aspects: *"I have my meeting anyway, and so for me, the*

trip is no different this way. I leave, when I otherwise would have, and I arrive when I otherwise would have. There is no difference" (M, male, 39).

Ownership and car use

Historically, owning has been seen as the 'right' way to do things. To passengers of ride sharing, ownership of a car is not necessarily the most advantageous solution. For many passengers, ride sharing is an alternative to owning at a particular stage of their lives. They find that it can maximise convenience and their current needs and at the same time minimise costs. However, many of the respondents who do not own a car at the moment believe that they will buy a car later in their lives, as many suspect their need for it to increase: *"I do not really like to drive. I can, but I would rather not. So this is an ideal way for me to get around. I guess in the far out future, I will probably be needing a car much more than I do now, and then I will probably get one. But not in the near future, that's for sure"* (Q, female, 32). Some of the respondents also believe that their economic situations will become better than it currently is, and that they will have more economic room to afford a car in the future: *"I want to have my own car someday, when I can afford it. I really like cars"* (O, female, 23). Some respondents, however, explain that they do not have such a large need for a car so that it would make sense for them to own one. They would instead prefer ride sharing or other forms of sharing: *"As it looks for me right now, I do not plan to get my own car. This is much easier. And it always works for me. I have much less trouble this way"* (R, female, 24). All respondents agree that there are large expenses connected with owning a car and that sharing is a less costly alternative: *"Financially, it would probably be a better idea to find some sort of sharing arrangements instead of owning my own car"* (O, female, 23).

Most respondents seem to agree that there is a specific point of most peoples' lives, where it makes more sense to own a car, because the need for it increases so much that ride sharing does not make sense anymore. Some agree that sharing arrangements are something that is mostly suited for younger people. It is cheap, and it is a smart alternative to owning a car, when your need for transportation is limited. But at some point in your life, it flips over. Many explain that when they have a family or find a job far away, they will need the flexibility of having your own car. And at that point in life, they expect that they can afford it better too. Most respondents believe that at a certain point in life, the advantages of sharing become smaller than those of owning and you make different choices. Still, some respondents believe that they would continue to offer rides through a ride sharing service, when getting their own car: *"But I imagine that many people would continue to take other people with them on rides, when they get their own*

car" (O, female, 23) and *"If I had my own car, I would take people with me. And I definitely want a car of my own some day"* (J, female, 24).

Sub-conclusion

The above presents the practical aspects of and the immediate motivations and feelings towards ride sharing. A key motivation for using ride sharing is financial, especially with passengers. Furthermore, it seems to be widely agreed that public transportation is inflexible and troublesome, whereas car use and ride sharing are not. Passengers are convinced that ride sharing is more flexible and easy compared to public transportation, despite sometimes having to go to specific meet-up places or finding their way home from drop-off spots. This also agrees with the theory that states how public transportation is rarely associated with positive feelings. Research show that the use of car is viewed as easy and flexible by owners as well as others, and this assumption seems to apply to cars in a ride sharing context as well. Drivers also express that their freedom and flexibility are not reduced in ride sharing context. Public transportation is the least desirable alternative, as respondents explain that they will generally look for other alternatives whenever they can find them. Research also states that psychological values are not attached to public transportation in the same way that they are to car use. A majority of passengers also consider ownership of a car at a later point in their lives and as such, they are not deliberately choosing not to own.

5.2 Symbolic-affective factors

Symbolic affective factors have to do with emotions connected to car use. It is more complex and comprehensive than are the instrumental-reasoned factors, and therefore this section contains a wide variety of aspects. Most dominate symbolic factors and values of cars and usage are also present and relevant in a ride sharing context. Post-modern society and collaborative consumption also bring a change in consumer perspectives on cars, which will all be elaborated on in the following.

Identity and commitment

There is a lot of identity invested in consumer objects and especially in the car. It is a way to form identity and the car holds heavy meaning for consumers. Sharing and not necessarily owning by taking part in collaborative consumption can also be a way of creating and maintaining identity as well as an object can. There is of course a clear difference in the view upon ownership between passengers, who do not own a car, and the drivers who do. When you own one, it can be difficult to imagine your life without it. Car owners feel a clear dependence on

and a sense of security with their car. They all express that their car is very important to them and that there is a special feeling to owning your own car. This applies even to those who do not use it every day or only very little. Respondent K explains that he actually uses his car very little. In fact, he does not use it every day to work because of too much traffic. Most of the time, it is parked outside the city, but he still expressed that he could not imagine not having a car: *"It is actually quite stationary. It is only a few times a week that I use my car. There is just a safety to having your own. It is always there when I need it"* (K, male, 28). He explained that going to work by car takes longer than public transportation and that it is almost impossible to find a parking space.

Most of the car owners express that they would have great difficulties imagining themselves as not being a car owner. Even if it is not something car owners and drivers express directly, it seems clear that owners are very attached to their car. Owners try to be discreet when asked about their needs for the car and their attachment to it. Research shows that people often try to rationalise their relationship with their cars, and that they are hesitant about admitting their emotional attachments to it. But when asking indirectly about their car use and feelings, it becomes rather clear, and some drivers admit it directly too, that the car is something they have come to be greatly depended on and it is something that matters very much to them: *"For me it is rather important that the car is mine. Only mine. I decide what happens to it, who gets to drive it and so on"* (K, male, 28). As an example, there are services that facilitate private renting of cars¹². Private car owners can rent out their car when they do not use it themselves. None of the car owners minded having strangers as passengers on shared rides, but they would be very hesitant about lending out their car to strangers through a service of this kind: *"I realise that nothing really could happen. But I just wouldn't feel comfortable lending strangers my car. Even though I have no valid arguments, really"* (M, male, 39).

There is a clear tendency for passengers to admit and focus on how there are many concerns connected to owning a car, whereas car owners logically emphasise the advantages. Quite unusual, though, there was one passenger who had her own car, but preferred being a passenger on shared rides for longer trips: *"I often prefer a shared ride instead of taking my own car, when I go to Copenhagen [from Aarhus]"* (N, female, 62). She expressed that ride sharing was a simpler and easier way of travelling. This was a bit unusual, but she added that it probably had

¹² www.minbildinbil.dk

something to do with her age, as she explained that she would most likely be feeling differently had she been asked 30 years ago. However, most passengers do not consider ownership as being something negative. They find ride sharing to be an effective, cheap, comfortable and flexible alternative to public transportation, but few see it as a long-term alternative to car ownership. It could be expected that ride sharing could constitute a permanent alternative to owning a car, but it does not seem to be the case very often. There are, obviously, clear benefits from ride sharing, but the majority of passengers use ride sharing as an advantageous alternative in their present situation, not because it is a deliberate choice to *not* own a car.

