

SWAPPING AND RENTING IS IT TEMPTING?

A study on Consumer Perceptions of
Collaborative Fashion Consumption Models

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Abstract

Background and Purpose: Based on today's unsustainable consumption situation, where a linear system views natural resources as unlimited, an alternative circular system is getting increasingly attention. Several alternative consumption models that seek to optimise resource yields are born out of this, such as collaborative consumption models, which builds on the idea of people sharing and collaborating. These models are highly applicable in the fashion industry where consumers' overconsumption is extensive. By the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping, consumers could share and exchange products, thus decreasing their consumption. However, not only must companies offer these models, consumers must also accept and adopt them. Thus, to find pathways towards a more sustainable consumption it is vital to interpret and understand consumer perceptions. Nonetheless, knowledge is scarce about consumers' perceptions of consumption concepts that support a circular system. Consequently, this study aims to explore how consumers perceive the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping, and the underlying motivations and barriers.

Methodology: This study's empirical part was conducted through an abductive and qualitative research method. The primary data was collected via eleven semi-structured interviews with consumers in order to understand their perceptions about collaborative consumption models.

Findings and Conclusion: Our study portrays consumers' perceptions of fashion consumption and the collaborative consumption models swapping and renting. Since consumers often attach meaning to their clothes, we found that their attitudes and behaviours in fashion consumption influenced their perceptions of swapping and renting. Via the analysis, we identified motivations and barriers to participating in collaborative consumption. For swapping, social, experiential and value creation aspects were found to be the main motivations, whereas the biggest barriers were style and concerns about getting a fair exchange. The main motivations identified for renting were style and trend, financial opportunities, and flexibility and freedom whereas ownership was found to be a barrier. Lastly, uncertainty and hygiene were found to be barriers for both concepts, and a sustainability aspect was identified as value adding in both concepts. Based on our findings, several recommendations for businesses were compiled.

Keywords: Fashion Consumption, Collaborative Consumption, Renting, Swapping, Fashion Industry, Sustainability, Consumer Perceptions

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Table of Content

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Problem Statement	1
1.2 Research Aim and Research Question	3
1.3 Delimitations	4
1.4 Clarification of Concepts	5
1.4.1 Swapping	5
1.4.2 Renting	5
1.5 Disposition	6
2. Literature Review	7
2.1 Attitudes and Behaviours	7
2.2 Sustainable Consumption	8
2.2.1 Fashion Consumption	10
2.3 Collaborative Consumption	13
2.3.1 Swapping	14
2.3.2 Renting	17
2.4 Chapter Summary	21
3. Methodology	22
3.1 Philosophy of Science	22
3.2 Research Strategy	23
3.3 Data Collection	25
3.3.1 Secondary Data Collection	25
3.3.1.1 Databases	26
3.3.2. Primary Data Collection	26
3.3.2.1 Selection of Interviewees	27
3.3.2.2 Interview Guide	28
3.3.2.3 Conducting the Interviews	30
3.4 Data Analysis	31
3.4.1. Translation	33
3.5 Quality of the Research	34
3.5.1 Trustworthiness	34
3.5.1.1. Credibility	35
3.5.1.2 Transferability	35

3.5.1.3 Dependability	36
3.5.1.4 Confirmability	36
3.5.2 Authenticity	36
3.6 Ethical Considerations	37
3.7 Chapter Summary	38
4. Empirical Findings and Analysis.....	39
4.1 Fashion Consumption	39
4.1.1 Sustainability.....	39
4.1.2 Self-image and Identity.....	42
4.1.3 Trendy and Fashionable.....	44
4.1.4 Price and Quality.....	45
4.1.5 Second Hand	47
4.2 Swapping.....	48
4.2.1 Social Aspects	48
4.2.2 Experiential Aspects	49
4.2.3 Value Creation	50
4.2.4 Uncertainty.....	51
4.2.5 Fair Exchange	53
4.2.6 Style and Identity	55
4.2.7 Sustainability.....	56
4.3 Renting	56
4.3.1 Flexibility.....	56
4.3.2 Style, Trend and Identity.....	58
4.3.3 Ownership	59
4.3.4 Uncertainty.....	61
4.3.5 Occasion.....	62
4.3.6 Price	63
4.3.7 Sustainability.....	65
4.4 Chapter Summary	65
5. Discussion.....	67
5.1 Fashion Consumption	68
5.2 Swapping.....	69
5.2.1 Motivations	69
5.2.2 Barriers.....	73
5.3 Renting	76

5.3.1 Motivations	76
5.3.2 Barriers.....	79
5.4 Chapter Summary	81
6. Conclusion.....	82
6.1 Research Aim.....	82
6.2 Managerial Implications	84
6.3 Limitations and Future Research	86
Reference List.....	87
Appendix	94
Appendix 1: Interview Guide	94

1. Introduction

In the following chapter, we will present the background and problem statement leading to the research aim and the research question this paper seeks to answer. This will be followed by a description of the delimitations, clarification of relevant concepts and disposition of the research process.

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

The consumption situation in today's society is unsustainable. If everyone was to consume in the same way as the Swedish inhabitants, approximately four planets would be needed in order to support this lifestyle (WWF, 2018). The level of consumption in developed countries continues to increase while at the same time the living standards of people around the world are getting continuously improved, resulting in increased consumption. Products are designed to have short lifespans and are only used for a limited time and then disposed. Many times, it is cheaper to buy a new product than repairing an existing one. This reinforces the throw-away mentality, which is a part of the industrialized world and is putting a strain on natural resources and the environment (Piscicelli, Cooper & Fisher, 2015). Consequently, a continually increased consumption supports the linear system that views virgin resources as unlimited and hence, continuously excavates them (Gullstrand, Lehner & Mont, 2016).

In contrast to the linear system, a circular system seeks to “optimise resource yields by circulating products, components, and materials in use at the highest utility at all times in both technical and biological cycles” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015, p. 23). Circular economy builds on the principles of keeping material and products in use, design out pollution and waste, and regenerate natural systems (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). On the consumption side, several alternative models with the potential of reducing the reliance on natural resources are identified (Armstrong, Niinimäki, Kujala, Karell, & Lang, 2015). A fast-growing concept connected to this is collaborative consumption, which is based on the idea of people sharing and collaborating to meet certain needs (Belk, 2014), and holds the potential to reduce overconsumption (Pedersen & Netter, 2015). By swapping and sharing, exchanging and bartering, the consumption of resources in the use phase is reduced (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

As such, collaborative consumption is important since many consumers are acting careless and buying products that they are only using a few times. For instance, 36 percent of the Swedish consumers buy clothes they do not need and let them hang in the closet (SVT, 2018). This points at unoptimized resource use and the room for improvement that can be met by alternative consumption models.

An industry where these business models are highly applicable, but not yet fully developed is the fashion industry. The industry is today facing an increasing issue with overconsumption where the market is characterized by high competition, resulting in an extended number of seasonal clothing collections. The fast production and consumption of clothes have resulted in a perception among consumers that clothes are disposable (Andersen, 2017) and an idea of “here today, gone tomorrow” has evolved (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010), highly in line with the throw-away mentality. It is even found that for some consumer goods prices are not taken into consideration when purchasing items, due to their cheapness (Brooks, 2015), illustrating an unsustainable consumption behaviour. Companies are therefore producing low-price clothes to low production costs, and are competing to earn consumer interest, resulting in short-term use of clothes and premature disposal. The concept of fast fashion is not only changing the landscape of the clothing business but also affecting the natural environment (Armstrong et al., 2015).

In relation to other countries, it is found that in the Nordic countries there is an extreme increase in clothing consumption. Consumers in the Nordic countries are purchasing fashion far beyond the world average, where Swedish consumers alone increased their clothing consumption by nearly 40 percent since 2000 (Netter, 2013). The high increase of clothing consumption in Sweden has resulted in that approximately 62 percent of usable clothes are thrown away (Ekström, & Salomonson, 2014). Only one fifth is being collected for reuse (Carlsson, et al. 2015), which is a relatively low number in comparison to other European countries, portraying the unhealthy clothing consumption in Sweden. Young Swedish consumers are amongst the world’s greenest and on the forefront regarding sustainability (Euromonitor, 2018), however, the high level of sustainability concern rarely translates into a sustainable apparel consumption (Gwozdz, Netter, Bjartmarz, & Reisch, 2013).

Consequently, fashion consumption in Sweden is in need of a change. A possible way is to develop “pioneering business models that capture the value of more durable clothes” (Ellen MacArthur stated in H&M Group Sustainability Report, 2018, p. 32). Two identified collaborative consumption models that hold this potential and are highly applicable to fashion consumption, but has received limited scholarly attention, are swapping and renting. The concept of swapping includes a permanent transfer of ownership and focus is on redistribution of underused or unwanted products, resulting in an increased lifespan and usage of these products (Park & Armstrong, 2017). The concept of renting builds on a shift from selling products to selling its functions or usage. The more robust and durable a product is, the more functions or usages can be sold, thus incentive is created among producers to design products that last longer, resulting in reduced resource use (Armstrong et al., 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

However, the shift is not only in the hands of companies, in order to enable a circular economy, consumers also need to be willing to accept and use products through alternative models of consumption (Chamberlin & Boks, 2018). Hence, to find pathways towards more sustainable consumption and production it is vital to interpret, understand and explain the motivations, behaviours and attitudes in society (Hydén & Wickenberg, 2007). However, literature within the topic has mostly been focusing on business model changes, whereas the compelling transformation required from consumers to accept these changes has been rather neglected (Chamberlin & Boks, 2018). Consequently, the knowledge is scarce on how consumers perceive these alternative consumptions models generally and even less is known about consumer attitude towards renting and swapping clothes, implying that further research is needed.

1.2 Research Aim and Research Question

The objective of this paper is to investigate how consumers perceive alternative collaborative consumption models and to understand the underlying barriers and motivations. More specifically, to examine how clothing rental and swapping is perceived among young Swedish consumers. Additionally, the aim is to contribute to a deeper understanding and to expand the research area of collaborative consumption from a consumer perspective.

Consequently, based on the background and on the research aim, this study will address the following research question:

How do consumers perceive collaborative fashion consumption models and what are the underlying motivations and barriers to these perceptions?

Through answering the research question, the study will contribute theoretically via a compilation of consumer perceptions of the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping, since these concepts have gotten limited scholarly attention. Furthermore, as the concept of collaborative consumption is argued to be in its early stage of being an accepted consumption model in the fashion industry, our research holds the potential to contribute to the understanding of the concept's future adoption.

Additionally, the study will contribute practically via providing consumer insights on collaborative consumption, which are important in order to design the optimal product-service offer that can lead to consumer acceptance and adoption. Via this study, companies in the fashion industry might get a deeper understanding of how consumers view renting and swapping, and the various aspects that are important for them in order to accept these alternative consumption models.

1.3 Delimitations

The study will focus on the fashion industry, hence other industries will not be analysed. Moreover, the study will be delimited to Swedish consumers and market, due to their high consciousness of sustainability and since fast fashion consumption is considered to be developed and prominent in this country. The focus will be on young consumers, motivated by their higher sustainability interest and willingness to change, as well as that they are assumed to set the stage for future generations. The authors' aim is to investigate the motivations and barriers in the consumption phase, thus other phases such as recycling behaviour are not the primary research objective.

1.4 Clarification of Concepts

In this part, the concepts used throughout the thesis will be defined in order to minimize confusion.

1.4.1 Swapping

The concept of swapping is defined as a permanent transfer of ownership. Swapping may include both monetary and nonmonetary exchange, and different ways to participate in swapping have been identified. In a less organized way, the concept of swapping can take place between family members and friends, where they swap unwanted items between each other. Consumers can also participate in swapping via different online platforms. Finally, swapping takes place via organized swap events where consumers can swap their unwanted items. These events usually involve monetary exchange where the participants buy a ticket to participate. In this paper, the focus will be on the last type of swapping, namely swapping events, which is a relatively unexplored area.

1.4.2 Renting

Renting is a transaction in which a product is offered from one party to another for a fixed period of time in exchange for money. The concept implies a shift from consumers buying a product to instead buying a service in which the product is a part of the offer. The customer is only paying for product access and thus, does not own the product. By taking away the initial cost of buying, the customer only needs to pay for access while the company owns the product and is responsible for its maintenance. The concept includes both temporarily rent solutions for special occasions as well as renting subscriptions, where the customer exchange the rented clothes, for instance, every month. In this study, both types are included.

1.5 Disposition

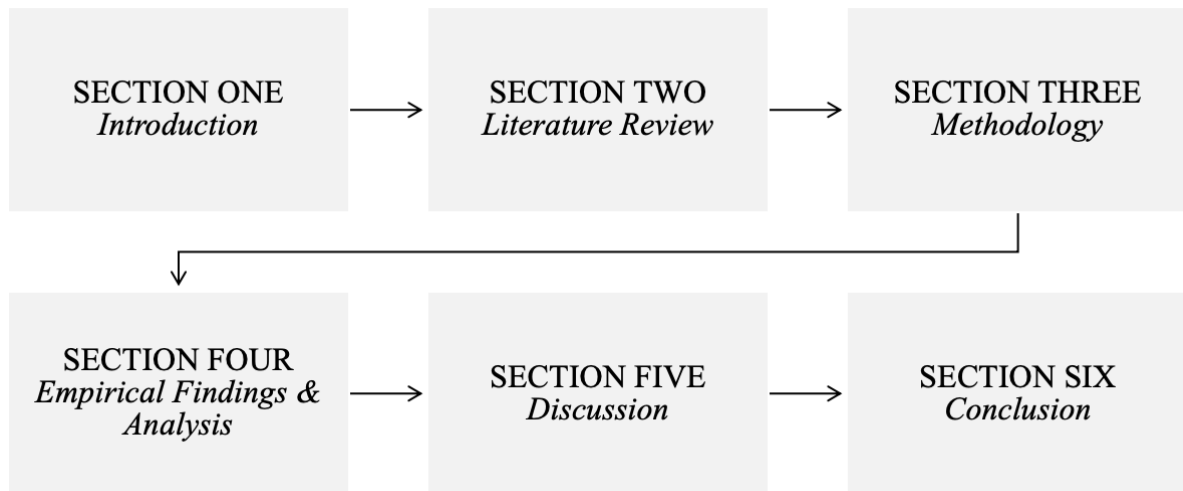


Figure 1. Disposition of the research process. Compiled by authors.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, relevant literature in relation to the research question will be introduced and elaborated on, as such form the foundation for the analysis of our empirical data. In each section, we present existing research and literature on the concepts to be able to outline and elaborate on key points. The chapter will be initiated with a brief presentation of consumer attitudes and behaviour, followed by a section about consumers' perceptions of sustainable consumption as well as consumers' perceptions of fashion consumption, in order to get an initial understanding of the topic and various concepts. The chapter ends with presenting consumer perceptions about collaborative fashion consumption, followed by detailed sections about swapping and then renting. Previous literature on consumer perceptions of sustainable consumption and fashion consumption is found necessary to include since it provides a foundational base for the rather new and unexplored concepts of renting and swapping.

2.1 Attitudes and Behaviours

In order to analyse consumer attitudes and behaviours, it is important to first understand what an attitude is, and its relation to a person's behaviour. The attitude concept is described by Allport (1954, p.45) as "the primary building stone in the edifice of social psychology" and an attitude can be defined as an indication upon the perception that a person has towards a certain occurrence. Attitudes are created as a collected impression of a number of different notions about a specific phenomenon and are formed when a person is evaluating an object from a cognitive, affective or behavioural component (Eagly & Chaiken 1993).

It is argued that attitudes connected to values, and attitudes that are persistent over time and deeper rooted in the self, are harder to change and have a great impact on a person's actions. However, more factors affect the likeliness of an attitude change, for instance, earlier studies point at younger people to be more likely to change their attitudes and opinions than older people are (Jagers, Martinsson & Nilsson, 2009). Moreover, when facing a situation, multiple attitudes are considered at the same time and are to a different degree affecting the behaviour depending on the situation (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2000).

According to Cohen (1964), an attitude is a precursor of behaviour and the two are closely linked in the way that attitudes are a set of beliefs, both unfavourable and favourable, that influence an individual's behaviour. A person that holds a positive attitude towards something is more likely to behave in line with this (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Thus, attitudes are playing a vital part in affecting a person's behaviour, and therefore, it is essential to understand the attitudes that a person holds in order to change his or her behaviour (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 2016).

When investigating consumer behaviour and the perceptions of collaborative clothing consumption models, several aspects need to be taken into consideration. Many authors associate clothing consumption with symbolic innovation and a need of being accepted and fit within one's socially constructed reality (e.g. Belk, 1988; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004; Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wand & Chan, 2012). Thus, consumers can be seen as tribe members seeking for belonging and uniqueness, and clothes are not just consumed for their utilitarian value but also for their symbolic value, and their power to transfer meaning to the consumer (McCracken, 1986). As argued by Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) almost all consumer action takes place within a group setting and consumers are influenced by different reference groups, whose perceptions are used by the consumer as a basis for his or her own perceptions.

Additionally, in connection to fashion consumption, collaborative clothing consumption models are found to be associated with social and experiential aspects, where the consumption has been referred to as fun and adventurous (Armstrong, Niinimäki, Lang & Kujala, 2016). Thus, in order to broaden the view of how consumers form their perceptions, one must also understand the experiential components, and include consumer feelings, fantasies and fun (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

2.2 Sustainable Consumption

The individual's view on environmental problems has a big impact when it comes to one's attitudes towards sustainability (Cheng & Chang, 2011). Environmental-friendly attitudes take a long time to develop (Widegren, 1998) and people that develop these will subsequently translate them to behaviour in terms of actions that protect the environment, for instance consuming sustainable products. To be able to develop environmental-friendly attitudes,

knowledge about environmental problems is needed. An individual having knowledge about these problems is more prone to pay a higher price for sustainable products (Lindén, 2004; Sundström, Martinsson & Lundqvist, 2008).

Furthermore, there are demographical differences in attitudes towards sustainability. For instance, it is found that younger people are more willing to pay a premium price for green energy compared to older people (Sundström et al., 2008). However, even if younger generations are considered to be environmentally and socially conscious, there is a contradiction between what they know and what they do concerning sustainability efforts (Hume, 2010). In addition, moral and social norms can affect the decision of whether to consume in a sustainable way. Ek and Söderholm (2008) suggest that a felt obligation to purchase green electricity may arise from acquiescence with a perceived expectation from others, e.g. neighbours and friends. Moreover, Niinimäki (2010) argues that consumers have a positive attitude towards ethical consumption, but that social orientation, ideology and ideals affect their decision making.

Additionally, cultural differences are identified in the literature. The sustainability attitudes in Sweden are rather strong (Jagers et al., 2009) and the level of environmental consciousness amongst young consumers are relatively high (Netter, 2013). However, this is not to be confused with positive attitudes towards improved environmentally friendly behaviour. Instead, the strength of the sustainability attitudes and their connection to values make them hard to change, since new information has to compete with current knowledge and perceptions. A possible way to affect these attitudes is to clarify how behaviour changes can make a positive contribution to the environment (Jagers et al., 2009). The more the individual believes in the effect of her or his behaviour, the more of an effort she or he will make in order to change the behaviour (Patchen, 2010).

