Collaboratively We Share,
But Differently We Care -

The impact of the Brazilian and German culture on the social
drivers of sharing economy participation
Master Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Collaboratively we share, but differently we care - The impact of the Brazilian and German culture on the social drivers of sharing economy participation

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Julia Meier

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Abstract

Background: The term “sharing economy” has become increasingly popular over the past decade, which has led to continuous research on the consumer of this new economy.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore the interplay between consumers’ social motivations to participate in the sharing economy and their national culture. As recent research lacks cultural aspects and challenges social impacts on consumers, this cross-cultural study will contribute to existing research on sharing economy motivators, as it focuses on the consumer’s social values associated with the concept of the sharing economy, as well as on potential cultural differences.

Method: Following an exploratory research design, six focus groups, three German and three Brazilian, were conducted in order to collect primary data and finally to compare the different motives, but especially social motivations. The data therefore was analyzed following a thematic analysis to extract all mentioned motivations and cultural characteristics for partaking in the sharing economy.

Empirical Findings: The findings showed, that Germans and Brazilians share mainly financial and convenience motivations for participating in the sharing economy. Moreover, security concerns were found to be an impediment, especially for Brazilian partaking. Regarding social drivers the participants expressed the desire for social interaction, cultural exchange or simply “the experience” as the main motives, which however differ in intensity across both cultural groups.

Conclusion: The results showed that in general, social motivations are highly dependent on different factors. Regarding the two examined cultural groups it can be concluded that although the individuals differ from the stereotypical “German” or “Brazilian”, all participants were somewhat impacted by their cultural origin in terms of social motivation. This includes for example the Germans to be rather reserved in terms of social interaction, whereas Brazilians are more urged to do it.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The term “sharing economy” is becoming increasingly popular in the past decade (Martin, Upham, & Budd, 2015). As literature still did not reach a consensus in defining the scope of this economy, many scholars attempt to define the new economy. Botsman and Rogers first mentioned and defined collaborative consumption, claiming it entails sharing underutilized assets either for monetary or non-monetary purposes (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Adding to this definition, more recent literature includes whole organizations (Muñoz & Cohen, 2017). Besides defining the term, motivations to participate in the economy are being examined in different environments. These motivations range from saving money to social exchange (Habibi, Davidson, & Laroche, 2017). Moreover, research discovered the relation between cultural heritage and consumers’ sharing behavior (Belk, 2007) leading to new opportunities that go in line with the sharing economy and different cultures, and in turn creating a contemporary field of research.

1.2 Problem Statement

As previous studies on motivations have shown, consumers participate in sharing economy platforms for various reasons (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Böcker & Meelen, 2017). Current research on motivations especially addresses the importance of social aspects by investigating whether or not sharing economy participation stimulates the opportunity to connect and interact with new people (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Frenken & Schor, 2017).

According to Hamari et al. (2015), enjoyment of the activity is the most potent driver of sharing economy participation, meaning consumers primarily intend to use peer-to-peer platforms as they are assumed to be fun and an opportunity to connect with peers, which is also confirmed by other scholars (Habibi et al., 2017; Frenken & Schor, 2017). Contrary to the aforementioned research outcomes, Tussyadiah (2016) found that some users of accommodation sharing services specifically avoid places that involve social interaction. Furthermore, Parigi and State (2014), exploring in their research whether or not technology has an impact on the strength of social relationships, claim that users of sharing economy practices have become
“disenchanted”, meaning they consider the relationships they build as less durable and more casual.

With the continuous growth of the sharing economy, peer-to-peer markets gained a great deal of attention from both companies and consumers, also implying skepticism towards the concept of sharing. Habibi et al. (2017) discussed whether peer-to-peer economies are linked to the intrinsic values of sharing, associated with the community aspect consumers see in peer-to-peer platforms. Belk (2014) defined this “phenomenon whereby commodity exchange and potential exploitation of consumer co-creators present themselves in the guise of sharing” as “pseudo-sharing” (p.7). Thus, some scholars also question whether sharing platforms can create social networks or even build new friendships (Schor, 2016; Habibi et al., 2017; Belk 2014).

Recent studies have discussed the role of social motivation within the sharing economy. Albeit, in what ways consumers are looking for sharing practices that encourage social behavior depends on various factors, which are not entirely addressed in current research contributions. Schor (2016) argues: the degree of socialization may depend on the type of the sharing practice, as some forms involve more significant social interaction. The need to distinguish between the various sharing platforms is also discussed by Habibi et al. (2017).

Furthermore, previous studies showed that for example age or gender could have an impact on motivations (Cornwell, Laumann & Schumm, 2008; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics & Bohlen, 2003). Thus, Böcker and Meelen (2017) argue that motivations to partake in sharing practices are likely to differ across various population characteristics. Considering that motivational studies on sharing economy participation mainly focus on the American consumer (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012), a need to look at the cultural background when assessing the consumer’s community aspect of sharing economy practices was identified (Böcker & Meelen, 2017). Davidson, Habibi, and Laroche (2018) also recognized that cross-cultural studies have only been done to a limited extent, stressing the importance to conduct further cultural research within the context of the sharing economy.
1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the interplay between consumers’ social motivations to participate in the sharing economy and their national culture. Existing research covers the consumer’s desire to build social relations through collaborative services; however, this study further aims to investigate cultural aspects linked with a consumer’s motivation to create social networks in peer-to-peer markets. As current research is challenging social impacts on consumers and discusses the term ‘pseudo-sharing’, this cross-cultural study will contribute to existing research on sharing economy motivators, as it focuses on the consumer’s social values associated with the concept of the sharing economy, as well as on potential cultural differences. Furthermore, this paper will consider different forms of sharing platforms across industries, which is why possible social behavior patterns, depending on the type of practice, will be identified. In existing studies, social motivation has mostly been viewed as a whole, whereas it is assumed to rely on multiple determinants, including the cultural background as well as the type of the sharing platform. Considering this research gap, this thesis will contribute knowledge about cultural aspects with regards to social drivers, while discussing different types of sharing economy platforms across industries.
2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Sharing Economy

2.1.1 The Concept of Sharing

Although the idea of a sharing economy is fairly new, the concept of sharing assets and sharing itself is not and goes back until the Stone Age (Belk, 2007; Botsman & Rogers, 2010). As has been known for centuries, sharing can enhance a community’s performance. People used to live in tribes to share chores like hunting, fishing, and cooking. This enabled these tribes to provide more food for the overall community through the mere act of sharing (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Additionally, people have shared certain objects for a long time, as the idea of a public library shows (Demary, 2015).

Belk (2007) defines sharing as “[…] an alternative to the private ownership that is emphasized in both marketplace exchange and gift giving. In sharing, two or more people may enjoy the benefits (or costs) that flow from possessing a thing.” Thus, sharing can be found in any type of exchange. Albeit, sharing is culture dependent (Belk, 2007). There are apparent differences in how cultures perceive sharing and at what time individuals in different cultures learn how to share. However, sharing, relinquished from culture, has impediments (Belk, 2007; Belk, 2013). The first issue that comes up in this matter is that sharing has to come willingly from an individual, meaning that egoism can discourage the willingness to share something (Belk, 2007). Apart from this, to be able to share at all, the individual or consumer needs to sense ownership in order to share something. Hence, materialism is a crucial factor when it comes to sharing. Abelson (1986) argues that possessions are not only materialistic assets, but also feelings we have for certain things, like the one particular seat in this one classroom or a person one loves. This goes in line with the argumentation of various researchers (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Kleine & Baker, 2004; Belk, 1992) who argue that feelings of possessions discourage the act of sharing. Thus, consumers draw a line when it comes to sharing and personal belongings (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).
2.1.2 Defining the Sharing Economy

Despite the fact that the sharing economy has become increasingly popular and more researchers dedicate their work towards the topic, a consensus regarding the definition of the term still has not been reached (Acquier, Daudigeos, & Pinske, 2017). As researchers agree that the sharing economy is an essential aspect of society, it is also recognized that defining the term is difficult because of its scope. The reason for this is not only the technology which enhances more possibilities inside the sharing economy and how consumers share, but additionally due to divergent understandings of what precisely the sharing economy entails (Acquier et al. 2016; Schor, 2014; Sundararajan, 2016). In general, two categories of definitions are differentiated: broad and narrow ones. For example, Stephany (2015) defines the sharing economy as making underutilized assets available within an online community, resulting in reducing the ownership of these assets. This definition is somewhat narrow, as it focuses on online platforms with a financial target.

On the other hand, a broader description by Habibi et al. (2017) mentions that the sharing economy entails many different (hybrid-) forms of sharing, containing the two progressions of pseudo- and true sharing. Based on recent definitions, Acquier et al. (2017) put the sharing economy in an organizing framework, instead of making another attempt at defining it. They, therefore, divided the sharing economy into three organizing cores: Access economy, platform economy, and community-based economy. Schor (2016) recognizes that it is almost impossible to find a suitable definition for this type of new economy. Thus, the author examines broad categories that the sharing economy can be related to, including durable assets, as well as assets that are used collaboratively, the recirculation of products and the exchange of services. Furthermore, the author suggests that further research should start by firstly defining the participants of the sharing economy adequately and then focus on the terminology, which can lead to one, final definition.

According to Hamari et al. (2015), the sharing economy is an opportunity for consumers to share services and goods through online platforms. This definition serves as guideline for this paper.
2.1.3 Primary Drivers of the Sharing Economy

Contrary to the traditional economy in which ownership is the primary focus, the sharing economy can be considered as a new way of consuming (Puschmann & Alt, 2016). Different factors have influenced the development of this economy: Firstly, the financial crisis of 2008 (Botsman & Rogers, 2010): Many researchers have established the financial crisis as one of the leading motivators for collaborative consumption. The reason for this is the fact that consumers tried to find new ways of saving money, but additionally of gaining money (Carrión, 2016). The possibilities that emerged with the sharing economy included earning money with the assets that were already in the consumers' possession. For example, it gives the consumer the option to rent out his bedroom while being on vacation or even perform mini-jobs in his spare time (Felländer, Ingram, & Teigland, 2015).

Secondly, the ongoing trend towards technology (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Puschmann & Alt, 2016; PwC, 2015): Smartphones and apps, as well as social networks, have helped collaborative consumption to become as important as it is today. Research stresses the fact that the emergence of the Internet, and the accessibility of social networks have reduced the frontiers, as well as have tailored a more natural and quicker way to share (Davidson et al., 2018). As the idea of sharing is not new to consumers, the Internet has accelerated the pace of consumers’ interactions and their sharing behavior. Moreover, so-called apps have introduced a new service to users, which does not only make life easier but additionally vastly accelerates the process. For example, an Uber can be ordered from inside the discotheque, which enables the consumer to enjoy the night until the very last moment (Felländer, Ingram, & Teigland, 2015).

Thirdly, the impact of changed consumer behavior can be identified as a significant driver. Consumers become more aware of how and what they consume. Therefore, sustainability has become an important matter towards an increasing number of users worldwide (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Möhlmann, 2015). As Botsman and Rogers (2010) argue, consumers start to question whether ownership is essential, resulting in a trend towards sharing, especially regarding assets and goods that are underused. This increasing trend from using instead of owning has been regarded as one of the leading drivers of the sharing economy (Matzler, Veider, & Kathan, 2015; Rifkin, 2014).
2.1.4 The Sharing Industries

According to Botsman and Rogers (2010), collaborative consumption practices are divided into three categories: product-service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles. The authors claim that consumers are shifting to a ‘usage mindset’, meaning they instead benefit from a product without actually owning it. This system allows consumers to share or rent several products that are either privately owned or owned by a company.

The second system, redistribution markets, can be explained as the reselling or redistribution of things that are not wanted, but needed elsewhere (Stokes, Clarence, Anderson, & Rinne, 2014). As noted by Botsman and Rogers (2010), the business models within this system range from social networks offering entirely free exchanges (e.g. Freecycle) to goods sold in exchange for points (e.g. Barterquest) or cash (e.g. eBay) to swapping all kinds of stuff, including for example clothes, toys or books (e.g. SwapStyle). While some redistribution platforms encourage stranger sharing, others connect people already knowing each other, as for instance NeighborGoods.

Lastly, collaborative lifestyles entail “people with similar interests [...] bonding together to share and exchange less tangible assets such as time, space, skills and money [...]” (p. 73). These platforms can range from providing accommodation or food to offering working spaces, parking lots or gardens. Collaborative lifestyles are usually occurring on a local level; whereas the world wide web also enables consumers to share globally, as in the travel industry.

