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**Exploring consumer motivation and decision-  
making in accommodation rentals through peer-  
to-peer digital platforms**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The sharing economy has been growing at an unprecedented rate in recent years. Digital peer-to-peer platforms have facilitated this growth and the ease of use and accessibility of these platforms have led to their increased adoption. Peer-to-peer platforms have expanded their services to new countries which has enabled consumers to participate in various sharing economy services globally. With the increasing popularity of the sharing economy, there is a growing need to understand why and how consumers participate in these platforms.

The aim of the study is to explore the factors that motivate consumers to rent an accommodation via peer-to-peer digital platform and examine the extent to which cultural factors, and travel destination influence their decision-making process. The study was conducted as qualitative research and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. A total of 10 interviews were conducted amongst young Finnish consumers who had prior experience with accommodation rentals through the accommodation sharing platform Airbnb. The study was further supported by a literature review, which provides the theoretical framework for the study. The literature review focuses on the extant research on sharing economy, motivation theories, generation Z and cultural values as well as the relationship between these topics.

The findings of the study show that cost benefits were found to be the most prominent factor guiding purchase decisions, followed closely by convenience whereas social and sustainability factors were considered less influential in the decision-making process. Authenticity and uniqueness of the accommodation were also found to be important factors for some participants. Additionally, the study found that trust was a crucial factor and reviews played a vital role in building trust. The impact of travel destination on sharing economy participation was found to be influenced by cultural differences and safety concerns in cases where the travel destination was perceived to be culturally highly distinct or located far away.

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**KEYWORDS:** sharing economy, peer-to-peer platform, accommodation rental, Airbnb, consumer motivation

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**VAASAN YLIOPISTO****Markkinoinnin ja viestinnän yksikkö**

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**TIIVISTELMÄ:**

Jakamistalous on kasvanut viime vuosina ennennäkemätöntä vauhtia. Digitaaliset vertaisverkkoalustat ovat toimineet kasvun tukena ja muun muassa alustojen helppokäyttöisyys ja saavutettavuus on nähty alustojen käytön yleistymiseen vaikuttavina tekijöinä. Vertaisverkkoalustat ovat laajentaneet palvelujaan uusiin maihin, mikä on mahdollistanut sen, että kuluttajat voivat hyödyntää jakamistalouden alustoja ja palveluita maailmanlaajuisesti. Jakamistalouden suosion kasvaessa tarve ymmärtää, miksi ja miten kuluttajat käyttävät vertaisverkkoalustoja lisääntyy.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia tekijöitä, jotka motivoivat kuluttajia vuokraamaan majoituksen digitaalisen vertaisverkkoalustan kautta sekä selvittää, missä määrin kulttuuriset tekijät ja matkakohde vaikuttavat kuluttajan päätöksentekoprosessiin. Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena ja aineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoiduilla haastatteluilla. Haastatteluja toteutettiin yhteensä kymmenen ja haastateltavat koostuivat nuorista suomalaisista kuluttajista, joilla oli kokemusta majoitusvuokrauksesta Airbnb:n kautta. Tutkimuksen tukena käytettiin myös kirjallisuuskatsausta, joka muodostaa tutkimuksen teoreettisen viitekehyksen. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa keskitytään jakamistaloutta, motivaatioteorioita, Z-sukupolvea ja kulttuurisia tekijöitä käsitteleviin aikaisempiin tutkimuksiin ja teorioihin.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että kustannushyödyt ovat merkittävien ostopäätöstä ohjaava tekijä majoituspaikan valinnassa. Toisena tärkeänä tekijänä nähtiin kätevyys liittyvät tekijät, kun taas sosiaalisilla ja kestävään kehitykseen liittyvillä tekijöillä koettiin olevan vähemmän merkitystä päätöksentekoprosessissa. Myös majoituspaikan autenttisuus ja ainutlaatuisuus osoittautuivat tärkeiksi tekijöiksi joidenkin haastateltavien osalta. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että luottamus on merkittävä tekijä majoituspaikan valinnassa ja arvosteluilla on huomattava rooli luottamuksen rakentamisessa. Kulttuurierot ja huoli turvallisuudesta olivat tutkimuksessa havaittuja kohdemaan vaikutukseen liittyviä tekijöitä, joita esiintyi erityisesti sellaisissa tapauksissa, joissa kohdemaan koettiin olevan maantieteellisesti etäällä tai kulttuurisesti kaukana omasta kotimaasta.

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**AVAINSANAT:** jakamistalous, vertaisverkkoalusta, majoituksen vuokraus, Airbnb, kuluttajan motivaatio

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# 1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the topic of the thesis. First, the background of the study is discussed in the light of existing literature. Next, the research gap is identified, in order to better understand the purpose of the thesis. Followed by that, the purpose, objective and research questions of the study are presented. Finally, the delimitations and structure of the thesis are discussed.

## 1.1 Background of the study

Belk (1988) has argued that “You are what you own” referring to the concept of extended self which suggests that our possessions extend our identity beyond our mind and body. However, in today’s economy Belk’s argument does not sound that unambiguous anymore. In recent years attitudes toward consumption have shifted, raising concerns about ecological, social, and developmental consequences (Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2016). As a result, we have been introduced to various alternatives for traditional consumption modes such as secondhand, access-based and collaborative consumption. These alternative modes of consumption have risen alongside traditional ownership, and even managed to challenge it (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Consequently, Belk (2014) has argued that we are now entering the so-called *post-ownership economy* where what was previously known as “you are what you own” is beginning to shift towards “you are what you share”.

Sharing as such is not a novel phenomenon. However, the recent shifts in consumer attitudes have enabled the emergence of new business models and modes of consumption built around the sharing of resources. Due to the advance in information technologies and growing popularity of web 2.0, there are now available online platforms that support user-generated content, sharing, and collaboration (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thanks to the rise of peer-to-peer platforms people can now collaborate to make use of underutilized assets through fee-based sharing (Zervas, Proserpio & Byers, 2017). Some prominent examples of peer-to-peer sharing platforms

include Airbnb, Omago, GreenMobility, RentMyWardrobe and Funding Circle. Peer-to-peer markets, collectively referred to as the sharing economy, have developed as alternative providers of products and services that were previously only offered by long-established industries (Zervas et al., 2017).

As the world slowly begins to shift from handling the COVID-19 crisis to recovery and economic reopening, it is evident that the period of lockdown has had a profound impact on people's lives and the way they live. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced consumers to rethink their international travel habits. Now that international travel is expected to gradually recover from the pandemic (UNWTO, 2022), it is timely to examine consumer behavior related to international travel. A recent study on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted consumers' attitudes and behavior in Finland reveals that young travellers appear to be particularly keen on finding ways to make their travel more sustainable (Sitra, 2020). By advocating the usage and redistribution of underutilized products and services, the sharing economy has been promoted as a propitious shift towards consumption that is more sustainable (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2017).

The sharing economy as we perceive it today began to take off in the 1990s, driven by technological as well as demographic and societal factors (Kozlenkova, Lee, Xiang & Palmatier, 2021). The phenomenon is growing rapidly, and it is estimated that the global revenues for the five key sharing economy sectors will increase from \$15 billion in 2014 to \$335 billion by 2025 (PwC, 2014). Sharing platform business models are praised not only by users, but also investors who have confidence in their profit potential, leading to valuations that often meet or even surpass those of more established traditional competitors (Wirtz, So, Mody, Liu, Chun, 2019). Fueling this fast-paced growth, companies operating in the sharing economy undertake rigorous strategies for global expansion, aiming to gain market share and obtain the advantages of being first (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Aside from its economic growth potential, some also consider the sharing economy as a positive force, that empowers individuals by providing new types of opportunities for employment, income and social interaction (Cherry &



Pidgeon, 2018). Pronouncements like this indicate that sharing economy is more than a passing fad and is in fact here to stay. Therefore, it should be taken seriously as it does not only provide a great alternative mode of consumption but also has the ability to impact the economy and society at large.