Research on sustainable consumption has concluded that the gap between attitudes and behaviour mostly is a matter of barriers, which hinder the individual to act upon its attitudes (Koo, 2012). In a simplified way, these barriers depend on individual or societal variables. Individual variables are often about attitudes towards own responsibility, interests, or socio-economic factors (Faber et al., 2012) whereas societal elements are for instance lack of

sustainable consumption alternatives, prices, or the environmental effect of an engagement (Barkman, 2014). This gap is also reported on in studies regarding circular consumption. Vehmas, Raudaskoski, Heikkilä, Harlin and Mensonen (2018) argue the attitude towards circular clothing to be positive, but that consumers' environmental concerns do not always translate into their purchasing behaviour. Research has found that millennials agree with that there are benefits in reducing resource consumption, recycle, selective collection and reuse. Nevertheless, most of them have not carried out and do not intend to carry out consumer patterns based on circular economy (Lakatos et al., 2018). Consumers need to perceive limited risks and ample benefits in alternative consumption models and remanufactured products in order to view these as viable options to the traditional purchase of new products (Mugge, 2018).

2.2.1 Fashion Consumption

Studies have shown that even though consumers are living in a society where being sustainable and consuming environmentally friendly is highly embedded in the culture, in many cases, this does not translate into sustainable clothing consumption (Faber et al., 2012; Ekström, Hjelmgren & Salomonson, 2015). Due to the rise of the phenomenon of fast fashion, consumers are expecting new collections in store almost every month and the amount of new collections has dramatically increased (Christopher, Lawson & Peck, 2004). Thus, fast fashion has caused a shift in consumption behaviour and attitudes towards clothing consumption. The concept is associated with the consumers' insatiable need for newness (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006) resulting in a new consumption culture of impulsive buying. Consequently, the consumption of clothes is causing overconsumption and increased disposal, where a throw-away mentality has been developed (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

In recent years, some consumers have started to become aware of the overconsumption and negative effects of fashion production and consumption. Therefore, the rise of slow fashion has evolved where consumers are becoming mindful of the social and environmental impact of their fashion consumption. The concept incorporates the sustainable aspects of high quality, small lines, fair labour conditions and regional productions, and encourages consumers to think about their purchase behaviour in a holistic manner (Henly, 2010). According to Pookulangara and Shephard (2013), consumers are slowly starting to invest in more slow fashion options,

however, lack of knowledge, transparency, monetary concerns, and fear of not being trendy are found as hinders.

In order to fully understand consumers' attitudes and behaviours regarding clothing consumption, one has to understand the concept of fashion consumption. According to Niinimäki (2010), fashion refers to symbolic production, moving beyond purely providing protection it is an expression of the self and the values and lifestyles we aspire. Fashion can unite us with our emotional needs by reflecting our inner personality via external symbols, brands, marks and status items. According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004), fashion is defined as a style accepted by a large group of people and acts as a symbolic innovation, reflecting the society. Hence, fashion consumption can be defined as an activity that is part of one's identity-making, serving as a symbolic and hedonistic value, moving beyond only utilitarian needs that a piece of clothing can offer (Dobers & Strannegård, 2005). Therefore, when purchasing clothes, it is of high importance that it portrays and is in line with one's self-image and it is found that fashion serves a special role since it provides a "second skin" (Belk, 1988).

Consumers use clothing to both emanate meaning about themselves to others and additionally to reinforce meanings to oneself (Belk, 1988). As such, there is a desire to via fashion consumption create an identity that fits within the social norms. Based on the importance of identity construction, fashion consumption becomes more about the choice of being fashionable than being sustainable. Moreover, it is found that sustainable fashion consumption is also affected by what is acceptable and desirable to people's peers. Consumers are found to only consume sustainable clothes if their peers find it as a good alternative (McNeill & Moore, 2015). On the contrary, Britwistle and Moore (2007) argue that the sustainable option is not outweighed due to identity creation, instead the reason is that there is a lack of knowledge about the negative effect of the fashion industry amongst consumers.

Connected to identity creation is the need to be trendy (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004; Markkula & Moisander, 2012). On the one hand, it is found that some consumers prefer to purchase sustainable, e.g. second hand since it enables a chance for them to find individual pieces that can express fashion trends and at the same time be sustainable (Niinimäki, 2010). On the other hand, sustainable fashion is found to not be perceived as a high-street alternative in the

consumers' socially constructed reality (Joy et al., 2012). Thus, sustainable fashion consumption is among some consumers not perceived as a fashionable or trendy option, and therefore not considered when consuming clothes (Niinimäki, 2010). Additionally, in a study by Joergens (2006), it was found that consumers would buy products that they knew were unsustainable just because they liked the style and wanted the product, and that fashion consumers tend not to bend on their consumption needs to be environmentally friendly.

One of the main barriers to sustainable fashion consumption is the perception of price. In the initial decision-making phase, sustainable aspects are often outweighed by the financial criteria. Sustainability is often perceived to come with a price premium, and Joergens (2006) argues that price is the most influential aspect when consuming clothes. Sustainable fashion is found to be communicated as a hype amongst celebrities, indicating that these clothes and garments are unaffordable and out of reach for a "normal" consumer (Joy et al., 2012). Consumers are preferring to buy more items that are unsustainable rather than a few that are sustainable since they would get more for their money (McNeill & Moore, 2015). In a study conducted by Fisher, Cooper, Woodward, Hiller and Goworek (2008) price plays an important part when addressing fast fashion, where the relationship between the anticipated longevity and price was found to affect the consumption behaviour. Depending on the type of clothes as well as the occasion, consumers view low-priced clothes as disposable. This was exemplified by a participant in the study who bought sixteen tops for a holiday and threw them away afterwards (ibid.).

Furthermore, another possible reason to not consume clothes in a sustainable way could be an underlying scepticism towards companies. Consumers mistrust the motives of companies and doubt their claims concerning sustainability. Instead, there is a perception that the main motive behind sustainable practices is profit (Fisher et al., 2008). The abundance of sustainability-related information and the ambiguity of the concept have resulted in a demanding challenge for consumers. The voluminous and sometimes contradictory information is a hinder to take personal responsibility for sustainable consumption (Markkula & Moisander, 2012). Thus, consuming sustainable in the fashion industry presents a great challenge for consumers (Ekström, et al., 2015).

2.3 Collaborative Consumption

Sustainable fashion is not merely determined by the design, production conditions and material but also via consumers and their habits, behaviours and intentions. Reusing fashion items might serve as an option to minimise the need for new items and decrease wastage. When consumers decide to not buy new garments but instead use existing ones or return their used or unwanted clothes to the lifecycle by enabling them to be available for second hand use, they enter the field of collaborative fashion consumption. The concept of collaborative consumption is not new but has in recent years grown in popularity in various industries (Iran, Geijer & Schrader, 2019).

Collaborative consumption is defined as “the rapid explosion in traditional sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping redefined through technology and peer communities” (Botsman & Rogers stated in Iran & Schrader, 2017, p. 472). Via integrating the concept of collaborative consumption, collaborative fashion consumption offers consumers alternative ways to consume clothes (Iran, et al., 2019). According to Botsman (2013), collaborative consumption has three distinctive systems, namely; redistribution of underused or unwanted products, paying to access product use instead of ownership, and new ways of trade and exchange of non-product assets. Since clothing can be understood as a tangible product, this paper will focus on renting where the consumer pays to get access to a product rather than owning it and swapping where consumers redistribute their underused or unwanted products.

Earlier research on consumer perception of this type of consumption shows that the perceptions differ depending on the type of product (Baumeister, 2014). Clothes in particular distinct from other types of goods, such as books or tools, as consumers often attach meaning to their clothes (Becker-Leifhold, 2018). According to Baumeister (2014), this means that studies on specific product groups cannot provide insights on how consumers view other product groups, however it can give indications on consumer perceptions. Based on this, and the fact that the research on consumer perceptions is limited, studies on other products groups and industries will be included to get a comprehensive overview.

2.3.1 Swapping

Swapping is suggested to be an alternative resource use and has the potential to maximize usage and reduce the number of goods that are discarded after limited use (Piscicelli et al., 2015). Swapping includes a transfer of ownership permanently and the aim is to increase the lifespan and usage via reallocation of underused or unwanted products (Park & Armstrong, 2017). In the fashion industry, consumers participate in swapping for various reasons (Armstrong et al., 2016; Albinsson & Perera, 2012). Some retailers organize swap events where consumers can swap their unwanted but still fashionable clothes. These events usually involve monetary exchange where the participants buy a ticket to participate. Examples of these events are Diva Eva Clothing Swap and Fashion Stimulus Clothing Swap (Lang & Armstrong, 2018).

From a consumer perspective, there are various motivations for participating in swapping. It has been recently suggested by several authors that research efforts should more specifically study collaborative consumption, such as swapping, as a social innovation (Park & Armstrong, 2017; Jaeger-Erben, Rückert-John & Schafer, 2015). In a study conducted by Armstrong et al. (2016) it was found that swapping, and in particular organized swap events, was motivated via social aspects, highlighting a particular collaborative lifestyle (Albinsson & Perera, 2012). Attending swap events offer an alternative way to meet people with similar interests (Balck & Cracau, 2015). Armstrong et al. (2016) even suggest the social and experiential aspect to be the main reason to participate in swapping, rather than the consumption value. For instance, swap events were referred to as an adventure and a place where camaraderie can be found. However, the social aspects of a swap event could also be a hinder for some, since the social engagement could be a distraction and make them unable to identify clothes that reflect their personal style.

Connected to the social aspects it is found that collaborative consumption such as swap events fosters a community (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). For clothes, the community aspect was found to be positively perceived by consumers, and in particular amongst young consumers (Armstrong et al., 2015), which are found to prefer to swap their clothes with friends instead of donating them (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). Swapping can via the community that it is creating, help feed the social self, the part of a person that seeks belonging and connection (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). The authors further argue that community building is crucial in

today's society where brands need to incorporate the experience rather than focus on the product since people today are expressing who they are via what they join and want to be a part of something. Also, higher degrees of communality of alternative consumption practices lead to greater opportunities to generate shared values and meanings that contribute to personal identity. This can be connected to Belk's (2010) argumentation about one's extended self, as participators in swap events who incorporate the notion of the sharing community as a part of their extended self are more comfortable with swapping items (Albinsson & Perera, 2012).

The extended self is also of importance in the discussion of whom to swap with since it is argued the individuals that are participating is to some extent swapping with people whom they identify with. Consequently, this might be problematic since some consumers are found to only be comfortable with disposing clothes to people whom they can identify with, for example, people with a similar profession (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). Additionally, as argued by Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) the disposed items are in some cases meaningful to the seller, and when divesting those consumers are symbolically divesting extensions of themselves. Thus, in these cases, a shared self which is rooted in a common identity offers some reassurance that the correct meaning is communicated from the seller to the buyer. In other cases, the sold items were never initially linked to the seller's self-concept or were linked to a past self that was no longer desired, then by selling these items, the seller considered that he or she could move nearer to a desired future self. However, Park and Armstrong (2017) propose that product attachment is less present in redistributed ownership, where the consumer continually exchanges redistributed goods via swapping, thus only owning the item for a short period of time.

Furthermore, swapping represents a change in ownership (Albinsson & Perera, 2009). In a study of a swap event, a transformation in the participants' perception of their possessions was identified, the consumers moved from thinking mine to thinking ours. The concept of swapping can be understood as a new paradigm for creating value since people that are participating in swapping are, intentionally or unintentionally, creating value for not only themselves but also for another person (Armstrong et al., 2016). When swapping clothes, consumers are found to have a good feeling and being satisfied when seeing their unwanted clothes leaving with delighted new owners (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Swap events can be seen as a way to clean

out unwanted possessions responsively and to help others find what they need (Albinsson & Perera, 2012). Some people perceive swapping only as an ideal way to dispose goods without expecting to acquire any new items (Armstrong et al., 2016). The chain can be more lengthened when the possessions acquired at a swap event continues to change hands in later events. In every change of ownership, the object is renewed, which supports the idea that possessions have a life apart from us. By understanding that our possession can be useful for someone else and not solely limited to the usefulness it has to us, we extend the circle and utilise the lifespan of the item. This was demonstrated in Albinsson and Perera's (2012) study where participants brought back some objects they have previously gotten at a swap event, but did not like as much as they thought they would, and therefore reasoned that someone else could get better use of it.

Moreover, social proof has proven to affect the behaviour and attitudes towards swapping. Early adopters of swapping work as social proof thus enable consumers to cross the physiological barriers that usually exist around new behaviours. Social proof allows people to copy the behaviour of others and is therefore a cognitive shortcut. It is found to be more effective to communicate that everyone else is doing it rather than appealing to people's feeling of social responsibility (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). On the other hand, a recent study by Iran, et al. (2019) suggests social norms to be less important for consumers when they decide about collaborative fashion consumption. What significant others think about consumers engaging in collaborative fashion consumption is not as important as their own attitudes towards it.

Still, swapping is rather unexplored, thus another obstacle for consumer acceptance is the general confusion of the concept. Consumers are sceptical towards swap events since there is no price tag or cashier and perceive it as hard to grasp that there are no strings attached and that the items are for "free". Consequently, sharing events can challenge many inexperienced participants perceptions of a marketplace. Sometimes consumers find it hard to accept "free" items since the traditional market system where the consumer pays for services and goods acquired is the only system they know (Albinsson & Perera, 2012). As such, the authors argue that consumers' mindsets need to be changed and that it requires a long-term perspective to do so. Moreover, according to Armstrong et al. (2016), there are high concerns regarding trust for the provider when swapping. Not only are consumers worried that the items might be

unhygienic, but they are also sceptical about the size, quality, variability and the ability to find something suitable to swap. Consumers are also found to be confused and uncertain about the value of the swap, including uncertainty about the valuation of the clothes one brings. When not knowing what something is worth, it creates confusion about what actually constitutes a fair exchange. As a consequence of the confusion, some consumers view swapping as time-consuming and difficult, and it becomes more about a process to search for the right trade (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Furthermore, according to Albinsson and Perera (2012), there is a difference in the free swap events and the ones that you have to pay for. The latter appeals to the capitalist culture that stresses the attitude of “getting one’s fair share” whereas the free events highlight generalized reciprocity (Nelson & Rademacher, 2009). Belk (2010) refers to this as non-reciprocal behaviours, meaning that consumers give without expecting anything in return.

Moreover, an identified driver to participate in swapping is the sustainability advantages with the concept e.g. responsible disposition (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). However, it is found that consumers’ general attitude towards second hand clothing plays a vital part in swapping. The perception of swapping varies depending on if the consumer views second hand as acceptable and good or with disdain (Albinsson & Perera, 2009). Additionally, past sustainable behaviour is also found to be linked to the willingness to swap. Individuals who have experienced participation in sustainable consumption practices are more likely to swap (Lang & Armstrong, 2018).

2.3.2 Renting

Renting is based on the idea of selling functions or usage of a product, rather than the product itself. The concept differs from other forms of sharing since there is no permanent shift in ownership (Lang, 2018). In the fashion industry, there are several companies offering clothing rental, e.g. GlamCorner and Rent the Runway. In so called fashion libraries, consumers can rent clothes via a subscription-based service (Pedersen & Netter, 2015) and the company keeps the product ownership and is responsible for its upkeep (Armstrong & Lang, 2018).

Renting has been identified as one typical type of collaborative consumption (Iran et al., 2019) and is defined as a transaction in which an item is offered from one party to another for a fixed

time period in exchange for money and without change of ownership taking place (Durgee & O'Connor, 1995). Thus, in opposite to traditional buying, there is a removal of personal ownership, which can affect consumer attitudes. For instance, in a study of car-sharing, it was concluded that consumers did not experience perceived ownership and avoided identification with the accessed object of consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Many times, ownership is a symbol of status and is seen as the ideal type of consumption in many societies. The more you own, the more successful you are (Lang, 2018; Gao, 2017). When we feel that a possession is a part of our extended self, we are more likely to wish to own and retain it (Belk, 2007). There is a desire to own and also a social stigma of not owning, which results in barriers to the adoption of renting models. Some consumers may think that renting instead of buying will not reflect their personal image and may develop a negative attitude towards renting (Lang, 2018).

On the other hand, as rental provides an opportunity to access clothes of high quality and the latest fashion trends, status can still be achieved without owning the clothes. Becker-Leifhold (2018, p. 788) states that: “the renting model provides the opportunity to display a certain social status for people with a high need to show their status to others”. Thus, consumers can via renting get access to new fashion products right after the product launch, and according to Lang and Armstrong (2018) fashion leadership, i.e. consumers with a strong interest in fashion, are positively associated with the intention to engage in clothing rental. Moreover, the perceived burdens of ownership, such as time and costs, can stimulate the willingness to instead engage in access-based consumption. Renting gives the consumer an opportunity to access diverse and new products without the burden of ownership (Bardhi & Eckenhardt, 2012). When not owning the product, the renter does not need to worry about long-term product performance. Thus, freedom is a common goal that renters seek (Durgee & O'Connor, 1995). Several studies associate renting with less pressure, as it does not matter in the long run if the consumer made the wrong choice, as well as an opportunity to try a variety of products (Gao, 2017; Belk 2007; Durgee & O'Connor, 1995). In a study about temporary ownership, which is connected to non-ownership, it was also found that the driving factors amongst consumers to not own products were an increasing desire for experiences, a rising demand for up-to-date products and premium products and an increasing level of environmental awareness (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010).

Moreover, the concept of ownership has changed over the years. It is argued that younger generations grew up in a society where sharing was obvious and hence, developed different attitudes towards ownership and sharing (Gao, 2017). According to Gao (2017), flexibility and freedom might be valued higher than security and long-term relationships with the items. In today's society change is valued highly and people get bored more easily. Consequently, to own an item can have a negative effect for a person, since it might take away the value of the event. For example, it might not be as enjoyable to ride a limousine if it happened every day. This is also connected to how people consume clothes since consumers today are found to have negative attitudes towards wearing the same dress over and over again (ibid.). Furthermore, changes in lifestyle have resulted in an increase of non-ownership consumption. Consumers have today become more sophisticated, more educated, better travelled and more adventurous and consequently they are looking for not merely utility when consuming products but also experience (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010).

The concept of renting becomes partially complex when addressing identity. Self-identity is argued to be connected to ownership (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), and as such only renting clothes for everyday wear might result in a feeling of detachment from a person's self-identity (Durgee & O'Connor, 1995). Nevertheless, how people identify themselves might have changed today, thus renting can create an opportunity to find their identities, since it can serve as a way to try different identities in order to find or escape temporarily from their current ones (Gao, 2017). Another factor affecting consumer attitudes towards renting is materialism, which refers to the importance a person attaches to possessions. Those who value materialism view possessions as the primary source of happiness in life (Belk, 2007). Lang and Armstrong's (2018) study highlights the negative influence of materialism on clothing rental and the study shows that participants with materialistic values are less likely to use renting as a purchasing option.

Additionally, hygienic considerations might affect consumers' willingness to rent, especially for products worn next to the skin compared to products such as winter outerwear, accessories or suiting (Armstrong et al., 2015). For instance, when sharing cars, one of the biggest barriers was the fear of contagion (Bardhi & Eckenhardt, 2012) and in line with this, Argo, Dahl and Morales' (2006) study confirmed that when consumers know that a product has been physically

touched by someone, especially someone they do not know, they usually have concerns about contagion. Furthermore, the issue of trust is critical when it comes to forming perceptions of renting (Möhlmann, 2015). Research by Armstrong et al. (2015) concluded that trust in the provider of the service is one of the more powerful themes contributing to a negative perception of alternative consumption models such as renting. Barriers to trust include both issues such as durability, size and quality issues, and hygiene, as well as scepticism about the motives of the service provider (Rexfelt & Hjort af Ornäs, 2009). Connected to the issue of trust, it is found that product-service systems, e.g. renting are ideal for companies with well-known brand image and that a smaller, less well-known brand may have difficulties to earn trust from consumers (Armstrong et al., 2015).