With continuous variety of sharing economy practices, some studies have found discrepancies within the different platforms, as some sharing practices deviate from the actual concept of sharing. Therefore, Habibi et al. (2017) developed the so-called sharing-exchange continuum, ranging from pure sharing practices to pure exchange practices (see Figure 1). In order to categorize the practices, the authors considered several sharing- and exchange-related attributes developed by Belk (2007).
When comparing different car or ride sharing services (i.e., Zipcar, Uber, and BlaBlaCar), some clear distinctions in the level of sharing can be made. Even though all ride or car sharing services share common features, the customer gains different experiences. On the one hand, the BlaBlaCar experience includes mutual bonding among travelers, with only very little profit-oriented motivation from the driver’s perspective, as consumers can share their rides so that gas costs can be divided (Habibi et al., 2017). Hence, a high degree of sharing is involved since drivers share their spare seats with other travelers, implying BlaBlaCar would be rather positioned toward the sharing-dominant side of the sharing-exchange continuum. By contrast, consumers renting a ‘Zipcar’ get a private experience, meaning they reserve a car and drive it themselves without any social interactions among other members of the Zipcar community. As research has shown, Zipcar members are not driven by social motivations, but rather by economic motivations, such as saving money (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). According to Habibi et al. (2017), Zipcar misuses the concept of sharing, which is why...
they even question whether the usage of this platform accounts as sharing economy. Thus, Zipcar’s exchange-related attributes outweigh its sharing-related characteristics. Lastly, Uber, a taxi service, where the consumer can order a taxi through an App, wherever the user wants to get picked up and if Uber is available in this particular geographical location, would be located in the middle of the continuum, as it involves some sharing characteristics: The car sharing service requires peers in order to share resources, which simplifies social cooperation between the passenger and the driver (Habibi et al., 2017).

A more recent study on the nature of sharing economy practices by Acquier et al. (2017) considers sharing economy to be the umbrella term for three core elements: (1) Access economy, (2) Platform economy, and (3) Community-based economy (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Three organizing cores of the sharing economy

![Diagram](image)

Source: Acquier et al. (2017)

While Habibi et al. (2017) focus on the concept of sharing as a critical determinator to categorize various platforms, however officially falling under the term sharing economy, Acquier et al. (2017) identified three sub-economies to define and distinguish sharing economy practices. In the community-based economy, developing social ties within the community plays a significant role, which is facilitated by "non-contractual, non-hierarchical or non-monetized forms of interaction" (p.4). Secondly, in the access economy, broad access to underused assets
is fundamental. The sharing platforms falling into the access economy can be diverse. Hence, not only companies such as Zipcar, where an organization owns assets but also peer-to-peer car rental services are included in the access economy. Lastly, the authors define the platform economy “[...] as a set of initiatives that intermediate decentralized exchanges among peers through digital platforms” (p.5). The platform economy describes sharing economy participants that use platforms like eBay or Amazon as their intermediaries to sell tangible assets. Thus, according to the typology of Acquier et al. (2017) Couchsurfing can be considered a platform community, as users offer their “service” directly on the digital platform, contrary to Habibi et al. (2017) who argue that the social factor is primary regarding Couchsurfing, hence relate it to a community-based sharing economy.

Considering previous studies on the phenomenon of the sharing economy, it became evident that it is a complex and diverse research field. As of now, no set definition has been reached, since different understandings of what the sharing economy implicates, exist. This, in turn, is why various attempts how to define the shared economy have been made. Thus, researchers call for future research. For instance, Schor (2016) argues that successive studies should focus on firstly defining the participants adequately and then the term sharing economy. Even though the sharing economy has been established in different ways, many scholars agree upon what drives the shared economy: the financial crisis, technological developments, and a changing consumer mindset. As the sharing economy was growing, some researchers also found that the continuous variety of sharing practices created discrepancies within the platforms, as some involve more sharing characteristics than others. Hence, the scope of the sharing economy is still vague.

2.2 Motivation

2.2.1 Theories of Motivation

In general, human motivation is a phenomenon that has been studied by various scholars, leading to a vast number of theories of motivation. By definition, motivation is a “process governing choices made by persons or lower organisms among alternative forms of voluntary activity” (Vroom, 1964, p. 6).

In recent studies, the motivation to participate in sharing economy practices was divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Hamari et al., 2015; Bellotti et al., 2015; Böcker & Meelen,
This so-called self-determination theory was developed to understand whether the consumer's behavior is driven by rather external influences or one's personal values and interests (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, this theory highlights two relevant types of motivation for understanding user's motivation to participate in peer-to-peer economy practices: intrinsic and extrinsic. The latter emerge from external influences, for instance, monetary rewards (tangible) or reputation (intangible), whereas intrinsic motivation is for example fueled by pleasure, which reflects the consumers’ mere interest or desire to take part in the activity because it is fun (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Since collaborative services rely on both, extrinsic motivation (i.e. monetary gains) and intrinsic motivation (i.e. enjoyment of activity) (Hamari et al., 2015), this theory of motivation is relevant for exploring motives of sharing economy participation.

Another theory of motivations that is pertinent to this research is Herzberg’s Dual Factor Theory (1968). The psychologist suggests two factors that drive human behavior: the hygiene factor, including status, interpersonal relationships, salary, working conditions or security and the motivation factor, such as achievement, growth or responsibility (Herzberg, 1968, p. 91-92). In fact, Herzberg’s theory is closely related to the self-determination theory considering that hygiene factors are comparable to extrinsic motivation whereas motivation factors are similar to intrinsic motivation. Thus, Herzberg’s theory further helps to evaluate whether members participating in sharing practices are rather intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, as well as to understand consumer motivation profoundly.

A more in-depth analysis and commonly used method to uncover consumer motivations is the means-end chain (MEC) analysis, which found global acceptance by several scholars (e.g., Wagner, 2007). The MEC supposes that consumer motivations are dependent on the consumer’s values and desires (Schaefers, 2013). Hence, this method considers a different perspective on consumer motivations, which is highly relevant to the research field of this study since the act of sharing, as well as the community thought of sharing economy participation, reflect the consumer’s values and desires. Within the area of sharing economy, this theory was already applied by Schaefers (2013), who found four motivational patterns related to the example of car sharing: (1) value seeking, (2) convenience, (3) lifestyle including a sense of belonging and community, and (4) sustainability.
2.2.2 Motivations to Participate in the Sharing Economy

The reasons as to why consumers join peer-to-peer platforms have been investigated in numerous studies. According to Botsman et al. (2010), four categories of consumer motivation were identified: economic, practical, social and idealistic drivers of motivation. The authors argue that consumers are incentivized to engage in the sharing economy because of expected economic benefits. Additionally, these online peer-to-peer platforms are more convenient compared to traditional services, which is another motivator for consumers to use them. The authors further emphasize, consumers are likely to participate because of social aspects: sharing economy platforms encourage social interactions, which in turn can create social ties. Lastly, idealistic factors of motivation are driving sharing economy participation, including for example the consumer’s intention to support more sustainable consumption.

Complementary studies on motivations to participate in the sharing economy have found additional factors of motivation. Hamari et al. (2015) suggest four drivers of motivation: enjoyment and sustainability, classified as intrinsic motivation, as well as economic benefits and reputation, categorized as extrinsic motivation. As exercise of the activity brings along fun and an opportunity to connect and interact with peers, one can argue that it could be identified as social motivation. In addition to social, idealistic and economic factors, the researchers consider the influence of peers to be an essential motivator. Furthermore, a study performed by Van de Glind (2013) suggests that curiosity towards peer-to-peer platforms can be another reason for consumers to engage in collaborative consumption.

Based on the self-determination theory developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), scholars have tried to categorize different drivers of motivations, that have been commonly identified in current research, as either intrinsic or extrinsic motivations (Hamari et al., 2015; Van de Glind, 2013). While Hamari et al. (2015) consider enjoyment or that is to say social motivation as intrinsic motivation, Van de Glind (2013) does not only count social but also environmental motivation and curiousness as intrinsic motivation. Similar to Hamari et al. (2015), Van de Glind (2013) argues that social motivation is driven by the consumer’s level of enjoyment resulting from the act of sharing with others, which is why it is classified as intrinsic motivation. Albeit, the author also suggests social motivation to be a part of extrinsic motivation, implying that users of the sharing economy hope for reciprocal treatment (Van de Glind, 2013). However as this primarily
concerns users offering and not consuming collaborative services, social motivation is considered to be intrinsic.

2.2.3 Social Motivations in the Sharing Economy

The ongoing change in the values of today’s society has made social motivation one of the main drivers of participation in collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). According to Hamari et al. (2015), collaborative usage is based on the social act of actually sharing and collaborating with others. Belk (2010) also emphasizes that the concept of sharing procreates social relations.

The act of sharing makes people believe they are doing a good deed, which evokes positive emotions (Hellwig, Morhart, Girardin, & Hauser, 2015). Accordingly, consumers participating in peer-to-peer economy practices are likely to look for social interactions. As a result of communal bonding, sharing economy participation is expected to increase the consumer’s level of happiness (Habibi et al., 2017). Moreover, positive social experiences encourage consumers to use additional collaborative consumption services (Ariely & Norton, 2009).

On the one hand, social motivations depend on the sharing practice. Schor (2016) does not question the consumer’s desire to develop social relations as a universal motivator; however, she challenges whether these platforms can fulfill the consumer’s expectations towards social benefits. When looking at current research contributions, evidence diverges, as some sharing platforms are more about the actual act of sharing than others. As stated by Habibi et al. (2017), practices tending to the sharing side involve a particular experience and are primarily used by consumers because of more significant social interactions. According to previous studies, experiential consumption has inherently more social character compared to material consumption, which in turn results in a higher affective value (Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

Frenken and Schor (2017) also discuss the social aspects of sharing economy participation. They argue that the development of online platforms has made sharing with strangers more desirable, resulting in online platforms having social character: starting from social interactions in the virtual world to face-to-face meetings to even new friendships. Taking the example of
accommodation sharing, users of the service have the opportunity to get to know their local hosts, who can introduce them to other locals (Tussyadiah, 2016).

Frenken and Schor (2017) additionally found that owners and users of collaborative services are expected to stem from different socio-demographic groups, which is why sharing economy participation is thought to encourage social mixing. Likewise, Böcker and Meelen (2017) assume that members participating in sharing practices differ according to population groups. Hence, they suggest that the consumer’s motivations to use collaborative services vary accordingly. Previous studies have shown an influence on social motivations of for example age. Cornwell et al. (2008) suggest that older people are more likely to join sharing economy practices compared to younger people, as the example of neighborhood sharing has shown. Considering the assumption that older people are more engaged in establishing neighborhood relations, the authors concluded a higher intention to participate in peer-to-peer practices with neighborhood character. As people’s interpersonal relationships are expected to decrease with increasing age, they are more likely to take part in associational networks to compensate for this and to develop new social contacts (Cornwell, Laumann, & Schumm, 2008).

Assuming different patterns of motivation across population categories, Böcker and Meelen (2017) also suggest that motives depend on cultural backgrounds. Research on motivational factors of sharing economy participation considering different cultural backgrounds is limited, as many of them focus on one culture only, primarily the American consumer culture (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). Regarding social motivation, it is assumed that cultures that are rather collectivist according to Hofstede (1980, 2001) are more likely to participate in the sharing economy because of social motivations (Böcker & Meelen, 2017).

2.3 The Role of Culture in Sharing Economy

2.3.1 Cultural Heritage and Sharing

The role of a consumer’s culture and its heritage is of crucial importance when it comes to sharing and thus, the sharing economy. However, defining the word “culture” and what exactly the meaning of culture is, has been discussed in literature several times, resulting in no clear definition. Therefore, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) analyzed 162 different definitions of
“culture”, emphasizing how difficult it is to define this term. In general, a culture can be defined as: “[...] the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts” (Zimmermann, 2017). This definition shows that culture is not only an individual’s (birth) heritage but additionally, it is part of the daily life of an individual or consumer. Moreover, culture is known to be of crucial importance in the way a consumer acts in his/ her daily life, as well as when it comes to his sharing decisions (Belk, 2013).

Regarding behavior, it can be assumed that culture impacts the way we share (Belk, 2007). In fact, sharing, possession, and ownership are taught by the individual’s culture. Furby (1978) argues that the Western culture teaches their children firstly what possession is, while the act of sharing is learned only at an older age stage. Contrary to this, Gould (1982) and Testart (1987) describe that Aborigines first learn about sharing and then about what possession means. This leads to the assumption that in different parts of the world, children learn how to share differently. Also, wealth has an impact on sharing among cultures. For example, it is a common tradition in parts of Africa to share wealth through food with relatives (Belk, 2013), which is slightly uncommon for Western cultures. Moreover, cultural behavior can always be influenced. As the definition shows, other - primarily social - impacts can shape culture. One example regarding this is traveling. Through traveling and exploring other cultures, a consumer is confronted with different cultures, while actively experiencing those cultures (Petronella, 2016).

2.3.2 Cultural Dimensions

It is needless to say that every culture is different. Previous research has examined the differences between cultures concerning materialism and how different cultures consume (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Kasser, 2016; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). A recent publication by Davidson et al. (2018) studied how distinguished the Indian and American sharing intention is. Moreover, several studies show that culture, trust, and behavioral intentions are related to another (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Cyr, 2008; Pavlou & Chai, 2002).