To a large extent it is a matter of access for the passengers, which according to theory is a way of consumption that holds little user involvement. Sharing of cars can be as identity promoting as owning, and ride sharing may encourage the same feelings. It seems, however, that passengers feel much less connected to the ride sharing practice as such compared to the obvious connection that can be found between a car and its owner. Passengers do not seem to identify themselves significantly with collaborative consumption and being part of such a practice. When comparing ride sharing to membership of CSOs, theory states that being a member of a CSO contributes to the identity creation to a large extent, as it is a very deliberate choice of consumption style. It seems that ride sharing does not hold the same extent of deliberate lifestyle choice. It could be assumed that CSOs constitute a much larger sense of belonging, as they require membership, monthly fees and encourage long-term commitment more than does ride sharing. Ride sharing requires less obligations and responsibility, as you only pay exactly for what you use. The lack of commitment that is in ride sharing may be the reason why users feel less connected to the practice. Ride sharing could be seen as being of a more random nature than CSOs and thus holding more practical than ideological motivations.

However, there seems to be a part of the ride sharing experience that users are particularly fond of. Experiences can be identity promoting in the same way as objects can, and there is great involvement from users when it comes to the relationship with other users. It is something they are happy to be a part of and which they gladly tell others about. The social aspect of ride sharing is quite complex and it will be further discussed in the following.

Social motives

Collaborative consumption holds a large social aspect, as the basic idea is for people to consume *together*. Modern society has brought with it a tendency for people to distance themselves from each other. Many people only spend time with people that are similar to them and spend their

time in the same spheres. As such, the car can easily become a place where people are alone and withdraw from the public sphere.

All respondents recognise that shared rides are much more personal and intimate than public transportation or than going alone in the car: *"It is a lot more personal than taking the train. On the train, we would definitely not sit next to each other if there were any empty seats elsewhere"* (C, male, 32). Ride sharing provides a possibility of meeting new people. People, which one would perhaps never otherwise have met. This proved to be extremely important to participants when engaging in ride sharing. All respondents express very positive feelings about having met new people and having positive experiences with it: *"I have had trips with people that I would have never met otherwise. We would never be in the same room. A platform like this is the only forum where I would ever have a chance to meet them. I find that extremely valuable. And that's really the main reason that I do this"* (E, female, 45). The positive experiences that people have when they meet and engage with other people are very valuable to the users: *"I have experienced that it is a great way to meet new and nice people. I have never had a bad experience. Really. I'm surprised too, but people are just so nice and friendly"* (D, female, 28). Respondents do, however, also acknowledge that it is a clear advantage to be an extrovert person. You need to prepare yourself to talk to strangers and be willing to create the dialogue: *"You need to be a somewhat extrovert person and obviously you cannot be afraid to talk to others"* (D, female, 28). Most users also agree that you should consider a different kind of transport, if you want to be left completely alone: *"I mean, it is stupid to choose this kind of transport if you really don't want to talk to anyone and just want peace and quiet. Then I guess you should consider other options"* (O, female, 23).

Many respondents express that they really like the social connection with other people. Many of them agreed to the fact that in today's society, it's very uncommon to end up talking to random strangers that you meet on your way: *"It would be totally awkward if you just started talking to other people on the train. People would think you are crazy"* (G, male, 32). In the public sphere, most often people are simply minding their own business. And so the shared rides provides a space where you can engage with other people: *"I like to talk to people instead of just staring out the window of a train for four hours"* (R, female, 24) and *"I have only had good rides. I mean time flies when you are four people in the car talking. It feels a lot faster than when you just go by yourself"* (M, male, 39).

The ride sharing service is used by many different people, which respondents also recognise: *"You meet people that are fundamentally different from what you are used to. I find that so many*

different types of people use this service" (N, female, 62). Respondents agree that meeting people that are different is a positive feature that happens rarely in their everyday lives: *"It is so lovely to get to know someone, even if it is just briefly, who has a completely different life compared to me. It is so precious to sometimes be reminded that your world is just a small part of the world. There are so much more out there"* (E, female, 45). One driver even explains that she often brings her son on rides, as she believes he can learn something from meeting new people this way: *"I bring my 12-year-old son with me sometimes on the trips. I have no concerns about doing that. I actually think that he can learn from it. I encourage him to talk to people and see what they are like. I like that I can show him some diversity"* (E, female, 45). When a shared ride results in positive experiences, it is something that truly matters to users. The experiences are something that is precious to them and they collect good stories to tell friends and family.

Stories

It quickly became clear that most respondents had many positive stories from their experiences with ride sharing. There was a clear joy and desire to pass on these stories, and so shared rides can feature many peculiar experiences. One respondent found a new colleague for work, another had a friend who found a girlfriend on a shared ride, and one had story about a friend finding an apartment in Copenhagen by luckily ending up with the friend of a seller on a shared ride. One driver was as lucky as to be invited to India to visit a passenger who had moved there.

Respondent E shared a story about how two men with foreign names once booked seats on her offered ride from Kolding to Copenhagen. She admitted that she was very anxious about having to share a ride with two immigrants and she almost declined their bookings: *"I did not want to be that kind of prejudiced person, but you hear so much, and I was genuinely worried"* (E, female, 45). She decided to give them the benefit of the doubt and she ended up getting to know the two very well and inviting them to dinner with her family and vice versa. The two men were applying for resident and work permits and had to go from Jutland to Copenhagen once a month. She ended up taking them with her on several rides for almost a year until they both received their permits.

The story made a great impression not only on myself, but also on all respondents on the following rides whom I told. It became a catalyst for conversations about foreigners. Every respondent who heard the story admitted that they were very relieved to hear it. They admitted that they might have the same fears, and therefore they were happy to hear a story where these fears were baseless. No respondents had mentioned that they would potentially decline someone based on their country of origin. Generally, respondents were very reluctant to even refer to the issue about immigrants, but as I would tell the story, many admitted that it was

something they think about in terms of riding with strangers. But they were embarrassed to talk about it. This was also something that the particular respondent experienced herself: *"Others love to hear this story. And I love telling it. It makes me feel so good that I can break down barriers within myself and also with others. I tell the story to everyone that wants to listen, because I think it is such important lessons. I think It's crucial for society that we get stories like this out"* (E, female, 45). To a small degree, ride sharing could have the potential to disprove some of the prejudices that users can have against each other. The social experiences with other users are indeed a large part of the ride sharing experiences, and it is something that clearly distinguishes ride sharing from both public transportation and general car use.

Consumer ethics

For some consumers, the car has become a symbol of modern society over-consumption, and modes of collaborative consumption potentially provide an alternative to this. There are two key elements of collaborative consumption, which are sustainability and the social aspect. The social aspects have been presented above and in the following, the environmental aspect will be discussed as well.