The renting model offers an opportunity to get access to the latest fashion trends and clothes of high quality, which consumers might not otherwise be able to afford (Becker-Leifhold, 2018). In line with this, it is found that the perceived financial risk of ownership influence consumers' frequency of using renting in a favourable way (Schaefers, Lawson & Kukar-Kinney, 2015). Renting is often cheaper than buying and price is an important factor in the consumers' decision-making process of whether to buy or rent (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010). Similarly, Durgee and O'Connor (1995) suggest that price consciousness is one of the key factors for this type of consumption and Gao (2017) argues the economic factor to be one of the major motivations for fashion renting. In contrast, Armstrong et al. (2015) highlight financial issues as major concerns for fashion rental. For instance, there is a risk of not getting what is expected when paying the provider for renting updated fashion items, thus experience a financial loss.

Furthermore, guaranteed access and flexibility are critical success factors of renting systems that affect consumer attitudes to a great degree (Gullstrand, et al., 2016). Nevertheless, different features of an offer have different value to people regarding flexibility. For instance, research by Baumeister (2014) demonstrates how people perceive owning a car as more flexible than taking part of a car-sharing scheme, while Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) show that consumers perceive carpools as more flexible than car ownership. The flexibility of renting models is highlighted by Rexfelt and Hjort af Ornäs (2009), who suggest that consumer risk perception can be reduced by offering consumers a chance to try out the concept prior to entering a contract.

Lastly, reduced consumption can serve as an argument for renting. In a study conducted by Armstrong et al. (2016) it was found that one potential benefit of renting amongst consumers is that it can reduce consumption. This is particularly the case when it comes to clothes bought for a special occasion or special time. Nevertheless, findings from scholars interested in whether sustainability aspects are a motive for engaging in clothing rental or not is rather inconsistent and contradictory (Becker-Leifhold, 2018). Some studies have shown that sustainability concerns are irrelevant (Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Barnes & Mattsson, 2016), while others have found sustainability and the ability of renting to restrain overconsumption as strong motivations for renting (Armstrong et al., 2015; Armstrong et al., 2016; Pedersen & Netter, 2015; Piscicelli et al., 2015). Moreover, renting might serve as an alternative for special occasion consumption, nevertheless, some consumers have a hard time to imagine renting as a consumption option for everyday clothing (Armstrong et al., 2016). As such, some products are consumed to mainly fulfil a functional benefit whereas others are primarily consumed for their hedonic benefits and this distinction of main consumption goal for the consumers can affect their perceptions and behaviours (Baumeister, 2014).

2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have presented previous research on the subjects that are of relevance for our study and that in a second step is used as a foundation when analysing our empirical data. We started with a section about attitudes and behaviour followed by perceptions of sustainable consumption and fashion consumption, in order to create an understanding of the concepts that act as an underlying dimension for the study. We then moved on to collaborative fashion consumption with a focus on perceptions of swapping and renting. One of the biggest barriers to increasing collaborative consumption is argued to be consumers' attitudes, where materialism, individual ownership and hygiene are found to be barriers for sharing and swapping of resources. On the other hand, social aspects, sustainability, flexibility and financial opportunities are frequently mentioned motivations. Furthermore, swapping and renting is also connected to the emotional attachment that consumers develop towards clothes. In the following chapter, we will present the methodology used for the thesis.

3. Methodology

The following chapter presents the applied methodological approach for the study as well as the underlying motives and limitations. Firstly, the chosen philosophy of science will be presented with the aim to explain the perspective and standpoint taken during the research. Secondly, the research strategy and approach will be described followed by a description of the data collection and data analysis processes. The chapter will be concluded through a reflection on the quality of the study which is analysed via the parameters trustworthiness and authenticity.

3.1 Philosophy of Science

In research, the philosophy of science holds the assumptions of how the researcher understands and interprets the world around her (Saunders et al., 2015). Epistemology and ontology are the two major components that constitute the research philosophy. Epistemological issues concern the question of what is considered as acceptable knowledge within a field (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The epistemological position interpretivism is based on the view that it is necessary for the researcher to understand variances between humans in our role as social actors and how we make sense of the world, guided by our meanings (Saunders et al., 2015) and is therefore well suited for this paper. Ontology, on the other hand, is concerned about the researcher's assumptions about the way the world work. The ontological position social constructivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually carried out by social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus, the reality is socially constructed, and the meanings of the individuals constitute its foundation (Saunders et al., 2015).

Based on this, the epistemological position of interpretivism with an ontological assumption of social constructivism is argued to match the research aim of this paper, since it seeks to investigate the attitude and behaviour patterns and the symbolic meanings that consumers assign to new consumption models. Hence, to be able to understand the attitudes, behaviours and symbolic meanings that are assigned to the collaborative consumption phenomenon, an investigation must be made that explores the subjective meaning individuals create.

3.2 Research Strategy

The study has an exploratory purpose, as it seeks to find insights on a relatively new and complex problem (Saunders et al., 2015), in terms of consumer perceptions about alternative consumption models. The aim of the research is to understand the motivations and barriers amongst consumers and their perceptions of the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping, therefore a qualitative research design will be applied. This matches the formulation of the research question, via choosing the approach of *how* the collaborative consumption models are perceived we facilitated an evolving and open research. The exploratory verb *perceive* reinforced this as it enabled an understanding of the consumers' perceptions. Moreover, the qualitative method is chosen since consumers' motivations and barriers regarding clothing consumption are based on emotional, self-reflecting and subjective values instead of utilitarian or rational values. Thus, a qualitative research design enables an understanding of the richness, depth and complexity of consumers which would not be possible with a quantitative research design (Malhotra, Nunan & Briks, 2017). As such, the chosen design enables an understanding of the research area from the interviewees' point of view and the primary instruments in the data collection and data analysis are us as the researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Moreover, an abductive approach was applied to the qualitative study, implying a combination of deductive and inductive approach. Through a deductive approach, the researchers form a hypothesis and in a second step test it with the empirical data. On the contrary, when adopting an inductive approach, the researchers collect the data and after that develop a hypothesis, theories and important concepts (Malhotra, et al., 2017). More concretely, our study first took a deductive approach through reviewing and researching literature and grounded on this we compiled the characteristics that distinguish the concept of collaborative consumption. This compilation served as a basis for collecting our empirical findings. The themes we identified in the empirical findings were thereafter combined with the literature in order to extend and build upon the initial compilation, thus formed an analysis model applied to answer our research question. This comprises the study's more inductive part. Adapting an abductive approach enabled us to be flexible and make adjustments based on the empirical findings, which allows us to continuously shift from our prior knowledge about the topic and the understanding grounded on the empirical material. Accordingly, this enabled us to use existing

literature as a guide for asking relevant questions in our interviews and as themes in the data codification. At the same time, it allowed us to also discover new insights and understanding of existing concepts and contribute to the larger understanding of the phenomenon of collaborative consumption. An overview of the research process is portrayed below in figure 2 and the various steps will be further discussed in the following sections.

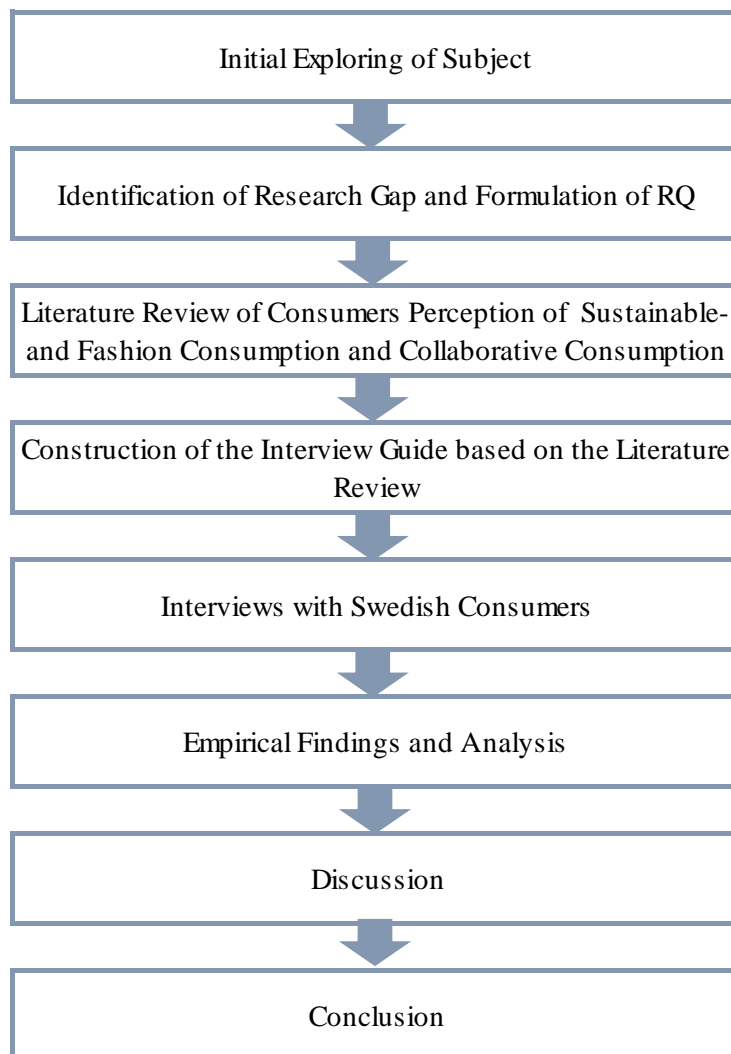


Figure 2: Summary of the research process. Compiled by authors.

3.3 Data Collection

Qualitative research seeks to encapsulate the experiences, feelings and behaviours of participants in their own context and terms (Malhotra, et al., 2017). Therefore, methods that are flexible and sensitive to the social context were used for the data collection. There are two types of data in data collection, namely, primary and secondary data. Primary data is described as “data originated by a researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the problem at hand” whereas secondary data is described as “data that have already been collected for purposes other than the problem at hand” (Malhotra, et al., 2017, p. 92). The data collection process started via a literature review based on secondary data and was followed by collecting primary data through interviews with Swedish consumers.

3.3.1 Secondary Data Collection

The data collection process was initiated with secondary data collection by searching for information about the subjects in order to determine the exact focus of the study. In order to find relevant literature and subjects to examine more in detail, the authors searched for information in electronic databases. After a comprehensive search, a research gap was identified, and the research aim and research question were formulated. The literature review was performed by reviewing and processing published material in databases about research that was relevant for the study, namely sustainable consumption, sustainable fashion consumption, collaborative consumption, swapping and renting with a focus on consumers’ attitudes and perceptions about these concepts.

The literature review of the concepts collaborative consumption, swapping, and renting was completed via searching for relevant books and articles that was peer-reviewed and published in established academic journals. Due to the newness of the research area, we found several relevant articles via a snowballing approach, where one relevant article guided us forward to new ones. To ensure the relevance of the articles we focused on research that was in line with the subject of the study. Since the concepts are rather unexplored, we made some exceptions when we found articles that were of high relevance to the study, but not published in academic journals. However, in these situations, we only included articles cited in peer-reviewed articles. Moreover, due to the lack of extensive literature on the subject, articles focusing on other

industries and sectors than clothing and fashion were included in order to get a comprehensive overview.

Furthermore, articles that were written in other languages than Swedish and English were excluded as well as articles that had a focus that was outside of the scope of this paper. Other exclusion criteria for the study were articles that focused on other types of alternative consumptions models such as second hand consumption as well as articles that focused on other aspects than the consumption phase, e.g. recycling. Finally, the aim of this study is to understand the consumer perspective and therefore articles with a primary business perspective were excluded.

3.3.1.1 Databases

In order to find a sufficient amount of relevant research and articles, we used numerous databases. Nevertheless, a limitation of the number of databases used was made by evaluating the time limit and the value of finding additional articles. The utilized databases were therefore Google Scholar, LIBSearch, Emerald and Business Source Complete. The databases were chosen grounded on their range, field, and quality of content.

3.3.2. Primary Data Collection

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with young Swedish consumers. By using interviews as the primary data collection method, we got the opportunity to get insights on how people view and think about the subject of this paper, in terms of personal stories and perspectives. In conversations, we get to know people and acquire knowledge on their experiences, feelings and attitudes about the world they live in (Kvale, 1996), therefore interviews were considered suitable in order to fulfil the research objective of this paper. Personal interviews were preferred over focus group interviews based on the advantages of them making it easier for the researchers to lead the conversation in the direction relevant for the research purpose as well as the higher allowance of confidentiality, making it easier to create an environment of trust (Brinkmann, 2013). The group interaction in focus groups would also have reduced our control of the interview situation, thus including the risk of resulting in poor data collection, making a systematic analysis difficult (Kvale, 1996). Hence, personal interviews were preferred in order to optimize data collection and its analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by asking relatively open questions that were prepared in advance, complemented with attendant questions if needed. In contrast to an unstructured interview, the semi-structured nature of the interviews resulted in a focus on the order and on asking the questions in a systematic way. However, there was still room for flexibility and for the interviewees to elaborate as they preferred and speak freely, which is not the case in a structured interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews were standardized in a way that made it possible to get a collective result from the interviewees. Without an interview guide, there would have been a risk that the interviewees would have gotten questions that could have been interpreted in different ways, which would have obstructed the analysis process since the result would have been desultory. Nevertheless, the flexibility and the option to ask attendant questions enabled more profound interviews (Kvale, 1996). Taken together, this sort of interviewing was considered appropriate because of the abductive and exploratory approach of the study, where clothing rental and swapping is a relatively unexplored subject that requires room for new information to be brought up. Nonetheless, since the study seeks to examine the consumer perception about the consumption models and the underlying motivations and obstacles, the interviews needed to have some structure in order to collect the information necessary for answering the research question.

3.3.2.1 Selection of Interviewees

The interviewees were based on two criteria; age and nationality. The motive for Sweden is grounded on the fact that fast fashion consumption is highly present in the country, wherefore alternative consumption models that better capture the value and optimise the clothes' lifespan can be argued to be needed. In addition to this, young Swedish consumers are viewed as one of the greenest in the world and are in the forefront regarding sustainability (Euromonitor, 2018), pointing at the potential acceptance of more sustainable alternative consumption models. Furthermore, the study is focusing on young generations, where all the interviewees are in the age span between 20 and 30, due to several reasons. Firstly, young consumers are relevant for the study since they are argued to be a key driving force to a more sustainable consumption pattern and hold the potential to act as means for change, wherefore their perceptions are interesting to investigate. Additionally, younger generations are said to directly or indirectly influence older generations' household consumption. Finally, this group has a high concern about protecting the environment and the behaviour change of today's young

generations is assumed to set the stage for future generations (Gwozdz, et al., 2013). Since the study has an exploratory purpose and seeks to find nuances in the interviewees' answers and thorough insights in a relatively unexplored topic, any more criteria for interviewees selection were not used.

There is no specific guideline for how many interviews a qualitative study should contain, instead it depends on the study's purpose (Kvale, 1996). As the study seeks to investigate in detail a relatively unexplored topic, a starting point nine interviews were planned, which was estimated to fulfil the data collection needed to meet the purpose of the study. After these nine interviews, the interviewees' answers indicated repetition and after two more interviews, a saturation point was experienced. Hence, the collected empirical data after eleven interviews were considered enough to build the analysis upon.

3.3.2.2 Interview Guide

In order to implement semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was created (Appendix 1). The guide was based on the literature review regarding consumers' perceptions of sustainable consumption, fashion consumption, and the two collaborative consumption models renting and swapping. Relevant themes identified in the literature research made the foundation for the questions in order to cover all areas the study aims to research (Bryman, 2002), and with the objective to get a holistic understanding of the interviewees' perception and underlying motivations and barriers to collaborative fashion consumption.

The first theme was sustainability and therefore the interviews started with general questions concerning the consumers' attitudes and behaviour in regard to sustainability and to sustainable consumption. The questions were based on prior literature about consumers' attitudes and behaviour regarding sustainability as well as circular economy, due to its relevance to our research and the concept of collaborative consumption. These questions served as a warmup for the interviewees as many are more familiar with sustainability in general than collaborative consumption in particular.

The second theme in the interview guide was sustainable fashion consumption. In this part, the interviewees were asked questions about their attitudes and behaviours in regard to sustainable

fashion consumption. The interviewees were asked about what was important for them when consuming clothes and their willingness and perception about consuming clothes in a sustainable way.

The third theme was renting. Before addressing the third theme a clarification about renting was made, in order for the interviewees to understand the concept on a general level. Even if this bears the risk of influencing the interviewees' answers since their immediate perception and attitude might be altered, the authors found it necessary to explain the concepts briefly due to their unknowingness. This was found to be an issue in the pilot study and therefore we decided to include a clarification. In the following step, the interviewees were asked questions about their attitudes towards renting based on previous literature.

Finally, the last theme was swapping. As with the theme renting, the interviewees were given a brief description of the concept due to the same reasoning. After this, the interviewees were asked questions about swapping based on previous relevant literature.

Since several consumer interviews were conducted, the interviews got improved during the time, as the researchers could see that some questions needed to be adjusted. This was done in line with the exploratory and abductive approach, which is beneficial due to its involvement of weaving back and forth in order to increase the understanding of the issue (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Nevertheless, to ensure the comparability of the interviewees, the main questions were not changed as the data collection progressed. Thereby, the chosen approach worked as a way to discuss and discover interesting topics raised by the interviewees rather than changing the interview guide.

The questions in the interview guide were carefully formulated to ensure an exploration of the areas interesting for the study. Most of the questions were designed as open questions in order to reveal attitudes (Saunders et al., 2009). They were also simple and direct for the interviewees to be able to understand them correctly and in a similar way, in order to facilitate the comparison and analysis. Additionally, the questions were evaluated both with regards to a thematic and dynamic dimension. The questions were accepted after ensuring the thematic aspect of being relevant for the research theme and the dynamic dimension of being beneficial

for the interpersonal interaction in the interviews and keeping a flow of the conversation (Kvale, 1996). A first draft of the interview guide was made and then sent to a test person from whom feedback about the relevance and clarity of the questions was requested. After receiving this, the interview guide was revised.

In order to test the quality of the research design concerning the interview guide, formulation of the questions and the flow of the interview one pilot study was conducted. The pilot study enabled us as interviewers to gain experience and confidence in conducting the interviews as well as check if any of the questions were difficult to understand, make the interviewee feel uncomfortable or lose interest at any moments during the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The pilot study did not result in any major findings of weaknesses in the research design, and the interviewee was able to answer all the questions in a sufficient matter. However, the pilot study demonstrated a weakness with confusions regarding the concepts and therefore, as aforementioned, a clarification of the concepts swapping and renting was included in the finalised version. As such, the pilot study resulted in minor alterations of the interview guide, and it also made us more comfortable in the role of an interviewer. Due to the quality of the findings from the pilot study, and that it did not lead to any major changes of the interview guide, it was found relevant to include in the empirical findings.

The finalised version of the interview guide starts with more general questions about the interviewee's knowledge and thoughts on sustainability and clothes consumption and then continue with more specific questions. Besides the main questions, there was also room for asking attendant questions and discussing supplemental subjects that were raised.

3.3.2.3 Conducting the Interviews

All interviews were performed face to face since it enables more nuanced conversations and is argued to increase the understanding as well as the personal engagement from the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since the identities of the interviewees were not needed to fulfil the research purpose, all interviewees have been kept anonymous and therefore, in the analysis, they were given a different name to ensure their anonymity. Moreover, all interviews were recorded in order to avoid the risk of loss of information and to be able to focus on the dynamics and topic of the interview (Kvale, 1996). Before the start of the interviews, all participants were

asked to give their consent to be recorded. No notes were taken as this was considered as a possible distraction for us as interviewers, instead, we were able to listen actively and carefully and respond to what the interviewees told us. As all interviews were conducted in quiet rooms without background noise, a good recording quality was secured.