Additionally, the way that cultures differ from each other can be described in many ways. Triandis (2011) summarizes various ways of how cultures can be distinguished from each other in his research. The most important according to the author are the following: Simple versus complex cultures, including how a culture is defined regarding societies. Tight versus loose,
implicating how many rules a culture has and how these rules are being followed. Collectivistic-versus individualistic cultures, describing cultures where individuals are seen either as part of groups or as individualists. And lastly, vertical versus horizontal cultures, indicating cultures that put different emphases on hierarchies (vertical).

Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are another way of comprehending different cultural aspects that influence behavior (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede’s work accounts as one of the most important regarding the understanding of cultural difference, as well as is strongly empirically supported (Sondergaard, 1994). His dimensions include aspects of cultures that are measured in relation to other countries (Hofstede, 2011). Additionally, the fact that some dimensions are closely connected to the Gross National Product (GNP) is of vital importance while working with Hofstede’s dimensions (Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede’s six dimensions model (6D model) includes the following: Power Distance including the degree of how a culture perceives power, Uncertainty Avoidance describing the level of how a culture manages uncertain situations, Individualism versus Collectivism depicting how individuals are integrated into groups, Masculinity versus Femininity exploring the value of roles of men and women within a culture, Long Term versus Short Term Orientation showing whether a culture is future oriented, Indulgence versus Restraint which relates to the gratification versus control of basic human desires to enjoy life (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede first introduced these dimensions in 1980, the last two dimensions were added over the past years, due to the elaboration of the model by different researchers (Hofstede, 2011).

Albeit, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are limited when it comes to individuals of a particular culture. Hence, research collected evidence that Hofstede’s 6D model can be linked with the Costa and McCrae’s Big Five Personality Test (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004) or the so-called OCEAN model (1992). This model takes into account five overall factors of a personality. The five factors are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. By linking these factors to Hofstede’s 6D model, an individual's characteristics can be related to his origin culture.
2.4 Research Question

As evident from above, the social character of sharing economy platforms has been widely discussed in previous research, resulting in diverse opinions. While some argue that social interaction plays a vital role in sharing economy participation, others state that social motivations are less important (Hamari et al., 2015; Belk, 2010). Others again stress the need to distinguish between platforms, as they involve different degrees of social interaction (Habibi et al., 2017; Schor, 2016). Hence, consumer’s social motivations within the sharing economy are not only much discussed but also divergent, highlighting the importance of conducting further research concerning social motivations (Böcker & Meelen, 2017). Moreover, the assumption of cultural differences in consumers’ social motivations addressed by some scholars, as well as limited cross-cultural research within the domain of sharing economy, emphasize the relevance of culture in this regard (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Davidson et al., 2017). Taking into account what has been mentioned, social motivations related to culture have not been studied yet, which is why this research aims to explore the interplay between consumer’s social motivations to partake in the sharing economy and their national culture, leading to the subsequent research question:

*RQ: How does the consumer’s national culture influence the social drivers of sharing economy participation?*

Therefore, two different cultures will be compared: the German and the Brazilian culture. Furthermore, differences among cross-industry platforms are considered. Hence, the following sub-questions will be answered as part of the research question:

*SQ1: Are there industry-specific differences in a consumer’s social motivation to participate in the sharing economy?*

*SQ2: In what ways does the consumer’s social motivation to participate in the sharing economy differ according to the type of platform?*
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

Being aware of the research philosophy is a crucial part of every study. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2015) therefore integrated the research philosophy as the utmost outer layer of their so-called “research onion.” In general, the term research philosophy relates to developing a deeper understanding and knowledge in regards towards one particular topic (Saunders et al., 2016). Burrell and Morgan (1979) argue that in every step of the research process a number of assumptions will be made. Hence, Saunders et al. (2016) list three different types of conjectures, which include epistemological-, axiological- and ontological assumptions. The philosophical choice that was made for this research relates to ontological assumptions, as it refers to the nature of reality, which can occur either subjectively or objectively. As subjectivism is utilized to understand how individuals perceive and add values to social phenomena, this study focused on subjectivism. Additionally, this goes in line with the final choice of the research philosophy.

Saunders et al. (2016) distinguish between positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. Within this research, interpretivism was found to be the most suitable since it emphasizes the importance for the researchers to understand the roles of humans within a society. As this research aims to explore the motivations of consumers in participating in the sharing economy, an interpretivist approach guided the study. Additionally, the philosophy of interpretivism was found to be particularly suitable for topics relating to consumer behavior and marketing (Saunders et al., 2016). The reason for this is that interpretivism emphasizes the fact, that theories and concepts are only valuable where, and if, they endorse action (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). Additionally, it supports an approach, where more attention is created towards practical outcomes from the research question (Saunders et al., 2016). Besides, an interpretivist philosophy allows working with more than one research method, making it appropriate to collect data with more means. Interpretivism philosophy also recognizes that several ways can be applied to interpret the world’s views and that multiple realities are possible. This, in turn, goes in line with the previously mentioned argumentation, that every researcher should regard his work from different perspectives to create the most value from his or her research.
3.2 Research Approach

Based on the philosophical decision, the research approach can be determined. In general, there are two ways to conduct research: deductively or inductively (Saunders et al., 2016). According to Creswell (2002) what kind of approach is followed depends greatly on the focus of the research, as well as the nature of the research project.

Deductive research is characterized by theory guiding the data collection and analysis and is frequently used, if researchers are considering causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2016). Contrary to this, following the principle of induction, data is collected and analyzed to derive theoretical conclusions. Understanding the meanings individuals tie to events is considered to be one of the leading strengths of inductive research. Hence, working inductively is in line with the stated research purpose as it suggests to explore why something is happening rather than what is going on. Furthermore, it is characterized by a rather flexible structure, which allows looking at alternative explanations regarding the research problem, thus inductive research may entail deductive components (Saunders et al., 2016; Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

The complex nature of consumer motivations and culture, makes it hard to control two variables. For this reason, instead of testing whether or not a relationship, suggested by theory, exists (i.e. deductive approach), this research creates different perspectives on how consumers’ social motivations are influenced by culture after relevant data was collected and analyzed (i.e. inductive approach).

3.3 Research Design

The most commonly applied research designs are exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, depending on the purpose of the research (Saunders et al., 2016). For this thesis, an exploratory research design was used, since cultural differences concerning a consumer’s social motivations to participate in the sharing economy have not been explored yet, however, were investigated within the scope of this paper. Furthermore, exploratory research allows the researcher to be flexible throughout the research process (Saunders et al., 2016), which is supported by working inductively and according to the philosophy of interpretivism, allowing the researcher to look at various angles.
3.3.1 Research Strategy

The next step within the research design is to define a research strategy. According to Saunders et al. (2016), the chosen research strategy is guided by the research purpose and question, the current scientific knowledge, philosophical reflections, as well as the time and resources available. There is a variety of research strategies, which are not to be considered as being mutually exclusive, including for example case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography and action research (Saunders et al., 2016; Babin & Zikmund, 2016). This thesis was guided by two principle research strategies: grounded theory and phenomenology. In line with the inductive approach, grounded theory implies that the research was conducted by inputs given from respondents rather than theoretically appropriated knowledge, which does however not assume that existing theory was neglected (Babin & Zikmund, 2016).

Furthermore, phenomenology was considered as part of this strategy. The phenomenological approach to research is originating in philosophy and psychology, meaning the researcher “[...] focuses on how relationships between a person and the physical environment, objects, people, or situation shape a person’s behavior” (Babin & Zikmund, 2016, p. 115). Since this research is studying motivations, which are said to arise from both physiological (i.e. innate) and psychological (i.e. acquired, meaning learned in response to our culture or environment) needs (Rogers, 2016), this research orientation was taken into account.

3.3.2 Research Choices

Subsequently, the data collection and analysis techniques were determined. The gathered data can be either quantitative or qualitative (Saunders et al., 2016). While quantitative data focus on the collection of numerical data, a qualitative approach focuses on words (i.e. non-numerical data) rather than numbers. Based on the research philosophy, approach as well as strategy, qualitative data was collected to gain in-depth and multifaceted insights. Furthermore, according to Saunders et al., (2016), qualitative research methods, associated with a slightly small sample are distinctive of an inductive research approach. Additionally, one can either use a single technique (mono-method) or multiple methods to collect and analyze data. For this research, a single qualitative data collection technique was used. The data were then analyzed according to qualitative data analysis procedures, which is referred to as a ‘mono-method qualitative study’.
3.3.3 Time Horizon

Lastly, the time and resources available were taken into account. A research study can be either longitudinal, involving the investigation of developments and changes over time, or cross-sectional, meaning the study is focused on a specific phenomenon at a particular time (Saunders et al., 2016). As time constraints were being faced, this research was a cross-sectional study.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

For this research, a mono-method approach consisting of semi-structured focus groups was used to receive the needed data. Before the primary data was collected, two pre-studies were conducted that served as a basis for the focus groups.

3.4.1 Pre-studies

To collect primary data with the means of focus groups, two additional, internet-mediated, interviews were conducted to receive expert opinions on the topics of the sharing economy, as well as Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Both interviews were composed in a synchronous form, implying that all questions were sent to the interviewees at one time (Saunders et al., 2016). Both participants then filled in the answers and sent them back via email. Typically, interviews should be conducted to receive saturated information regarding a topic, hence more interviews are required (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). However, as both interviews were conducted with the aim of collecting expert opinions to set up the focus group question guide, two interviews were sufficient.

3.4.1.1 Interview with Russell Belk

The first interview featured sharing economy expert Russell Belk. Belk composed several articles about the sharing economy and is currently employed as the Marketing chair of Kraft Foods in Canada, as well as a research professor at York University in Toronto. Professor Belk agreed to answer questions via email, due to time differences and Belk’s schedule. In total, a set of ten questions were sent to the expert.

By sharing his opinion, Belk gave exciting insights into the sharing economy. In general, the most important outcome of the interview, which in turn guided the compound of the focus group
questions, include that social interaction and -relation are a side benefit of the sharing economy. The author explained that the primary motives why people participate in the sharing economy are guided by monetary motives, as well as convenience motives. However, Belk clearly emphasized that different collaborative consumption platforms can enhance social relationship building. Regarding the cultural heritage of participants, Belk accentuated that culture can have an impact. Especially the act of sharing, according to Belk, is inherited which implies that different cultures have different preconditions when it comes to “sharing” itself. Albeit, Belk recognizes that everything is dependent on the individual who is partaking: “[…] Even a massage can be impersonal and anonymous for someone who just wants the service”.

3.4.1.2 Interview with Lucas Alban

The second interview was conducted with Hofstede lecturer Lucas Alban. Alban is one of four South American accredited lecturers in Intercultural Management. Alban’s interview was also conducted via email, due to time constraints. The interview served as the basis for the focus group questions that were related to national culture and Hofstede’s six dimensions.

During the interview, Alban was asked whether Hofstede’s dimensions are still contemporary, as many researchers, including Belk, voiced issues regarding Hofstede’s dimensions being not as contemporary as they were when they were composed. Alban, therefore, assured that Hofstede’s dimensions were recently re-studied and proven to be contemporary. However, he reiterated that globalization is shaping and transforming cultures, especially regarding the younger generations, resulting in behavioral changes. Nonetheless, cultural heritage is still in the back of people’s minds, meaning “[…] that Germans still act as Germans and Brazilians still as Brazilians”.

Both interviewees unveiled interesting insights in their field of expertise. As Belk explicitly mentioned not to trust Hofstede’s dimensions, Alban gave reasonable arguments of why Hofstede can serve as the cultural guideline of this research. However, due to the individual character of each focus group participant, the Big Five Personality Test was necessary to establish the relationship between the individual’s national culture and his/her personality. Also, all focus groups were conducted with a set of questions guided by the topic of the sharing economy, as well as questions that explored the cultural influence of the participants in order
to detect the motives of sharing economy participation related to cultural heritage. Belk’s and Alban’s answers were crucial components while setting up the questions. For instance, Belk’s responses regarding personal relationship building guided the decision to ask focus group participant about different sharing economy platforms, including platforms with varying degrees of social interactions.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Focus Groups

Focus groups are a type of group interviews which are related towards a specific topic (Saunders et al., 2016). The aim of any focus group, as well as any group interview, is to facilitate conversational discussions between the participants to record these (Carson et al., 2001; Krueger & Casey, 2009). Focus group interviews can be differentiated in structured, semi-structured or unstructured. As each type generates a different kind of data, the researcher thoroughly has to determine which type of focus group interview will be used in the research. Semi-structured focus groups are favorable when it comes to an exploratory research or a research that features an exploratory element (Saunders et al., 2016): the semi-structured way of conducting them make it possible to derive links between different responses through for example, follow-up questions, which also enables the participants to probe answers and give the opportunity for other participants to adjoin their own views, thus a more induced discussion can take place (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). This also leads to the benefit, that not only participants will learn from each other and the discussion flow will be enriched, but additionally, a rich and detailed set of data can be collected by the researcher. Moreover, the opportunity to ask guiding questions is of particular interest for this research as motivations for participating in the sharing economy are being explored.

