



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



Emma Gullstrand Edbring<sup>a</sup>, Matthias Lehner<sup>b</sup>, Oksana Mont<sup>b,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lund University, Sweden

<sup>b</sup> International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics (IIIEE) at Lund University, P.O. Box 196, 22100 Lund, Sweden

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 6 July 2015

Received in revised form

15 October 2015

Accepted 23 October 2015

Available online 11 November 2015

#### Keywords:

Consumer attitudes

Motivations

Drivers and barriers

Secondhand

Access-based consumption

Sharing

Collaborative consumption

### ABSTRACT

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

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

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

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

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

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

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +46 46 2220250.

E-mail addresses: [inf08egu@student.lu.se](mailto:inf08egu@student.lu.se) (E. Gullstrand Edbring), [matthias.lehner@iiiee.lu.se](mailto:matthias.lehner@iiiee.lu.se) (M. Lehner), [oksana.mont@iiiee.lu.se](mailto:oksana.mont@iiiee.lu.se) (O. Mont).

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Literature analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1744213>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1744213>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)