All interviews were conducted in Swedish since this was the mother tongue of all the interviewees. Interviews in mother tongue enable the interviewee to be more comfortable, speak more freely and for the researcher to capture more nuances of what is brought up (Andrews 1995; Tsang, 1998). To increase the comfort and relaxation even more, the interviewees got to decide time and place for the interview.

When the interviews had been conducted, the recordings were used to transcribe the interviews. This was done in order to allow the obtained information to be coded and analysed. The transcription process started directly after the first interview had been performed and continued in parallel with further interviews. We agreed on a transcribing style of verbatim and word by word and signs for pauses and expressions like laughter. Some interview parts were transcribed by both of us, in order to investigate if there were any discrepancies and to align the style of transcribing. This strengthens the transcription reliability and thus its quality (Kvale, 1996). At the point of time when all interviews had been conducted and fully transcribed, a respondent validation was composed. This means that a summary of the interview was sent out to respective interviewee in order for him or her to control the accuracy. A respondent validation enables the interviewees to control and confirm the data interpretation and thereby decreases the risk that the researcher's own subjective interpretations and views mislead the data, thus increasing the credibility and authenticity of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Provided discrepancies between the perception of the interviewees and the transcribed interview material, corresponding changes were made.

3.4 Data Analysis

It is important to clarify that the data analysis process started already when conducting the interviews, as the researchers analysed and interpreted the interviewees' discussions. Nevertheless, the main part of the analysis process occurred after the interviews were conducted. As aforementioned, the interviews were transcribed in order to prepare for the

actual analysis. The analysis process can thereafter be divided into three parts; sorting, reducing and arguing. Sorting included coding of data, which means that the collected material was sorted into different categories (Saunders et al., 2009). The categories were developed based on the literature review and the collected data by searching for repetitions, similarities, differences and theory related material (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). To sort the material, the categories sustainable fashion consumption, renting and swapping were used, which are the ones we based the interview questions upon. The theme sustainability was removed before sorting since we found the collected data regarding this to serve better as a complement to the other sections rather than as a separate theme providing findings relevant for answering the research question. Within each of the categories, we constructed subcategories. For instance, under the category of clothes consumption, subcategories such as ‘quality’, ‘self-image’ and ‘price premium’ were created.

The next activity in the analytical process was to unitise the data. This means to attach relevant “units” of data to the appropriate category. Sentences, a number of sentences or complete paragraphs from the interview transcripts were added to the relevant category accordingly. This selective process, guided by the research purpose allowed reducing and rearranging of the data, resulting in a more comprehensive and manageable form (Saunders et al., 2009). At this stage, the categories were revised, and data were rearranged continuously as we searched for key themes, relationships and patterns in the data. Categories were further subdivided or integrated as some categories attracted a great number of units and data and needed to be subdivided in order to enable further analysis. Also, new insights were gained within existing categories and thus suggested new ones. The reducing part also involved selecting parts of the subcategories that were found most interesting, not necessarily most frequently mentioned, and excluding the less interesting components (Styhre, 2013). For example, in the category renting, the subcategories ‘uncertainty’, ‘scepticism’ and ‘trust’ formed one untied subcategory named ‘uncertainty’. The reducing process resulted in initial findings on how the collaborative consumption models swapping and renting are perceived as well as the underlying motivations and barriers.

In order to explicate the meaning of the interviewees’ statements, three contexts of interpretation were applied. In a self-understanding context, we attempted to formulate what

the interviewee him- or herself believed to be the meaning of his or her statement in an abbreviated form. The interpretation is a rephrased condensation of the meaning of the interviewees' statements from their own point of view as these were understood by us. The sorting and categorization of data happened within the context of the interviewees' self-understanding. In the next context, critical common-sense understanding, our interpretations went beyond rephrasing the interviewees' self-understanding. The interpretations included a broader frame of understanding than that of the interviewees themselves. We critically viewed their statements and focused on the content of what was said by including general knowledge about it. By doing so, we could enrich and amplify our interpretations of the statements (Kvale, 1996). Lastly, in a third context, we applied a theoretical frame for interpreting the statements' meaning. In this context, the interpretations went beyond both the interviewees' self-understanding as well as a common-sense understanding and we applied the theories presented in the literature review in order to interpret the meaning of the statements. Thus, by doing so, the findings were argued by comparing the reduced empirical material to the existing literature.

3.4.1. Translation

The transcribed material was in a final step translated from Swedish to English, resulting in some methodological considerations. We performed the translations ourselves and as such the process of translating the transcriptions was not entirely neutral or unbiased since we choose and decided on the most suitable words and construction of sentences for expressing the interviewees' original statements. Hence, the original statements were transformed from Swedish to English, and the interviewees' initial wordings were altered. Consequently, the interviewees' statements are being expressed and portrayed via our perceptions and understandings of their viewpoint. It is important to address and reflect upon these implications since they result in that some of the interviewees' expressions were altered or in some cases even to some extent lost in translation.

Thus, finding and selecting subcategories in Swedish that represented the accurate meaning from the literature resulted in some challenges. In some cases, translating the words directly would have resulted in implications of the words' meaning, since some of the words cannot be translated directly and some words do not have an accurate counterpart in the two languages. In these situations, we considered the difference in the actual meaning of the words, their

definition from a dictionary and considered what meaning the interviewees' expressed when discussing these keywords. Furthermore, it was challenging to in a sufficient manner portray some of the interviewees' statements. This became apparent when the interviewee used phrases and words that are deeply embedded in the Swedish language and therefore lack a direct translation that reflects the meaning in English. In order to minimise these aforesaid challenges, we have during the process been aware of the possible misinterpretations and implications that may occur. Therefore, when translating the statements and words we discussed and questioned each other in order to find the most suitable words or phrases that represented the intended and original meaning instead of solely translating the words and statements directly.

3.5 Quality of the Research

The quality of the research is often measured via reliability and validity. Nevertheless, the two stated concepts have been criticized for not being relevant for qualitative research, since the application of the concepts to qualitative research assumes that a single absolute version of social reality is feasible. As such, the concepts are argued to be more relevant for quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, in line with the interpretive paradigm with a qualitative approach, the quality of this research is more suited to be evaluated by trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As a first step to strengthen the quality of the research, both of us participated in all stages of the thesis. Since we are two researchers that interpreted things in different ways, we made it clear from the start that it was acceptable to question each other during the process. This concerns everything from the collected material during the interviews to how to analyse it and connect the empirical findings to the theory. Our different interpretations and understandings led to several discussions which forced us as researchers to question our own thoughts and reflect upon our choices, thus increasing the quality of the study.

3.5.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness builds on four criteria, that each has an equivalent criterion in quantitative research, namely; credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.5.1.1. Credibility

Credibility addresses to what extent the research is credible or feasible and is a key criterion since “(...) there can be several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 396). We ensured credibility via respondent validation, thus executing the research according to good practice and by submitting the findings of the interviews to the persons interviewed to verify that the social context was understood correctly by the researchers. The interviewees were contacted via email within three weeks after their interview with an overview of the findings. The interviewees responded back on email and in general, there was a consensus about the findings. As such, this resulted in a credible understanding of the individuals’ social context and reality. Another possible technique to ensure credibility is triangulation (ibid.), however, this technique was not applied in the research.

3.5.1.2 Transferability

Qualitative research is usually oriented to the aspects of the social context and contextual uniqueness that is studied. Therefore, it is an empirical issue whether the research findings would be the same in another context or even in the same context studied but at a different time. To enable transferability of the findings, qualitative researchers should provide a thick description (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The primary aim when conducting the study was not to find results that ultimately can be generalized, which therefore is affecting the transferability. Due to the interpretative view, focus tend to be more on the specific case or situation and therefore transferability is not as relevant (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Thus, the findings will mostly be accurate in the specific context that the study took place in and it is therefore questionable to what degree it is transferable to other industries and studies. Moreover, since the subject is fairly new and unexplored and consumers attitudes are changing over time, the results might be different in the future. However, the researchers provided a detailed and thick description of the collected data and the setting and context it was collected in to minimize this issue. Consequently, a detailed description enables the reader to assess whether the findings and research can be applied in another setting (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.5.1.3 Dependability

Dependability is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research. In order to ensure dependability, it is suggested that the researchers should adopt an auditing approach, which means that it should be kept records of all phases of the research process in an accessible way, for others to audit that a proper procedure has been followed (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Throughout the thesis, the researchers elucidated and outlined the decision process. Via a clear and detailed description of the processes of data collection, data analysis and the findings of the research study, the chances for consistency and repeatability are enhanced and dependability is most likely ensured.

3.5.1.4 Confirmability

The criterion confirmability addresses the researcher's ability to act in good faith and account findings and conclusions grounded on the interviewee's answers and not former prejudices and assumptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Confirmability was warranted via several points. Firstly, after the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and sorted. Secondly, in the analysis quotes from the interviews were used in order to enhance the understanding of the researchers' interpretations. However, this might be limited due to the aforementioned translation errors. Finally, to ensure that an accurate interpretation was made, the transcribed documents were sent to the interviewees, which also enabled them to add comments if necessary, enhancing the confirmability.

3.5.2 Authenticity

In addition to the abovementioned criteria, Guba and Lincoln argue for a criterion of authenticity. This criterion involves a broader set of problems regarding the wider political impact of the study. As such, it concerns how fairly the research represents various viewpoints amongst people of the social setting, if it helps the participants to get a better understanding of their social situation, how other members of the social setting are perceiving things, whether the participants can change their situation, and whether the participants have received better opportunities to engage in actions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). With regards to this, one potential drawback of the study could be that the consumers interviewed can be argued to have rather similar backgrounds and therefore holds the risk of not fairly representing different viewpoints. However, we believe that a fair representation of collected information is a scientific

foundation and that the other criteria in addition to fairness are of low relevance to our study. Besides this, in general, the criterion of authenticity has not received great influence and are many times perceived as proactive (Bryman & Bell, 2015), wherefore authenticity will not be further applied.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

When using interviews as the primary data collection method there are several ethical issues that may arise that the researchers need to be aware of and work proactively with. This is extra important in research with human participants, which needs to serve both scientific and human interests. Ethical decisions arise during the whole research process, rather than being specifically attached to separate stages (Kvale, 1996).

When designing the study, the interviewees' consent to participation, securing confidentiality and possible consequences of the study for the interviewees were taken into consideration (Kvale, 1996). Subsequently, in the interview situation confidentiality was clarified and the interviewees were informed on their anonymity before the start of the interviews. The purpose of the anonymity was to ensure that the interviewees dared to express their opinions and attitudes and not let the fear of personal integrity to affect the results of the study. When promised, it is of utter importance to make sure that the anonymity is maintained (Saunders et al., 2009), therefore the audio recordings were deleted after transcription. By doing so, the issue of harm to participants was avoided. The interviewees were also informed on the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw from the process at any point. As aforementioned, the participants were all asked for consent to be recorded before the start of the interview. The amount of information given was considered enough to ensure that the interviewees were able to make an informed decision of whether to participate or not (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Additionally, the consequences of the interview interaction for the interviewees were taken into account (Kvale, 1996). The interviews took place in a familiar setting for the interviewees and as we were two researchers, one asked the questions whereas the other one made sure that the interviewee did not feel stressed or uncomfortable in any way. The researches also reflected on the possible consequences for the larger group the interviewees represent, which is Swedish

clothing consumers. In this matter, the researchers believe that the study can be beneficial since perceptions about more sustainable consumption models are explored, which in the long term can contribute to a shift to a more circular and sustainable consumption.

The ethical considerations in the analysis involve the issue of how critically and deeply the interviews can be analysed and of whether the interviewees should be able to opine on how their statements are interpreted. The researchers used Kvale's (1996) three contexts of interpretations and communities of validation in order to secure that the interpretations were in line with what was said. Thus, the aforementioned respondent validation made it possible for the interviewees to validate the first step of data interpretation. Since the interviewees controlled and confirmed the data interpretation the risk of subjectivity from the researchers was reduced.

Lastly, the role of us as researches and how it will affect the study was reflected upon. We have controlled and verified the research material, both separately and together, in order to ensure scientific quality. Also, we have had in mind during the whole process, and especially when conducting the interviews, the risk of overidentification with the interviewees (Kvale, 1996). This was avoided by keeping the researcher role and the purpose of the study at the forefront and thereby keeping the critical perspective.

3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have presented our used methodology. Through performing a qualitative study with an exploratory purpose, we were able to gather interpretations and perceptions from young Swedish consumers and as such, explore the subjective meanings that individuals create. The data was collected via eleven semi-structured interviews with Swedish consumers in the ages between 20 and 30 and through collecting existing literature on the topic. We analysed the data through an abductive approach and the process was divided into sorting, reducing and arguing and the data were analysed within three contexts on interpretation. The chapter ends with a reflection upon the quality of the study through the parameters trustworthiness and authenticity. In the next chapter, we will present our analysis of the empirical findings of the study.

4. Empirical Findings and Analysis

This chapter will present the empirical findings from the consumer interviews, interpreted in line with Kvale's (1996) first and second context of interpretation and structured based on frequently mentioned topics. The findings will be presented in the same order as the interviews were conducted, i.e. begin with the general and broader theme of fashion consumption in connection to sustainability, and then continue with the specific collaborative fashion consumptions models renting and swapping.

4.1 Fashion Consumption

Various factors and topics were brought up as important in regards to fashion consumption. These identified aspects were to different degrees affecting the interviewees in their consumption behaviour, resulting in individual motivations and barriers to consuming fashion.

4.1.1 Sustainability

Sustainability seems to be a complex concept where various aspects are mentioned as important in order to act in a sustainable way. During the interviews, the consumers' fashion consumption was referred to when asking about what sustainability means for them. As such, attitudes and behaviours with regard to the fashion industry seem to be top of mind for consumers when thinking of sustainability. This was demonstrated by Amanda who mentioned that:

“I think the fashion industry is a very big part of today's environmental issue. So much is produced and bought to be used a few times and thrown away instead of reused”.

One topic that was mentioned in the interviews was the concept of fast fashion and the implications it has amongst consumers. When asked about sustainable consumption Hanna claims that: “When it comes to clothes, I can absolutely become better. I am still buying a lot of fast fashion since I am not rich”. Accordingly, Emil stated that: “For example, even though I am aware of that stores such as Primark contributes to fast fashion, I am still willing to buy a scarf there when it is cold outside and it only costs 10 SEK”. Thus, consumers seem to be aware of some of the consequences of fast fashion, where brands such as Zara and H&M was mentioned frequently, however since fast fashion is perceived as affordable, consumers still

engage in it. Nevertheless, due to the knowledge about the negative effects of the fashion industry, there are some contradicting consumption behaviours, where the consumer is conscious about the negative aspects of fast fashion but still ends up buying it. This is demonstrated by Albin who said that he could imagine that organic clothing items have a longer lifespan and are better than throwaway pieces. Therefore, he argued that he can motivate himself to buy more expensive clothing that lasts longer. However, even though he had this mindset, he still buys clothes from stores such as H&M because he thinks it looks nice and is cheap.

Connected to attitudes towards fast fashion, a reoccurring theme that was brought up was overconsumption. Hanna stated that: “I really like to have new clothes, but this is something I need to change. I need to buy fewer pieces of clothes in general”. Furthermore, during the interviews, reducing overconsumption was mentioned as an important factor, since the interviewees believed that they personally could make a difference in this regard in order to act more sustainable in their fashion consumption. Emil mentioned that: “For me, sustainability is more about that I think about how long I personally will be able to use the clothes”. This was further brought up by Jakob who claimed that for him it is more about buying fewer pieces that you can use more often. Thinking about the usability and durability of the clothes was further mentioned in relation to special occasions. Hanna claimed that:

” I try to not buy too much stuff. I think about how many times I can use the garment and not just that I need something new because I am going out this weekend. “

Hence, a desire to act more sustainable was identified during the interviews. Even though there are some aspects that the interviewees are thinking of and actions that they are taking in order to act sustainable in their fashion consumption, they still think they could do more. This is demonstrated through the above statement and via Jenny who mentioned that: “I wish that I did so much more, for example, that I consumed more second hand”. Nevertheless, some barriers were identified amongst the interviewees to engage in sustainable fashion consumption. Firstly, there seems to be an overall lack of knowledge about what is sustainable and lack of holistic information. Hanna discussed that she thinks her behaviour would change if she had more knowledge and stated that:

“... I have heard so many terrifying stories about what happens in the textile industry...
If my knowledge increased, I would get more inspired to change.”

Moreover, Jenny mentioned that there is a lot of information about what is going wrong in the industry but very little information about what you can do on an individual level.

Secondly, it was mentioned in some of the interviews that there are not enough alternatives in the fashion industry to be able to act sustainable. Even though there are some alternatives to buy more sustainable or recycled, consumers still find it time-consuming and difficult. Philip explains that he knows of some brands that are making sustainable clothes but for instance, he has never heard of a sustainable shoe brand. Therefore, he claims that in some segments there are options, but in others, it is hard to find sustainable alternatives. In line with this, both David and Jenny mentioned that there are limited alternatives for office clothes such as a suit, where they both do not know of a good option. Furthermore, David claims that it would be easier and more convenient if the companies take the first step and offer sustainable alternatives and mentions Adidas recycled materials for clothes as a good example.

Finally, some of the interviewees expressed a concern about the intention of companies that are offering sustainable clothes. For example, David expressed concerns about the brands' authenticity:

“You lose respect for the whole idea when so many companies are greenwashing. For bigger companies, it is more about creating returns than making a difference”.

In line with this, Jakob stated that it is hard for the consumer to know if the sustainability claims are true or not. Even though some companies are branding their products as sustainable, they still appear in newspapers due to bad working conditions etc. which is making it hard to differentiate between brands' claims and their true intentions. As such, he returns to the discussion of how you need much more knowledge in order to make better decisions.

Another aspect that was mentioned during the interviews was a potential difference in behaviours and attitudes in different generations. When addressing sustainable fashion consumption Hanna mentioned that younger generations are more open for accepting new

information and changing their behaviour accordingly. As such, she stated: “I believe that it is easier for younger generations to take in new information and change their behaviour. It might be harder for older people to change their behaviour. I believe that we are a bit more used to being adaptive.”

4.1.2 Self-image and Identity

Clothing items seem to mean more to people than just their functional value. Self-image and identity can be expressed via clothes by shared symbolic values and meanings. Many interviewees expressed how clothes tell something about who they are and that this was meaningful for them. For instance, Albin mentioned that his primary benchmark when buying clothes is that he thinks that it looks good and that it has some symbolic value that he wants to express. Karolina expressed how she thinks that some of her friends dress more in shirts and jackets to create a certain self-image:

“I think clothes can say a lot about a person. Some of my friends that want to create an image of living in a specific way dress accordingly”.

Clothes then work as an effective tool to create an image of whom you are, by expressing different types of values and meanings via the clothes. This is further illustrated by Philip who claims that: “when wearing brands that people know is sustainable, you express that you are conscious about what you wear and about sustainability”. As such, by wearing brands considered as sustainable, an identity of being sustainable can be created. However, in order for the right symbolic value to be expressed, the people around you need to be aware and agree upon what you are trying to express, for it to be effective. Albin described this by mentioning that in some contexts people know the brands and style that he is wearing, while in other contexts it does not say as much since people are not aware of them.