There is no doubt that private car use has an impact on the environment. Whether it is a direct motivation to seek other alternatives is not as certain. Respondents have very different views on the environmental aspect of ride sharing: *"I think it's an obvious way of doing good for the environment. I find it so silly and a waste of resources whenever I see a car with just one person in it"* (N, female, 62). Some respondents express that it is something they care about in many other aspects of their lives as well: *"It is very important to me that there is a sustainable aspect. I care about that a lot in my everyday life"* (D, female, 28). It is also seen as an easy way to do good for the environment with a minimum of effort: *"I think it is appalling how so many cars around the country only have one person in it. This is a good way to be environmentally conscious. I am going to drive the distance anyway, so it is absolutely no extra work for me. It is being environmentally friendly, completely free of charge"* (A, female, 54). GoMore has a specific feature on the site that makes it possible for users to see their exact CO2-savings. Most respondents express that they like this feature, but only few look at it often. Most respondents find the savings to be a nice bonus, but it does not seem to be a determining factor when using ride sharing: *"It is not the main thing, definitely not, but I really like to look at my CO2-savings from time to time and feel good about it"* (H, female, 28). Respondents agree that in general, society has focus on environmental issues and therefore it feels like a natural part of the ride sharing concept: *"Media and society in general have started to put more focus on the environment and on waste of*

resources. And it really makes sense to me not to go on all of these trips just one person alone in a car" (M, male, 39). It is, however, also quite clear that respondents would use a ride sharing service regardless of environmental impact. For some, it is not important at all: *"I do not care at all. I use it because it is faster, cheaper and more fun. Environmentally speaking, I believe that ride sharing is only a drop in the ocean"* (C, male, 32). In general, it can be said that the environmental aspect of ride sharing is present in the minds of the users, but it is by far not the main motivation for use. Collaborative consumption is often associated with environmental awareness, and so it could be expected that this would play a larger part in the participation of ride sharing. However, it seems that other aspects matter more and environmental issues are only a nice bonus.

Gender issues

Gender issues are another important symbolic aspect of car use. The car and car use are traditionally associated with masculine features. The shared rides allowed me to observe that there is still a very masculine culture related to car use and driving. On several occasions, passengers were joking about the lack of driving skills with female drivers. Primarily male passengers, but female passengers recognised the prejudice and played along as well. There were jokes about this issue on several occasions: *"If there is someone I would prefer not to ride with? All women. Haha, no that was just a joke"* (C, male, 32). It seems that even though it is highly accepted for women to drive and none of the respondents would be reluctant to go on a trip with a female driver, there is still a tendency to assume that women have poorer driving skills compared to men. Female passengers also express that they feel safe with male drivers. They express that it is probably caused by the fact that men often like cars more than women and have an interest in it. Most respondents agreed that e.g. in families, it is most common that it is the man who drives the car if the entire family is going on a trip. It seems to be somewhat acceptable for women to have poorer driving skills and in general, you expect males to have good driving skills.

It was also interesting to notice an incidence on a ride, where the female driver (A, female, 54) started the trip by assuring everyone that they did not need to worry about her driving skills. Even though no one had asked or express any kind of concern. *"Don't you worry, I am a skilled driver, I have driven many kilometres throughout my life and I have never had an accident. Just to inform you"* (A, female, 54). None of the male drivers said anything like that. There was also a tendency for male drivers to admit that even though they have no problem with being a driver on shared rides, they would prefer not to be passengers themselves: *"I know how I drive, and I*

feel safer this way. I know there is no basis for this, but it is just the way I feel" (M, male, 39).

Furthermore, even though all shared rides were chosen completely randomly, there was an overweight of male drivers.

Another aspect related to gender is the fact that male passengers and drivers seem to feel safer on a general basis than do female passengers and drivers. The male respondents all agree that they have none or very few concerns about the sex of their fellow passengers. They do not see it as a potential problem, if they were alone in the car with someone of the opposite sex. Female passengers, however, express a larger degree of concern about being alone with someone of the opposite sex. The female respondents express that they feel safer with a female, if there is only two people sharing the ride: *"I prefer not to travel alone with a guy. If there are others in the car, then it's no problem. I don't mind driving with guys in general"* (D, female, 28) and *"I actually thought a lot about who I booked a ride with. If it was a man, I didn't want to be the only other person in the car"* (L, female, 24). Even though many of the respondents realise that their concerns are probably unfounded, they still admit that it is something they think about: *"I would never ride with a man. When this trip was booked, which my daughter-in-law did for me, I specifically asked her to find a female driver. I know it may sound weird, but I just didn't want to go with a man. Even though, I don't know exactly what I'm afraid of"* (F, female, 58). For some female respondents, however, it was not an issue at all: *"I totally didn't care if it was a man or a woman. That was not important to me"* (J, female, 24). A respondent also express: *"I don't consider if it's a man or a woman. Maybe I am just naive, haha. But I believe that all people are good people. And with three years of ride sharing, I haven't been proven wrong"* (H, female, 28). Furthermore, for most respondents this is only important to a certain extent. Several female respondents also add that if they had to be at a certain place at a certain time and there was only one ride available to fit their schedule, they would take it regardless of the conditions. As such, gender related aspects do not seem to be a severe issue in the context of ride sharing in general. There are noticeable gender differences, but nothing that causes great challenges. There seem to be a high degree of trust in other users, which will also be elaborated on in section 5.3.

Sub-conclusion

Even though, the social aspect is a large part of collaborative consumption, it was not expected to be such an important part of ride sharing as well. When interviewing users, it was indeed something that could make them talk. I experienced that respondents loved to talk about their positive experiences, and many of them had several stories. According to theory, the symbolic-affective factors are valued more than the instrumental-reasoned. However, users are not

necessarily always aware of this. They tend to focus much on I-R factors such as price and flexibility when asked directly about their transportation. But S-A factors are what makes them talk and also what seems to make the largest impressions on users. It seems that I-R factors are the main motivation for engaging in ride sharing to begin with, but the S-A factors seems to be the reason why users like it and keep on doing it. Furthermore, it seems to be something that can benefit not only users individually, but maybe also benefit society on a larger scale by connecting people. The social aspect adds a new dimension to car use, which is not present in the same way with regular car use.

5.3 Challenges of ride sharing

There are naturally challenges to ride sharing, as strangers are forced to share quite an intimate space. The potential social rewards of shared rides can only come to exist if users overcome the potential barriers of sharing rides with strangers. As such, the same thing that seems to reward users is interestingly enough also what can constitute the greatest challenge and barrier. The sharing of physical and emotional space can be very uncomfortable, and it will be discussed in the following.

Contamination

When sharing a ride, there is sharing of the experience and of the physical space. For the part of the drivers, there is also sharing of personal property. When engaging in close contact with others, either through psychical space or through the sharing of objects, part of your extended self will be invaded. As stated in the theory, this contamination can be of both negative and positive nature depending on the relationship you have with the 'invader'. One driver even explains that he only offers seats on rides, when he is alone on the trip. He explained that if he had a friend with him in his car, he would never offer the two remaining seats on a shared ride. He feels that the presence of a stranger would invade, and thus contaminate, the personal relationship that he has with the other person: *"If I had a friend in the car with me, I would not share the ride. It would be kind of uncomfortable for the third person to invade our friendship like that"* (M, male, 39).

When strangers invade your personal space or objects, it usually creates feelings of discomfort. As such, there is a barrier that needs to be crossed in ride sharing and you have to be willing to let strangers into your personal sphere. All respondents agree that it is something you must think about when you decide to engage in ride sharing: *"It is really something that you need to consider, when you choose ride sharing. Can you deal with strangers in this way?"* (C, male, 32).