Sharing economy has also piqued interest among researchers. As a relatively new and rapidly growing phenomenon, the sharing economy poses many interesting research questions and challenges. One of the fundamental questions is what motivates the consumer to participate in it, as this is a prerequisite for its existence. Some of the most prominent approaches used to explain motivational factors regarding sharing economy participation include the social exchange theory (Guttentag, Smith, Potwarka & Havitz, 2018; Kim, Yoon & Zo, 2015; Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Tussyadiah, 2016) and self-determination theory (Hamari et al., 2016; Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Tussyadiah, 2016). Kozlenkova et al. (2021) have further extended the research by adopting an international marketing perspective and identifying four value-based drivers of sharing economy participation. As their research is based on a meta-analysis merging the findings of existing studies, Kozlenkova et al. (2021) state the necessity to identify some of the mediating mechanisms via which value-based drivers affect sharing economy participation. Furthermore, Kozlenkova et al. (2021) suggest that future research should explore the influence of cultural norms of countries.

Lee, Erdogan and Hong (2021) use Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to examine the influence of cultural factors on a consumer's participation in the sharing economy. As their study only used a sample from United States, Lee et al. (2021) suggest that future research should include a sample from a different culture. Moreover, Lee et al. (2021) underline that their study did not question in detail those participants who had past experience with Airbnb. They emphasize that a positive experience may lead to a positive impact on the intention to adopt, while a negative experience may lead to a negative impact on future usage intentions. Additionally, little is understood about how generational differences and country of destination affect an individual's use of sharing

economy platforms. Martínez-González, Parra-López and Barrientos-Báez (2021) have studied what influences young consumers' intention to participate in the sharing economy in tourism. However, their study is limited to the students at a single university and therefore, Martínez-González et al. (2021) suggest that the global nature of the findings within a specific age cohort is not fully conclusive, especially in the case of tourism and the topic should therefore be further studied. Furthermore, they propose that selecting a specific sharing economy platform operating in the tourism industry would provide a more in-depth understanding of the sector.

To conclude, the topic of this study contributes to existing theory by aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the mediating mechanisms via which value-based drivers affect sharing economy participation. Moreover, the study focuses on researching a specific digital peer-to-peer platform by interviewing participants who represent generation Z and have past experience with the accommodation sharing platform Airbnb. Furthermore, the influence of cultural factors is examined in relation to Finnish culture.

## **1.2 Research gap**

The sharing economy has been studied to some extent, but as with any new concept or increasingly widespread phenomenon its explicit definition remains ambiguous (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Prior research on sharing economy participation has been largely focused on studying the sharing economy as a whole (Hamari et al., 2016; Hawlitschek, Teubner & Gimpel, 2018; Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Luri Minami, Ramos & Bruscatto Bortoluzzo, 2021) rather than focusing on a specific sector or platform. However, each sector, let alone platform, has unique features and characteristics that differ significantly from each other, and may therefore influence the motives for participation. Sands, Ferraro, Campbell, Kietzmann and Andonopoulos (2020) argue that although there is a definite demand for the sharing economy, yet little is known about

the diverseness of consumer preferences and the differing demand for sharing experiences across various consumption categories.

Even though the sharing economy has piqued the interest of academics and practitioners due to its remarkable growth and potential, it is, still however not entirely certain which factors motivate and discourage people to participate in peer-to-peer exchanges, and which determinants hinder its more prevalent adoption (Matzner, Chasin & Todenhöfer, 2015). Therefore, there is a clear demand for empirical research regarding users' motives for participating in sharing economy platforms as well as the strength with which such motivating factors take impact (Hawlitschek et al., 2016).

When selecting the platform to be examined in this study, the peer-to-peer accommodation sharing platform Airbnb was selected, since it is a well-established platform that has been on the market for some time, and is becoming highly relevant yet again as travel slowly picks up. In prior research regarding Airbnb users and their participation in the sharing economy, the focus has been on identifying antecedents and determinants for participation behavior by quantitative measures rather than gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the underlying motives (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Previous studies have also not specified whether the phenomenon is studied specifically in the context of international travel or whether domestic travel is also considered.

There seems to be strong consensus among researchers regarding the fact that young consumers often share similar attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior (Mulyani, Aryanto & Chang, 2019). Even though research on generation Z's participation in the sharing economy is limited, this demographic segment possess optimal characteristics due to their tech-savvy and diginative nature (Martínez-gonzález et al., 2021; Mulyani et al., 2019). Therefore, this study focuses on generations Z which can be defined depending on the chosen author as a group of people born between mid 1990s and early 2010s (Scholz & Rennig, 2019; Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

These arguments, along with the findings and suggestions found in prior studies present a definite need for further research. To fill certain gaps in the current research, this thesis investigates young consumers' motives to participate in short-term accommodation sharing while travelling abroad and thus contributes to the theoretical and empirical research in this field. Exploring the phenomenon from a less-studied point of view serves as an intriguing research topic that can provide valuable insights to the field of study.

### **1.3 Research question and objectives of the study**

The aim of this study is to explore the factors that motivate young Finnish consumers to participate in the sharing economy and examine the extent to which cultural factors, and travel destination influence their decision-making process. Specifically, the study will investigate the motives for choosing short-term accommodations through Airbnb while travelling abroad.

The main research question of this study is:

*RQ1. What motivates consumers to rent an accommodation via peer-to-peer digital platform?*

Three sub-questions were determined to support the research objective:

- 1. What are the motives that guide travellers' accommodation choice?*
- 2. How does cultural background impact consumers' decision to participate in the sharing economy?*
- 3. To what extent do the consumers' perceptions of the travel destination influence their decision?*

#### **1.4 Delimitations of the study**

The study includes certain delimitations that limit its scope and provide boundaries for the study, as stated in earlier sub-chapters. The first delimitation of the thesis relates to the scope of the study. The empirical study will not explore sharing economy as a whole due to inherent and significant differences between various sectors and platforms. For instance, peer-to-peer finance, car sharing, and peer-to-peer accommodation sharing all have their own unique characteristics, that should be taken into account. Consequently, this study focuses specifically on peer-to-peer sharing in the context of short-term accommodation sharing and thus excludes other categories of consumption. Furthermore, Airbnb and its users are selected as the platform and user base in which the consumer participation will be examined.

As the purpose of the study is to explore the various motives for young consumers participation in peer-to-peer accommodation sharing in the context of international travel, the research is limited to the visitor perspective explicitly. This study focuses specifically on the motivations for Airbnb visitor participation and hence excludes provider and host behavior, which has already been studied in several studies (Fischer, Pahus & Bager, 2019; von Richthofen & von Wangenheim, 2021; Wang, Asaad & Filieri, 2020).

In addition to the fact that the topic is limited to a specific sector, platform and solely on the visitor perspective, the research is focused on a specific demographic cohort being the generation Z. Moreover, motives for accommodation sharing participation will be examined explicitly in the context of international travel excluding visitor experiences with Airbnb in domestic travel.

#### **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of the thesis, discusses the background and research gap of the study and presents the

purpose, objective and questions as well as the delimitations of the research. The second chapter provides an overview of the prior research related to the topic and presents the theoretical framework of the study.

In the third chapter the methodology of the research is discussed in terms of the methodological approach and research philosophy, data collection and analysis, selection of interviewees as well as the assessment of the reliability and validity aspects of the study. The fourth chapter presents the findings from the data with quotes of the interviews and the fifth chapter discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical background. The final chapter will draw conclusions from the research and present the limitations of the study, managerial implications, and suggestions for future research.