The concept of fashion as a tool for self-image and identity creating is further reflected through the strive for updating your clothes in order for them to better fit with whom you are. Several interviewees think that clothes say something about who they are, but that their current clothes are not part of their identity and therefore they want to change their wardrobe in order to match their personality. Maria expressed that she wants to exchange her whole wardrobe since she

thinks that clothes say much about a person. She further argues:

“Now I just have black clothes, I want to buy more colourful garments as I think it matches my personality better”.

This wish and strive was also brought up by Angelika in the words of: “I can sit and think of how much I hate my wardrobe and want to change it”. However, the degree of connecting clothes to identity and self-image seems to be connected with how interested you are in clothes. Consumers that are less interested in clothes seem to think that clothes do not tell as much about their identity. Jenny described this: “I do not have an interest in clothes, and I do not find it that exciting. It does not define me as a person”. Also, Amanda illustrated it by stating that she does not think that her clothes say much about who she is, she mixes a lot and does not have a certain type of style. On the contrary, Angelika, who is very interested in clothes illustrated a clear connection between clothes and identity:

“Clothes are my whole identity, I love clothes so much and a bad day can be due to what I am wearing”.

The identity making is also demonstrated by the way people use clothes as a way to be associated with a certain group or classifying others based on what they are wearing. Some meant that this was rather unconscious, that it happens automatically. For instance, Hanna brought up an example of studying business and letting that be mirrored in what she was wearing without even thinking of it: “I think it is unconscious that clothes define who you are, I study business and when I think about it, it can be seen in what I am wearing. There are some things I would never put on when going to school”. David also claimed this unconsciousness group association:

“When you hang out with people, you start to dress the same. This is probably not something you think about, but people in different subgroups often dress the same”.

Additionally, this can be understood from a bigger perspective than subcultures and peer groups. Angelika mentioned that the city you live in affects how you dress: “The things I buy

here would probably not fit in Hamburg, I think I change my identity according to the city I live in". She gave an example of her friend living in Oslo and when she visited her hometown in Sweden her dad said that she could not wear a beret there, it does not fit in. Hence, clothes seem to work as a way to identify with many things, from a city, to a group of friends, to an academic interest. This will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

Fashion also serves as a way to help to identify with others and categorize them. Many tend to think that people are in a certain way based on how they look, and clothes often play a big role in one's appearance. Emil described it in the words of:

"You draw conclusions pretty fast and place the person you are meeting in a certain category based on how he or she looks and dresses".

This attitude can also stop people from trying new types of clothes, as they associate it with a type of person that does not match their self-image. One example that illustrates this was given by Hanna in the words of: "Right now many people dress more hipster, and that type of clothes I would never fit in, just because I think that I am not that kind of person. Even if it sounds really stupid to reason like this".

4.1.3 Trendy and Fashionable

When addressing the importance of being fashionable or trendy, the interviewees had different perspectives on how important it is or how much they are being influenced by trends. Overall the interviewees seemed to be more influenced than what they initially stated since different reference points such as friends, social media or the city you live in were mentioned. This is illustrated by David, who first mentioned that trends are not important but after some thought stated that:

"I think you get more influenced than you realize. I get inspired by people that follow trends, but I would not say that I am actively following them."

This was also mentioned by Maria who mentioned that you unconsciously get inspired by what you see on social media and what people around you are wearing. As such, people around you

seem to be an influential factor in your fashion decision-making process. This was also demonstrated via Karolina who mentioned that she is not an early adopter when it comes to trends but when her friends are wearing something that she likes she might adapt to a specific trend.

The unconscious character of trendiness can be further illustrated by an unwillingness to be identified as a trend follower. This can be portrayed by Albin, who stated that he is trend sensitive and that he actively follows trends, however, he does not want to be identified as a person who follows trends. Consequently, being trendy seems to be important to some of the interviewees whereas for others it is not as important. However, when discussing it further there seems to be an underlying concern about trends and fitting in with your friends. Moreover, another interesting finding about trends in the fashion industry was brought up by Angelika who stated that:

“... The latest trends are just not becoming sustainable in their design”.

Therefore, she believes that it is hard for her to be trendy and at the same time sustainable, which was a reoccurring theme in the interviews. Moreover, during the interviews, there was an underlying motivation to purchase sustainable clothes to be unique. This was portrayed via Angelika who said that a lot of the clothes that she wants is not possible to find in stores, but can appear in second hand stores, thus she can find more unique and special items second hand.

4.1.4 Price and Quality

The two product characteristics that were most frequently discussed were price and quality. Many interviewees view quality as an aspect of sustainability and argued that to buy garments that lasted longer was a way for them to contribute to a more sustainable clothes consumption. Emil illustrated this:

” Sustainability is also about the quality aspect. Even if something is produced in a good way, it cannot be worn out after three months.”

Moreover, the connection between quality and lifespan is also demonstrated via the argumentation of that high-quality clothes have a secondhand value and can be sold to a new owner. Maria described that it is a high probability that she will be able to sell clothes with high quality for a better price in the future and that she is more willing to buy those type of clothes as she knows that people take better care of them.

It seems that price and quality go hand in hand since many interviewees are willing to pay extra for clothes that they know that they will keep for a long time. As stated by Emil: “I feel that it is nice to buy clothes that I know will last long. I rather pay more for something that I believe is of a higher quality and thus something I know I will keep for a long period of time”. For some interviewees, price was the most important factor, and they felt that if they bought something more expensive, they had to keep it longer and could not afford to dispose it. Jakob illustrated this: “If you buy something that is more expensive, then you will use it longer”. However, for most of the interviewees, quality was more important than price in clothing consumption and they raised that it was a conscious decision to buy clothes that last longer.

Another finding with regards to price is that price seems to be a clear barrier for consuming clothes in a more sustainable way. Many believe that sustainable clothes come with a price premium, for instance, Emil expressed that: “In general I associate sustainable clothes with higher prices, and I am not ready to pay the double for something that I personally view as equal in other ways, such as appearance and quality”. As seen in this statement, many view cheap price and sustainability as antipoles and believe that they have to choose between the two. This was further illustrated by David:

“Unfortunately, price trumps sustainability for me, if something is cheaper, I would probably buy it even it is the less sustainable product”.

Jakob took it even further and mentioned that he actively looks for products that are not organic since he is sure that they are more expensive. This attitude is often vindicated by not having a lot of money. Many argued that if they would have more money, they would be able to consume in a more sustainable way. Jenny described this as:” I wish that I had more money, then I would have been able to make more conscious decisions. Right now, it is just not possible”. Thus, the

perceived sustainability price premium is used as a defence and justification for not consuming as sustainable.

4.1.5 Second Hand

As aforementioned, when addressing sustainable fashion consumption second hand was mentioned as a common alternative. During the interviews, second hand seemed to be top of mind when discussing sustainable fashion and consequently having an impact on consumers' perception of consuming clothes in a sustainable way. On the one hand, some of the interviewees were positive about second hand consumption where a feeling of proudness was identified. This was demonstrated by Amanda who said that:

“I own some second hand pieces and I am really proud of them”.

On the other hand, some interviewees perceived secondhand consumption as time-consuming and a clear hygiene barrier was identified, and not knowing who has worn it before was an issue. For instance, Karolina expressed a clear barrier with regards to hygiene, but at the same time a desire to consume via secondhand:

“Second hand is a barrier for me, and I am really trying to get passed it. I do not like not knowing who has worn it before.”

The interviewees' previous experience with second hand consumption seemed to affect their perception of other sustainable clothing consumption alternatives. This was portrayed by Maria who said: “I believe it all has to do with if you have bought second hand before. When I started to buy second hand, it was still a factor for me that it had been worn before. But now I might be a bit more open for other types of consumption in comparison to others. “

4.2 Swapping

Several themes were frequently mentioned during the interviews as important and affecting how the collaborative consumption model swapping is perceived.

4.2.1 Social Aspects

The first theme we found recurrent during the interviews was the social aspects of swapping. Many interviewees view a swap event that includes additional social features like drinks and mingle as more attracting, compared to an event only including clothes swap. Maria expressed this in terms of: “I definitely think that it would have been more fun if it was a social thing too. It would be so much more fun than just going to a big locale, instead, you can mingle and have some drinks”. This was further illustrated by Amanda, who went to a swapping night at one of her friends. The first thing she told us was not that she found nice clothes, but that she had a great night and met many new nice people. Jakob who had not been to a swap event before started to picture this type of event in his head and elaborated on having a band there and having some beers and maybe someone in your group would check out some clothes. However, he ended up saying that: “I can imagine going there with your partner, then maybe the partner is more interested, and I end up drinking beer instead”. This point was brought up by many interviewees. It seems that they would participate in an event more due to the social aspects, rather than seeing the clothes swap as the main activity. As described by Karolina:

“Social features would be fun. Then you could come for the more enjoyable social parts and if you actually swap something it is a bonus.”

Instead of a consumption activity, swap events are seen as a socialising event. For instance, Hanna view swap events as a fun thing to participate in to meet new people and have a good night. She said: “Then it is something else that attracts you than just to swap your things, you can go there without even swapping something, just to hang out”. The social part of swapping is further demonstrated by the community aspects and the preference for attending such an event together with your friends. Philip stated that:

“I would have gone there with friends, as it is outside my comfort zone. Grab beer and swap clothes in a more relaxed way, rather than on my own and try clothes”.

Similarly, David mentioned that his primary reason for attending a swap event was because it was a social thing in his group of friends. Thus, it seems that in many cases swapping is pictured as a social activity rather than a clothing consumption alternative for those who have not tried. For those who have tried it, the social dimensions also seem to have been the main reason for participating. Swap events are seen as both a way to find new friends and hang out with your current ones.

However, some interviewees expressed that they saw intrinsic value in the clothes swap and that social add-ons might have been uptight. As illustrated by Emil: “If I would like to swap something and would have gone to this type of thing, then I would like the swap to be the main focus. It might have been a bit uptight to mix it”. The attitude about whether swapping should be a social thing or not might be connected to how important it is to find something you like and actually swap it. For instance, Amanda discusses how she likes to go shopping or visit a flea market alone and that she then does not care that much about other add-ons, instead, it is more important for her to find something that she likes. Nevertheless, she can still see that it would be possible to make a day out of it and visit a swap event together with a group of friends, but then it would probably be less focus on the clothes. Hence, social add-ons seem to be an attractive aspect of swap events for many, but it could also work as a hinder for those who want to focus on finding a good exchange.

4.2.2 Experiential Aspects

Similarly to the social aspects of swapping, experiential aspects seem to have a vital role in the interviewees’ perception of swapping. For many, it is the event itself and the add-ons such as music that is attracting, rather than finding a piece they want to swap. Hanna discussed that she thinks that add-ons, such as music would add to the experience and make it “more of a fun thing to participate in”. In line with this, Jakob elaborated on the experience and argued that it could be a “pretty cool event”. He also mentioned that he would be willing to pay to participate in a swap event if it included features like a cool clothing brand that show new trends, which further illustrates the importance of the experiential aspects.

Many refer to swapping events as “fun”, for instance when David discussed a swap event, he participated in some weeks ago, he said: “I was at a swapping event a couple of weeks ago,

and it was fun”. He continued to discuss that he had some beers and hung out with his friends but did not mention anything about the consumption value. Also, the interviewees that had not tried swapping before first mentioned that it would be a fun experience, rather than that it would be a good way of consuming clothes. Thus, experiential aspects seem to be a motive for participating for many, but a barrier for actually seeing swap events as a clothing consumption alternative. This will be further elaborated on in the discussion.

4.2.3 Value Creation

During the interviews, swapping was identified as a good option to dispose the clothes that you are not using any more. As mentioned previously, this paper is not focusing on the disposal of clothes, instead, the main focus is on the consumption part. Nevertheless, consuming via swapping was for the interviewees closely related to disposing their clothes, and was identified as a motive for participating in swapping and therefore included in our findings due to its relevance. Swapping was perceived as a good way to dispose your clothes, where a type of value creation was identified. This was demonstrated via Jenny who mentioned that it is fun to see someone else use your clothes, that they are being reused and that you become happy by seeing this. Angelika further stated that:

“... I am a huge fan of giving my clothes away. It feels like I am contributing to the world while at the same time helping someone out”.

Many of the interviewees had some concerns or negative feelings about how many pieces of clothing that were just hanging in their wardrobe but not being used. Karolina mentioned that she thinks swapping is a great idea since she would like to dispose the clothes that she is not using anymore. She expressed an opinion about that she prefers to see all the things she owns get used, which is why she is offering her roommate to borrow clothes from her. Thus, there is a desire to see the clothes that you own getting used, pointing at an indication of utilizing the clothes’ lifespan. David who had participated in a swapping event mentioned that:

“It was a really nice way to clean out my closet and reflect about clothes that I do not want anymore, and whom could actually use it instead”.

He moreover mentioned that he liked the concept of swapping from a sustainability perspective and that he rather swaps clothes than leave them in a container where he does not know where it ends up. According to David, people that are participating in swap events are most likely more sustainability focused than him, and they will probably do something better with the clothes after using them. Thus, he viewed swapping as a value adding activity in the clothes' value chain. Connected to David's perception and experience, Emil addressed swapping as a good way to get rid of something that he no longer uses and in return get something that he likes or finds useful. As such, swapping seems to be a positive way to be a part of more sustainable fashion consumption, since it was argued to be a good way to give your clothes away and seeing them get a new life, consequently resulting in a good feeling. This can be connected to previous studies about attitudes about swapping, which will be further analysed in the discussion.

4.2.4 Uncertainty

Since swapping is still a rather unexplored type of clothing consumption in Sweden, many concerns regarding the concept, supply etc. arose during the interviews. As such, clarification and recommendation from someone you know or just proof of concept seem to work in a beneficial way of making the attitude to swapping more positive. Many interviewees mentioned that they would be more willing to try swapping if they knew someone who had been to an event and recommended it, which was stated by Maria:

“If my friends are positive, then I would be more prone to participate and try it out”.

This social proof is further illustrated by Emil, who had heard of swapping but was a bit unsure. He argued that: “if someone tells about a good experience, then it becomes more interesting for me”. Nonetheless, some argue that for the social proof to be valid, it must come from someone whose consumption habits they can identify with. Albin gave an example: “If some of my friends who buy a lot of second hand clothes and fully have that kind of lifestyle it would not affect me that much. But if some of my best friends that are more aligned with my lifestyle would engage in swapping, it would make me more likely to also do it”. Thus, it seems that it is not enough to only know someone who has tried swapping to be more prone to do it, it requires something more, which will be further touched upon in the discussion.

Several interviewees mentioned that if their friends have tried swapping, it would not only make them more likely to try it on their own, but they would also be more likely to go to a swap event together with these friends. As Jenny expressed it, it would serve as “a foot in the door”. Since the concept is rather unknown for many, they would have felt safer to go together with a friend. Angelika describes this in terms of: “It would be very fun to go together with a friend, but also a safeness”. The uncertainty of swapping was a recurring theme for discussion, and it seems that uncertainty is a barrier for swapping in many different shapes. Firstly, it is demonstrated by the general confusion of the concept. Angelika mentioned that she has been checking several swap events on Facebook and that all of them seemed to have different rules, which made her more resistant. She described this like:

“There is no standard way of swapping, so I would always have to read up on and understand, and that could be a barrier”.

Secondly, uncertainty is illustrated by supply concerns. Many were unsure of if they would be able to find something at a swap event. Jenny argued that you are never guaranteed to find what you are looking for and that it will fit you. She gave an example of looking for a particular clothing item: “maybe I would be lucky and find a white shirt, but still, it can be too big or too small”. David argued in line with this and told us about the swap event he went to where all men were 1.90 meters tall whereas he is 1.70 meters tall and that it was hard to find something that fitted. He is therefore uncertain of what he can find to swap in future events, expressed via the wording of:

“I think it is very hard to find something when you are not average in size, that is a limitation”.

In addition to the uncertainty of whether the clothes will fit or not, it also seems to be a contingency of the type of clothes and its quality. For instance, Jakob discussed that you never know on beforehand about the supply. He further discussed the breadth of the supply in the words of: “The supply is probably limited or distorted. You do not have a breadth or as much of everything. I am interested in jackets and people consume fewer jackets, so maybe there would not be anything there for me”. Moreover, Philip’s reasoning illustrates the quality

aspects as he is afraid that people would go to a swap event only to get rid of their “trash”. The uncertainty regarding supply is also demonstrated by being unsure of finding something that matches your style. Angelika mentioned that she likes specific things and if she can find those via swapping it would be fine, but that it is probably difficult. This uncertainty aspect is further described by Albin:

“Swapping seems interesting, but I am unsure if I can find something that interests me and is aligned with my style”.

Lastly, uncertainty is also portrayed in terms of being unsure of the previous owner of the garment. Jakob illustrated this trust issue in terms of: “I want to trust the person who had the garment before. It has to be some kind of trust involved, especially with things that could be unhygienic”. As seen in Jakob’s discussion, trust and hygiene seem to go hand in hand and appear to be one of the main barriers for swapping clothes, which is further illustrated by his initial perception of swapping:

“I immediately start thinking about hygiene factors... I start thinking of what other people have done in these clothes.”

The hygiene factor is demonstrated by both which type of garments people prefer to swap as well as with whom people prefer to swap. For instance, David preferred to swap jackets as you always wear an inner layer in which the sweat stays. He further stated: “I prefer to swap things that stay clean, independent of the earlier user”. The general rule for many is the farther from the skin, the higher willingness to swap.

4.2.5 Fair Exchange

A concern that was raised amongst many of the interviewees was whether they would get a fair exchange. This was demonstrated by Amanda who said that she liked the idea of swapping but that it would need to be some securement in the trade, meaning that you get as much in return as what you leave. There seemed to be a higher concern if the piece that you brought meant something to you or if it was of higher quality. This was mentioned by Albin who stated that if he brought a high-quality item then he would like to get some type of warranty of that the event

holds a certain standard. According to Jakob, a fair exchange is also depending on how the event is formed. In the case of a more social event, he is not as concerned about what he is getting in return, instead, you get the value of leaving with a story.

Furthermore, for Philip, it was more about the feeling of being satisfied rather than getting something for the same price. Instead, he mentioned that it is more important to get a fair exchange concerning that you are personally satisfied. This was demonstrated when he said:

” ...It does not matter what the monetary value is, instead it is more about getting a fair exchange in terms of both parts being satisfied.”

In contrast to getting a fair exchange, Jenny and Karolina mentioned that it might be enough for them to just give away their own clothes, referring to value creation. Karolina stated that it is more about the fact that her clothes are getting used. Jenny argued that it is almost as with charity, the giving that is the reward, and that is enough in itself. However, in line with the aforesaid argumentations, she mentions that she would of course want to swap something and that if you are to do this in the long run than you have to get a fair exchange. That is if you clean out your closet and keep doing so without getting something new in, then your closet will, in the end, be empty. From that perspective you need to get a fair exchange in order for swapping to work as your long-term clothing consumption method.

As aforementioned, for some swap events, you have to pay in order to participate. In such a situation it became clear that a fair exchange was more important than when you do not have to pay. This was portrayed by David who stated that:

“If I had to pay for the event, I would be concerned about getting value for my money.”

Accordingly, Emil stated that if he needed to pay for swapping, he would do a cost-benefit analysis and if the benefit is higher, he would not have any problems to pay for the event. In line with this, Hanna stated that she would not mind paying for the event if that ensured a higher quality of the clothes. Consequently, paying for an event seemed to create higher demands and different attitudes to the concept were formed, which will be discussed further in the discussion.