Many respondents explain that their main concern before trying ride sharing was the social aspect. Many had concerns about the social behaviour on the ride and how to deal with sharing such a small space with complete strangers: *"I was a bit worried about the other people in the car. I mean, are we supposed to talk all the way, what can we even talk about, what if we can't talk at all and so on. I think the social part of it was my main concern"* (L, female, 24). Users agree that in ride sharing, there is a very different way of associating with people around you compared to public transportation, where it is acceptable to avoid or ignore others.

It is interesting to notice that the social and emotional contamination that occurs in ride sharing seems to be the most difficult one to overcome. Most respondents find that sitting physically close to strangers in a car feels invasive to a certain extent, but the social and emotional closeness that ride sharing holds is what feels the most invasive and what causes most worries: *"I was quite nervous for the talks. I had to talk to people that I would most likely never meet again"* (J, female, 24) and *"the conversation part is definitely the main barrier. I think it can scare people. The fear of awkwardness"* (L, female, 24). Respondents are very aware that it is a rather intimate thing to share emotional space with strangers: *"Its just the feeling of letting someone into you personal space. It is so close to you"* (K, male, 28). Many respondents explain that often, you can create an emotional distance to people even when you are physically very close to them e.g. by ignoring them or minding your own business. This can happen on a bus or on the train, where you can sit next to someone for hours and not really acknowledge his or her presence: *"If we were on a bus sitting exactly as we are sitting right now, next to each other, we wouldn't even notice one another. We would completely ignore each other until we reach our destination. And we would definitely not sit next to each other if there were any empty seats elsewhere"* (C, male, 32). This, however, is not an option in ride sharing and it therefore feels much more intimate and personal than public transportation: *"You can't just completely ignore the other people in the car. I would feel that was bad manners"* (J, female, 24).

Respondents agree that you are forced to acknowledge the presence of your fellow-passengers when you engage in ride sharing and as such, you must be willing to accept a degree of contamination of self. The key is to overcome this barrier and turn it into positive contamination instead of negative. Respondents all agree that the first time you try ride sharing is the hardest: *"At first, I thought that the idea of taking strangers with me in my car was not appealing"* (K, male, 28). But once you have a positive experience with engaging in conversations and sharing physical space, you start to feel differently about the sharing: *"I was very sceptical before I tried it. I really worried about having to talk to the others all the way. It was not bad at all."*

In fact, it was cosy and they were nice people” (J, female, 24) and “I hear people worry that it is expensive, not flexible and very awkward. But really, take one trip and it’ll prove all of that wrong” (H, female, 28).

Risk and trust

Contamination is not the only barrier that users need to overcome when engaging in ride sharing. It also involves a great amount of risk and trust. Participants are forced to take the risk of trusting strangers not only on a personal level, but also in terms of driving skills. Finding a reason that legitimises the trust in a stranger is thus crucial in order for ride sharing to happen. There is distinct, voluntary giving up of control when sharing rides and it forces users to trust in fellow participants: *“You have to cross that certain line. And just trust people”* (H, female, 28). As stated in the theory, it can cause a great amount of discomfort when giving up control. Therefore, in order for participants to feel comfortable when sharing rides, it is a matter of minimising the perceived, subjective risk of the practice. This can be done in several ways, and participants are not always directly aware of the processes that occur in order for them to justify the risks they take. For the most part, the controlled set-up through an established provider is the main reason why people allow themselves to trust other users: *“The platform makes it seem very well-organised and you have a degree of control and knowledge of the people using it, so that made me feel safer”* (N, female, 62). The institutionalised set-up provides a reason for people to trust others, as they believe there will be proper sanctions and reactions if other users do not comply with the rules: *“The website provides a safety net for everyone. As a passenger, you have certain rights in case the driver doesn’t show up or something like that. And the other way around too, as a driver, you are sure to receive your payment”* (P, male, 57). This set-up also provides users with a little bit of knowledge about other participants through user profiles. The knowledge that users can get about others from the profiles constitutes a basis for an affinity with the others and convinces users that other users are orderly people: *“I guess I believe that it is fairly decent people who use the service. I mean, you have to have access to a computer, know your way on the Internet and pay with credit card and so on. I don’t think homeless people, illegal immigrants or criminals would sign up to a service of this kind”* (M, male, 39). The specific user profiles will be further elaborated on in section 5.4.

Users also instinctively search for some sense of belonging to the same group. For some users, the fact that people choose to be a member of the same ride sharing service serves as a group belonging: *“I always think that if they use this service, then they must be just like me and I have nothing to worry about”* (H, female, 28). Users try to establish a simple in-group relationship to

fellow passengers. This happens on a mostly non-conscious level. Respondents recognise that they have some sort of screening process, when browsing through profiles or deciding to accept or book rides. But they have much trouble explaining what they are looking for, and so the search for some sort of affiliation with other users happens mostly without the direct knowledge of users. They often try to interpret certain features of other passengers in order to justify that they trust them. One respondent explains how she chose the driver for her last trip: *"The driver was a grown man of 40 years. That made me feel safer, I assumed that he was a skilled driver. I would prefer that to a young 18 year old guy, who just got his licence"* (J, female, 24). And so some respondents try to explain it by saying that they are looking for specific driving skills or similar qualities, but with almost all respondents, they are only able to give vague explanations of what they search for: *"I guess it is kind of non-conscious, but I try to find the person that I believe is the best driver. I really don't know how I know that. I look at the picture and also on the amount of trips that they have had. And how their reviews are"* (J, female, 24). Objectively, there is hardly a way of knowing a person or their driving skills through these measures. But as theory states, in some situations you have very little or no basis for knowing and trusting someone. And then you search for some sort of connection that would legitimize your trust and thus legitimize your actions.

One respondent also explains how he sometimes uses a peer-created Facebook group for shared rides. It is a small group that consists of people from his hometown, who then offer rides to and from there. He explains how people trust each other, because they come from the same place even if they do not know each other. With a group of this kind, there are no guarantees for users, as it is not facilitated by a provider. Still, it is an example of how powerful the feeling of in-group belonging can be, when it comes to trusting others. In addition to this, users also like it if they can ride with the same people again: *"Like [respondent R] here next to me. I have had her with me five or six times now. That is nice. For passengers as well as driver, I think"* (P, male, 57). The profiles make it possible to find a driver or passenger again for your next ride, which is also a way of eliminating the element of uncertainty.