## **2 Literature review**

This chapter will introduce the concept of sharing economy and discuss the various motivations consumers may have for selecting this alternative consumption mode. Furthermore, this chapter examines generation Z as a consumer segment and the cultural perspective on sharing. The literature review is divided into five sections and begins by an overview of the origin and definitions of sharing economy and peer-to-peer accommodation. Following this, prior research on the motives for sharing economy participation are reviewed. Next, the characteristics of generation Z, as a consumer segment, are analyzed. Finally, the last section focuses on effect of culture on sharing. The chapter is concluded with a theoretical framework drawn up on the basis of the literature review.

### **2.1 Sharing economy**

Even though sharing itself is nearly as old as humankind, the sharing economy facilitated by the rapid development of information and communication technologies, is a 21st-century phenomenon (Hawlitschek, Teubner & Weinhardt, 2016). In recent years, the concept of sharing economy has been used in literature to define how individuals interact via digital platforms to rent, share, and exchange products and services (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Hamari et al., 2016). Hawlitschek et al. (2016) argue that the rise of sharing economy is influencing the consumption patterns of millions of people around the globe. In the following subchapter, various sharing economy definitions will be discussed in more detail and finally, the definition used as the basis for this study will be introduced.

#### **2.1.1 Defining sharing economy**

The vast growth of sharing economy practices has been followed by numerous publications. As already discussed in the introduction, up to this date, the academia lacks

a common agreement when it comes to conceptually defining the sharing economy. This is largely due to it being a relatively new and rapidly spreading phenomenon (Cherry and Pidgeon, 2018; Hawlitschek, Teubner, Adam, Borchers, Moehlmann & Weinhardt, 2016; Kozlenkova et al., 2021) which has been researched in various scientific fields and schools of thoughts. However, there are several points of universal agreement that can be identified from the various definitions of the sharing economy. This subchapter aims to shed light on the conceptualisation of the sharing economy and provide some clarity to the conceptual confusion around the topic.

One of the aforementioned universally agreed principles is that the sharing economy entails interaction between individuals (Barnes & Mattsson, 2016; Hou, 2018; Ma, Gu, Hampson & Wang, 2020). Another common defining factor of the concept is the emphasis on the need for the utilization of idle resources (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018; Hamari et al., 2016). This enables society as a whole to utilize assets more efficiently thanks to citizens giving one another access to already existing resources (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018). General consensus also holds for the fact that the sharing economy is enabled by technology and mostly takes place on IT-enabled platforms (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Most sharing economy definitions acknowledge its accessibility solely on the internet and that its “activities are mediated by various information systems” (Hamari et al., 2016). Sharing that takes place without the interference of an online platform is not regarded as part of the sharing economy (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). For example, borrowing household appliances from a friend, family member or neighbor in person does not fit the criteria for the sharing economy. Most researchers also agree that at the heart of the phenomenon is the possibility to gain temporary access to a resource rather than its ownership (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Therefore, platforms such as Amazon and Facebook Marketplace are not considered to be part of the sharing economy since no sharing takes place once the product's ownership is fully transferred to a new owner.

Next, the conceptual elements of the sharing economy which have undergone more debate among researchers will be discussed. One of these elements is financial



compensation. While other academics clearly indicate that a monetary transaction is required, others do not take a stand on this in their definitions (Cheng, 2016; Eckhardt, Houston, Jiang, Lamberton, Rindfleisch, & Zervas, 2019) and some even allow for both (Prayag & Ozanne, 2018). An example of the former is Kumar, Lahiri, and Dogan (2018) who define sharing economy as “monetization of underutilized assets that are owned by service providers (firms or individuals) through short-term rental”. Another element for which there is no consensus among researchers is whether the sharing economy solely applies to peer-to-peer platforms or if some business-to-consumer platforms can also be considered to be part of it.

Regarding the unambiguous conceptual definition of sharing economy, academics only agree on some of the factors, which increases the risk of them not researching the same phenomenon. However, a study conducted by Kozlenkova et al. (2021) reveals that, possibly as a result of the availability of data, sharing economy’s operationalizations are much more coherent in practice. They found that 96% of the empirical studies under their examination explored companies where providers received financial compensation in exchange for the sharing of their underutilized assets. Another finding was that 95% of these studies examined online platforms. Finally, as a result of the literature analysis, Kozlenkova et al. (2021) found that 82% of these studies featured firms that operate on a peer-to-peer basis. Thus, this thesis defines sharing economy based on both extant theories and definitions as well as empirical data which has been reviewed in prior studies as consumers allowing others to have temporary access to their idle assets against monetary compensation intermediated by an online platform.

While examining the sharing economy and its taxonomy, it is essential to also consider some of the closely related terms and concepts. Such terms include peer-to-peer economy, access-based consumption, and collaborative consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Barnes & Mattsson, 2016; Ma et al., 2020). Many of these terms are used interchangeably and for example the term known as collaborative consumption may be seen as either a subcategory (Belk, 2014; Hamari et al., 2016) or a synonym of

sharing economy (Martin, Upham & Klapper, 2017). This demonstrates how the terminology used to characterize the sharing economy is ambiguous as are the connections between the subsets and concepts involved.

While sharing economy is often praised for its potential to promote sustainability and social matters, it has also faced significant critique. There have been some concerns raised about the proper classification of what should be considered part of the sharing economy. One defining factor of the concept is known to be that it enables the utilization of underutilized resources (Cherry & Pidgeon, 2018; Hamari et al., 2016). However, Price and Belk (2016) argue that “In some of the theory and research surrounding ‘the sharing economy,’ sharing is so blurred with traditional marketplace exchanges as to be indistinguishable. Or more accurately, the concepts often remain distinct, but a ‘sharewashing’ effort is made to blur them to the extent that marketplace exchange is touted as sharing.” Frenken and Schor (2017) use Airbnb, the accommodation sharing platform, as an example to demonstrate this by highlighting that when a homeowner is away on vacation or on business, or when a spare room happens to be available, the property is not being utilized and can therefore be classified as temporarily idle capacity. However, buying a second house or apartment and renting it out to visitors on a long-term basis is considered operating as a commercial accommodation establishment, and therefore is fully equivalent to a hotel or bed and breakfast. The phenomenon described above has even been labelled as sharewashing, which refers to the deliberate misrepresentation of social and ecological principles by a platform to consumers even when those principles are not necessarily central to the platform's business model (Hawlitschek, Stofberg, Teubner, Tu & Weinhardt, 2018).

Secondly, concerns have been raised about the exploitation of the “workers” who participate in sharing economy in the role of service providers. This stems from the fact that according to the law, individuals working in the sharing economy are considered to be self-employed contractors rather than regular employees (Ahsan, 2020). Therefore, the sharing economy faces critique concerning uncertainty and lack of protection for workers (Schor, 2016). Ahsan (2020) argues that the sharing economy reflects the rise

of a trend that exploits the idea of entrepreneurship to justify certain types of employment practices. Also, closely related to this, the sharing economy has also been criticized for its overall variation and lack of regulation that is present in the platform economy (Schor, 2016; Uzunca & Borlenghi, 2019).

Additionally, sharing economy has faced criticism for disrupting traditional industries such as transport and tourism (Cramer & Krueger, 2016; Zervas et al., 2017). Also, the inequality aspect of the sharing economy has been criticized in a sense that it enables those that already own resources to use them to gain further economic benefit (Törnberg, 2022). Moreover, Törnberg (2022) found that for example the Airbnb markets have gradually shifted towards only a small number of hosts receiving the majority of market revenue.

### **2.1.2 Accommodation sharing**

Accommodation sharing is a new type of lodging industry within the sharing economy, in which hosts temporarily rent out private residences via digital platforms (Chi, Pan & Huang, 2021). Peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation markets have vastly expanded during the past 10 years (Dogru, Zhang, Suess, Mody, Bulut & Sirakaya-Turk, 2020; Ert & Fleischer, 2019; Liang, Schuckert, Law & Chen, 2017). The fundamental component of the peer-to-peer accommodation business model is the service provider (platform), which serves as a mediator between the host, who is the supplier, and the consumer paying for the underutilized properties (Kumar et al., 2018).