In general, it is suggested to conduct interviews in groups of 3 to 12 people until saturation has been accomplished and no new information is conducted from the focus groups (Saunders et al., 2016; Babin & Zikmund, 2016). Moreover, the benefit of researching with two researchers enables to have a higher validity when it comes to the collected data: As one researcher can lead the discussion, the other is free to take notes and manage the audio recording.

However, generating primary data always comes with certain risks. For example, collecting data through personal interviews, such as focus groups, can conclude in certain types of bias. For instance, some participants might not feel comfortable in expressing their true opinions, leading to a possible social-desirability bias, as the participant will try to agree with the
viewpoint of others (Babin & Zikmund, 2016). On account of this, the researcher, acting as the moderator, has to try to prevent these biases from happening. Furthermore, the moderator has to regard the discussion assiduously so that every interviewee contributes an equal share to the composed data. It is vital that within every focus group interview, the moderator is aware of his position, thus acts this way. Only then valuable outcome for the research is guaranteed (Babin & Zikmund, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016).

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Sampling

As this study is aimed at exploring two different cultures and their social motivation to participate in the sharing economy, the possibility to analyze the data from a census is relatively low. Hence, a convenience sample from both cultures able to participate in the focus groups in Jönköping, Sweden has been used to generate primary data. The selection of participants was based on a voluntary basis. For this, people were invited via Facebook to participate in the focus groups, stating that interviewees are required to come from certain countries.

Another essential step while sampling was to determine how many focus groups and how many participants for each are needed to be able to answer the research question. For this study, three focus groups for each country were held, resulting in a total of six focus groups, each group containing four participants, who are students of the University in Jönköping.

3.5.2 The Brazilian vs. German Sample

The chosen sample of this research consisted of consumers of the Brazilian and German culture. The choice to conduct this cross-cultural research with a focus on German and Brazilian consumers was based on different reasons: Firstly, due to the lack of research that has been conducted within the sharing economy regarding the two cultures. Research mainly discussed the US-American consumer concerning sharing economy, however, regarding Brazilian and German consumers, there is a clear gap, which is attempted to be filled with this research (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012).

Secondly, the decision of investigating the German and Brazilian culture was also based on the differences between the cultures. Since the purpose of this study is to explore consumers’ social
motivations, the aim was to compare two cultures that differ in their socio-cultural characteristics. According to Hofstede’s 6D model, these differences were recognized while comparing the Brazilian and German culture, especially regarding the scores of individualism and indulgence (see Figure 3). Moreover, as illustrated by Furby (1978), Western individuals including Germans learn the values of sharing at a later age, while in the Brazilian culture the act of sharing is natural. Thus, collectivist cultures (i.e. Brazil) are also more likely connect the intrinsic values of sharing to the use of sharing economy platforms (Böcker & Meelen, 2017). That is to say, social motivations of sharing economy participation are assumed to play a more significant role for Brazilian consumers.

Thirdly, the attractiveness and growth of the sharing economy in these countries was another reason why Germany and Brazil were selected. The sharing economy in Brazil is on the rise, being the leading country in South America (Be Brasil, 2017). Brazil’s consumers have changed immensely in the last decade. As until recently, the country’s middle class entailed more than half of the population (Donatelli, Hoefel, Resstom & Stul, 2016). However, the economy developed negatively, resulting in one of the most significant recessions the country has ever witnessed, forcing consumers to think about their assets and properties, as well as their buying behavior, indicating an excellent chance for the sharing economy (Donatelli et al., 2016). In comparison, Germany is Europe’s biggest consumer market, with more than 81 million inhabitants (Santander, 2018). In general, Germans enjoy a raised standard of living, as well as a high buying power. According to PwC (2018), Germany is among the most attractive countries for the sharing economy, with a market volume of 20 million euros, and rising. As the financial and economic crisis raised uncertainty, the German consumer realized that time and money is limited. Considering that Germans are also known for having high expectations, the consumers’ purchase decision is increasingly lifestyle-oriented, indicating a great potential for sharing economy participation (Breuer & Spillecke, 2010). Hence, not only Germany’s market size but also the consumers’ mindsets, arouse the interest of investigating the German consumer in relation to the sharing economy.

To receive a more transparent image of the Brazilian and German consumer and their behavior, Hofstede’s 6D model (Hofstede, 1980), helps to identify patterns within each society. Since for this research not all dimensions of Hofstede’s model are of equal importance; the following section will focus on the most important ones.
First of all, it is essential to understand that the Brazilian culture is a rather collectivistic than individualistic culture since the country scores relatively low on Individualism (38/100) (see Figure 3). This entails that Brazilians tend to be somewhat group-oriented, starting with their birth, as well as characterizes that helping each other is a critical factor of this society. Hence, the most important aspects for Brazilians are family, as well as enjoyment of life, rather than being focused on the work life. This is also reflected by the high score on power distance (69/100), which indicates the Brazilian society to believe in hierarchies, as well as inequality within the community. Therefore, status symbols are of particular importance amongst Brazilians. Furthermore, contrary to the German culture, Brazil scores relatively high (59/100) on Indulgence. This leads to the assumption that Brazilian’s rather live in the moment and enjoy life, instead of thinking about what might be in the future, resulting in high importance of leisure time in comparison to the professional life. This all goes in line while analyzing Brazil’s score on Masculinity (49/100), as the intermediate score reflects the values of caring about others, as well as the motivation to be the best (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

In comparison, the German society is rather individualistic, as the score of 67/100 indicates. This implies that Germans primarily care about themselves and their immediate family. Hence, instead of defining one’s self-image in terms of “We”, the German consumer strongly believes in the concept of self-actualization. Furthermore, as indicated by a relatively low score in power
distance (35/100), direct communication is highly appreciated, signifying that honesty is preferred over the avoidance of conflicts. Additionally, the culture can be described as restrained (40/100). Contrary to indulgent societies, German consumers tend to neglect their leisure time and to control their desires. Instead of focusing on the pleasures of life, they are likely to feel guilty as soon as they gratify their wants. Moreover, the German society is rather masculine, meaning people are success-oriented in terms of being the best. Moreover, performance plays a vital role. As the German school system is split into three different forms of higher education, children learn to value achievement from an early age, since better performance leads to a better degree. As can be related to the low level of indulgence, Germans rather “live to work.” To a great extent, self-esteem is therefore acquired from the fulfillment of tasks and the demonstration of status symbols (Hofstede Insights, 2018). What this all amounts to is that the German consumer has a tendency to be self-centered, restrained and rather focused on achievements, as opposed to cultures with a strong sense of group belonging and quality of life considered as a sign of success.

3.5.3 Participant Overview

The figures below display the participants of the six focus groups. The first letter of each participant refers to the country of origin, meaning that the capital letters B and G apply to Brazil and Germany. Before the discussion of each focus group started, every participant was asked to take a Big Five Personality Test (Costa & McCrae, 1992). As highlighted within the theoretical framework, research of Hofstede and McCrae (2004) found a relevant link between Hofstede’s 6-Dimension model and the Big Five tests to analyze an individual’s personality detached from his national culture. Thus, the figures further shows each individual’s characteristics in terms of Openness (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A) and Neuroticism (N).
Figure 4: German Participant Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>E</th>
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Duration (in minutes) 38'

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<td>56%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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Duration (in minutes) 70'

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Duration (in minutes) 53'

Figure 5: Brazilian Participant Overview

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Duration (in minutes) 41'

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<td>Ø</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
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<td>56.3%</td>
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Duration (in minutes) 50'

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B9</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<td>B10</td>
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<td>90%</td>
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<td>B11</td>
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<td>81%</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<td>B12</td>
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<td>75%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>Ø</td>
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<td>67.8%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duration (in minutes) 51'
In fact, the results retrieved from the tests show interesting characteristics about the interviewees that contradict Hofstede’s 6D model. Taking all results into account, the German participants, apart from one focus group, each scored higher in openness in comparison to the Brazilians. This is a result that was not expected since the German society is known to be rather reserved, with a high score on Individualism (see Figure 3). Although the Germans score higher on openness, Brazilians tend to be more engaged with others, which is shown in their average higher score in extraversion. This goes in line with Hofstede: Brazilians tend to be rather group-oriented, which is shown in their rather low score on Individualism. Regarding conscientiousness, where high scorers are characterized to be organized and determined, opposed to low-scorers that are impulsive (Truity, 2018), the results from both country participants on average were not that distinctive, however, as expected from Hofstede’s 6-D model, the Germans (apart from one exceptional participant who scored very low with 27%) scored a few percentage points higher, associating to both countries high score on uncertainty avoidance. Also surprising are the scores on agreeableness for both countries. As Hofstede’s insights characterizes the German culture as rather individualistic, whereas Brazil scores rather low on this dimension, the scores are rather similar throughout the participants. The last trait score of the personality test, neuroticism, a tendency to experience negative emotions (Truity, 2018), rather depicted low scores. However, the highest score (73% and a group average of 51%) was found within the last Brazilian focus group.

Comparing Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of the German and the Brazilian culture with the results of the Big Five Personality Test, and thus, with individuals of these cultures, it was noticed that average focus group participants deviated from the overall cultural image, as supported by Hofstede.

3.5.4 Conducting the Focus Groups

A discussion guide was set up to lead the focus group in a way that allows both discussion between the interviewees and control by the interviewer. As the national culture defined by Hofstede is limited concerning individuals of a certain culture, each participant was asked to fill in the Big Five Personality Test, which considers individual characteristics. Following this, some generic opening questions were asked to introduce the participants to the topic of the research (Babin & Zikmund, 2011). The purpose of this was to assess how familiar the interviewees are with the sharing economy. Therefore, the group did some brainstorming on
what kind of platforms they know and use, which was captured on a whiteboard. After the initial outline of the topic, the participants were asked to share their individual experience, including how often and why they use sharing economy platforms. This way the interview was moved from a general discussion to a more in-depth discussion by revealing the individual’s motivations, feelings, and opinions on the sharing economy (Babin & Zikmund, 2011). To guide the discussion towards social motivations to participate in the sharing economy, the participants were given different examples of sharing economy platforms. To compare the responses given from Brazilians and Germans, all focus groups were asked to discuss two pre-defined examples more in-depth. Additionally, since this study is not focused on one specific industry, other examples were addressed, which varied according to the inputs given from the focus groups.

The following examples were used: Airbnb, a platform where individuals (‘guests’) make use of living space rented by other individuals (‘hosts’) vs. Couchsurfing, a platform where users live in people’s homes for free (i.e., accommodation sharing) and BlaBlaCar vs. Uber (i.e. ridesharing). The selection of each example was based on the fact that the two platforms within the same industry differ according to their degree of social interaction. By asking the participants for differences between the peer-to-peer platforms, the discussion is intended to be directed towards the social aspect of sharing economy participation. Furthermore, to find out more about the interviewee’s social motivation, the respondents were asked which platform they would prefer and why. Eventually a final question, asking whether or not the participants consider social interaction as an important characteristic of sharing economy participation, allows completing the picture of each individual’s opinion (Babin & Zikmund, 2011). All focus groups finished up with the call for any additional comments. Throughout the focus group interview, follow-up questions were asked, which enabled the respondents to probe answers, leading to a more induced discussion (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

3.6 Data Analysis

After the data was collected, the final step of the research process includes the data analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). To analyze the collected data for this research, a thematic analysis was used. Thematic analyses are regarded as a ‘foundational method for qualitative analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This type of analysis fits this research since it is focused on considering themes and patterns of a data set. In general, it helps in firstly identifying key themes and patterns,
secondly in picturing thematic descriptions from the data set to probe theories related to these topics, and finally in drawing conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders et al., 2016). Relating to the inductive approach of this research, the themes will not be derived from theory, albeit from the focus groups and what is being said during these interviews.

To analyze all relevant patterns the following steps were undertaken. The first step included becoming familiar with all collected data and transcribing it (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, all transcripts needed to be coded. Coding is crucial to understand and interpret the data, as well as to make it easier for the researchers to find motives for participating in the sharing economy. It enables to identify themes and patterns and gives a better overview about the all mentioned topics and motives. To ascertain all relevant motivations for this research, the coding was done manually by reading and marking all transcripts. This, in turn, helped to collect all key words that fit one theme or motive, so that no vital sentence was dismissed. After the data was coded, relevant and reoccurring topics needed to be identified, as well as relationships were necessary to be recognized (Saunders et al., 2016). In the end conclusions could be drawn from the analysis (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researchers have to make sure that the way the research was designed is both methodologically viable and according to ethical standards. Hence, ethical principles were greatly respected throughout this research. During the process of data collection, ethical concerns can be related to data privacy of research participants or the way participants are treated, including embarrassment or discomfort (Saunders et al., 2016). Hence, the researchers have to ensure confidentiality of records, as well as anonymity of participants, since the way data is being collected, used and analyzed can cause the participant to suffer from anxiety or stress (Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, all individuals were informed beforehand about their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Moreover, during the data collection process, participants have the right to informed consent, associated with the right to withdraw from the study. Informed consent is given if the participant bases his free decision of whether or not to get involved in this study on the full information about his rights and how the personal data is being processed. Therefore, a consent form signed by the participants and the researchers is recommended (Saunders et al., 2016). Accordingly, the participants of this research project were given a written document, asking for agreements concerning participation, audio
recording and the use of anonymized quotes. Lastly, the researcher’s objectivity during data collection and analysis is vital in order to avoid data falsification (Saunders et al., 2016). The researchers therefore did respect the focus group participants’ individual opinions on the research topic.
4. Findings and Analysis

The following sections will provide a detailed overview of the most important findings of both focus groups (i.e., German and Brazilian). Consumer motivations of both countries are presented, starting with general motivations to participate in the sharing economy and then going into detail regarding social motivations. Subsequently, the results will be analyzed individually and compared.