Danish context

Another aspect that contributes to the building of trust is the Danish context. As presented in the theory, Denmark has an extraordinary high degree of trust in society. There is a clear tendency with respondents to feel safer in Denmark as opposed to other countries. Respondents express that they would be very hesitant to engage in the same ride sharing practice, if they were in another country: *"I don't think I would take people with me in my car in another country. Well, if it*

was Sweden or Norway perhaps, where I know that they are kind of the same people as us, then maybe yes. But I wouldn't be comfortable doing it other places" (K, male, 28). Respondents express that they know how people behave in Denmark, they know that they live in a country with a certain type of rules and so they believe that they know what to expect here: *"In a strange country, you don't know the rules or how people might behave. No, I would feel too unsafe doing this in a foreign country"* (M, male, 39). Some respondents express that they might consider engaging in ride sharing in countries which they feel are similar to Denmark: *"I was recently in the US and I would never do it there. But maybe in Germany or Northern Europe it would be okay"* (G, male, 32). Unfamiliarity with culture and people makes users feel unsafe: *"In other places, where they have a different culture and different values, I would be very hesitant"* (I, female, 25).

Respondents furthermore express that they have a high degree of trust towards the Danish system in general. As one respondent explains, she considers the rules, laws and structure of our society to constitute a safety guarantee: *"I really don't think about the driving skills of the person that I go with. I guess that I think in Denmark, you have to take a proper test to get your licence and so I trust that. I have actually never considered that before you mentioned it"* (D, female, 28). Respondents seem to agree that they trust the system and thus the people in it. Another respondent explains that she finds Denmark to be one of the safest places in the world and that there are no reason to worry when engaging in ride sharing here: *"If in a country like this, you don't dare to do this, where in the whole wide world would you then dare? This country is so safe. Crimes are low, society is well-structured, and we are peaceful people. I mean, what could possibly happen?"* (E, female, 45). The trust in institutions creates a trust in the people who live in them or use them. This seems to be quite fundamental in order for people to engage in ride sharing: *"I would not do it in other countries. I would be a lot more sceptic. If there was a portal like GoMore, then maybe I would"* (R, female, 24). Being Danish and driving with others that are too constitute an in-group relationship in itself, albeit a very frail one, which is why users search for further knowledge as well.

As for driving in it self, which also requires a large degree of trust, the driving skills of the users is also something that respondents consider when engaging in ride sharing: *"I am actually quite concerned about the driving skills of the driver. That is something I focus on. But I have never had a bad experience, so it hasn't really been an issue"* (N, female, 62). Here too, it seems that users have a lot of faith in both the Danish system, as stated in the above, and also in the GoMore system: *"I don't really think about the driving skills of the driver. I guess I conclude that if you offer passengers a ride though GoMore, then you know how to drive a car"* (Q, female, 32). Drivers also

express that they concentrate on their driving a bit more than usual, when they are the driver of a shared ride. Passengers generally do not have significant worries about the issue: *"I'm thinking people try to drive nicely. Who would offer a ride and then drive like a mad person? You wouldn't get more rides. You don't want bad reviews"* (H, female, 28). They seem confident that it is common sense to drive carefully when you have the responsibility for others: *"I thought about the driver and the driving skills. I guess I feared that the person would go very fast. But then again, I really didn't expect that anyone would drive like that. You know that you have other people in the car, so you behave your best"* (L, female, 24).

Sub-conclusion

Ride sharing can cause serious discomfort, as there is clear invasion of physical and emotional space. Participants must be able to turn the contamination into a positive kind in order to comfortably engage in ride sharing. The individual users also unconsciously have certain criteria that they seek to fulfil when legitimising their trust in and sharing with strangers. This could be criteria of what constitutes a good driver, or even a good person. Respondents are not able to express this directly, but there is a selection and justification process going on, as they are each looking for something that makes them feel safer. It is then the challenges for the provider of a ride sharing service to make sure that this can happen. Some of the specific features GoMore will be discussed in the following.

5.4 Ride sharing in practice

As described in the above, there are many elements to take into consideration with ride sharing. It will be discussed how it is carried out in practice and how it differs from hitchhiking, which has several comparable and similar features.

GoMore - profiles, booking and reviews

Trusting other users is a crucial factor in ride sharing. In practice, this is addressed by the use of registered user profiles through which users can get a sense of the person they are sharing a ride with. When investigating the selection process of users on who to bring or who to go with, it proved a large issue. It is very important to users to have the possibility of choosing: *"You know that you are going to have quite an intimate time with these people, so its not just anybody you want to let into your personal space"* (K, male, 28). At the same time, as also described earlier, respondents have great difficulties putting into words what exactly their selection criteria are: *"I am not sure, actually. I guess if the person had bad ratings. If someone had written that the person was late or misbehaved in the car. Its funny, cause when you ask like that, I am not sure exactly*

what it would take for me to say no" (L, female, 24). Therefore, some users choose the booking type, where seats are not directly confirmed but must be approved first: *"I choose to approve the bookings before the ride is confirmed. I think it gives you a sense of safety that you have the possibility of saying no. Even though, I do not think you ever really would"* (J, female, 24).

Respondents all make it clear that they think very positively about the set-up with registered users so that they can see whom they choose and approve.

The user profiles include basic information on users (see section 2.5). Profiles are obligatory and furthermore, users review each other after each ride on a scale from one to five stars. Profiles and especially the reviews are extremely important to users of the service: *"I always look at the reviews when choosing rides. It's very reassuring"* (B, female, 28). It provides users with a feeling of knowing what to expect: *"I always look at the reviews of the people I take with me. Like on this trip e.g., I noticed that [Respondent B] had a lot of reviews and they were all extremely good, so I looked forward to having her with me"* (A, female, 54). The set-up reassures users that they are dealing with real people: *"I very much like the fact that you can see a little bit about people on the web site. You can also find them on Facebook and you get the first impression from the web site. It gives me a sense of safety. I can see that they are 'real' people and I can kind of see who they are"* (L, female, 24). By seeing what kind of experiences other users have had with a passenger, it reduces uncertainty: *"You can see that someone else had a nice trip with them. Then you feel safe"* (D, female, 28). Reviews also serve as a filter when browsing through ride opportunities: *"Sometimes, if people do not have any reviews, then I see if I can find somebody else. Or then I check out their profile more thoroughly to see who they are"* (H, female, 28). Having bad reviews is therefore not popular: *"If I saw someone with only 1 star reviews or bad comments on their profile, I wouldn't go with them. I would look for another ride"* (R, female, 24).

However, reviews are in fact also written by people who the users do not know. Using reviews therefore seems to reduce the sense of perceived risk, which in a way is a false sense of security, as those who vouch for a user are in fact complete strangers as well. But it still contributes greatly to user comfort: *"I really think the review function is a great idea. Because then you can indicate whether or not this person was being reasonable. It's a good way of insuring that people behave"* (B, female, 28). Most respondents want to see good reviews in order to justify to themselves, the risk they are taking by trusting strangers. However, many respondents also agree that even though it provides a sense of security, it can still be difficult to know much based on this: *"I guess, you cannot possibly know who the people on the profiles are. But it helps a little. It makes it feel less unfamiliar"* (Q, female, 32).

Respondents express that they would not share rides on platforms without this feature. Interestingly enough, passengers also admit that they are somewhat willing to compromise on this if they have to. Many respondents say that, despite having clearly underlined just how important the reviews are, if they really have to go somewhere and there is only one ride available, they would take it regardless of the driver or passengers: *"But the profiles only matter to a certain point. If I have a specific date where I have to be at a specific place and there is only one ride available at GoMore, I would take it regardless of who offered it"* (Q, female, 32).