Chi et al., (2021) highlight that many travelers, millennials in particular, are starting to prefer peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation over traditional hotel accommodation to attain more personalized accommodation experiences. P2P accommodations have also been argued to enable “connections between people with significant dissimilarities (i.e., weak ties), e.g., in terms of beliefs and background” (Sánchez-Franco & Rey-Moreno, 2022; Yoganathan, Osburg & Bartikowski, 2021). Some of the other arguments in favor

of this alternative form of accommodation include its ability to provide both economic value and functional, pleasant, and social experiences (Ikkala & Lampinen, 2014).

### **2.1.2.1 Airbnb**

Airbnb is a globally operating online marketplace where homeowners who wish to rent out their apartments may connect with travelers searching for short-term accommodation in their travel destinations. The most recent statistics from Airbnb shows that it has over six million listings, which span more than 100,000 cities and towns and more than 220 countries worldwide (Investopedia, 2022). Airbnb was established when two hosts opened their San Francisco home to three visitors in 2007. Since then, it has expanded to over 4 million hosts and more than 1 billion guest stays in nearly every country around the world (Airbnb, 2022).

## **2.2 Sharing economy participation**

To understand why individuals participate in the sharing economy, it is necessary to first understand what motivates them to do so. Extant consumer behavior research implies that individuals make purchase decisions regarding products and services to satisfy a variety of needs (Tussyadiah, 2016). It is crucial to comprehend the motivations behind consumption for various reasons. For instance, by aligning advertisements with these motivations, using experiential or functional appeals can enhance the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. (Volz & Volgger, 2022).

Some of the most notable approaches used to explain motivational aspects regarding sharing economy participation include the social exchange theory (Guttentag et al., 2018; Kim, Yoon & Zo, 2015; Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Tussyadiah, 2016) and self-determination theory (Hamari et al., 2016; Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Tussyadiah, 2016). In the following subchapter the above theories and extant literature regarding them will be reviewed.

### **2.2.1 Motivation theories**

Motivation is a valuable measure used to understand and explain decision-making as well as to why individuals display certain behaviors (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Petrick, Backman, Bixler, & Norman, 2001). Two well-established frameworks, the self-determination theory, and the social exchange theory, lay the foundation for identifying the antecedents for sharing economy participation (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Next, these two theories will be further discussed in the context of sharing economy.

#### **2.2.1.1 Self-determination theory**

According to self-determination theory, people's behavior is governed by intrinsic or extrinsic motives and thereby individuals with intrinsic motivation undertake an activity for its inherent fulfillment, but those with extrinsic motivation do so to accomplish goals that are motivated by external factors such as reputation or monetary gain (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsically motivated individuals act in order to obtain instrumental value, while intrinsically motivated individuals act in order to enjoy the task itself (Ryan and Deci, 2000). For example, an athlete might be motivated to play a sport for internal reasons such as enjoyment and the opportunities for learning and skill improvement or external rewards such as trophies and scholarships. The degree of motivation may be similar in both scenarios, even though the motivation's orientation varies.

#### **2.2.1.2 Social exchange theory**

Social exchange theory suggests that individuals engage in the exchange of social and material resources when they expect there to be a favorable outcome and value returned to them upon these exchanges (Emerson, 1976). Motivation research based on the social exchange theory indicates that individuals have an inherent need for trust,

making it a crucial aspect of their motivation (Turner, 1987). Both users and providers of the sharing economy have to trust that the other party will reciprocate, since there is no guarantee for the satisfaction and end result of these exchanges (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Trust plays a vital role in social interactions and is often examined in sharing economy related research (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Ert, Fleischer, & Magen, 2016). Mähönen, Tuunanen, Ojala and Kruse (2023) have studied the user's perspective of a sharing economy platform's trustworthiness and their findings suggest that the trustworthiness of such digital platform is perceived through how trustworthy the technology, other users and the company are seen as.

### **2.2.2 Value-based drivers**

Prior research suggests that typically consumers evaluate whether or not to take part in the sharing economy based on their perception of the value they can get from it (Perren & Kozinets, 2018) and this value may be associated with utilitarian, social, hedonic, or sustainability motivations (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). In this thesis these four value-based drivers will be investigated in relation to sharing economy participation. Value-based drivers, which include utilitarian, social, hedonic, and sustainability values, reflect peoples' internal decision-making criteria that drives them to participate in the sharing economy (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential to note that individuals may participate in the sharing economy for various reasons depending on whether their behavior is governed by intrinsic or extrinsic motives such as saving time or money, accessing a high quality service, acting more sustainable or enabling meaningful relationships with other individuals rather than brands (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p.70). From a self-determination theory perspective, consumers seek utilitarian values to serve their extrinsic motivations whereas social, hedonic, and sustainability values are sought in order to meet their intrinsic motivations (Kozlenkova et al., 2021).

### 2.2.2.1 Utilitarian value

Voss, Spangenberg & Grohmann (2003) propose a two-dimensional conceptualization of consumer motivations with a utilitarian dimension derived from the functional benefits of a product/service and a hedonic dimension consisting of the sensations obtained from the experience of utilizing a product/service. In extant literature the most prominent motive for sharing in relation to utilitarian considerations is cost benefits (Hamari et al., 2016; Liang, Choi & Joppe, 2018; Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2016). In most cases sharing economy platforms offer lower cost options compared to market alternatives (Leung, Xue & Wen, 2019; Schor, 2016).

Peer-to-peer platforms in particular enable value to be redistributed throughout the supply chain to providers and users bringing it further away from “middlemen,” partially due to providers’ costs being lower (Schor, 2016). Saving money may provide gratification that outweighs the possible psychological hurdles (e.g. the risk factor, variance in service quality and concerns about safety) to engaging in the sharing economy, especially for price-sensitive individuals (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). For instance, if customers discern that Airbnb offers more affordable accommodations than conventional hotels and service providers, they might be more inclined to explore the sharing economy alternative. Accordingly, sharing economy participation may be considered utility maximizing and logically justifiable behavior in which the customer replaces exclusive ownership with more affordable alternative consumption modes available through a collaborative consumption service (Hamari et al., 2016).

Other utilitarian benefits of the sharing economy stem from its convenience (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). For example, using the Omago car sharing service you can access a car only when you need one and it best suits you while avoiding the hassle with common car ownership related inconveniences such as insurance paperwork, car storage, vehicle inspection and maintenance. According to Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) sharing may be seen as a convenient way of consuming. Their research implies that convenience orientation positively impacts the preference for non-ownership and thus supports the

notion that people who value convenience are more likely to participate in the sharing economy. Convenience orientation, in the context of sharing economy, refers to the wish to save time and effort as consuming and participating in the sharing economy is often perceived quite convenient since it allows access to resources without the burden of ownership (Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010).

#### **2.2.2.2 Hedonic value**

Hedonic value, in contrast to utilitarian value, emphasizes affective motivation and emotional pleasure instead of practicality and cognitive motivation (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). With regard to consumer experience, the hedonic value refers to the evaluation of factors such as the uniqueness of the product or service and the degree to which it evokes pleasant emotions in the consumer (Overby & Lee, 2006). Due to their substantial impact on consumer attitudes and behavioral patterns, consumers' evaluations of hedonic and utilitarian attributes have been widely researched (Lee & Kim, 2018).

Existing research proposes that the hedonic value received from authentic, pleasurable experiences may result in increased sharing economy participation (Lang, 2018; Wu, Zeng & Xie, 2017). For example, if people perceive carpooling via BlaBlaCar when travelling from one city to another or staying at an Airbnb in their travel destination to be more exciting and unique than public transport or a hotel accommodation, they may be more likely to explore these sharing economy alternatives. Perceived enjoyment has been discovered to influence both attitudes and behavioral intentions toward taking part in the sharing economy (Hamari et al., 2016).