For both cultures, four main motives were identified: convenience, financial, security and trust, as well as social motives. The themes were derived from key words mentioned during the focus group discussions, which can be seen in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Identified Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Security &amp; Trust</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Social Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>Non-ownership</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Cultural Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Fun</td>
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<td>Efficiency</td>
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<td>Social Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
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<td>Company</td>
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<td>Easy</td>
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<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<td>Fast</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Interaction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.1 German Focus Groups

4.1.1 Findings

4.1.1.1 Identified Motivations

Convenience

The most frequently mentioned motives are centered around “convenience”. For this, participants determined several reasons, how sharing economy is convenient and why. For example, the benefit of the platform Airbnb was identified to be having “[…] the whole apartment, instead of just a bed so you can cook there and everything […]” (Participant G4).
Additionally, new technology and apps were another convenience factor for several participants, as it was described that “[…] it’s more convenient with the app, you can just see where the drivers are and […] pay with your credit card” or “[…] it’s super convenient, when you just have it on the app and you don’t have to call anybody” (Participant G2 & G10 about Uber). Besides, the relation between sharing economy and saving time was established to be one important driver for utilizing the sharing economy over traditional platforms. For example, BlaBlaCar, which gets people faster from A to B than trains or busses, according to participant G2. One decisive factor was recognized to be non-ownership, as consumers “don’t have to take care at all” (Participant G1), hence no maintenance needs to be kept in mind or “[…] you just use the ones that are [available]” (Participant G2). Non-ownership also implies efficiency for the participants. As interviewee G1 mentioned, it is efficient to not own a bike, but instead have the luxury to resort to it, as in this case, no bike will “[…] stand at home in the winter.”

Furthermore, bigger platforms like Uber and Airbnb were acknowledged to “[…] come with a certain standard, so if you book something you know it’s going to be super clean and it’s going to be what they’ve promised” (Participant G1).

Financial

Other motives that were mentioned during the focus group interviews revolve around financial motivations. Since the sample of this study included exclusively students, monetary motives were seen to be particularly important. “[…] It’s cheap, cheaper than alternatives” (Participant G7).

In fact, every participant appreciated that the sharing economy offers cheaper alternatives to traditional platforms. As for some interviewees saving money might be a side benefit of making use of the platforms, for some participants it is the main motive. Furthermore, affordability was noticed to be a crucial part of the participation. For example, participant G1 mentioned, that “[…] if you cannot afford to buy your own car or bike” sharing economy enables you to still be able to make use of these means of transportation. Another reason for participation was to be able to go on vacation on a budget. Since sharing economy platforms offer various possibilities, participants mentioned to engage in the sharing economy while being on vacation. For example, one interviewee who traveled through Europe implicated that she utilized a mix of Airbnb and Couchsurfing to safe money “[…] it was great for me, because I was on a budget and it was spontaneous […]” (Participant G10). Especialy Couchsurfing was mentioned to be
attractive, because of the fact that users don’t have to pay “[…] I think that’s the only thing that speaks more for Couchsurfing, is that you don’t have to pay for it” (Participant G6).

**Security & Trust**

Mistrust in strangers, as well as the feeling of insecurity are major concerns of German interviewees while engaging in the sharing economy. Albeit, certain elements increase the decision to partake in those platforms. For instance, ratings: “You can read who would be driving with you or you can choose who you want to take, you don’t have to accept it” (Participant G3). Although, as mentioned before, monetary motives are crucial to the interviewees, ratings make the final decision: “I never stay with someone who doesn’t have enough ratings, so I always look if they have 20 plus ratings […]” (Participant G6). Moreover, several Germans indicated, that they would prefer bigger organizations, such as Uber and Airbnb, because Uber drivers and Airbnb hosts are officially registered (e.g. Participant G3), which in turn generates more security while using these platforms.

**Social**

Besides the above-mentioned motivations, focus group participants expressed social motivations for partaking in the sharing economy. One of the most frequently mentioned reasons within the German focus groups was the desire for cultural exchange. Several German participants invoked that they already partook, or are willing to partake, in peer-to-peer platforms in order to experience the culture of a country. Participant G8 of the second focus group mentioned that Airbnb accommodations mirror the culture, whereas for instance hotels look the same all over the world: “I feel Airbnb’s have more the charm of the people that live there and the culture”. The same argument was also mentioned in the third German focus group: “[…] you get more of a cultural experience if you stay in a cabin here in Sweden for example” (Participant G11). This was also noticed during the first focus group: “If I’m going to a country I’ve never been before and I want to really experience the country and want to know how the people are and what is the culture, and if I am staying in an Airbnb instead of a hotel, I [will] get closer to the culture” (Participant G3). Especially the platform of Couchsurfing was recognized to introduce culture through social exchange: “When you do Couchsurfing, you meet the locals” (Participant G1) or “If you want to meet the locals, then Couchsurfing is a nice option” (Participant G8).
Another frequently mentioned motive included the local knowledge exchange one receives through participation in collaborative consumption: “[…] and then [the host] showed me London by night and we walked to places I would have probably never found [by myself]” (Participant G6). Others mentioned that simple advices are a factor: “The people, they give you advice where to go” (Participant G1).

Moreover, social interaction was acknowledged to be meaningful. Participant G4 noted that social interaction contributes to a better atmosphere while consuming collaboratively. Continuing, participant G10 argued that Couchsurfing was a great experience to her, as “[she] met amazing people”. Engaging in the conversation, participant G4 even explained “I also offer it, because of the community, to take someone with me, to talk to them, to meet people”.

On hindsight, the German focus group members revealed several reasons for the participation in the sharing economy. Especially convenience motives, such as location, technology and time factors were of particular importance to every single participant. Furthermore, monetary factors, such as the price and non-ownership were stated to be of interest. Safety and trust, especially while dealing with strangers, are important factors in the decision-making process of the Germans. Conversely, social motivations, such as curiosity and especially the desire for cultural exchange were found to be internal factors affecting the partaking within the sharing economy.

4.1.1.2 Factors influencing Social Motivations

Considering social motivations for partaking in the sharing economy, participants of all three German focus groups mentioned factors that affect the degree of involvement within the peer-to-peer economy, as well as the choice of the platform. For instance, participants commented that the duration of the stay has an impact on whether they stay in a shared or private Airbnb: “If I would just go for a holiday, I think I would also just book the entire apartment, but if I stay longer... I think that if you share a flat that you get in touch with new people” (Participant G8).

Especially the degree of social interaction is mentioned to be highly participant dependent: “[...] it depends on the host, but if they actively invite you, you have to interact” (Participant G5). As briefly mentioned before, particularly BlaBlaCar accounts for a platform where social interaction is wanted, but highly indentured of the people that are in the vehicle. Moreover, all the German interviewees mentioned that the level of social interaction and whether or not the contact that was made through sharing economy platforms is durable is also individually
determinant: “It depends on the person. If it’s on the same level” (Participant G2). Additionally, several Germans added that the level of social interaction is purpose subordinated. Many participants therefore referred to the purpose being an important driver while choosing a sharing economy platform and which they choose for their holidays.

In general, the factors that influence the German social motivation were found to be highly individual dependent. As the German focus groups featured different characters, including different levels of openness, for some participants direct contact with strangers was an impediment, whereas others saw it as a driver to actively and socially partake in the sharing economy.

4.1.2 Analysis

Analyzing the collected data from the German focus groups, motivational patterns can be identified. As various researchers discovered in their studies, one main motive of partaking in collaborative consumption is the economic benefit (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012). As a matter of fact, every German participant mentioned that the price advantages of sharing economy platforms are important drivers to participate. This is contrary to the results of Hamari et al.’s (2015) study, which noted that the strongest driver of the sharing economy is enjoyment of the activity, linked to social interaction.

- “It’s definitely price and convenience over social interaction [...]” (Participant G6).

However, it can be identified that this is platform dependent. Hence, interviewees stated that while using BlaBlaCar social interaction is the key benefit, whereas sharing gas costs can be remarked as a side benefit, which is confirmed by Habibi et al.’s (2017) sharing continuum.

- “I put my drive on BlaBlaCar, because I wanted to have people that talk to me on the way” (Participant G2).

Followed by the motive of convenience, several participants mentioned that technology does not only make it easier to interact with other sharing economy participants, while partaking in the sharing economy, but also makes it more comfortable and easy to make use of the peer-to-peer platforms. This goes in line with previous research (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Puschmann & Alt, 2016), which argued that technology and especially Apps are one of the most crucial factors for the rise of the sharing economy.

- “It’s easy to order [an Uber], because you don’t
need the number of the local taxi company or something like this, you can just use your App” (Participant G1).

In addition, the advantage and preference of having an own space, rather than a shared hostel room or a couch through Couchsurfing was frequently brought up. In fact, every German participant noted that the option to have one’s own private space is one of the main drivers to participate in the sharing economy, rather than traditional platforms such as hotels or hostels. This motivation, however, is especially distinct while travelling with friends or family. - “I go for Airbnb, if I want to have my own personal space, because I travel with more people […]” (Participant G10).

One aspect that can be noticed under particular interest, is the shift towards non-ownership. Although research (i.e. Belk, 2007) stated, that this trend can be recognized, a few Germans argued against it. - “If I would have the choice between my own car and any other means of transportation, I would always take my own car” (Participant G9).

Albeit, several participants also spoke in favor of non-ownership. Hence, this goes with the motivation of having an own space by renting apartments through Airbnb: Although the apartment does not really belong to the consumer, the feeling of renting it privately gives an ownership feeling, which in turn makes the German participants more comfortable.

This is also highlighted by the impediments of trust and security: As several participants affirmed they often find trust and security as an obstacle when it comes to participation in the sharing economy. - “I would never consider Couchsurfing. [...] If I want to stay at someone’s place whom I don’t know, especially when I’m alone, I would not consider it.” (Participant G7).

Furthermore, participants stated they feel more secure when using Uber or Airbnb, as they know that a bigger organization is behind it. - “It’s more official, secure” (Participant G8). Albeit, several participants revealed that ratings are a way to gain trust and receive a feeling of security when dealing with other platforms than Uber and Airbnb, especially in regards to platforms with more social interaction. - “[...] You always have to look at the ratings and be sure that it’s someone reliable” (Participant G6).

Besides, participants confirmed that the motives to participate in platforms with a high degree of social interaction is led by intrinsic motivations as was researched by Ryan and Deci (2000)
and various other researchers (Hamari et al., 2015; Habibi et al., 2017). Particularly curiosity in new cultures is one main motive, why Germans partake in sharing economy platforms with a high degree of social interaction. - “[...] [the hosts] show you around, you cook together, then you get like the perfect feeling of the culture within” (Participant G10).

Thus, sharing economy platforms have opened new ways to cultural experience. However, this is highly person dependent. Throughout the interviews, differences between the German participants occurred. As stated by the MEC theory, consumers motivations are dependent on the consumer’s individual values and desires (Schaefers, 2013).

Essentially the motivations of the German participants in partaking within the sharing economy are diverse. Although certain motives, like convenience and price were noted by every interviewee, the desire for social interaction or for example curiosity in other cultures are highly people dependent. One reason for this was indicated by the missing trust in sharing economy providers, such as Airbnb and Couchsurfing hosts. Furthermore, monetary motives are also platform dependent. As numerous Germans responded, certain platforms offer the advantage of gaining money as a side benefit, whereas the actual goal is intended to be social interaction. All German focus groups revealed that the motives and intentions while using the sharing economy are value and desire dependent.
4.2 Brazilian Focus Groups

4.2.1 Findings

4.2.1.1 Identified Motivations

Convenience

Within the Brazilian focus groups, convenience was identified to be one of the main decision-making criteria of participating in the sharing economy. According to the question of what factors are most relevant while using these platforms, convenience was explicitly mentioned by various participants, for instance “convenience mostly” (Participant B9) or “I feel for most of them it’s the price and convenience […]” (Participant B10).