Challenges of trusting reviews

Even though profiles and reviews function well and are important to users, the reviews themselves pose a challenge. Users find it very difficult to be critical of others, and so they often avoid giving bad reviews: *"Most people give 5 stars, if they just had a regular trip. I really get a bit uncomfortable, when I have to give a bad review. I don't know this person, and then I have to write that he could have done something better. But I also don't want to write something that will make others skip him when choosing rides, you know"* (C, male, 32). Respondents express that the reviews mostly work, when there are no problems on the rides. If they experience something that could have been done better, they often avoid commenting on it: *"I am not sure, actually, what I would do if I had a really bad experience. How I would review the driver. I wouldn't like to be the person that says to someone else 'you're a terrible driver'. You have met the person and then you have to talk badly about them behind their backs. That doesn't feel very good. And what if you meet them again?"* (J, female, 24). Respondents agree that the right thing to do would be to give honest reviews. They agree that if a driver were driving very badly, they would want to give the person a bad review. Most respondents had not had any bad experiences, but the few who had explained that they found it extremely difficult to give a bad review. In fact none of them did. One respondent chose to tell the driver in person and not write anything in the review: *"I don't want to criticise people. I told him in person, but didn't write anything in the review"* (A, female, 54). Another respondent explained how she experienced a bad driver, but felt so uncomfortable giving a bad review that she simply did not: *"I really think it's difficult. Even with the guy that drove awfully, I just couldn't find it in me to give him only 1 star. I felt so uncomfortable, because he had met me and sort of knew who I was, and it felt so inappropriate. Even though it was totally fair, because he was a bad driver. I ended up giving him 5 stars. Which I know is wrong, because it completely undermines the whole concept of the ratings and reviews"* (O, female, 23).

Furthermore, users are afraid to give bad reviews, because they fear that the person will give them a bad review in return. One respondent explains how her husband once had a bad experience with a passenger who was too late, did not inform and was not being very polite about it. He gave her 1 star and explained in the review what the issues had been. *"But then she gave him 1 star back as revenge, even though there was no reason. In that sense, the reviews are tricky. Because people can give you a bad review if they want to, even when you did not deserve it"* (N, female, 62). Respondents all agree that the reviews you receive are very important, because other users may turn you down or not book your rides if they see bad reviews. Respondents recognise the ambivalence in the fact that they are very focused on reviews in order to feel safe, but at the same time they know that the reviews can sometimes not be trusted. This is indeed an area with room for improvement.

Ride sharing or hitchhiking?

Hitchhiking and ride sharing are very similar concepts, as introduced in the theory. Both practices involve sharing a car ride with someone you do not know. However, in the minds of users, there is great difference between the two. When asked whether they would consider hitchhiking, the majority of respondents had very strong reactions to the concept: *"I would never hitchhike! It is just too risky"* (B, female, 28), *"I have a fixed warning in the back of my head against hitchhiking. It is something you have always been told was dangerous and not something you do"* (D, female, 28) and *"I would never pick up a hitchhiker. You don't know who you'll end up with"* (C, male, 32). The main issue with hitchhiking is that it does not take place within a controlled context. Respondents express that with hitchhiking, there is no way of knowing who the other person is and they find it to be unsafe: *"I would never do that. It is not the same as GoMore. GoMore is organised, and that's my safety. If something goes wrong, it is controlled"* (J, female, 24). With hitchhiking, it is impossible to know anything about the person you pick up or go with. Ride sharing facilitated through a service provides the users with basic information on the other users, which is a key element for trust and feeling safe: *"With ride sharing through GoMore, it feels like it is supported and controlled. Hitchhiking is so untamed and non-structured"* (D, female, 28). Most respondents clearly express that they would not feel comfortable trusting a stranger standing on the side of the road, whereas a user profile on the GoMore platform creates a basis for trust: *"I would never pick up a hitchhiker. With GoMore, you have a user profile, and so if anything happens, you can find that person again or you can do something because you know who people are. With a hitchhiker, you have no idea who that person is and you have no chance of ever finding them again"* (M, male, 39).

Some respondents, however, also admit that the GoMore set-up only guarantees control to a certain extent. *"With hitchhiking, you don't know who the other person is. I guess you really don't with GoMore either. But you kind of do. With a hitchhiker, you definitely don't know them"* (L, female, 24). Furthermore, it is also a very important element for users that a shared ride is planned beforehand. The spontaneous nature of hitchhiking makes respondents feel unsafe. *"With GoMore, it is a planned trip and you know who is going with you. With hitchhiking, you have to make the decision on a second and you don't have time to think about it at all. Just doing it on a blink of an eye, that's not for me"* (K, male, 28). There is a slight difference in opinion between the younger respondents and the older respondents. The older ones remember a time, when hitchhiking was more normal, and some of them had tried it themselves and therefore considered it less of a danger. But they also admit that it is hardly something that is done anymore: *"When I was young, we used to pick up people all the time. It was fun, we helped each other and you got to meet new and exciting people. I used to hitchhike all the time. It was great. I still pick up people from time to time, but there are actually very few out there. People just don't do it anymore"* (A, female, 54).

As such, both hitchhiking and ride sharing involve a great amount of trust. The driver accepts a stranger into his/hers private space, and the passenger enters this space without actually knowing anything about the driver. It is more extreme in the case of hitchhiking, as there is no previous contact between driver and passenger. Both parties have to overcome the perception of risk and be willing to trust the other part on the basis of very short time and information. This can create great discomfort for everyone involved, which is why ride sharing is preferred over hitchhiking.

Sub-conclusion

It seems that the motivation for hitchhiking and ride sharing are quite alike. It is a cheap way of transportation that at the same time offers the possibility of meeting new people. The un-known and spontaneous nature which is a key element in hitchhiking is, however, what separates it from ride sharing and also what makes hitchhiking seem dangerous and ride sharing safe. Even though, the objective risk may be almost the same, the perceived risk of hitchhiking is much larger than that of ride sharing. The facilitated ride sharing set-up gives users the impression and feeling that it is controlled and safe. Which, to a certain extent, it also is compared to hitchhiking where there is no registration of participants. The registered profiles provide users with a possibility of establishing an in-group connection to other users, which contributes to overcoming the discomfort of trusting strangers. The element of control justifies this trust,

which is crucial for ride sharing to work. There is, however, still a small issue with credibility of reviews, as users express how they are not always honest when reviewing others. This creates a paradox, as users also express that the reviews are what makes them feel safe when using the ride sharing service. Despite feeling very safe in the Danish society, which is also an important element of ride sharing, respondents express that a Danish context alone is not enough for them to feel safe enough to engage in ride sharing without a controlled facilitation with user registration and profiles.