#### **2.2.2.3 Social value**

Social factors have also been proposed as a motive for participating in the sharing economy (Belk, 2014; Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Schor (2016) suggests the desire to



broaden one's social network to be a common motivation for participation. Sharing economy has the potential to offer meaningful encounters between users and providers and it may even allow friendships to form between like-minded participants (Kozlenkova et al., 2021).

Some consumers may participate in collaborative consumption merely because they consider it to be fun and something that enables them to experience meaningful interactions with others in the community (Hamari et al., 2016). It is suggested that peer-to-peer sharing is a more social form of consumption than business-to-consumer sharing, since consumers feel more accountable for the community and its members when they communicate directly with one another (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012).

#### **2.2.2.4 Sustainability value**

The world population is growing, which means that the usage of resources is continuing to rise. As a result, measures to promote a more sustainable way of living and conducting business are required. The sharing economy has been proposed as one answer to encouraging sustainable behavior. (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Luchs, Naylor, Rose, Catlin, Gau, Kapitan, . . . Weaver, 2011; Raisanen, Ojala & Tuovinen, 2021).

In addition to weighing the utilitarian, social, and hedonic benefits of a certain consumption decision, many people also consider the environmental impact of their actions. Many sharing economy platforms promote themselves as environmentally friendly and propose sharing as a means to decrease carbon footprints. It is a well-known argument among sharing economy participants that sharing requires fewer resources than the prevalent methods of obtaining goods and services due to the aforementioned reduced demand for new goods or facilities (Schor, 2016). This declaration is in line with prior research which validates that some people use sharing economy platforms to limit their consumption for sustainability related matters (Seegebarth, Peyer, Balderjahn & Wiedmann, 2016).

Hamari et al. (2016) suggest that participating in the sharing economy is often perceived as a sustainable alternative and sustainability as a motive is associated with an individuals' ideology and norms. These arguments are consistent with other researchers' findings which suggest that some individuals like to present their choice of consumption mode with the purpose of advocating their ideological interests (Bardhi & Eckhart, 2012). A notable aspect of these findings is that participation and sustainability cannot be proven to be directly linked to one another unless the consumer has a positive attitude towards collaborative consumption in general (Hamari et al., 2016). In contrast to most other studies, a study by Möhlmann (2015) found no effect between sustainability and either customer satisfaction regarding a sharing service or the probability of them selecting a sharing economy alternative again.

In addition to the general motivational factors and drivers for sharing economy participation there are various other factors that may have significant influence on consumer behavior and should thus be considered. These aforementioned factors include demographics such as age, gender, and culture. Next, the generational age cohort and cultural factors that are the focus of this study are discussed in more detail.

### **2.3 Generation Z as a consumer segment**

Generation refers to a detectable group of people who were born around the same time, go through similar life events and face alike experiences and environments while growing up (Krbová & Pavelek, 2015; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Generation Z, also referred to as "Gen Z" and "Zoomers", is defined as individuals with birth years from mid-nineties to early-tens, with lack of agreement concerning the exact time frame for the birth years, some suggesting them as 1995-2009 (mcCrindle 2010, p. 66), while others stating years 1995–2010 (Bencsik Juhász & Horváth-Csikós, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2016) and others simply declaring the years "after 1997" (Bresman & Rao 2017). In this thesis, generation Z is defined as people who were born in between

the years 1995–2010 (Francis & Hoefel, 2022) and who, although not being a homogeneous group, differ greatly from earlier generations (Fratrièová & Kirchmayer 2018; Tienari & Piekkari 2011, p. 100).

Individuals that are part of the same generation often share a lot more than just their birth years. Yet, the research on generational differences has faced a lot of criticism, particularly because of the debate on the definitions of the generational cohorts and their precise measurements (Weeks & Schaffert 2019). As every generation grows up facing such similar occurrences and life events, they often develop alike worldviews, values and personality traits that vary from those held by foregoing and subsequent generations. This generational gap is also considered to affect knowledge, abilities, and the way of communicating as well as other aspects of life including social interaction and purchase behaviors (Srinivasan, 2012).

Although every individual is unique, it can be argued that the majority of Gen Zers possess a few integrative traits and characteristics. For instance, due to their young age, they are still relatively new to working life and known to value and strive for a diverse community. People that belong to generation Z are often alluded to as “digital natives” and the “internet generation”, which stresses the fact that technology has been an integral part of their life since they were little children (Fratrièová, & Kirchmayer 2018; Tienari & Piekkari 2011, p. 100). Generation Z has also only ever experienced a world that is very globalized, which has influenced their personality and outlook on the world (Magano, Silva, Figueiredo, Vitória, Nogueira, & Dinis, 2020). Being the first truly global generation, they have been able to benefit from the free movement and shared currency inside the EU (Scholz & Rennig 2019). Not only are Gen Zers a generation considered to be more educated than ever before, but they also share a higher level of complexity and are under more strain than ever before (Scholz & Rennig 2019).

When it comes to generation Z as consumers, they are considered to have more ethical consumption styles as well as increased freedom of expression and open-mindedness

towards understanding different types of people (Francis & Hoefel, 2022). Thangavel, Pathak & Chandra (2022) have studied the consumer decision-making style of generation Z and their empirical findings indicate that value consciousness and convenience driven are the prevalent buying orientations that influence generation Z consumers. Generation Z consumers have also found to be the most prone to compare and evaluate the available options in the online platforms prior to making their final purchase decision (Thangavel et al., 2022). Thangavel et al. (2022) highlight that this supports the idea that Generation Z is less brand loyal than prior generations, which is also confirmed by their study.

To conclude, Thangavel et al. (2022) suggest that the buying preferences of Generation Z differ significantly from those of previous generations, and that marketing techniques aimed at Gen Z consumers must be tailored. Moreover, other recent studies also reveal that Gen Z has distinct consumer values, preferences, and beliefs than previous generations; hence, understanding Gen Z consumption habits is necessary (Desai & Lele, 2017; Puiu, 2016).

## **2.4 The effect of cultural values in peer-to-peer sharing**

Not only intragenerational differences can be detected in consumer behavior, but most of the consumer behavior aspects are also culture-specific at least to some extent (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2011). Defined as “the collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), culture serves as a foundation for interaction and shared understanding among members of a group (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Wallerstein, 1990) and establishes societal norms and expectations, thereby influencing individual and organizational behavior (Hofstede et al., 2010).

While peer-to-peer exchanges continue to increase around the globe, business researchers have only recently begun to recognize the need of examining cultural variations in order to better comprehend the sharing economy (Gupta, Esmailzadeh,

Uz & Tennant, 2019). It is crucial to integrate a cultural lens into this field of study because people from different countries hold distinct cultural values (Hofstede et al., 2010), beliefs (Belk, 2010) and norms (Minkov, Blagoev, & Hofstede, 2013; Vauclair & Fischer, 2011) when it comes to sharing. Since the sharing economy necessitates encounters with strangers, cultural aspects also tend to play a role in determining what behaviors are expected and considered acceptable (Wu & Shen, 2018).

Next, Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be discussed in more detail and Finnish culture will be examined in relation to them. Furthermore, extant research and literature on the relationship between culture and sharing economy participation will be reviewed.

#### **2.4.1 Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Finnish culture**

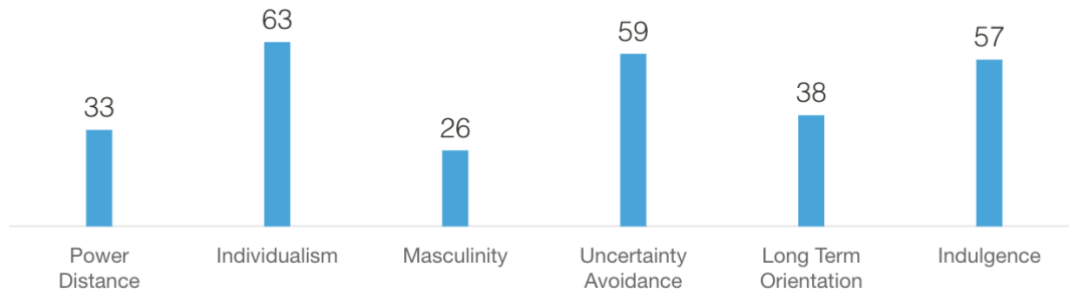
The Hofstede dimensional model of national culture has been utilized in many of the studies regarding cross-cultural consumer behavior. Numerous studies in several fields of studies have long validated the findings of Hofstede's research (Beugelsdijk, Kostova & Roth, 2017). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework that can be used to understand the cultural variations across countries. Despite the fact that the country scores were first introduced in the early 1970s, multiple replications of Hofstede's research on various samples have shown that the country rankings based on his research are still relevant (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2011).