4.2.6 Style and Identity

Style and identity are identified as two concepts frequently mentioned by the interviewees with regards to fashion consumption. There seemed to be some dissonance for some of the interviewees when addressing the question of how important style and identity are for them, where several aspects were brought up. On the one hand, they found it important to some extent to identify with the person. Either from a perspective of the person being hygienical or from that you are more eager to swap with someone if the person is social and nice, which was brought up by Emil. On the other hand, many of the interviewees stated that it really should not matter and that you can always wash the clothes and therefore you should be open-minded, but that it still bothered them. This was portrayed by Jakob who said that: "... if a person is taking care of himself, I am more eager to swap with him. But it should not matter, you should come there open-minded".

Another identified aspect of this theme was the opportunity to find complementary and more unique clothing items. This was mentioned by Amanda who said that the benefit of swapping is that you can get positively surprised since you might find other pieces of clothing than the ones that you buy instore, expressing a motive of uniqueness. Additionally, Jakob mentioned that he could see swapping as a compliment, especially for things he is not using that often but prefers buying new things.

Moreover, connected to style, David expressed concerns about how different subcultures might affect the success of a swapping event. He stated that:

"Different cultures dress differently and therefore the way that you use a piece of clothing varies between cultures, which might be problematic".

Thusly, he stressed a concern about that there is a need to, at least partly, identify with the people that are participating and that in order for the swap event to be successful, you need your subgroup or people from the same culture to participate.

4.2.7 Sustainability

An identified motivation for swapping is its potential to contribute to more sustainable clothing consumption. As aforesaid, David mentioned that he thinks swapping is good viewed from a sustainability perspective. Additionally, Hanna mentioned a motivation to participate in swapping in order to minimize the overconsumption. To her, the biggest problem is due to that some days you really hate your wardrobe, thus shopping is not about buying something new but rather that you want options. She consumes clothes because she is tired of what she has in her closet and this leads to her shopping something new. Therefore, she believes that swapping can be a good option in order to reduce her consumption since she could swap clothes instead of buying new ones. Another influential factor is that consuming via swapping could result in a positive feeling of doing something good. This was mentioned by Angelika who said that by consuming via swapping, she could be proud of her wardrobe and know that she would not contribute to overconsumption through her own clothing consumption. As such, consuming via swapping could result in a proudness of doing something good for the environment and for others.

4.3 Renting

Such as in the case of swapping, recurring themes during the interviews have been identified, which are relevant for the interviewees' perceptions of renting.

4.3.1 Flexibility

When discussing clothing rental, the aspect of flexibility was frequently mentioned. Renting can be seen as both more and less flexible compared to traditional consumption models and it seems to be dependent on what flexibility means to you. However, all interviewees agreed on that for renting to be an attractive alternative, it has to be flexibly designed. Jenny illustrated this by describing that she thinks it is very important that the service is as flexible as possible. She further stated: "It should not be a long registration process and if it is a physical store where you rent it has to be close to you". Emil agreed with this as he emphasized that it has to be fewer moments and less hassle for you personally. He continued:

"It needs to be an incredibly high service level, you should not have to think about anything".

Nevertheless, many do not expect this high service level to be offered and believe that clothing rental would be complicated, time-consuming and add an extra element in their life to handle. For instance, Emil started to think about sending and receiving clothes back and forth and thus, thought that renting would be rather troublesome. Amanda's first reaction to renting was that it seems laborious and she argued: "To collect and deposit instead of having the garments in your closet makes it a project. I do not spend much time and energy on my clothes, so this would probably be too complicated. I do not think it is something for me". Similarly, Angelika points at the extra element it would add in her already busy life. The complicatedness is also demonstrated by the need for extra planning that many believe renting would mean for them. This was illustrated by Albin who believes himself to be bad at being proactive and therefore argued:

"I always start to plan my outfit for the evening in the afternoon, which I believe would be problematic when it comes to renting. I guess it requires some planning".

He further discussed the spontaneity and think that it would be a barrier to not be able to be as spontaneous as you want, but instead be proactive and plan in order for renting to be a possibility. In line with this, Jakob discussed that there are several steps that need to be overbridged before being comfortable with renting, especially regarding planning and being proactive. However, he also sees that renting could mean increased flexibility for him, especially for special occasions which he compared with Airbnb: "Instead of owning a house, I can go wherever I want in the world. It is the same with a jacket, the one time am I going to a graduation ceremony I can find a nice jacket, instead of having one in my closets that just hang there and gets grey and boring". He could also see the flexibility in being able to adjust to seasons and follow trends in a new way and get the natural variation in your everyday life. The trend and season variables were also brought up by Karolina who mentioned that the flexibility aspect is very attracting and that she could spice up her closets with some colours and adjust it more by season. Furthermore, the view of renting being flexible is also illustrated by the fact of not having to obligate to anything, which was brought up by some of the interviewees. Philip portrayed this by stating:

“It is like renting an apartment, much more flexible. You do not have to commit to anything. There are definitely advantages with that”.

Thus, renting is perceived as both more and less flexible than traditional consumption, and flexibility have many sides, shown by people’s many different perceptions of it. It is also identified that people require a seamless service to view renting as an equal competitor to the traditional clothing consumption models, which will be further elaborated on in the discussion section.

4.3.2 Style, Trend and Identity

One motivation for participating in renting was that many of the interviewees saw an opportunity to be trendy or to try new trends. This was demonstrated via Jenny who claimed that:

” I would rent more trendy clothing and party pieces such as dresses.”

She further argued that renting would be an optimal solution to complement your fashion consumption with. Therefore she preferred to rent trendy items or clothing that are more fashionable now and that you know will become untrendy within approximately one year. For many of the interviewees renting was mentioned as a good complement to your everyday basic clothing and that it could serve as a way to try trends or looks that you would never have bought in the traditional way. Thus, it might cause problems in the way that it actually increases today's issue with overconsumption. On the one hand, it can result in a more sustainable consumption if people rent the items that they today are using very few times, and as such giving the item a longer and more sustainable life cycle resulting in lowered consumption. This was brought up by Amanda who said that: “it is beneficial since the clothing items are used until it is fully worn out and not disposed because you are tired of its style”.

On the other hand, if people are to consume more and especially more items that they would not even think about buying otherwise, it might have the opposite effect and become a highly unsustainable option. This attitude was identified by Jenny who stated that: “Renting could be a way for me to buy things that I would not buy otherwise or item that I would not treat myself

with”. As such, this would create a problem since one of the biggest issues today is the way people are consuming clothes and the throw-away mentality which would then not be improved via renting if a new consumption behaviour arises.

Connected to trying new trends, renting was mentioned in relation to identity creation. Maria stated that renting could be a good and fun way to update your wardrobe and at the same time your identity. In line with this, Albin mentioned that renting could be a way to optimize the value that each item has. For him, some items are used in order to be “cool” and to express a certain symbolic meaning. In those cases, renting could be the perfect solution since you can rent the item and then return it when it has served its symbolic purpose. This was demonstrated when he stated that:

“... I can rent an item that I think is cool and then get the symbolic value and optimize the symbolic meaning I want to express”.

Additionally, renting was mentioned as a good way to update your wardrobe and to renew it. This was connected to the aforementioned argumentation about identity and symbolic meaning. Philip claimed that he would mostly rent statement items or a special jacket that is expensive but that you do not use that often. Maria expressed a feeling of fun and excitement about getting a new wardrobe every one to third month. She further mentioned a Swedish brand that only offers everyday basic clothing, which does not fulfil the purpose she seeks in clothing rental.

4.3.3 Ownership

When renting instead of buying clothes it means that you never really own the garment. As such, the factor of ownership becomes interesting and is found to be a controversial point. It seems to be two sides in this matter, the ones who think that owning is not so important and are willing to share their clothes, and the ones who strongly prefer to own their garments and see the access-based character of renting as a barrier. The first opinion can be illustrated via a freedom aspect of not owning. Karolina expressed a feeling of it being nice to not own and similarly, Angelika argued that she would not have any problems with the clothes not being hers. The opinion can further be pictured by not valuing ownership as highly.

For instance, Hanna discussed that she does not care that much about owning her things and that she often shares clothes with her friends. She stated:

“Not owning is not odd for me, I think that it is just super nice that as many as possible can use it”.

In connection to not prize ownership as highly, many expressed a good feeling of letting go of things. When not owning everything, you do not collect thousands of pieces of clothes in your closet. David illustrated it by mentioning: “I am not thinking that much about owning the clothes, I think it is nice to get rid of stuff”.

Contrarily, several interviewees expressed a reluctance to not own their clothes. For some, it was just a general feeling, as Jenny argued: “I think it would be difficult, it is just a feeling I have”. In line with this, Philip discussed:

“I like to own my things and feel that they really are my own, therefore I am a bit hesitant about the idea of renting.”

He further explained that he often gets favourites when it comes to clothes and that he then would not like to return them. This consideration was brought up by many as a motivation for owning clothes, thus being a barrier for renting. Both Jenny, who values ownership and David, who does not value it as highly, raised the problem of having to return something they have rented and really liked. This could possibly be connected to emotional attachment, which will be further interpreted in the discussion part of this paper. Furthermore, it seems that the desire to own your clothes can also be motivated by practical aspects, rather than materialistic. This is well illustrated by Hanna who reasoned:

” It is not the ownership aspect that matters, I think it is more about convenience”.

She gave an example of having everyday clothes easily accessible and using them all the time, instead of tearing back and forth to rent things for every occasion. Albin argued in line with this as he thinks it is more about not being able to be as spontaneous and having easy access to

all his clothes, rather than the aspect of ownership that matters. Also, Maria illuminated the convenience advantage of owning everyday clothes, even if she is not caring that much about ownership. Moreover, the issue of ownership appears to be seen as a generational question. This is demonstrated by Philip's reasoning of his desire to own things but at the same time view himself as a bit old school in this matter. Maria illustrated this even clearer by stating that: "I do not know if it is our generation, but ownership is just not that important anymore".

4.3.4 Uncertainty

When discussing the concept of renting, many of the interviewees were confused and sceptical towards how the concept would work in real life. Most of the interviewees had not tried renting before and were therefore in general uncertain about the concept and how they would adapt to it. Another issue that was brought up was a concern about the responsibility if a clothing item was damaged or if it got a stain on it. This was demonstrated by David who said that:

"The downside is if something got damaged or stained, who would then be responsible for it? That would be a problem for me".

Connected to the uncertainty of who is responsible if something happens to the item, there were some uncertainty and scepticism to not knowing who has used it before. David argued that for him, he would feel more confident and eager to rent if he could pay different prices depending on how many times the items have been used. The reason for this was because he would like to be one of the first to rent the garment, due to a hygiene barrier, which was mentioned by many of the interviewees. He compared it with borrowing something from a friend which he is more receptive to since the intimacy barrier is much lower. In line with this, Emil perceived a barrier with renting, since for him it would feel like walking around in someone else's clothes, which he is uncomfortable with due to not knowing who have worn it before. This was further brought up by Jakob who said that: "renting is a bit weird for me, it is like sleeping in someone else's bed". As such, most of the interviewees demonstrated a high concern about hygiene, and that in order for them to fully adopt renting, the hygiene barrier needs to be overbridged. Karolina who expressed a strong barrier against second hand clothes due to hygiene were more willing to rent clothes that are not as close to the body, such as a coat or a scarf.

Moreover, during the interviews, a concern about the supply was brought up. In general, most of the interviewees had doubts about how different rental companies would be able to offer clothes that fit all body types and sizes. David expressed concerns about pants since he usually has to tailor all his pants. He further mentioned that the fit would be an issue for him since his perception of second hand is that clothes usually get washed out or loose fit and that it would be the same with renting. Additionally, Jenny mentioned that it might be an issue if you have a certain dress code for work that you need to adjust to. Then renting might be problematic if you need a certain type of clothing item and it is not available.

Connected to the aspect of uncertainty, Jakob mentioned that for him trust between the renter and himself is important. As such, if he would be able to test the service first and see how it works, then he would be more likely to continue doing it in the future. Due to the uncertainty aspect, trying the concept for free or to a reduced price was brought up by many interviewees. If you get to try the concept for free, many of the interviewees were more eager to try it. This was portrayed by Maria who said that:

“...If I were to try renting for free, I would for sure try the concept”.

Emil further argued that he would not necessarily have to try it himself, instead, he argued that if someone close to him would tell him that they had a positive experience, then he would also try it. Thus, trying the concept out once seemed to be a good solution in order to overcome the uncertainty aspect, which is in line with previous findings and will be further analysed in the discussion.

4.3.5 Occasion

We also identified that most of the interviewees had difficulties with viewing renting as their only way to consume clothes, rather, they viewed it as a compliment. Many brought up examples of renting clothes for special occasions, such as a ball or a wedding. For instance, Jenny said:

“I would rent clothes for special occasions. Cocktail dresses would be convenient to rent instead of buying and only use it two times.”

Many interviewees also found it beneficial to rent clothes for specific seasons, such as a winter jacket, or for a specific cause. Emil gave an example of going on a ski trip, which he does not do that often, and rent ski trousers. Amanda discussed the seasonal aspect and that she would prefer to rent jackets since she could have a jacket for one season and then get a new one the next winter. For her, as for many of the interviewees, the financial perspective was involved. She meant that if buying a winter jacket, which is an expensive type of item, she would have to use it for several winter seasons. If she instead rented the jacket, she would have the opportunity to only use it for one winter and then pick a new one the following year. Also, for Hanna, the preference to rent clothes for a wedding or a finer event was motivated by a financial perspective. She argued: “When going to a wedding, then instead of buying a really expensive dress which will then just hang in my closet, I definitely would have been willing to rent it. I think that is a really good concept”.

Furthermore, it was also highlighted by many that they would prefer to rent the type of clothes that are a bit more expensive and that they do not use that often. For example, both David and Philip stated that they would not be willing to rent t-shirts and those type of garments that they view as more “wear and tear”. Many were resistant to rent everyday clothing and reasoned that they needed to have their own basic clothes. Maria illustrated this by stating that:

“Renting would be difficult for everyday clothing. I think that most of us want to have our own basic everyday clothes.”

The ones who view renting as positive and saw possibilities with the concept still did not think that they would like to rent everything in their closets. For instance, Jenny argued that renting could to a high degree be a compliment, but that she still needed to consume clothes in other ways too. In line with this Hanna stated that renting might be a good substitute for buying clothes for a specific occasion, however, she could not see renting as an option for everything in her closet.

4.3.6 Price

For most of the interviewees, price is a determinate factor when consuming clothes. As such, renting was, on the one hand, understood as a financial opportunity where some of the

interviewees saw a chance to rent clothes for special occasions, such as a tailcoat, to a lower price. The underlying motive was that these items would not be used that often and that they are usually expensive. Hanna compared it to leasing a car, where she recognizes an opportunity to rent expensive clothing items to an affordable price. Connected to this, Jakob mentioned that if you are aware that you will only use the item very few times in your life than the rational choice is to rent.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees saw some financial risks and uncertainty with renting. Angelika mentioned that she did not know what garments that she would rent or the price she would be willing to pay for it. Furthermore, Albin who had rented a tailcoat for three occasions stated that he ended up paying more than he would have done if he had bought the tailcoat from the start. According to him, this could have been due to the renter, but he still expressed frustration about the financial loss. Moreover, Jenny could not imagine how renting can be cheaper, since she thought about the administrative costs and cost for staff etc. She further conveyed a concern about increasing her consumption, thus spending more on clothes via renting than she is doing today through traditional clothing consumption. In line with this, Jakob stated that: “there is a risk that you start to rent very often and then the total price increases instead”.

Finally, Maria was worried that you pay a price and then the items that you want are not available, resulting in a feeling of throwing the money away for nothing and being unsatisfied. Related to the financial risk and opportunity with renting, the interviewees found it difficult to determine what price they would find acceptable and suitable to pay for the concept. This was demonstrated via Albin who stated that:

“I have a hard time to determine a price level that would be reasonable for renting”.

If renting was priced at the right level, some of the interviewees saw a financial opportunity. However, they were all unsure of what they actually would be willing to pay for renting various clothing items. This was brought up by Philip who mentioned that it would be hard for him to estimate what he would be willing to pay for renting a jacket that originally costs 10 000 SEK. Hence, the interviewees seemed to make a trade-off between the price and how long they would

use the garment in order to decide if it would be worth it. This was due to the perception that if you rent an item many times you might end up paying the actual price it would cost to buy it yourself in store, or even more.

4.3.7 Sustainability

From a sustainability perspective, renting was viewed as a good option to reduce overconsumption and to minimise the disposal of clothes. This was demonstrated via Karolina who stated that:

“Renting is a really good idea and I like everything that moves in the direction to consume more sustainable... and renting is a way to care for the environment”

Moreover, Amanda mentioned that renting might be a more suitable option for people that change their clothes a lot since you get an opportunity to consume the clothes you want to a cheaper price. This would result in the clothing item getting used more and used until it is worn out and not thrown away because you do not like it anymore. Additionally, Maria brought up a general concern about the importance to know what actually happens to the clothes after you dispose them. For her, that is vital since she argues that even if she and 20 of her friends shares a sweater via renting and are not buying one each, the unsustainable disposal behaviour might still be the same. As such, she indicated that even if you rent clothes, in order for it to be sustainable, the disposal part needs to be considered as well, otherwise the same problem with disposal might still exist.

4.4 Chapter Summary

In summary, our empirical findings and analysis have resulted in several overall findings which respond to the research question of this paper. As such, through the interpretive paradigm, we gained an understanding of how Swedish consumers perceive sustainable fashion as well as the collaborative consumption models swapping and renting. Many interviewees brought up price and quality as important factors when consuming clothes as well as the desire to express a certain image via their clothes. Sustainability aspects were also mentioned, often with regards to overconsumption and utilization of the garments.

The first consumption model swapping is perceived as something positive from the viewpoint of being a sustainable option that is creating value since it is perceived as a good way to dispose clothes and reinforce a good feeling when your unwanted clothes get a “new life”. Moreover, it is driven by social and experiential aspects where these events are perceived as something extra and value adding to the consumption activity. However, some barriers were identified. Many of the interviewees expressed concerns about getting a fair exchange and they were uncertain about how the concept would work and about the quality of the products and the supply. Furthermore, some concerns were brought up about finding something to swap that is aligned with the interviewees’ styles.

The second consumption model renting is also perceived as a sustainable option in fashion consumption and a good and sustainable way to consume clothes for special occasions or clothes that you do not use that often since a financial opportunity was identified. Renting was further perceived as a way to try new styles and trends and express a symbolic meaning. Freedom of not having to commit to anything and be flexible were also mentioned as motivations to participate. However, a desire to own and have access to your everyday clothing was identified as a barrier as well as uncertainty about the concept and the pricing of the rental. Concerns about not being able to be flexible were mentioned as a downside since a perception about having to plan your life and not being able to be spontaneous was brought up. Finally, for both swapping and renting, hygiene was mentioned as a strong barrier to participate in the two collaborative consumption models. The meaning of these findings will be further interpreted in the next section, where the main findings are presented and a theoretical frame will be applied, connecting the empirical findings with previous literature.

5. Discussion

In this chapter, we will answer our research question by presenting the main findings and compare the similarities and differences of our findings with existing literature, consequently referring to the third context of interpretation proposed by Kvale (1996). We begin with discussing key points identified in the findings regarding fashion consumption, which are found to be of importance when forming perceptions about the collaborative consumption models swapping and renting. Subsequently, we discuss motivations and barriers identified for swapping and compare it to existing literature. As aforementioned, previous literature on collaborative consumption has gotten limited academic attention and does not offer a complete picture, wherefore the discussion needs to be extended by insights from research on consumer perceptions of sustainable consumption and fashion consumption. Thereafter, we perform a similar discussion and comparison for renting. The main findings and their interconnectedness which are providing a basis for the discussion are illustrated in figure 3.