Furthermore, throughout the focus groups, the participants repeatedly mentioned several factors motivating them to choose sharing economy platforms over traditional alternatives, that can be referred to as being “convenient”, including for example availability and flexibility. Based on the example of Airbnb the participants argued: “[...] you can have a variety of options [...]” (Participant B3) or “[...] it’s flexible, and I have more options I would say” (Participant B11). Moreover, the participants use sharing economy platforms because they are practical and easy to use, as the following responses show: “[I used] Uber and Airbnb for me because it was practical at that moment [...]” (Participant B9) or “They [Uber driver] pick you up from your spot [...] and you don’t have to worry about having cash with you” (Participant B1). The focus groups further revealed, sharing economy options are used because the service is fast and efficient, which has been evident especially in relation to the ride sharing platform Uber. - “Also for me, it’s like fast, so you contact Uber, and in five minutes they are there” (Participant B2). Additionally, consumers partake in the sharing economy because it is considered as being more comfortable than traditional service providers. The participants argued: “[With Airbnb] you get more than just a room. You get your own kitchen and stuff” (Participant B5) or “They [Uber drivers] offer food, and water, and they say like you can choose the music” (Participant B2).

Financial

Besides convenience, financial aspects were found to play a vital role for Brazilians, as the question why the participants use certain peer-to-peer platforms has been invariably answered with “it’s cheaper” (e.g. participants B1 & B11) While sharing personal experiences, it was recognized that they most commonly looked at the economic benefit of the sharing economy.
For example, participant B10 used the sharing economy platform Worldpackers so she “[…] could work there and didn’t have to spend much […]”. Participant B11 also went for the price while evaluating different accommodation options for a trip to Stockholm. Furthermore, the fact that consumers do not need to own assets is one reason that interrelates with the financial motive of sharing economy participation. For instance, participant B10 emphasized “I would say mostly it’s about price […] and the fact that I don’t need to own things, but I can still have them”. Since the sharing economy enables consumers to use assets, which might cost a fortune if they would have to own them, another motivational aspect that was mentioned is status, as the statement of B11 shows: “I think a lot goes for status. We planned to go to Montenegro and there was this house which was just rocks and it was super fancy and super cheap, so my friends they said ‘imagine the pictures you can take there’. I mean yeah, that’s part of it, taking cool pictures in front of the house and even if it’s not your house […]”.

Security & Trust

Security and trust have a great influence on the Brazilian consumer’s motivations to participate in the sharing economy. Since these peer-to-peer platforms are about “[…] building trust with someone that you never saw before […]” (Participant B2), several participants argued that they need to feel safe in order to use sharing economy platforms: “[…] I’m not sure if I’d go to BlaBlaCar for that, like I’d be concerned with my safety […]” (Participant B12) or “I would prefer Airbnb [over Couchsurfing]. I’m not that secure alone in other people’s houses” (Participant B2).

Social

Another aspect for Brazilians to participate in the peer-to-peer economy is experience, both socially and culturally. Especially in the travel industry, the participants are seeking contact to locals and their culture. For instance, participant B11 used Worldpackers when he was abroad because “[…] it was more about the experience of living with the people here [Chile]” as well as participant B2 was arguing “[…] I’m going to use Worldpackers this summer [because] I’m looking more for people […] so I know how they act, how is their culture […]” Similarly, it was found that Couchsurfing and Airbnb are used because of the cultural, but in the case of Couchsurfing also social experience linked to the platform, as has been expressed by several participants: “[…] sometimes price is less important when it’s an experience, like when I stayed on the boat [offered by Airbnb]” (Participant B10) or “[…] Couchsurfing, I think it’s more
about the experience of meeting other people [...] you’re expecting to talk to them, to know them, to understand their culture and everything [...]” (Participant B3).

Considering the characteristics of Couchsurfing, some participants even regard using the platform as an “adventure”. For example, according to the question whether the participants would consider using Couchsurfing, participant B8 responded: “If I’m feeling adventurous, maybe”. While people would use Couchsurfing to meet people, social interaction while using Airbnb was considered less important in that sense. For instance, participant B1 argued “In my experience, it’s only talking through the [Airbnb] app, I would say. [...] It’s like ‘Hi, what do you recommend during this neighborhood’ and they answer formally, like ‘best regards’ or ‘have a lovely day’. That’s what it is.” However, on the other hand it was mentioned that social interaction is still of importance. According to participant B4, social interaction “[...] does not necessarily mean by words, by making a friend or something like that, but it’s a relation of trust [...] so it’s important to have it [social interaction] still [...]”.

Besides accommodation sharing, the participants also showed social motivations to participate in the sharing economy related to other industries, as the answers related to ride sharing platforms showed: “[...] if you share your car, you might want to make a friend. It can be boring to drive alone, I guess” (Participant B5) or “[...] If I’m in a new city, I always start a conversation [with the Uber driver] because I want to know more about the city, so it’s nice to meet people from that city” (Participant B7).

Overall, the Brazilian participants primarily use sharing economy platforms because they provide a more convenient and cheaper alternative to traditional solutions. Besides the financial benefit, several factors including availability, flexibility, practicability, ease of use, efficiency and comfort all contribute to the sharing economy platforms being more convenient than traditional alternatives and are therefore preferred by the Brazilian participants. With regards to social motivations, the participants of the Brazilian focus groups seek for the experience involved with using peer-to-peer platforms by meeting and interacting with new people. Not to be neglected are trust and security concerns expressed by members of the Brazilian focus groups, that influence their decision of whether or not to use peer-to-peer economy platforms.
4.2.1.2 Factors influencing Social Motivations

As contradictory answers have shown, the individuals within the focus groups feel different about social interaction as part of sharing economy platforms. For example, while participant B5 argues “[...] it’s super awkward to just sit next to someone [in a BlaBlaCar], without talking”, participant B6 thinks “[...] when you start talking to the person next to you then it gets awkward, like you need to talk for hours, but you actually don’t want to, then social interaction is just forced and awkward”. However, this was only an exception as the majority Brazilian participants argue that they “[...] feel awkward with silence” (e.g. Participant B2).

Furthermore, whether or not participants are actually seeking for social interaction is related to their mood. For instance, participant B11 argues that his mood would make a difference on the decision whether or not to use BlaBlaCar: “[...] on trips, I’m really like a music guy and want to listen to music ... so I actually would think that this would make a difference on my decision making ... it would depend on my mood [...]”. Similarly, participant B9 believes that social interaction can even get exhausting if one is not in the same mood as the people sharing one car.

As the platforms within the sharing economy differ according to their business models, motivations also varied. Therefore, participants described Airbnb as rather formal, “[...] more like a company to people [...]” (Participant B3), whereas Couchsurfing was perceived as informal, where “[...] you’re not a customer, you’re more like a guest” (Participant B2). The same applies to ride sharing. When the examples of Uber and BlaBlaCar were discussed by the participants of the focus groups, differences between the platforms were recognized: “In Uber, you’re like the customer, and BlaBlaCar [...] a favor is being done to you [...]” (Participant B7). According to participant B5, the act of sharing is not necessarily existent with peer-to-peer platforms that are more structured as a business, as for example Uber: “I don’t feel like this is as much sharing. You’re getting paid for doing a service”. Based on that, the participants argue that it is easier and more likely to build social relationships if the platform is not based on a “[...] business relationship [and] you haven’t paid to stay there [...]” (Participant B5).

Participant B9 further stressed that it is easier to connect with someone who does not have a commercial motive. – “If I had to choose between one room in an Airbnb and Couchsurfing, I would go for Couchsurfing, because the thing is just how the relationship is build. Here it’s more, like I told you, you’re the guest and they want you to be here, they’re probably going to be nicer, because you’re not earning anything here [Couchsurfing]” Moreover, since hosts at
Couchsurfing do not ask for money in exchange, several interviewees stated that they would feel like guests, which is why they would want to give them something back.

Further, sharing economy participation is situation-dependent. Regarding the travel industry, it has been frequently addressed that the decision concerning what platforms to use depends on whether the individuals travel alone or with friends, how long they are travelling and where they are travelling. Therefore, participant B5 states “I’d never go with my girlfriend to get a room with some guy for a stay. I would prefer my own place” or participant B3 mentioned “[...] if it’s quick, like one night, it’s okay to be in a room with other people or in the same apartment, but if you’re staying for long, maybe it’s going to be inconvenient”. Hence, the purpose is correlated to social motivations.

While looking at the Brazilians’ social motivations more in-depth, three influencing factors were identified: the attitude towards social interaction, the type of sharing platform, as well as individual intentions. In general, the majority of Brazilians showed a positive attitude towards social interaction, which influences social motivations favorably. Furthermore, as platforms involve more sharing-related characteristics, the participants revealed higher social motivations to use them. Lastly, sharing economy participation for Brazilians is highly situation-dependent, and thus, also determined by each individual.

4.2.2 Analysis

Analyzing the identified motivations and in particular the role of social motivations for Brazilians, it can be said that financial as well as convenience factors are most important to the participants and thus, more relevant than social motives. Contrary to what Hamari et al. (2015) argued, sharing economy as an opportunity to enjoyment, as well as to connect and socially interact has not been identified as the main motive of participation. - “I feel for most of them, it’s price and convenience, except for specific situations [...] then sometimes price is less important when it’s an experience” (Participant B10).

Albeit, Brazilians are still looking for a social experience when using sharing economy platforms, as already discussed by various scholars in recent research (Böcker & Meelen, 2017; Frenken & Schor, 2017). However, it has been found that the participants’ social motivations are highly dependent on the type of sharing platform. As already addressed by Schor (2016) and Habibi et al. (2017), the need to distinguish between the platforms is essential, as some
sharing platforms clearly deviate from the concept of sharing, which has been confirmed in this study. Based on that, a relationship between the degree of sharing of the platforms and the participants’ social motivations was recognized. According to the interviewees, more informal platforms that involve less or even no monetary transactions, such as Couchsurfing or BlaBlaCar, are expected to have a greater focus on the social benefits of the sharing economy. Contrary to that, more official platforms, such as Airbnb or Uber rather focus on making a profit. Hence, the motivations explored are influenced by what Belk (2010) labelled as ‘pseudo-sharing’. Thus, participant B8 explained: “[...] I feel like Couchsurfing and BlaBlaCar is much more about sharing, like they take this sharing aspect much more seriously”, while participant B5 described Uber as: “I don’t feel like this is as much sharing. You’re getting paid for doing a service”.

Considering the organizational framework established by Acquier et al. (2017), it could therefore be argued that community-based economies characterized by non-monetized or non-contractual forms of interaction, are more likely to stimulate consumers’ social motivations in terms of sharing economy participation. Consequently, the participants showed higher social motivations with platforms, that actually involve more sharing. For instance, they would use Airbnb because it is cheaper and more convenient, but they would use Couchsurfing because it is “[...] about the experience of meeting other people [...]” (Participant B3).

As part of the experience, Brazilians are commonly looking for social interaction while using peer-to-peer platforms, opposed to Tussyadiah (2016), who found that some users of accommodation sharing avoid places that imply social interaction. For most of the participants of the focus groups, silence is not common and thus, uncomfortable. Therefore, sharing economy platforms provide an opportunity for them to connect and interact with peers, which they consider as a good experience. This goes in line with Ariely and Norton (2009), who found that positive social experiences encourage consumers to use the service again. - “[...] honestly, I get really attached [...] most of the time I do [interact] and actually, it gives me a good thing about the app. Sometimes I’m like, yeah, I remember the driver from yesterday and I talk about it with my boss and yeah, it feels like I want to do it again, it’s part of the experience” (Participant B11).

Furthermore, it can be said that the more experience the platform involves, the greater the consumer’s expectations towards social benefits. This can be related to what Nicolao et al. (2009) found, videlicet that experiential consumption has inherently more social character than
material consumption. The focus groups showed: platforms that provide a more intimate relationship, such as Couchsurfing, are considered as providing a greater experience than more official platforms. Some even call doing Couchsurfing an “adventure” (e.g. Participant B5). Hence, social motivations are higher if the participants want to gain positive social experiences from using sharing economy platforms.

Even though the participants revealed social motivations concerning more sharing-related platforms, they are still reserved in using these platforms due to security concerns. As evident from the findings, the Brazilian participants stressed that safety and trust are critical factors influencing whether or not to use sharing economy platforms. While they expressed higher social motivations in terms of using rather sharing-related platforms, they also revealed greater security issues with those platforms. For instance, even though Participant B2 emphasized that she is “[…] looking more for people […]”, she would still not use Couchsurfing because she does not feel safe alone in other people’s houses. Hence, the more informal the platform and the more it is about the actual act of sharing, the higher the participants’ social motivations, albeit the higher security concerns. While Frenken and Schor (2017) found that the development of online platforms has made sharing with strangers more desirable, this study actually shows that the Brazilian participants are highly concerned about sharing with strangers, which impedes their social motivations to participate in the sharing economy. - “In Couchsurfing, I think a lot of people wouldn’t use it because of safety issues” (Participant B4). Yet, if Brazilians shared a room with a stranger, they would highly appreciate the act of sharing, as they feel the need for compensation. According to Hofstede’s (1980) dimension of Masculinity (49/100), Brazilians are known for caring about others, which is reflected in that regard.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the majority of Brazilian participants consider silence as awkward, instead of wanting to know more about a person, some focus group members also feel “forced” to interact just to avoid uncomfortable silence. In that case, social motivations are rather mitigated and the experience involved more likely to be negative. - “It’s a closed space and then it’s just two people, you know. I feel kind of pressured. I need to talk a little” (Participant B11).