Although Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been widely used to understand cultural differences in various fields, there have also been critiques towards their use. Taras, Kirkman, and Steel (2010) conducted a review of Hofstede's cultural value dimensions and argued that they are too broad and therefore do not capture the complexity of cultural differences. They also suggest that Hofstede's cultural dimensions are based on a Western-centric view of culture and do not account for cultural differences in non-Western countries. The theory has also been criticized for its lack of attention to individual differences (Van Ness, Seifert Franko & Buff, 2005). In conclusion, some studies have found Hofstede's cultural dimensions to be very useful while others have

presented critiques towards them. Thus, it is important to acknowledge these limitations and to consider alternative cultural frameworks in future research.

The five dimensions of national culture found by Hofstede include Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-/Short-Term Orientation. (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2011). Based on a systematic review of the world value surveys conducted in 2007–2008, Minkov (2007, 2011) proposed a new cultural dimension, which he referred to as indulgence vs. restraint. Subsequently, Hofstede et al. (2010) incorporated it as the sixth dimension to the cultural dimensions framework since it covered a new facet of culture.

This thesis focuses on five of these dimensions, excluding the dimension of power distance. These five dimensions include uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, indulgence, and longterm orientation. The study is limited to only five of Hofstede's dimension, because each of these five is anticipated to play a role in consumers' decisions about whether or not to participate in the sharing economy. Previous studies revealed insufficient evidence to substantiate the influence of power distance on individuals attitudes (Lee et al., 2021). Furthermore, while power distance primarily impacts people at work or in settings where they are aware of social classes, it is less significant in a setting where a customer develops attitudes toward utilizing an Airbnb or other sharing economy service (Lee et al., 2021).



**Figure 1. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Graph for Finland. (Hofstede Insights, 2021).**

#### **2.4.1.1 Uncertainty avoidance**

The uncertainty avoidance dimension in Hofstede's framework refers to the degree to which members of a society tolerate ambiguity and are risk-avoidant (Gupta et al., 2019; Hofstede et al., 2010). Lee et al. (2021) found in their study that uncertainty avoidance had a negative effect on the attitude towards peer-to-peer accommodation. Furthermore, Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance score for Finland has been found to be 59, as shown in the figure, which indicates a relatively high preference to avoid uncertainty (Hofstede Insights, 2021). This implies that the unknown attributes associated with accommodation sharing could be considered as a threat by Finnish consumers.

Considering that participation to peer-to-peer accommodation requires interaction with strangers, it necessitates a sufficient level of trust (Lee et al., 2021). Raisanen, Ojala and Tuovinen (2021) conclude based on their systematic literature review on how trust is built in the sharing economy that there appears to be consensus among scholars that trust is at the heart of the sharing economy, because there is no sharing without trust. Moreover, there has been found evidence that a platform user's trust in a platform may affect the likeliness of them trusting the other users of the platform (Teubner,

Hawlitschek & Adam, 2019). Although consumers may trust other individuals and alternative service providers, they still might have a strong aversion to not having control over their stay (Kozlenkova et al. 2021).

#### **2.4.1.2 Individualism-Collectivism**

The Individualism-Collectivism dimension refers to the degree to which individuals prioritize the wellbeing of a group before their own and are expected to be self-sufficient and independent from others rather than mutually dependent and have close ties with one another (Samaha, Beck, & Palmatier, 2014; Gupta et al., 2019). Moreover, Hofstede's individualism score for Finland has been found to be 63 and thus is considered to be an individualist society (Hofstede Insights, 2021).

Gupta et al. (2019) have studied the effects of cultural values on peer-to-peer sharing economy participation and their findings suggests that collectivism has a significant positive effect on consumer willingness to participate in peer-to-peer sharing. However, this finding concerns sharing economy in a broad sense and does not take into account any specific sharing activity or platform. Lee et al. (2021) found in their research that individualism had a negative effect on the attitude towards peer-to-peer accommodation.

#### **2.4.1.3 Masculinity-Feminity**

Masculinism refers to the degree to which individuals from a certain culture are assertive, goal-oriented, and ambitious (Gupta et al., 2019). Individuals from a feminine culture, on the other hand, place high value on quality of life, nurturing, and caring (Gupta et al., 2019). A comparative study revealed that Italian consumers, from a masculine society, were found to be opposed to and have a more negative attitude toward participation in the sharing economy compared to Spanish consumers, from a feminine society (Perfili, Parente, Grimaldi & Morales-Alonso, 2019). Gupta et al. (2019),



on the other hand, discovered a positive correlation between masculinism and peer consumer propensity meaning that masculinism positively influences people's intention to rent and rent out assets. Contradictory to the other research, the study by Lee et al. (2021) found that the only cultural dimension that showed no substantial effect on attitude was masculinity

Moreover, Hofstede's score for Finland has been found to be 26 which is considered a rather low score and indicates that Finland should be regarded as a feminine society (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Given the conflicting results of previous studies, it is difficult to say what conclusions can be drawn from them regarding Finland and the Finnish culture.

#### **2.4.1.4 Indulgence–Restraint**

The indulgence–restraint dimension refers to the degree to which individuals try to control their urges and impulses as a result of their upbringing (Lee et al., 2021). Hofstede's indulgence–restraint dimension is particularly important and influential in consumer behavior since it is centered around people's attitudes about happiness and enjoyment as well as the significance of fun, leisure, and entertainment in their lives, which all have an impact on people's decision-making (Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov, 2007).

Hofstede's indulgence score for Finland has been found to be 57 which is considered a relatively high score and suggests that Finland is an indulgent country (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Indulgence was found to positively affect the attitude toward Airbnb (Lee et al., 2021). In support of this finding, examining the issue from a slightly different angle, Wallace, Cao and Wang (2022) found that indulgence affects the hedonic value of sharing, and therefore, the indirect link between indulgence and intent to participate in sharing economy through hedonic value of sharing was considerable.

#### **2.4.1.5 Long-term orientation**

The long-term vs. short-term orientation dimension refers to the extent to which societies encourage individuals to postpone gratification of monetary, social, and emotional demands (Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede's long-term orientation score for Finland has been found to be 38 which is considered a relatively low score and therefore indicates that Finland should be classified as a normative society (Hofstede Insights, 2021).

Long-term orientation has been found to positively affect attitudes toward sharing economy participation within the Airbnb platform (Lee et al., 2021). Accordingly, Wallace et al. (2022) discovered in their research that long-term orientation has a positive effect on the intention to participate in the sharing economy. The considerable positive influence of long-term orientation may be associated with the finding that long-term orientation fosters trust building (Ryu & Moon, 2011) and trust is a necessary prerequisite for sharing economy participation (Lee et al., 2021; Raisanen et al., 2021).

#### **2.4.2 Perception of foreign services**

As this research focuses on consumers sharing economy participation while travelling abroad, it is also essential to understand how the country of origin and travel destination may affect consumers' perceptions of sharing economy services.