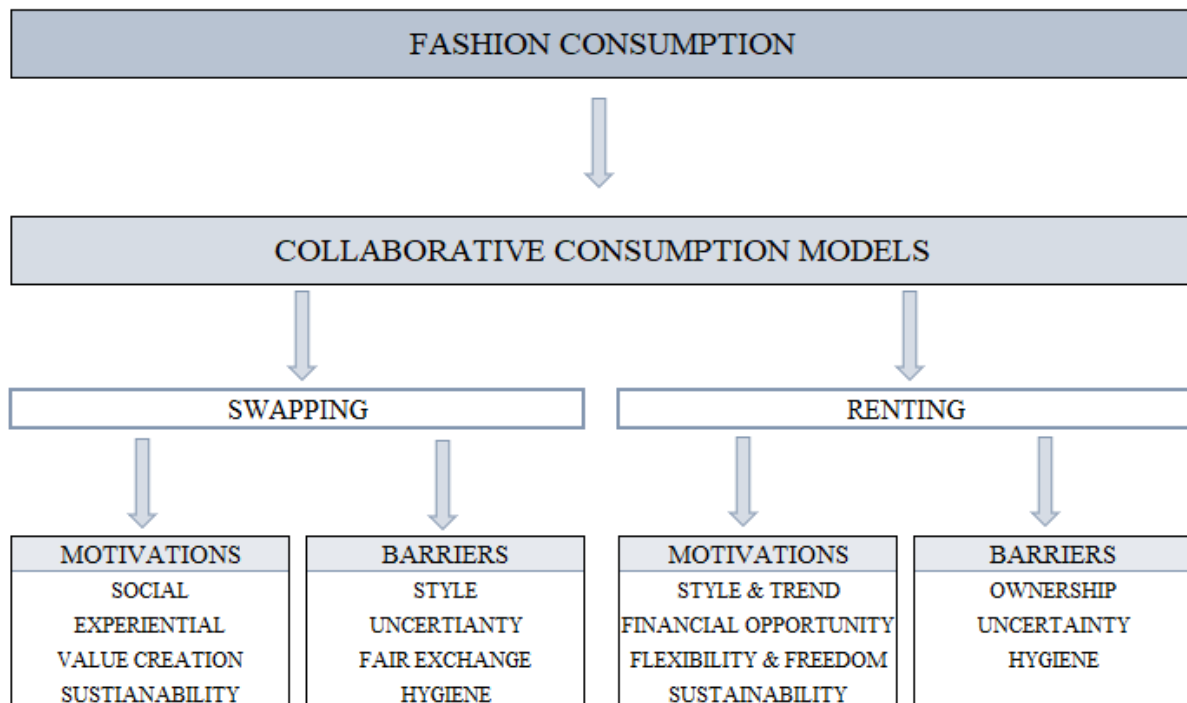


Figure 3. Summary of main findings. Compiled by authors.

5.1 Fashion Consumption

When consuming clothes several factors were identified as influential. Firstly, many interviewees expressed a desire to consume their clothes in a more sustainable manner. Nonetheless, they perceived other factors, such as appearance and price as more important, which consorts with Joergens (2006) argumentation about that consumers tend not to bend on their clothing consumption preferences only to be more environmentally friendly. Our findings also point at that consumers find it difficult to consume in a more sustainable way, both due to lack of knowledge and a mistrust of companies, which is suggested by Fisher et al. (2008) to be a possible reason for not consuming clothes in a sustainable manner. The lack of knowledge is reported by Britwistle and Moore (2007) who argue that consumers lack information about the negative effects of the fashion industry. However, our findings imply that the lack of knowledge among consumers seems to be more about being unsure of what to do in order to act and consume their clothes more sustainable. Nevertheless, it was identified that the interviewees perceive buying fewer pieces of higher quality and that last longer, instead of buying cheaper pieces more often as a way to act more responsible. This contradicts McNeill and Moore's (2015) argumentation about fast fashion and that consumers prefer to buy more items that are unsustainable. Instead, it conforms to Henly's (2010) line of reasoning about slow fashion in terms of that consumers are becoming more aware of the overconsumption and more mindful of their own consumption.

Moreover, appearance and symbolic value were identified as important aspects when consuming clothes, as such, clothes play a big part in the identity creation. This was portrayed consciously or unconsciously amongst the interviewees and demonstrated when mentioning that you adjust your clothes when moving to a new city or to fit in with your friends, and further that you categorize people based on how they dress. This is in line with Niinimäki's (2010) argumentation about that fashion refers to a symbolic production and an expression of the values and lifestyle that consumers strive to achieve. Moreover, it also conforms to a study conducted by Solomon and Rabolt (2004) arguing that fashion is something that is accepted by a large group of people, reflecting the society, which was identified in our study.

Closely associated with identity creation, fashion consumption was identified to be connected to being trendy and fashionable. Being trendy was to different degrees mentioned as influential

when consuming clothes, where many of the interviewees brought up that it is important to fit in with your friends and that it unconsciously affects their decisions. Nevertheless, a perception was identified of it being difficult to be trendy and at the same time sustainable, resulting in a hinder to participate in sustainable fashion consumption. This is in line with the argumentation by McNeill and Moore (2015) and Joy et al. (2012) who argues that sustainable fashion is not perceived as a trendy option.

Another identified barrier to consume fashion sustainable was the perception of that sustainable clothing comes with a price premium, which goes in line with Joergen's (2006) argumentation. This is identified as a barrier since the interviewees argued that they cannot afford to participate in sustainable clothing consumption due to the higher prices even if they have a desire to do so. However, whether sustainable clothing comes with a price premium or not was not investigated or confirmed by the interviewees, instead the perception was used as a defence and justification for not consuming as sustainable. Additionally, second hand consumption was frequently brought up when addressing sustainable fashion consumption and many of the interviewees perceived it as unhygienic, which is in line with previous studies (e.g. Armstrong et al., 2016).

In summation, the factors identified as important in fashion consumption were found to be significant in forming consumer perceptions of collaborative clothing consumption models, which will be elaborated on in further discussion.

5.2 Swapping

Up to this point, we have identified how young Swedish consumers perceive the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping. There are various motivations and barriers to participating in these more circular consumption models, which can be viewed and understood from various angles.

5.2.1 Motivations

As stated previously, one of the main motivations to participate in swapping was the experiential aspects of trying something new. Swapping was perceived as a “fun” activity rather than primary perceived as a consumption activity. This conforms with Armstrong et al.'s

(2016) study that found experiential aspects to be a main reason to participate in swapping, where the consumption type was referred to as fun and an adventure. This is in line with our findings and demonstrated via Jakob who claimed that swapping could be a “pretty cool event” that he would like to participate in due to the experiential aspects. Additionally, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) claim that in order to understand how consumers form their perceptions, it is vital to understand the experiential aspects and include consumers feelings, fantasies and fun. This seems to become highly applicable to the findings of the interviewees’ perceptions and underlying motivations to participate in swap events. Even though many of the interviewees had not tried swapping before, they were positive to the idea of it, which seemed to be motivated by fantasies of the event taking place in a nice setting with music or containing aspects such as drinks and other experiential add-ons.

Closely connected to the aspect of swapping being perceived and motivated by experiential aspects, we identified swapping as being driven by social aspects, which is in line with Armstrong et al.’s (2016) findings. The social aspects were identified as one of the main reasons to participate in swapping since many argued that it would be more fun to participate if it was a social thing too. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they rather go there with friends and make it a social activity. This can be connected to the reasoning of Arnould et al. (2005), about that almost all consumer actions are taking place within a group setting. During the interviews, it became evident that swapping was perceived as more attractive if performed in a group setting, which was demonstrated by Philip who stated that he would have gone with friends since it is outside his comfort zone.

According to Balck and Cracau (2015) participating in swap events offers an alternative way to meet people with similar interest. Our findings show that swapping is motivated by the social aspects of meeting new people and hang out with your current friends, however, it is questionable whether or not it has anything to do with people that share similar interests, which contradicts previous studies. Nevertheless, our findings demonstrate that swapping is perceived as something social, which is highlighting a particular collaborative lifestyle (Albinsson & Perera, 2012). As argued by Botsman and Rogers (2010), swapping can via the community that it is creating and the perception of it being a social activity, help feed the social self, which is the part that is seeking belonging and connection. This was identified amongst the participants

since they mentioned that swapping is an enjoyable event where you can socialise and meet people. Hence, the social aspects seemed to minimise the pressure from the consumption activity, meaning that finding something to swap becomes less important, instead, the social aspects were valued higher and as such identified as a strong motivation for participating in swapping.

According to Armstrong et al. (2016), swapping can be viewed as a new paradigm for creating value since people are creating value not only for themselves but also for other people. The notion of swapping as value creating was a topic frequently mentioned by the interviewees. The disposal aspect was identified as a motivation to participate in swapping and a feeling of happiness and satisfaction was brought up when seeing your unwanted clothes being reused. This is in line with Botsman and Rogers' (2010) argumentation about being satisfied when seeing your clothes leave with delighted new owners. Moreover, many of the interviewees had a negative feeling about having clothes in their wardrobes that they did not use anymore, and as such, it was identified that participating in swapping might be motivated by the fact that it can serve as a way to utilize the clothes lifespans and doing something good for someone else. According to Albinsson and Perera (2012) swapping events can be perceived as a way to clean out unwanted possession and help others find what they need. Our findings were in line with this, which was demonstrated by David who claimed that swapping is a good alternative to get rid of his clothes and reflect upon what clothes he does not want anymore and who could actually use them instead.

Another interesting finding with regards to the value adding aspect was that the clothing chain can be lengthened when the possessions that are being swapped at the event continue to change hands in later events. Thus, ownership is renewed in each step, which supports the notion that one's clothes have a life apart from us and is aligned with the study conducted by Albinsson & Perera (2012). Many of the interviewees touched upon this via expressing that someone else could use the piece of clothing in a different way than they are, or that someone else might do something even better with the garment that is brought to the swap event, which was viewed as reassuring. This demonstrates that the clothes have a life apart from us and that the clothing chain can be utilised and lengthened via swapping, and as such, swap events are perceived as value adding and at the same time sustainable.

As aforementioned, swap events are designed in different ways where the main difference is that you either have to pay to participate or that the events are for free. Many of the interviewees had a positive perception about the free swap events since they argued that the value creation was then enough in itself. In these situations, participating in swapping was motivated via the value creation aspect. This can be connected to Belk (2010), who refer to this type of behaviour as non-reciprocal behaviour, meaning that the interviewees gave clothes without expecting anything in return.

Another identified perception of swapping was that it can serve as a sustainable way to consume clothes, which is in line with previous research on the topic (Piscicelli et al., 2015). Swapping clothes was mentioned as a way to reduce overconsumption since the clothes' lifespan is utilized. For instance, Hanna mentioned that for her it is not about a need to buy something new, instead, she has a need to update her wardrobe since she is tired of the clothing that she owns. This can be connected to the concept of fast fashion and the consumers' insatiable need for newness (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006). Thus, from our findings, swapping was perceived as a good alternative to update your wardrobe in a sustainable way.

Moreover, according to Lang and Armstrong (2018) individuals that have participated in sustainable consumption practices before are more likely to participate in swapping. Our findings are not demonstrating this increased likeliness, instead, they are contradicting regarding this. That is, Angelika who often consumes clothes via second hand was very positive and motivated to participate in swapping. Maria on the other hand, who also consumes a lot via second hand, was not as positive and had more doubts about the concept. Consequently, despite their shared experience regarding previous sustainable consumption, their perception of swapping was not the same. Furthermore, the sustainability aspect was generally identified as a motivation to participate in swapping, which is aligned with Botsman and Rogers' (2010) line of reasoning. However, it was found to be perceived more of an add-on rather than a main motivation to participate and therefore the sustainability motivation in itself was identified as not strong enough to result in action to participate in swap events.

5.2.2 Barriers

As stated by Dobers and Strannegård (2005), fashion consumption can be argued to be a part of one's identity making, serving as a symbolic and hedonistic value and moving beyond only utilitarian needs. Thus, when buying clothes, it is of high importance that the piece is in line with and portrays one's self-image. This agrees with the findings from our study, where concerns about not being able to fulfil your personal style and identity creation via the consumption model swapping was recognised. Albin illustratively expressed this by stating that swapping seemed interesting, but that he was concerned about whether he could find something out of interest and that was aligned with his style. Consequently, a barrier concerning if swapping can fulfil the identity creation and style was identified. In connection to identity, Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) argue that a concern when disposing clothes is whether people can identify with those that receive their disposed clothes. In contrast, our findings did not imply that identification with the person that you are swapping with is important, instead, the barrier identified is a concern about being able to find suitable pieces that are aligned with your style and identity. It is important to address the aspect of identity since it is argued that consumers use clothing to both emanate meaning about themselves to others and to reinforce meanings to oneself (Belk, 1988). As such, the barrier of not being able to find something that aligns with your style when swapping clothes might become a big challenge in order to fully be able to adapt to swapping as a clothing consumption alternative.

Another interesting finding was the influence of having your reference group present, or people from the same subculture, which was brought up by Daniel who expressed concerns about how different cultures dress differently, which he viewed as a limitation of swapping. This can be connected to our finding with regards to fashion consumption, that many are influenced by what their friends are wearing or people in their lives in general such as the ones living in the same city. Thus, this is in line with Solomon and Rabolt's (2004) argumentation about fashion being something that is accepted by a group of people, acting as a symbolic innovation, reflecting the society. As such, if the swap event includes people only from subcultures that are not desired for the participant, it might result in a barrier due to the abovementioned discussion.

As previously stated, social aspects are found to be a motivation for swapping. However, it is also important to address that a few of the interviewees saw the social aspects as distracting,

which might be explained by how important it is to find something that to swap that is aligned with one's style. This is in line with Armstrong et al.'s (2015) findings of the social aspect being a hinder for some and a distraction to identify clothes that would reflect their personal style. This was mentioned by Emil, who perceived the social aspects as distracting, resulting in a barrier to participating since the social aspects would in a negative way interfere with the process of finding something that was aligned with your style.

One of the main barriers identified was the uncertainty aspect of swapping, where two key features were distinguished. Firstly, many of the interviewees were concerned about the quality of the clothing pieces and the supply, which is in line with Armstrong et al.'s (2016) study. Thus, in order to fully adapt to swapping as a consumption model, the interviewees expressed that a large supply of good quality needs to be ensured. Secondly, due to the newness of clothing swap events in today's society, there was general confusion and uncertainty about the concept. Even though many of the interviewees could image a swap event, there were several aspects which they found difficult to grasp. Hence, as argued by Albinsson & Perera (2012), these swap events might challenge many inexperienced participants' perceptions of a marketplace. In line with Botsman and Rogers (2010), our findings also demonstrate that social proof can work as a tool to overbridge the barriers to participating in swapping, especially in the case of the uncertainty aspects. This was portrayed by several interviewees who claimed that they would be more prone to participate if their friends had tried it and had a positive experience. Thus, social proof enables consumers to copy the behaviour of others and works as a cognitive shortcut for participating in swapping. However, from our findings, it became evident that in order for social proof to work as a tool to minimise uncertainty, it is vital that you can identify with the person that is acting as social proof. This was validated by Albin who claimed that the person needs to be aligned with his way of consuming clothes and lifestyle.

According to Botsman and Rogers (2010), swapping may result in confusion about getting a fair exchange. This is in line with our findings since many of the interviewees expressed different degrees of concern about getting something of fair value out of the swap. Two ways of viewing a fair exchange was identified, one regarding getting something for the same monetary value and a second one about getting a fair exchange in terms of being personally satisfied. It was moreover identified that the concern about getting a fair exchange was higher when the person was swapping something that was valuable for them. According to Becker-

Leifhold (2018) consumers often attach meaning to their clothes, and from our findings, it becomes clear that in these situations the attachment might hinder or at least affect the consumers' willingness to participate in swapping. Another aspect that influences the notion of getting a fair exchange is whether or not you have to pay to participate in the event. If a monetary exchange is included, the interviewees demonstrated a higher concern about getting something in return. This is in line with the capitalist culture, which stresses the attitude of "getting one's fair share" (Nelson & Rademacher, 2009). Moreover, getting a fair exchange was recognized as a crucial factor for the consumption model to work in the long run. Even though many of the interviewees were motivated to participate in swapping due to the function of value creation and saw that as a reward in itself, it was mentioned that swapping would not be possible in the long run if you only bring clothes to be swapped but do not get anything in return.

Connected to the discussion about uncertainty, this aspect is also portrayed in terms of not knowing the previous owner of the garment, which is resulting in a barrier of hygiene. According to Armstrong et al. (2016), consumers are concerned that the clothing items are unhygienic, which is also implied in our findings to be a clear barrier to participate in swapping. This was demonstrated by many via mentioning that they are more likely to swap the farther away from the skin the garment is.

Many of the interviewees compared the idea of second hand clothing in swapping with their perception about the secondhand consumption model. Thus, as argued by Albinsson and Perera (2009), consumers' perception about second hand consumption plays a vital part in swapping. Our findings point at this relationship being due to hygiene considerations. Karolina who perceived secondhand as strongly unhygienic expressed the same perception towards swapping since she compared it with secondhand. She argued that she is trying to consume more second hand but cannot get past the fact that it has been used before. As such, even though she had tried second hand consumption, she could not disregard the aspect of hygiene, which was a frequently mentioned theme. As a consequence of concerns about hygiene, many interviewees argued that they were more likely to swap only particular items, resulting in limitations of the consumption model.

5.3 Renting

Similarly to swapping, various motivations and barriers to engaging in renting have been identified. When discussed in relation to literature, these illustrate how Swedish consumers perceive clothing rental.

5.3.1 Motivations

Our findings show that when discussing clothing consumption, many tend to view clothes and the style that they are assuming as a part of their identity making since they expressed that clothes say a lot about a person. According to Niinimäki (2010), fashion is a type of symbolic production as it expresses the inner individual personality via external symbols and marks, which goes in line with the findings of this study. For many, the appearance and symbolic value is a primary criterion when consuming clothes, consciously or unconsciously. In contrast to swapping, where the personal style is viewed as difficult to obtain, renting seems to be perceived as an opportunity to get access to more expensive clothes that carries a special symbolic value. Thus, it can fulfil symbolic aspects that are identified to be important for many when consuming clothes, which is aligned with Becker-Leifhold's (2018) discussion about that clothing rental provides an opportunity to get access to clothes of high quality and clothes with the ability to symbolize. The finding and the congruence are demonstrated by Albin, who mentioned that he can rent items that he views as cool and then optimize the symbolic meaning he wants to express. Hence, a motive for engaging in clothing rental is that one can use the rented clothes as a tool to create an image of who you are and which group you belong to, in the same way as when consuming clothes in a traditional way. However, when renting clothes, the symbolic meaning can be optimized, and you can access clothes that you may not afford if you were to buy them, thus create an even more desired self-image.