5.5 Observations of ride sharing behaviour

The GoMore service provides a controlled set-up for the shared rides with rules and regulations. When observing ride sharing in practice, it becomes clear that there are also certain unwritten rules that apply. It is something that exists on rides and which most users recognise and follow. It is interesting to see how the practice has a clear set of rules that characterises and frames it, without them being explicitly enacted. In the following, observations of rules and social behaviour will be presented.

Responsibility of drivers

Many respondents express that the drivers of a shared ride play a central role in determining what kind of ride it will become. *"As a driver you are kind of 'the host'. It is like inviting people into your home"* (C, male, 32). The driver is seen as the 'owner' of the ride and therefore, passengers often feel that they must adjust to whatever preferences the driver may have: *"The setting belongs to the driver and they determine the ambience"* (B, female, 28). When drivers set up rides, there is a feature on the web page where they can set criteria for the specific ride, e.g. if they prefer conversation, music, pets etc. or not. This serves to help all users balance expectations before booking a ride and to avoid potential misunderstandings. *"I think it's nice to let people know what you expect from the ride. It makes it easier to avoid bad experiences"* (C, male, 32). It seems, however, that it is still the actions and decisions of the driver during the ride that mostly determines the ride. And many drivers also acknowledge that they have a large influence on the atmosphere, as one driver expresses it: *"I think it is very much the driver's responsibility to set the 'rules' of the trip. To say, it's okay if we talk, it's okay if we don't. As a driver, I am very conscious of the fact that I decide on the ambience in the car"* (A, female, 54).

Proper passenger behaviour

Passengers too have responsibilities on a shared ride. They are expected to adjust to the drivers' settings and to show respect for fellow passengers as well. Respondents all agree that as a

passenger, you should exercise acknowledgement of your fellow passengers, which is considered proper passenger manners. Even though, respondents have troubles defining exactly what constitutes proper manners, many can refer to situations where they felt that a fellow passenger did not behave properly: *"I have only tried it once that someone just entered the car, put on headphones and then just didn't talk to anyone during the whole trip. That was a bit weird. The rest of us talked, so there was no problem, but I noticed because it wasn't typical behaviour"* (H, female, 28) and *"Once, when I was driver, the first passenger who came went straight for the back seat and did not say anything. That felt a bit weird"* (O, female, 23). I was also able to observe some misplaced passenger behaviour myself during the investigations. On one ride, a passengers entered the car and her mobile phone rang immediately afterwards. She answered the phone and had a fifteen-minute long, rather personal, conversation with her mother. The rest of us in the car were not able to talk to each other because of the loud conversation. I was not able to discuss the inappropriateness with the others on that particular ride, but I was able to discuss the incident with other respondents on following rides, and it was considered bad manners. Respondents express that there is a fine line in behaviour, which cannot be so closely defined. Generally, phone conversations are not preferred, but respondents recognise that it can be acceptable with short conversations, e.g. with the people you are meeting at the destination.

However, both drivers and passengers agree that the most important factor in appropriate behaviour is acknowledging your fellow passengers. It is found to be extremely inappropriate in a shared ride context if you ignore others. Respondents agree that there is a distinct difference between shared rides and public transportation. You cannot and should not ignore the presence of your fellow passengers in ride sharing, as you can do in public transportation. Important to notice in this connection is how acknowledgment does not necessarily mean that it is required to make conversation all the time on shared rides: *"I found out that you do not have to talk. I guess I expected that you would have to keep talking all the way, but it is not necessarily so"* (J, female, 24). It can be considered perfectly proper behaviour not to, as long as there has been proper introduction and recognition of each other: *"I think there is room for not talking as well. There was this guy on a ride with me once who had an important exam the next day, so he politely asked if it was okay that he kept to himself and studied the whole trip. Of course, that was fine. I went in for a coffee, bought him one too to keep him awake, and we shared a fine trip even though we barely talked"* (E, female, 45). Furthermore, the time of day can also be determining for the kind of ride: *"Like very early morning trips e.g. then it is okay to just drink your coffee and not talk. Whereas in the afternoon, it would be more obvious to talk and the energy would probably be higher"* (J, female, 24).

Respondents also express that it is an important part of the concept to be honest with others users to avoid misunderstandings and bad experiences: *"I think it is very important to be informative and honest. I heard of a ride once, where the driver had all sorts of errands to do on the way, and so the trip took almost an hour longer than it should have, and he did not tell the passengers beforehand. That is really not okay"* (N, female, 62). There are indeed unwritten rules of social behaviour, which are implicitly recognised by most users. Breaking of these rules, whether intentionally or not, is frowned upon. At the same time, however, users realise that these are not rules laid down by law. As such, they are not deal-breakers; rather they make ride sharing smoother when followed.

Types of users

As the collection of data progressed, it became clear that there are recognisable categories of user types. Firstly, there is a difference between being either a driver or a passenger. There is a tendency for users to be consequently either or, rarely both. Many passengers do not own their own car and therefore only have the possibility of being passengers in the set-up. However, few passengers have their own cars, but find a shared ride to be more practical at certain times. Drivers are primarily car owners. Furthermore, the investigations have come to show that drivers can be divided into two very different types. There is the practical driver type and the service oriented driver type. The service oriented driver type is very engaged and involved in the practice. He or she feels that they are providing a service to the passengers who pay to go with them, and they make it a personal matter to make sure that passengers feel as comfortable and happy as possible: *"I only offer 3 seats in total. I do not want people to be all cramped up in the back seat. I want to make sure that everyone is comfortable, so only 2 people in the back seat. Always"* (P, male, 57). On more than one occasion when driving with the service-oriented driver type, passengers were kindly offered something to drink for the ride. Furthermore, this type of driver would also ask where exactly passengers were headed, and most of these drivers would drop off the passengers at the exact address or as close to as possible: *"I don't mind dropping off at specific places. It is no inconvenience for me. Pick up and drop-off are sometimes fixed spots, but if I can make someone happy by driving them closer to home, I am glad to do so"* (P, male, 57). There is a general feeling with this kind of driver that they want to be flexible, and they wish for the passengers to choose them again the next time they need a ride: *"People are often very thankful that there are only two people in the backseat. And I want to be flexible. That is also one of the reasons why people choose to ride with me. I actually have a lot of the same people coming again"* (P, male, 57).