##### **2.4.2.1 Country-of-origin image**

International business and marketing literature have revealed that consumers' overall views of a country's image, known as the country-of-origin image (COI), may affect individuals' assessments and buying intentions of certain products and services (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly & Luk, 2008). According to the COI effect, individuals evaluate the quality of things created in a certain country based on their overall perceptions of the nation (Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Murali, 2005). Furthermore, products and services produced in foreign country may be seen as risky by some consumers

(Elliott & Cameron, 1994). Moreover, some consumers prefer purchasing goods from countries that share similarities with their own rather than from such countries that are culturally highly distinct or located far away (Khan, Bamber & Quazi, 2012; Zafer Erdogan & Uzkuurt, 2010).

In accommodation sharing, this is reflected in the fact that although Airbnb is a global and well-known operator, the hosts represent the population of the destination country. Moreover, the destination country can indirectly be thought to influence the choice of accommodation. For instance, many travel destinations have well-established hotel chains offering accommodation and these hotel chains may be familiar to the travelers from their home country or some of their previous trips.

Other closely related concepts that consider the effects of foreign countries in international business include country of origin (COO), animosity and ethnocentrism. However, these are excluded from this study because they are considered to either potentially influence the choice of destination rather than the choice of accommodation or to be better suited to studying a product rather than a service.

## **2.5 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this research seeks to conceptually define sharing economy and determine motives for consumers to engage in sharing economy practices and accommodation sharing. The theoretical framework further explores generation Z as a consumer segment, and finally examines the effect of cultural values and perception of foreign services.

The literature review of the study is divided into four segments: 1) sharing economy, 2) sharing economy participation, 3) generation Z as a consumer segment, and 4) the effect of cultural values in peer-to-peer sharing. In order to understand sharing economy and provide some clarity to the conceptual confusion around the topic various definitions

are introduced to identify the main points of debate and general consensus on the characteristics. The concept is defined through the studies of Bardhi & Eckhardt (2012), Botsman & Roger (2010), Hamari et al. (2016) and Kumar et al. (2018).

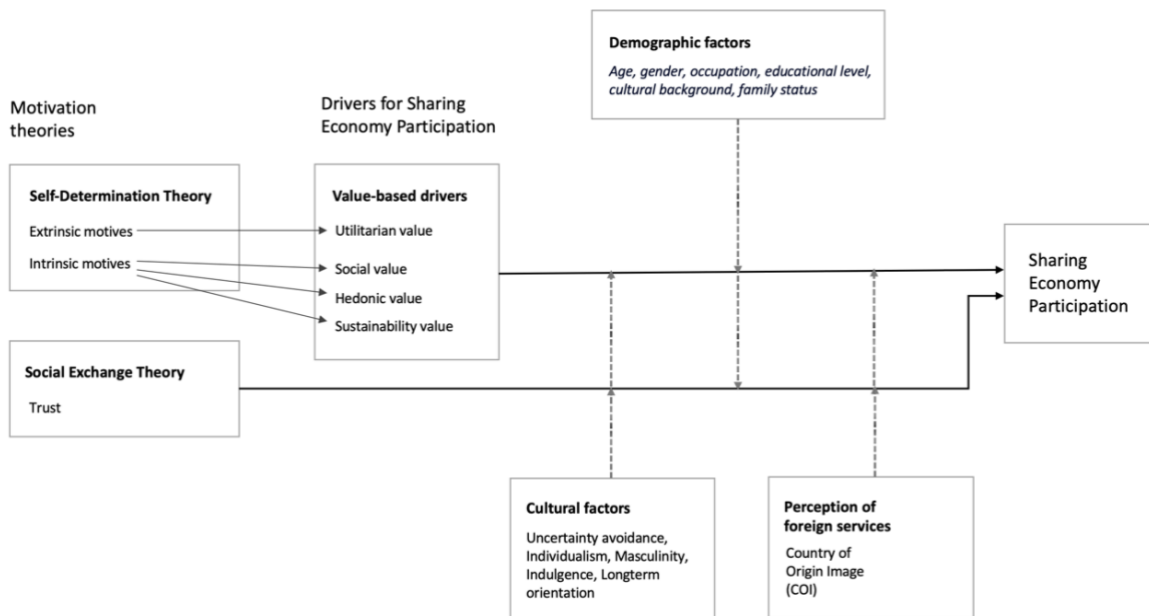
The chapter defining sharing economy also explores some of the universally agreed principles and characteristics of the phenomenon. These are illustrated with examples, drawing on the studies of Barnes & Mattsson (2016), Hou (2018), Ma et al. (2020) Gu, Hampson & Wang (2020), Cherry & Pidgeon (2018), Hamari et al. (2016) and Kozlenkova et al. (2021). In addition, the chapter includes the studies of Cheng (2016), Eckhardt et al. (2019), Prayag & Ozanne (2018) and Kumar et al. (2018) to recognize some of the conceptual elements which have undergone more debate. Finally, the definition by Kozlenkova et al. (2021) was chosen to be used for the purpose of this study because it not only takes into account the existing conceptual definitions but also the operationalizations of the sharing economy.

The literature review in terms of sharing economy participation focuses on three main concepts: the self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci (2000), the social exchange theory through the studies of Emerson (1976) and Turner (1987) combined with the value-based drivers identified in a study by Kozlenkova et al. (2021). Additionally, when studying consumer behavior, it is essential to consider the demographic characteristics of the group being studied. These factors are explored through a generational approach through the studies of Fratrièová and Kirchmayer (2018), Tienari and Piekkari (2011), Magano et al. (2020), Scholz and Rennig (2019), Francis and Hoefel (2022) and Thangavel et al. (2022) to recognize some of the integrative traits and characteristics of generation Z consumers.

The final chapter of the literature review focuses on the theoretical background on the relationship between culture and sharing economy participation. The literature review of the effect of cultural values in peer-to-peer sharing examines Hofstede's cultural dimensions as described by Hofstede et al. (2010), de Mooij & Hofstede (2011) and

Minkov (2011) in relation to the extant research on the effects of cultural values in sharing economy participation including the studies of Gupta et al. (2019), Lee et al. (2021) and Wallace et al. (2022). The chapter also includes the studies of Nadeau et al. (2008), Laroche et al. (2005), Elliott and Cameron (1994), Khan et al. (2012) and Erdogan and Uzokurt (2010) to recognize how the perception of foreign services and country-of-origin image (COI) may affect individuals' assessments and buying intentions.

On the basis of the research objective and the findings of the literature review, the author created Figure 2 to illustrate the relationships between various factors influencing sharing economy participation. As presented in the figure, intrinsic and extrinsic motives guide the consumers decision through the expected value they receive which may be associated with utilitarian, social, hedonic, and sustainability motivations. The sharing economy requires both users and providers to trust that the other party will reciprocate and thus plays a crucial role in the participants motivation. Other factors such as demographic and cultural factors also play a moderating role in consumer behavior, sharing economy participation and the choice of consumption mode.



**Figure 2. Motives and factors influencing Sharing Economy Participation.**

Researching the motives behind young consumers' use of sharing economy services and especially accommodation sharing in the international travel context is crucial for several reasons. The sharing economy has revolutionized the way people consume and travel by providing more affordable and sustainable options. Generation Z has grown up in a digital era and is considered a significant demographic when it comes to digital platforms and services. These young consumers are also gradually entering the workforce and gaining more purchasing power which results in them having a significant impact on the economy and the potential to shape the future of various industries. Sharing economy services are also gaining popularity among consumers during their travels abroad. Yet the consideration of factors such as cultural aspects and the impact of the destination country in existing sharing economy literature is scarce.

The extant literature cannot provide an answer to the research question due to several gaps. Firstly, previous research focuses on the sharing economy as a whole, instead of differentiating between the various forms of sharing. Secondly, there is limited focus on individuals with actual Airbnb experience, which is essential to understand their actual motivations and experiences. Thirdly, there is a lack of qualitative research in exploring

Airbnb participation motives, which can provide a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of Airbnb users. Fourthly, there is limited research on individuals who use sharing economy services while traveling abroad. Lastly, the literature does not provide specific factors that motivate young consumers to use sharing economy services. Therefore, there is a need for more qualitative research on the subjective experiences and motives of Airbnb users to provide a better understanding of the factors that act as drivers for renting accommodation via a peer-to-peer platforms.