Our finding of that rented clothes can serve as a tool for self-image and identity creating is further reflected by the strive for updating and exchanging your clothes in order for them to better fit with whom you are. Renting is often referred to as a good and fun way to update your wardrobe and at the same time your identity, pointing at its ability to offer an opportunity for consumers to find their self-identity, which is in line with Gao's (2017) argumentation. By renting clothes, consumers can try different identities in order to find their preferred one as well as temporarily escape from their current identity. Thus, the perception of not being able

to reflect one's self-image via renting instead of owning as argued by Lang (2018), is contradicted by the findings of this study, where it is suggested that consumers think that self-image can be expressed by only wearing clothes and not solely by owning them.

Connected to identity is the need to be trendy. Lang and Armstrong (2018) argue that consumers can get access to new fashion products right after the product launch through the concept of renting and that consumers with a strong interest in fashion are positively associated with the intention to engage in clothing rental. Our findings are interpreted accordingly, and as such the identified perception is that renting can fulfil the need to be trendy, based on the preference of renting trendy items instead of basic ones, and since renting is viewed as a way to spice up your closet rather than as a primary clothing consumption alternative.

When wanting to be trendy, clothing rental can be viewed as an alternative that offers more room for flexibility and freedom. Jakob demonstrated this by stating that he saw the flexibility in being able to adjust to seasons and follow trends in a new way and that you have the possibility to get a variation in your everyday life. This goes in line with Moeller and Wittkowski's (2010) identification of a demand for up-to-date products as a driving factor for non-ownership. Besides seeing the flexibility advantages of renting when wanting something trendy or seasonable, our findings suggest that non-ownership in terms of freedom and flexibility is in general a motivation for engaging in clothing rental. This corresponds with Gao's (2017) reasoning of that flexibility and freedom might be valued higher than the security and long-term relationship that ownership offers. Renting offers an opportunity to access diverse and new products without the burden of ownership (Bardhi & Eckenhardt, 2012), which is perceived as attractive according to our findings. This can be illustrated by Philip's appreciation of not having to commit to anything when renting as well as by Jakob's comparison of Airbnb. Instead of owning a house and put all the eggs in the same basket, he can go wherever he wants in the world when travelling. He stated that it is the same with clothing rental, that he can rent a nice jacket instead of buying one, thus get rid of the risk of buying a jacket that he does not use for more than one time. The freedom aspect conforms to Durgee and O'Connor's (1995) argumentation that consumers associate renting with freedom and non-commitment. Consumers feel less pressure when renting because it does not matter in the long run if the decision was wrong. However, our findings also show that consumers are

unsure if the flexible and freedom benefits they seek can be met by the companies providing the rental services. This will be discussed further in the section about barriers towards renting.

Besides style, trend, and flexibility, our findings show that clothing rental was also perceived as a financial opportunity, motivating people to participate. Price was found to be a determinant factor when consuming clothes and this is also identified to be the case when renting. In traditional consumption, price is often perceived as a hinder to engage in more sustainable consumption, but in renting the financial aspect is viewed as a positive feature. Many saw an opportunity to rent clothes that they were not planning on using many times, thus making it less expensive. This goes well in line with previous literature on renting models, which suggest the economic factor to be one of the key motivations for this type of consumption (e.g. Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010; Durgee & O'Connor, 1995). The lower prices compared to buying increases the supply of clothes the consumer are able to get access to, which is demonstrated by Hanna, who recognizes an opportunity to rent expensive pieces of clothes to an affordable price, which agrees with Becker-Leifhold's (2018) argumentation. The literature on the financial aspect of renting also points at the risk of not getting what is expected when paying for the access to updated fashion items, hence experience a financial loss (Armstrong et al., 2015). Our findings do not conform to this instead the concerns are identified to be more about if it is possible to provide a good service for a cheap price.

The preference to rent clothes that you do not use that often was also motivated by sustainability concerns. Instead of ten people having a tuxedo in their closet and using it two times each, they can rent and share only one, which would reduce the number of tuxedos needed to be produced. Thus, renting was perceived as a way to reduce overconsumption by maximize the usage of clothes and minimise the disposal, which is portrayed by Amanda who argued that renting would result in the clothing item getting used more and until it is worn out, instead of thrown away because it is not liked anymore. This is in line with Armstrong et al.'s (2016) study, which found that one potential benefit of clothing rental amongst consumers is that it can reduce consumption. Consumers have become more aware of the negative effects of fashion production and consumption (Henly, 2010), which can be an underlying aspect of why the strive to become more sustainable functions as a motivation for participating in clothing rental. Karolina illustrated this by stating that she thinks that renting is a very good idea and a way to

care for the environment. However, results from scholars on clothing rental show that it is rather unclear if sustainability aspects are a strong motivation for participating (Becker-Leifhold, 2018). Similarly to the identified motivations for swapping, our findings indicate that sustainability is a positive additional aspect of renting, but not crucial.

5.3.2 Barriers

In our findings, we analyse that there seem to be two sides in the question of ownership, one group who prefer to own their clothing pieces and perceive the access based character of renting as a barrier, and another group that expressed that they do not think that owning their clothes is as important. However, the ones that say that ownership is not important still find it important to own the main part of the clothes in their closets, especially their basic clothing. Thus, their abnegation of valuing ownership is interpreted as mainly driven by flexibility and freedom and a wish for being more open. The fact that they still want to own the main part of their clothes points at a convenient aspect, but also at the high emotional value that this type of product, i.e. clothes, has to people. As such, ownership is found to be a barrier to participate in clothing rental, mainly due to the two identified aspects.

Firstly, our findings suggest that the preference to own clothes can be motivated via a convenience aspect. Hanna illustrated this by her example about tearing back and forth to rent clothes every other day and Albin states that he would have to start planning his clothing way more and that renting would reduce his opportunities to be spontaneous. This is not frequently mentioned in previous studies on renting, instead the focus tends to be more on the relationship between ownership and identity as well as materialism (e.g. Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Durgee & O'Connor, 1995; Belk, 2007; Lang & Armstrong, 2018). For instance, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) suggest self-identity to be connected to ownership, wherefore renting instead of buying might result in a feeling of detachment from the self-identity. As discussed earlier, our findings contradict this view, as it is found that consumers perceive that self-identity can be expressed via renting and wearing clothes and not solely by owning them.

Secondly, it was found that many tend to develop some kind of emotional attachment to their clothes and hence, they believe that renting would mean risk in terms of starting to like a piece of clothing too much and have to return it instead of keeping it as desired. This can be connected

to Belk's (1988) argumentation about the extended self, in terms of that when we start developing feelings and feel that a possession is a part of our extended self, we are more likely to wish to own and retain it. Moreover, in line with Belk's (2007) and Armstrong's (2018) discussions about materialism, it was also found in this study that the ones who attach high importance to their possessions, are sceptical to renting. As illustrated by Philip who stated that he likes to own his things and feel that they really are his own and are therefore hesitant to the concept of renting.

Connected to the aspects of convenience, we identified an uncertainty regarding both the cost, design and feasibility of the concept of renting, which was perceived as a barrier. First of all, many expressed concerns about difficulties on how renting can work as a flexible and fuss-free service, without being too expensive. Many perceive renting as laborious and believe that it would add extra moments and effort or mean that they would have to plan instead of being spontaneous when deciding what to wear. Additionally, many are also unsure of what the concept would deliver and thusly are not sure of what they would be willing to pay for a rental service. The uncertainty regarding the concept and its regulations also took shape in terms of the question of what would happen if something broke as well as concerns regarding the size and fit of the supply. These uncertainty aspects seem to be recurring when looking at perceptions of new sustainable clothing consumption models. For instance, Pookulangara and Shephard (2013) state that a lack of knowledge, transparency and monetary concerns are found as hinders to invest in more alternative slow fashion options.

The uncertainty aspect is found to be connected to trust, which is demonstrated by Jakob who claimed that he would be more likely to participate in renting if he would be able to first test the service and see how it works. This point is brought up by Rexfelt and Hjort af Ornäs (2009) who suggest that consumers' risk perception can be reduced by offering them a chance to try out the concept prior to entering a contract. Nonetheless, we found that testing of the concept does not necessarily have to be done by the consumer him or herself. The consumer can also be reassured via recommendations from others in order to overbridge the uncertainty barrier, similarly to Botsman and Roger's (2010) discussion about social proof, mentioned in the above section on swapping.

Lastly, similarly to the discussion about hygiene being a barrier for participating in swapping, it is also identified as a barrier for engaging in renting. Thus, as argued by Armstrong et al. (2015), consumer willingness to rent is affected by hygienic considerations, especially for products worn next to the skin. This is in line with our findings that the interviewees are more prone to rent certain clothing items, such as jackets, purses etc. based on a high concern about hygiene and not knowing or trusting the person that has worn it before. From our findings, this seems to be one of the deepest rooted attitudes and might be very difficult to change, which is connected to Jagers et al.'s (2009) argumentation.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the main findings from our study and compared it to previous literature on the subject, demonstrating similarities and differences as well as new nuances to previous findings. As such, it sheds light on consumers' perception of the collaborative consumption models swapping and renting. We have identified the main motivations and barriers to participating, where an overview can be found in figure 3. Our findings have resulted in some contribution to existing literature which will be further elaborated on in the next chapter, conclusion.

6. Conclusion

The last chapter includes concluding reflections of the findings and an elaborated discussion of the study's contribution. Firstly, we will answer the research question followed by our contribution to academia. Subsequently, managerial implications derived from the findings are presented and serve as practical recommendations for companies applying the collaborative consumption models. Lastly, limitations and future research will be discussed.

6.1 Research Aim

The purpose of this study was to investigate how consumers perceive the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping and what the underlying motivations and barriers to these perceptions are. These clothing consumption models are starting to become more common, but little research on consumer acceptance and perceptions have been done on this, wherefore it became interesting for us to conduct this study. To get an understanding of how consumers perceive the models as well as their motivations and barriers to engage in swapping and renting of clothes, we applied an interpretative approach and a qualitative design, in order to deeply understand the research area from the interviewees' point of view.

Our data collection enabled identification of how young Swedish consumers perceive clothing rental and swapping via key motivations and barriers forming these perceptions, as illustrated in figure 3. As also portrayed in figure 3, consumers' attitudes and behaviours in fashion consumption in general influenced their perceptions of the collaborative consumption models swapping and renting. Since clothing as a product is distinct in the way that consumers often attach meaning to their clothes, their underlying attitudes and beliefs are often strong and therefore function as a basis when forming perceptions of other ways to consume clothes.

In conclusion, our study demonstrates how consumers perceive clothing rental and swapping and the underlying key motivations and barriers. Our findings point at a positive perception of swapping, where several motivations for participating were identified. Since swapping was not perceived to function as an option that could fulfil one's full need of clothing, but rather as a fun and sociable event, the experiential and social motivations were found to be essential. This goes in line with previous studies but adds a nuance since our findings indicate that consumers

would like to visit a swap event solely to enjoy the experiential and social parts without seeking to find anything to swap. Moreover, the possibility to dispose clothes and create value for others and yourself as well as a sustainability aspect of swapping were identified as motivations for participation. However, the sustainability factor was found to be perceived more as a positive add-on rather than a primary incentive.

In addition to the motivational aspects of swapping, several barriers to engage were also found. Firstly, the fear of not getting a fair exchange and of not finding a piece of clothing that matches your personal style was identified as hinders for engaging in the consumption model. Compared to traditional clothing consumption in store, it was argued that you cannot be guaranteed to find anything that you like and that is equivalent to your contribution. This was found to be incentivized by both the capitalist culture where it is of high importance to get one's fair share, the longevity of swapping as a consumption form, and the high symbolic value clothes carry, wherefore it is extra important to find the right ones. That is, the ones expressing your identity, and not just whatever available. Our findings also imply uncertainty and hygiene to be strong barriers that are difficult to overcome, for both swapping and renting. The uncertainty aspect was identified to be due to the newness of the concepts and the deeply rooted perception of how a marketplace should function.

For the collaborative consumption model renting several motivations and barriers were also identified. In contrast to previous literature suggesting that self-identity only can be reflected by owning clothes, our findings indicate that consumers via renting can get access to clothes that carry high symbolic value and thus express their identity. Hence, a motivation for participation in clothing rental is the possibility to get access to trendy clothes and to clothes of high quality, that can express a symbolic meaning. Our findings also demonstrate that consumers seem to be attracted by the freedom and flexibility that a renting model could offer. Nonetheless, a consideration regarding if renting services would be able to deliver these benefits was identified. We also found that clothing rental was perceived as a financial opportunity, especially for clothes that you do not use that often, which motivates participation. Lastly, similarly to the identified motivations for swapping, our findings suggest that the sustainability aspect of renting is a positive add-on, but not a primary incentive to participate.

Besides hygiene and uncertainty, a reluctance towards renting based on the preference to own your clothes was noticed. This conforms with previous research, but our findings also point at the desire to own to be based on a convenient aspect, rather than purely materialistic and connected to self-identity. This is demonstrated by the identified lower willingness to rent everyday basic clothes, and instead prefer to rent more special clothes that you do not use often, which was incentivized by convenient motives. However, even if a materialistic aspect was not found to be the main underlying aspect of ownership in our study, our findings show that the ones who like to own their clothes were more sceptical towards renting.

In summation, our findings are answering the research question by showing that consumers in many aspects perceive the models in a positive way and see reasons to participate. On the other hand, they are perceiving many hinders that need to be overbridged in order for them to be willing to participate or increase their degree of participation.

By this study, the literature on consumer perceptions of the collaborative consumption models renting and swapping has been extended, contributing to creating an understanding of the consumer acceptance of these alternative consumption models. This is a necessity in order to enable a circular economy where consumers need to be willing to use products in new ways.

6.2 Managerial Implications

Our study provides as aforesaid contributions for the theoretical scope, and it additionally results in some managerial implications. Firstly, we believe that our study holds implications for companies and foremost the ones that offer the collaborative fashion consumption models swapping and renting. It gives practical implications in terms of business model design and on how to get consumer acceptance.

In regard to swapping, we identified that participation in the model is not primarily motivated by the consumption activity in itself, instead, it is the social and experiential aspects that the consumers seek. Based on this, we propose that companies should focus on forming and building an attractive and social event and communicate these features. The aspect of swapping being sustainable and a value creating activity in terms of getting rid of unwanted items and seeing them get a new life should be communicated as value adding elements besides the

experiential and social features. Due to the finding that consumers perceive the concept as confusing and lack knowledge about it, distinct information about swap events should be provided. Moreover, we recommend that in order to increase awareness and overbridge the uncertainty aspects, swapping companies should use brand ambassadors and ‘member get member campaigns’. That is, companies can offer a bonus if a customer brings a friend. These persons can work as social proof, which is identified as an effective way to overcome various aspects of uncertainty.

Addressing the managerial implications for renting, we propose that companies should focus on designing a service that is hassle-free and does not require any extra elements, thus offer an extraordinary service. A good example of such a service is UberEats, that is, a service where you can order your pieces and get them delivered to the door without having to plan in advance and then picked up from the door when used, minimizing the involvement from the consumers’ side. Additionally, the supply that is offered should focus on trendy pieces and seasonal clothes and not every day basic clothes, since consumers are identified to prefer owning these items from a convenience perspective. Consequently, companies should communicate a possibility to try new trends and styles in an easy and accessible manner. Another recommendation is that the price should be clearly communicated with a focus on the financial opportunities. Thusly, we suggest that the service providers communicate what you actually gain on renting in comparison to buying the item and how easy it is for you as a consumer to use the service. As with swapping, we identified a concern about the uncertainty in connection to the concept of renting. We recommend that companies overbridge the uncertainty aspect by offering to try the concept for free, or to a discounted price.

An important matter to address with regards to sustainability is the aspect of overconsumption and that if consumers engage in renting but at the same time stick to their old consumption habits of constantly wanting new things, the total clothing consumption might increase. Hence, companies need to consider and address consumers’ thoughtless behaviour and rebound effects connected to non-ownership fashion consumption.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Touching upon the limitations of our study, we are solely focusing on the swapping and renting models in the fashion industry and therefore, the findings are not applicable to other industries neither to other collaborative consumption models, such as leasing or co-designing. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that the phenomenon of collaborative consumption can be understood as a current topic that is evolving continuously and therefore the concepts of swapping and renting are flexible to changes. As a consequence, the collected data can be assumed to mostly be relevant around the period of our research, as the consumers' perceptions and attitudes most likely will change accordingly to the evolvement of the phenomenon.

Another limitation with our study is the delimitation to young Swedish consumers. Focusing on Sweden might have an impact on the transferability to other countries that are beyond a Swedish socio-cultural context. Therefore, we propose that future research should include other nationalities and age groups in order to widen the understanding of the perceptions and attitudes that consumers hold towards the concepts.

Additionally, as aforementioned, previous scholarly attention on the concept of collaborative fashion consumption is rather limited. When conducting research on the subject, several interesting topics emerged that could be studied further. For instance, consumers' deeply rooted perception of a marketplace can be a topic for further investigation. How can their perception be transformed in order for new consumption models to be accepted? Moreover, in order to get a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and further insights regarding the perceptions in collaborative fashion consumption, ethnographical research could be performed in an experimental setting to test and explore consumer behaviour.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Hållbarhet

Vad är hållbarhet för dig?

- kunskap om hållbarhet/miljöproblem?
- om jag säger circular economy, vad säger du då?

Hur ser du på din konsumtion idag i förhållande till hållbarhet?

- Känner du att du konsumerar så hållbart som du vill?

Anser du att det idag finns alternativ för att konsumera hållbart?

Hur tror du att din inställning till hållbar konsumtion skulle vara om du visste mer om hållbarhet och konsekvenserna av ditt konsumtionsbeteende?

Hur öppen är du för att konsumera på nya alternativa sätt?

Hållbar Klädkonsumtion

Hur konsumerar du kläder idag?

- och hur mycket?

Vad är viktigt för dig när du konsumerar kläder?

När du konsumerar kläder, är det viktigt för dig att följa trender?

Anser du att dina kläder säger mycket om vem du är?

Hur viktigt är pris för dig när du konsumerar kläder?

- Vad är dina tankar kring pris och hållbar klädkonsumtion?

Skulle du vilja konsumera dina kläder hållbart till en större grad än vad du gör idag?

- vad är anledningen till att du inte konsumerar så hållbart som du vill?
- vad är anledningen till att du försöker konsumera hållbart?

Skiljer det sig hur du tänker när du handlar kläder jämfört med när du handlar andra produkter?

Vad är hållbar klädkonsumtion för dig?

Renting

Att hyra plagg en fast tidsperiod, betala för tillgången och sedan lämna tillbaka det.

Vad känner du inför att hyra kläder?

- Har du provat? / Vill du pröva?

Varför vill du? / Vill du inte? (motivation/barriär)

Vad känner du kring att inte äga plagget? (motivation/barriär)

Är det några plagg du är mer benägen att hyra än andra?

Vad är dina tankar kring pris när det gäller att hyra?

Vad är dina tankar kring att hyra som ett flexibelt konsumtionsalternativ?

Tror du att du skulle tillfredsställa ditt klädkonsumtionsbehov genom att hyra kläder?

Swapping

Ett event där du lämnar in kläder och får med dig andra kläder i utbyte.

Vad känner du inför att swappa kläder?

- Har du provat? / Vill du prova?

Varför vill du / vill du inte? (motivation/barriär)

Är du mer benägen att delta om eventet innehåller mer än bara konsumtionsaktiviteten?

Hur ser du på att betala för att få delta i ett swap-event?

Känner du någon som har deltagit i ett swapping event?

- Gör det dig mer eller mindre benägen att delta?

Spelar det någon roll för dig vem du swappar med?

Är det viktigt för dig att du får rättvis swap?

Är det några plagg du är mer benägen att swappa än andra?

Tror du att du skulle tillfredsställa ditt konsumtionsbehov genom att swappa kläder?