Overall it can be said, that Brazilians’ social motivations to participate in the sharing economy highly depend on the type of platform. The more sharing and the “less business” is involved, the higher the consumer’s social motivations. However, as security plays a vital role in that sense, Brazilian consumers are also likely to relinquish the social benefits of the sharing
Therefore, the participants are primarily motivated to participate in peer-to-peer platforms, as they provide cheaper and more convenient alternatives to traditional options. Albeit, social interaction and the experience linked to that are important aspects for Brazilian, which make them feel attached to the concept of the sharing economy.

4.3 Cultural Similarities and Differences in Motivations

While analyzing the collected data from the focus groups, it became apparent that Brazilians and Germans share several values and motives in terms of sharing economy participation. Essentially, four main motives have been identified for both cultures: financial, convenience, security, and social motivational factors, as already encountered by other scholars (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Hamari et al., 2015). Schäfers (2017) found four motivational patterns related to car sharing, with three of them being reproduced within the scope of this research: (1) value seeking, which implies saving money, (2) convenience, including ease of use, flexibility, reduced responsibility and comfort, and (3) lifestyle, involving the community-aspect, as well as a desire to interact. This research additionally revealed the importance of security and trust with regards to sharing economy participation. As encountered by Botsman et al. (2010), idealistic factors, such as sustainability, were not discovered within the scope of this research.

The German, as well as the Brazilian participants uttered that the motivations depend upon the type of sharing practice: the less structured and the more sharing is involved within the platform, the higher the consumer’s social motivations and vice versa. Concurrently, with less business-oriented platforms, security concerns are raised, since participants of both cultures voiced mistrust in strangers and a feeling of insecurity. On the other hand, financial and convenience drivers are high throughout sharing economy participation, irrespective of the kind of sharing practice.

Though, minor differences concerning these motivational factors could be established. One aspect that Germans did not mention as specifically was status that occurs while using the sharing economy, as it leaves opportunity to make use of assets that one might not be able to afford (i.e., financial motive). One German participant mentioned that platforms can enhance affordability “[…] if you cannot afford to buy your own car or your own bike […]” (Participant G2). However, Brazilians took this thought one step further, as they particularly mentioned that it is about status: “[…] It was a Volvo, so one of the reasons is status. […] If you’re in a Volvo you feel like… you know […]” (Participant B11). This can be reflected in the high score.
(69/100) on power distance (Hofstede, 1980), implying the importance of status symbols for Brazilians.

Furthermore, non-ownership was perceived differently from both cultural groups. While the Germans considered the fact that they do not need to own assets as convenient, the Brazilians related this as characteristic to the financial benefit that comes with it. Yet, the German participants remarked affordability as an indicator as to why sharing economy participation provides a financial benefit, which can be linked to the fact that assets do not have to be owned. Concerning security and trust, the German focus groups noted the relevance of ratings in sharing economy participation, as opposed to the Brazilian focus groups, who did not mention it at all. Besides, the Brazilian participants vented higher doubts concerning security aspects of sharing practices, implying that safety plays a more significant role for them.

4.4 Interplay between Culture and Social Motivations

In terms of the participants’ culture and their social motivations to partake in sharing economy, only minor differences could be recognized. Hence, it cannot be argued that one culture expressed higher social motivations than the other. Böcker and Meelen (2017), suggesting that collectivist countries (i.e. Brazil) show higher social motivations than individualistic cultures (i.e. Germany) can therefore not be applied to this study. Still, although the focus group participants mainly did not mirror the “typical” German or Brazilian culture, as could be derived from the Big Five Personality Tests, the analysis of the focus groups ascertained some differences between the representatives of the two cultures and their social motivations.

As the Big Five Tests characterized, the German participants scored, on average, higher regarding openness. However, while conducting the interviews, the Brazilian participants indicated a higher level of social interaction and openness to strangers. Several interviewees stated that “[...] it would be awkward to not talk” (Participant B8) and even if they are not in the mood to talk, they feel the urge to. Although, other Brazilians stated they “talk a lot to people” (Participant B3), because of the pure enjoyment of having conversations, hence social interaction. This can be related to the Brazilian’s higher score in terms of extraversion. Contrary to this, Germans, especially regarding the question whether or not they interact with their Uber drivers, stated “no”, because “it always feels awkward to talk” (Participant G2). Hence, in this
case Hofstede’s dimensions are more applicable than the Big Five Test, as Germans are rather restrained when it comes to starting a conversation.

Both countries high score (DE: 65, BR: 76) on uncertainty avoidance reason why Couchsurfing, apart from security reasons, is not that popular: As Couchsurfing is a rather uncertain and spontaneous platform, participants prefer to go for planned and organized platforms, such as Airbnb or traditional accommodations as hotels. - “Couchsurfing is a bit of a gamble... It could be that they cancel last minute and you [are] without any accommodation [...]” (Participant G6).

Furthermore, safety concerns became apparent. During the sessions with Brazilians, every focus group voiced doubts concerning security regarding sharing economy platforms that involve a higher degree of social interaction, as Couchsurfing and BlaBlaCar. One participant mentioned, that he would feel a lot safer, if BlaBlaCar had a tracking system (Participant B7). Another participant voiced, that she would never use BlaBlaCar, because she “would be concerned with [her] safety and the situation” (Participant B12). Similarly, Germans also mentioned safety as impediments to sharing economy participation, however on a different level. Only one single participant vented concerns regarding BlaBlaCar, no one else. Hence, security does not seem to impede Germans as much as Brazilians. Contrary to BlaBlaCar, Couchsurfing is much more associated with concerns by Germans, consequently correlated to impediments. As for some Brazilians, Couchsurfing is connected to the act of sharing and does not seem to come with the same level of concerns as the aforementioned ridesharing platform. Further, Brazilians mentioned one other matter in relation to Couchsurfing: the need to give something back to the host and to follow the house rules. This is one factor why many Brazilians would rather go for Airbnb instead of Couchsurfing, as they would be free to do what they want to. - “I have to respect more what the other person wants” (Participant B7).

Cultural exchange can be associated amongst the greatest social motivations for German consumers, as they asserted that beside price and location this is a reason for them to partake in sharing economy. Opposing to this, Brazilians did not mention it particularly in relation to the discussed example platforms Airbnb or Couchsurfing, but more in relation to the platform Worldpackers.
As can be derived from these outcomes, Germans and Brazilians share some social motivations regarding the participation in the sharing economy. However, values are distributed differently across those two cultures leading to impediments, as for example divergent viewpoints regarding the discussed platforms. Differences can specifically be noticed regarding active social interaction. The German focus group participants for example stated they only interact with Uber drivers while being intoxicated and that otherwise it usually feels awkward to interact with them (i.e. Participant G3). Contrary to this, Brazilians declared that it feels awkward to not interact with them and actually see it as an opportunity to receive local knowledge. In general, Brazilians voiced that social interaction is a must for them, even if they are not in the mood to talk in order to avoid awkwardness. On the other hand, Germans uttered that interaction has to come naturally and they rather relinquish conversations instead of forcing them. Consequently, Germans are more likely to actively look for social interaction within sharing platforms, if they indeed want to, compared to Brazilians who partly just consider it as a natural side benefit.

Figure 7: Interplay between Culture and Social Motivations
Overall, it can be said that the cultural background can have an impact on the degree of social motivation; however various other factors exist that shape the consumer’s motivation to partake in the sharing economy because of social drivers, irrespective of the national culture. As for this research, the main cultural difference influencing social motivations was found to be the attitude towards social interaction. As can be seen from Figure 7, Germans tend to socially interact only if it is meaningful to them, while Brazilians commonly talk to people in order to avoid silence. Principally, German and Brazilian focus group participants stated that social motivations are highly situation and individual dependent. Many interviewees from both countries for instance noted, that social interaction is a two-way stream, meaning that it is also conditional from the counterpart, as for example the host. Other factors, like safety are regarded differently across the two countries; however, still existent in both. Especially, the desire for cultural experience was applicable in German focus groups, albeit Brazilians mentioned it to be one factor. Lastly, German, as well as Brazilian focus group participants stressed that social relationships are more likely to emerge with platforms that are not based on a business relationship and thus, involve actual sharing, such as Couchsurfing or BlaBlaCar.
5. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the interplay between consumer’s social motivations to partake in the sharing economy and their national culture. Therefore, the following research question was answered:

*How does a consumer’s national culture influence the social drivers of sharing economy participation?*

This study has contributed with relevant knowledge concerning consumer’s social motivations to participate in the sharing economy from two cultural perspectives, the German and the Brazilian. As found within the scope of this research, Germans, as well as Brazilians primarily established convenience and financial motives for sharing economy participation. Nevertheless, social motivations could be ascertained, however these are highly dependent on different factors. Besides common motivators, motivational patterns concerning social drivers of sharing economy participation are rather similar in those two different countries. Nevertheless, the cultural origin impacts social motivations in various ways.

To begin with, the attitude towards social interaction differed among the cultures examined, indicating different levels of social motivations. While the Brazilian consumers are actively looking for social interaction to avoid awkward silence, the German consumers are rather reserved and only interact if it is meaningful to them. Consequently, Brazilian participants revealed higher motivations towards social interaction as part of sharing practices. On the other hand, German users uttered increased social motivations as far as cultural exchange was concerned, which is attributable to their communication behavior (i.e. social interaction only active, if meaningful). Furthermore, social motivations of both cultures are affected by the participants’ mistrust in strangers, as well as security concerns, although Brazilians voiced more significant reservations.

As the findings show, social motivations are influenced by the participants’ cultural identity to some extent; however, essentially, the motivational patterns found within this study are highly dependent on individual values and desires.

Moreover, since this thesis did not focus on one specific industry and considered different forms of sharing platforms, the following sub-questions were answered:
SQ1: Are there industry-specific differences in consumers’ social motivations to participate in the sharing economy?

Since two industries of the sharing economy, accommodation sharing and ride sharing, were discussed in-depth, only small discrepancies concerning sharing industries were found. Regarding ride sharing, social motivations were revealed by both cultural groups, especially concerning BlaBlaCar; however, not as high as within accommodation sharing, since sharing a room was perceived as being more intimate than sharing a ride. Moreover, in accommodation sharing, consumers of both countries expressed higher social motivations, as they expect greater cultural experience by connecting and interacting with locals.

SQ2: In what ways do the consumers’ social motivations to participate in the sharing economy differ according to the type of platform?

The findings of this thesis showed, that both cultural groups expressed higher social motivations with platforms, which involve a higher degree of sharing, as Couchsurfing or BlaBlaCar. Consumers of both countries stressed that social relationships are easier to establish with these types of platforms, since providers (e.g. Couchsurfing host or BlaBlaCar driver) are not primarily incentivized by financial benefits. Thus, the less commercial the platform, the more likely consumers are to participate because of social motives. As based on the results of this study, it can therefore be argued that the consumer’s social motivations to participate in the sharing economy differ according to the type of platform.

5.1 Implications

5.1.1 Theoretical Implications

This study offers four theoretical implications. As discussed in previous research pseudo sharing is a much-discussed factor in the sharing economy (Belk, 2007). This research confirms, that because of pseudo sharing, different platforms are not being perceived as “true” sharing economy platforms, but rather as being part of the traditional economy. This in turn has great impact on the social motivations of consumers to participate in those sharing economy platforms, stressing the importance to distinguish between different types of sharing platforms, according to the degree of sharing involved, for future sharing economy research.
Secondly, participants of this study implied a strong link between social motivations and security concerns, which was not addressed in previous research before. Hence, safety issues as impediments to social motivations should be taken into account for successive studies on consumer motivations.

Thirdly, the value of this research is of particular importance in proving, that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are rather a small proof, when it comes to certain consumer behavior. As the Big Five Personality Test showed, individuals of this study dissented from the average scores based on Hofstede to a certain degree. The importance of individual values as part of this research outcome implicates that cultural studies should not exclusively rely on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions.

Lastly, this thesis is the first to explore the two cultures of Brazil and Germany in relation to sharing economy participation. Therefore, this study provides relevant knowledge about the consumers of these countries and aims to be seen as a guideline for further cross-cultural studies in relation to the sharing economy.

5.1.2 Managerial Implications

The research additionally concludes three managerial implications. As the findings showed that security and trust are impediments to many focus group interviewees, it is suggested that platforms like BlaBlaCar and Couchsurfing invest more in security factors to increase the usage of those networks and abolish barriers.

Additionally, the status that possibly comes with the sharing economy through being able to use assets that the individual normally cannot afford was found to be a driver for Brazilians. Accordingly, this is an opportunity for more sharing economy platforms to federalize with well-known organizations in order to secure more customers for both parties.