The practical driver type is rather different from the service oriented. For the practical type, the main focus is the trip from A to B. The reason for the trip is that they need to go somewhere themselves and that is their main concern. They feel that they are doing passengers a favour by offering a ride. On these trips, the car is usually fully booked with three people in the backseat and the driver does not want too much inconvenience: *"Time wise, I don not want it to cost me anything. If it takes up too much of my time, I cannot be bothered. I need it to be simple and easy, but other than that, I absolutely do not mind doing it. And I only do it when I have the time. Not if I have to hurry to a meeting"* (M, male, 39). Furthermore, this type of driver usually picks up and drops off on specific places: *"I am not a taxi. I do not want to drive around all over town to pick up people and drop them off again. I have only one spot and that is where I am going myself. It is up to people to find their own way from there"* (M, male, 39). It is not so that either of the two is the 'right' way, but it is quite clear that there are huge differences in the attitudes of the drivers. Passengers express that it is a nice bonus when the driver is service minded, but the main thing is still to be transported from one place to another, and so the type of driver is less important. There is also a tendency for all drivers to prefer being drivers. Most of them would not be passengers, but only use a ride sharing service to offer rides: *"I have never been a passenger. It is not something I would use. I give rides, because I know that there are lots of people who need it, but I am not going to use it myself, no. If I were younger and didn't have my own car, then maybe yes, but now, no"* (M, male, 39). Passengers are not as easy to clearly categorise as drivers. There seem to be a more nuanced picture and passengers vary greatly in motivations, expectations and behaviour. There is large diversity in the purpose of their rides, some go several times a week in connection to work, some use it for holidays and visiting family or friends. Most passengers, however, are not car owners and they use ride sharing as a faster and cheaper alternative to public transportation.

6. Conclusion

In the previous sections, I have presented the methodological and theoretical basis and presented the empirical findings. In the following, I will summarise the results in order to present the thesis objective of providing a deeper understanding of the ride sharing practice in Denmark. The practical, instrumental-reasoned factors are what makes users interested in ride sharing in the first place, and the emotional, symbolic-affective factors are what makes them continue and like it.

Regular car use provides a large degree of freedom, independence and flexibility. To a large extent, ride sharing is able to provide the same things. The primary reasons for passengers to engage in ride sharing are financial and practical. Ride sharing provides a cheaper and often faster alternative to public transportation on longer rides. For drivers, the motives are also financial, though drivers tend to play down that part and focus on the help that they can provide to others with little inconvenience.

There is much identity and feeling invested in a car, and this also applies to the car owners that engage in ride sharing. Car owners invest a lot of themselves in their cars, whereas the ride sharing practice does not seem to provide passengers with the same sense of connection. Users do not significantly identify themselves with collaborative consumption as such, even though they have clear positive feelings towards it. In terms of ownership, which has traditionally been seen as the proper solution, it also seems to be the view of users of ride sharing despite engaging in this sharing practice. Ride sharing is used as a profitable alternative on a short-term basis, but it is not something users do as a deliberate choice to not own a car. There seems to be less ideological and more practical motivation for ride sharing, which is also something that distinguishes ride sharing from CSOs.

The car is also traditionally closely connected to masculinity, which seems to be something that still lingers in car use. Especially the driving skills, or lack thereof, of women are something that comes up when discussing car use. This is, however, by no means a serious issue. A bit more serious is the safety of the female users. In general, they feel safe, but some female users prefer not be alone with a male passenger or driver.

The car is a powerful consumption object, and the use of it often mirrors the economic and social development of a society. With the arrival of collaborative consumption, there has come a focus on the negative aspects of car use and especially on the environmental harm. The environmental aspect of ride sharing is something that users find to be a positive feature, but it plays no significant role when deciding to engage in ride sharing. Ride sharing holds a fairly low degree of involvement for users generally speaking compared to e.g. CSO-memberships, which are more long-term in their nature and commitment. However, users of ride sharing do enjoy and value the involvement and connection between users. As such, ride sharing is as a mix between access-based consumption and sharing, as it holds elements of both in terms of motivations and involvement.

Modern society has been accused of encouraging too much individualisation and causing people to withdraw from the public sphere. The social aspect of collaborative consumption can be seen as a reaction to this. In terms of ride sharing, this aspect is very present and it is something that users value. It is something that is not associated with regular car use, and users find it very rewarding when they have positive experiences with strangers. The main challenge to ride sharing is, however, the same thing. When sharing physical and emotional space with strangers, there can be severe feelings of discomfort, as sharing is usually not something that happens between strangers. There is invasion and contamination of the extended self, which users must turn to something positive in order to feel comfortable with the practice. There is furthermore a sense of perceived, subjective risk when trusting strangers in ride sharing. In order to overcome this, users seek to find knowledge of the other users through their profiles and reviews in order to justify their actions. Users also try to establish in-group relations so that people and rides will feel safer and less unfamiliar. Furthermore, the fact that the shared rides are facilitated through a well-established Internet service also contributes to users' feelings of security. Additionally, users also trust the service, because it occurs in a Danish context. It is a familiar environment with a high degree of general trust in society, which is also an important factor when engaging in ride sharing.

When compared, there are several similar elements between ride sharing and hitchhiking as they both involve the sharing of rides with strangers. However, in the minds of users there is a large difference and very few of them would even consider hitchhiking. The spontaneous and un-controlled nature of hitchhiking makes users feel insecure and uncomfortable. They prefer to have a service that facilitates and also provides information on users. However, there are certain elements with the profiles and reviews that could be improved. Users admit that they are not always honest when giving reviews and that they tend to give good reviews even when participants do not deserve it. It makes users feel uncomfortable to give bad reviews, which is a problem as the reviews serve as a critical basis for the trust that users have in others users and in the service in general.

When observing ride sharing in practice, it becomes clear that there are certain unwritten rules and codex for ride sharing behaviour. Drivers are seen as 'owners' of a ride and so their rules apply and passengers are expected to follow these rules. Most importantly, all users expect that one acknowledges the fellow passengers on a ride and restrain from certain anti-social behaviour such as talking loudly on the phone or ignoring others. Furthermore, drivers can be categorised into two main types; either they are practical in their approach and care mainly to

go from A to B. Or they consider themselves as sort of a 'host' for the ride and make it their business to take good care of the passengers and try to provide a nice service.

7. Other perspectives

Limits in resources have inevitably resulted in a specific focus of the thesis. During the working process, aspects occurred that could potentially be investigated further in future research.

Firstly, ride sharing is primarily used for longer trips. Investigating how a different set-up or how moderations to the current set-up could result in the use of ride sharing for shorter rides could also be a research opportunity. Furthermore, this investigation focuses on ride sharing in a Danish context, and it could be relevant to make similar investigations in other contexts as well, where the structure of society is significantly different and therefore could influence the use of ride sharing. Furthermore, this investigation is qualitative in its nature, and different perspectives on the findings could be further investigated and elaborated on in a quantitative study set-up.

There are also potential business perspectives of ride sharing, which could be investigated. Today, GoMore collaborates with the gas station Q8, where users can get a free cinnamon bun or a bottle of water on the day of their shared ride. GoMore also cooperates with the Federation of Danish Motorists, whose members save the 10% GoMore service charge on shared rides. Last summer, the Roskilde Festival had special parking spaces closer to the festival site reserved for guests who arrived by shared rides. Investigating future business opportunities such as these could be interesting in order to make ride sharing even more attractive for current as well as potential users. Competition from peer-created Facebook groups that organise shared rides could be a potential thread to the providers of organised ride sharing, and so they need to be able to offer something more to the users. This could be in terms of more rides, but also in terms of perks such as the above mentioned, which is also something that could be investigated further.

In a larger perspective, ride sharing has the potential of connecting different people and potentially breaking down prejudices. Further research in this area could also be relevant.

8. Bibliography

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