Ultimately, the German participants lacked knowledge about different sharing economy platforms, as they mainly were familiar with bigger platforms like Uber, Airbnb and BlaBlaCar. However, they were found to be open to the general idea of social exchange and the sharing economy. Hence, regarding the German market size and by educating Germans more about the possibilities of collaborative consumption, prospective new markets could emerge.
5.1.3 Societal Implications

This study further implicates a change of society. First, since the particular respondents of this research differ from Hofstede’s average scores to a certain extent, as well as the fact that consumers from different countries show rather similar motivations, suggests that the modern consumer is widely influenced by a globalized mindset.

Beyond, the international mindset implies that consumers of cultures, which are known to be rather reserved, become more open-minded. Even though consumer behavior is still influenced by the cultural origin, a general shift towards a liberal-minded mentality is recognizable, which is also attributed to the participants’ great interest in other cultures, as a major part of social motivations.

Increased globalization, especially in regards to latest generations, shapes society and thus, consumer behavior, which is why consumers should be rather regarded as individuals with different values that shape their consumer patterns and consumption decisions.

5.2 Limitations

It is important to emphasize that due to the methodology of this paper, some limitations were encountered in the analysis. Since this research is focused on a qualitative instead of a quantitative approach, the sample size was limited to 12 representatives of the Brazilian and the German culture, which makes it difficult to generalize the results and to transfer them to the whole population. In order to be able to identify distinct cultural differences between the Brazilian and the German consumer concerning social motivations of sharing economy participation, additional, quantitative research would have to be conducted.

Moreover, as research has shown, Germans are known to be rather reserved, whereas contradictory to that, the Big Five Personality Test revealed that the German sample shows a high level of openness, which can be accounted for by the assumption that international students are more likely to be open towards new people and cultures. Consequently, the outcome of the study could differ with non-international students.
Lastly, the emphasis of the focus group discussions was on two main industries, as it was based on specific examples of accommodation and ride sharing platforms. Accordingly, not all industries have been intensively covered, which illustrates another limitation of the study.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This cross-cultural study, exploring consumer’s social motivations of sharing economy participation, suggests three recommendations for further research.

First, the lack of generalizability proposes a quantitative study. The implementation of a survey, based on a broad sample of the Brazilian and German population is suggested to find a significant difference between both cultures concerning their social motivations to participate in the sharing economy. Moreover, in order to see whether the motivational patterns found in this research can be reproduced to other cultures, further research could explore the social motivations within the context of shared economy of additional cultures.

Second, since the focus group discussions were predominantly focused on examples of accommodation and ride sharing, additional qualitative studies could be conducted in order to see whether or not the social motivations explored within the scope of this research are rather industry-specific.

Third, as the cultural differences found within this research are not substantial, additional research could investigate the role of individuals related to cultural dimensions in that regard.
II. References


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III. Appendix

Interview Russell Belk

1. **How important, according to you, is a consumer’s culture within the sharing economy?**

One way of thinking about the sharing economy is that it gives consumers access to more goods and services for less money. It allows a leveraged lifestyle because in a large anonymous city no one knows that you didn't really buy that car, handbag, dress, etc.. As such there can be a large link to consumer culture. On the other hand, toy sharing, tool sharing, children’s clothing sharing, shared gardens, and so forth are not very materialistic.

2. **You argue that “sharing can reduce envy and create feelings of community”** (2007, p. 131). **Do you think this is also true for members participating in sharing economy practices?**

Not as much. Companies like ZipCar have failed to establish a sense of community and the same is true for ride sharing like Uber and Lyft. However, Couchsurfing and some Airbnb can sometimes foster a sense of community.

   a. **If yes, how would you describe the potential of sharing economy platforms to develop social ties?**

   They are generally weak ties with diverse others as opposed to strong ties with similar others in non-mediated family sharing.

   b. **Do you think social relationships emerging from sharing economy participation can be long-lasting?**

   Potentially, but not often.

   c. **If no, why not?**

   Some Airbnb & Couchsurfing relationships continue and of course, so do family sharing relationships. But even neighborhood sharing organizations are hard to sustain and tend to fall apart after of few months or years. Small scale operations like Majorna in Göteborg do a better job when they are small enough that members know each other and when they participate in duties in the organization.

3. **In the context of the sharing economy, would you say a consumer’s motivation to share is interrelated to a consumer’s motivation to interact with others and to be part of a community?**

I don’t think this is the initial motivation usually as much as an unexpected side benefit.

   a. **how would you describe the relationship between a consumer’s motivation to share and his motivation to socialize?**
Perhaps positive in the case of co-ops, but otherwise largely unrelated or even negatively related (I just want the car/apartment/thing). Ride sharing may be more positive however. But even BlaBlaCar allows you to choose the level of interaction.

b. What do you consider to be different influencing factors on the above-mentioned consumer motivations?

How personal the service is. But even a massage can be impersonal and anonymous for someone who just wants the service.

4. Some sharing economy platforms can rather be described as “business relationship masquerading as communal sharing” (Belk, 2014, p.11). Do you think this has an influence on the user’s (i.e. of sharing economy practices) motivation to connect and interact with providers (i.e. of sharing economy practices)?

Yes, but people are still and talk to Uber drivers, Airbnb hosts/guests, etc.. Even some crowdfunding allows interaction online.

   a. If yes, how do the differences in sharing platforms impact consumers’ social motivations?

Face-to-face services and product exchanges engender more sociality.

5. Do you think the consumer’s perception of sharing as a means to “[...] foster community” (Belk, 2007, p. 126) has changed, as more and more research on sharing economy practices discuss and explore issues such as capitalism and misuse of the concept of sharing?

No, but it has changed as sharing scales up from small scale to large scale.

6. According to you, “sharing is an interpersonal process and is sanctioned and prescribed by culture” (Belk, 2007, p. 130). Furthermore, since sharing “[...] creates feelings of solidarity and bonding” (Belk, 2010, p. 717), do you think the consumer’s motivation to participate in the sharing economy in order to socialize is influenced by the consumer’s national culture?

   a. If yes, according to your opinion, how important is the national culture in assessing consumer’s social motivations?

Yes, but not always in ways expected. Eastern Europeans learned to share under communism, because they had to in order to survive. It also helped that there weren’t huge economic disparities—we’re all in this together.

   b. Do you think the individual’s social motivations could be explained by Hofstede’s cultural dimensions?
I don’t trust Hofstede’s characterizations, but there is a difference between standing out and standing in. Interdependent cultures (vs independent) are more likely to stand in. E.g., whether by purchase, rental, or counterfeits, in a study of 20-something women in Tokyo, 80% owned at least one LV item, 60% owned Gucci, 57% Prada, 51% Chanel. When this many own or rent such items, you would stand out by NOT having one.

   c. If yes, what cultural dimensions would you consider as being distinctive of a strong sense of community?

Implicitly more than explicitly. You might look favorably at another Airbnb participant, but that doesn’t mean you would continue to interact with them.

d. Can you think of any other cultural factors or theories that could underlie consumer’s social motivations?

Scandinavian coop culture, communism in Russia (USSR) and Eastern Europe (but not PRC), poverty (we must share to survive—e.g., hunters and gatherers, contemporary Greece & Syria), war time (we’re all in this together).

7. Besides sharing as “culturally learned behavior” (Belk, 2007, p. 130), what other intrinsic cultural values do you consider influential to a consumer’s social motivation to participate in sharing economy practices?

The size of the community you live in. Large cities breed independence and indifference to others, except among minorities, homeless, and other micro-cultures.

8. You also mention that sharing of similar brands can evoke a feeling of “[...] belonging to a group of like-minded people” (2007, p. 133). Do you think this can be transferred to the context of the sharing economy? (i.e. people using the same sharing platform are feeling part of the same community)

   a. If yes, do you also think that this sense of belonging could lead to social relationships (outside the virtual world)?

Sports fans may be an example where if you cheer for the same team you are my friend and if you cheer for an opponent you are an enemy. Perhaps different social media platforms can also foster this.

9. Do you think the virtual world (i.e. user profiles with pictures etc.) could be an impediment to users trying to create social ties through sharing economy platforms?

   a. If yes, why would you think so?

   b. If no, can you think of any other factors that might challenge users of sharing economy practices to socialize with the respective providers?
Not an impediment but more conducive to weak ties rather than strong ones. Maybe in the case of strongly opinionated causes (e.g., anti-gun ownership in the US) there is stronger bonding. Trump’s polarization of the US has also caused more distrust of outgroups and more affinity with in-groups/

10. Do you have any other comments regarding the aspect of culture within the sharing economy? Or recommendations?


**Interview Lucas Alban**

1. **How would you describe the Brazilian and the German culture?**

Describing cultures is a hard task, since we all, unavoidably, takes our personal background and point of view into consideration when doing so. Both Brazil and Germany are large countries, presenting many cultural differences already inside their territories. However, it is clear that the Brazilian and the German cultures, when analyzed with a holistic approach, present some differences regarding each other.

Brazil still holds historical traces of being a former Portuguese colony, as the strong hierarchy has never left the country’s peculiarities. Brazilian people tend to act more collectively. In other words, the sentiment of “family” is more easily extended to other relatives (not only parents and siblings) and to close friends. Due to the past unpredictability of its economy, Brazil has also developed a strong bureaucracy intending to control uncertainty. Religion also plays a strong cultural role in the country – which features a multi-faceted population and an incredible diversity of origins.

Germany has a very different past when compared to the South American country. The wars and the conflicts lived by the country’s population helped to shape its current characteristics. While hierarchy is also valuable – as in Brazil - the power distance is not as high. In other words, people in power positions (whether a parent in the context of the family or a boss in a company) do not mind consulting others to make decisions. Germans are known for its discipline and desire for achievements – arguably, both reflexes of the country’s past.

2. **What do you think how much impact does the national culture have on sharing economy participation?**

Certainly, sharing is something that may be faced differently across the globe. While on the one hand, for some peoples it is a positive way of interacting with the community, on the other hand, for others, sharing can be perceived as a sign of weakness. In general, in cultures where achievements are more valorized, the possession of goods is a status symbol and sharing something that usually happens in case of a convenient gain.

3. **How much does the national culture influence individuals? Do you think that Hofstede’s dimensions are still contemporary?**
There is one metaphor that I really like. It says, if you speak to a Spanish friend, you may feel that there is no cultural difference between you two. If another Spanish person joins the conversation, there may be some small differences between you and them. However, if you go to a bar in Spain, most likely you will feel the atmosphere of being the foreign person in the bar.

In other words, national culture influences each one of us. However, it is not the only thing that constitutes our personality and is more felt when we are as a group. Hofstede’s dimensions were recently studied again and proven to still be valid, so they are certainly still contemporary. On the other hand, some countries showed movements: for instance, countries that developed economically also presented trends towards a higher level of individualism.

4. Are there any cultural trends/changes?

Specially among the youth, it is still hard to measure how much globalization is shaping national cultures. While there is still not – and probably there will never be – a unified global culture, there are certainly some cultural trends. The prosperity of countries has also indicated higher levels of individualism and a lower power distance, as an example. Besides, the younger generations are showing to be less likely to explicit their “cultural background” - in a sort of attempt to have a more global mindset. This cultural background, however, is still there – even though a bit hidden.

5. How would you describe the relevance of security and trust to Brazilian and German consumers?

Security and trust are very abstract and complex concepts, so it is hard to describe their relevance. Certainly, as human beings, we all carry a strong instinct to pursuit safety – whatever that means to each one of us. Culturally speaking, is tough to say what components make something more or less safe for Brazilian and German consumers. What can be argued, however, is that the collectivist trait of Brazilians makes them prioritize relationships over tasks. In other words, Brazil’s collectivist people would more easily give up some security features of a car, for example, and still feel safe in case they trust the driver. But as I said, it is a very complex question and I do not feel prepared enough to answer it properly.

6. Do you have any other important cultural aspects you want to mention in relation to the sharing economy?

I think that the effect of cultural aspects in the sharing economy are still to be revealed. Hofstede’s dimensions certainly can lead us to some insights. In Eastern cultures, for example, trust in relationships take longer to be established – and that is especially true for the business world. Time will certainly show how people respond to punctual temporary contracts (such as an Airbnb rental) in this sort of context where relationships usually take so much longer. However, the cultural peculiarities may take some time to arise completely and I think it will be a very interesting process.
Big Five Personality Test Sample

Rate each statement according to how well it describes you. Base your rating on how you really are, not how you would like to be.

Mark only one oval per row.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
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<td>I am always prepared</td>
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<td>I feel comfortable around people</td>
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<td>I often feel blue</td>
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<td>I believe in the importance of art</td>
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<td>I feel I am better than other people</td>
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<td>I avoid taking on a lot of responsibility</td>
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<td>I make friends easily</td>
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<td>There are many things that I do not like about myself</td>
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<td>I am interested in the meaning of things</td>
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<td>I treat everyone with kindness and sympathy</td>
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<td>I get chores done right away</td>
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<td>I enjoy going to art museums</td>
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<td>I accept people the way they are</td>
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<td>It's important to me that people are on time</td>
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<td>I always make good use of my time</td>
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<td>I avoid philosophical discussions</td>
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Rate each word according to how well it describes you. Base your ratings on how you really are, not how you would like to be.

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