### **3 Methodology**

The methodological choices of this thesis are presented and justified in this section. In the following subchapters the chosen methodological approach and research philosophy will be introduced. Next, the author presents how the research will be conducted and finally assesses the reliability and validity aspects of the thesis.

#### **3.1 Methodological approach and research philosophy**

For empirical research, there are two common methodological approaches which are quantitative and qualitative research. The selected methodology is determined by the research problem and the objectives of the study considering that quantitative and qualitative approaches both emphasize very different areas and outcomes and are therefore suitable for certain types of research. The aim of a qualitative approach is to identify subjective meanings rather than obtaining data on objective facts, which is often the primary objective of quantitative research (Barbour, 2007, p. 11).

The objective of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding on what drives young consumers to participate in the sharing economy and for selecting this alternative consumption mode in their accommodation choice. Since the nature of these questions necessitates exploring consumers' attitudes and motives, a qualitative research method is considered the most appropriate approach.

The research philosophy in this study is interpretative since it focuses on finding meaning for consumer behavior in the context of the sharing economy phenomenon. Interpretivism focuses on understanding and explaining human interactions, meanings and processes that occur in a real-world setting (Gephart, 2004, p. 455). Since interpretive research philosophy aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, it is typically enabled by qualitative research and a relatively small sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007, p. 168).



The study will be approached in a deductive manner. First, a theoretical framework will be developed based on an in-depth analysis of prior research and academic literature. Next, the thesis will aim to explore the phenomenon through empirical research and thus extend the existing research. Finally, the theoretical and empirical research will be analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and to detect any similarities or contradictions.

### **3.2 Data collection and analysis**

The research method selected for this study is qualitative research and the data will be collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are considered appropriate for this study as they allow interviewees to share their thoughts freely with some guidance from the researcher and therefore are flexible in nature (Denscombe, 2014). The interviews will follow an interview guide that has been prepared prior to the interviews, since this allows the interviewer to clarify questions and keep the discussion on the topic. The interview guide can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

The empirical data collected from the interviews is considered primary data as it is collected specifically for the purpose of this thesis (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The semi-structured interviews are conducted as individual interviews. The reason for selecting individual interviews rather than focus groups is that when studying consumers' motives and attitudes, it is important that their responses are not influenced by the opinions and ideas of others (Mariampolski, 2001).

In order to analyze the data collected through the interview method, the interviewer must be able to collect the information that emerges during the interviews. Various ways to log interview discussions include voice recordings, video recordings and written notes taken a separate observer or moderator (Mariampolski, 2001). Considering that in the interview setting only the interviewee and interviewer will be present, the option

of taking notes is ruled out as following the interview guide and discussion requires the interviewer's full attention. Of the remaining two methods, the voice recording is considered the most appropriate considering the purpose of this study.

An interview can only be recorded with the consent of the interviewee, so all interviewees were asked for permission to record their interview before conducting one. Interview recordings in audio format are often transcribed into written form, to notes or transcripts (Mariampolski, 2001). The analysis of the data in this thesis began with listening to the recordings and transcribing them into transcripts. Following that, the answers were further analyzed and grouped by themes. Finally, the results were discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of the study.

The author used thematic analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis refers to the process in which patterns or themes are identified from qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method consists of six steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) identifying themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing a report. The first step in this study consisted of transcribing the interviews and reading them through to gain a general idea of their content. Following this, the interview data was coded based on a pre-existing coding framework to provide analysis of the specific aspects of the data the study was most interested in exploring. These initial codes were formed deductively based on the interview guide and concepts from literature. Furthermore, these codes were identified from the transcripts by utilizing the highlighting feature of the text editor to highlight the most relevant passages. The third step consisted of reviewing the codes in order to search for themes that emerge from the data. After identifying these themes, the fourth step was to make sure that the themes match with the data and the purpose of the study. Following the reviewing of the themes, the fifth step was all about naming the themes and ensuring that they reflect accordingly with the codes and their categorizations. The sixth, and final step, consists of producing a

detailed and organized summary of these themes along with appropriate quotes from the interview transcripts to support and illustrate the identified themes.

An example of the deductive approach can be seen in how the data has been presented in relation to the value-based drivers identified in the literature. For more detailed coding of the motives related to consumers renting an accommodation via peer-to-peer digital platform the author followed the conceptual framework by Kozlenkova et al. (2021), which identifies the following four value-based drivers: 1) utilitarian, 2) hedonic, 3) social, and 4) sustainability. Thus, when an interviewee stated, "They are quite affordable in my opinion, or at least there are more options in terms of prices", this was coded as utilitarian value. In contrast, when an interviewee said, "Authenticity is the main thing for me... and I often consider even more important than the price", the author coded this as hedonic value. Moreover, when an interview mentioned that "I haven't thought much about it... I'm not aware of the figures, how much more sustainable it is to stay in an Airbnb compared to a hotel", it was coded as sustainability value.

### **3.3 Selection of interviewees**

Interviewees had to meet certain criteria in order to be eligible to take part in the study. The main criterion was that the interviewees must have prior experience of participating in the sharing economy and Airbnb accommodation in particular when travelling abroad. Other criteria were that the participants were young Finnish consumers. The study exclusively recruited Finns as interviewees to gain a focused perspective on sharing economy participation within a single culture. The aim was also to find interviewees from both genders and experience from various types of travel destinations to enhance validity of the data.

The interviews were conducted in March and April 2023. Interviewees were selected based on their consumer behavior, so that they would be able to provide insight on

what motivates them to participate in sharing economy and accommodation sharing. 12 individuals were invited to take part in the interviews. One of them was excluded because they did not fully match the criteria and the other interview was cancelled due to some scheduling constraints. The final number of interviews that were conducted was 10.

All interviewees were Finnish citizens from four different cities in Finland. Two of the interviewees live abroad because they study in Amsterdam and Copenhagen. There were in total 10 interviews with six females and four males interviewed. The majority of the interviewees were employed at the time of the interviews. The interviews lasted between 25 to 39 minutes, with the average of 31 minutes. The table below presents the background information of the interviewees as well as the duration of the interviews.

**Table 1.** Details of the interviewees.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Interview duration (min)</b>
A	25	Female	Tampere	Student, part-time employed	:39
B	26	Female	Espoo	Employed	:32
C	25	Female	Amsterdam	Student, part-time employed	:26
D	26	Male	Espoo	Employed	:35
E	25	Male	Copenhagen	Student	:25
F	25	Female	Espoo	Employed	:30
G	26	Female	Helsinki	Employed	:26
H	26	Male	Helsinki	Student, part-time employed	:33
I	25	Female	Espoo	Employed	:34
J	27	Male	Helsinki/Turku	Employed	:27

### **3.4 Reliability and validity**

In academic research, the foundation of a study is typically based on past research in the same field and/or similar topic, or at the very least referencing prior research. Thus, it is critical that all studies are carried out in a way that ensures that their conclusions are reliable, so that they can be used as a basis for future studies. This should be taken into account in the research process by considering the reliability and validity aspects of the study. Reliability of a study signifies the consistency of the findings, indicating that the research should be repeatable and should produce comparable findings (Weathington, Cunningham & Pittenger, 2012, p. 57).

Compared to quantitative research, the process of data collection and analysis in qualitative research may be more challenging to replicate consistently (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Due to the qualitative nature of this study the interactions in an interview setting cannot be repeated in the exact same way from one interview to another and the data collection and analysis involves subjective interpretation of data. However, the reliability of this research was improved by creating an interview guide prior to the interviews and following the same interview guide in all interviews. In the interview setting, the researcher adopted a neutral stance to avoid influencing the interviewees and their answers.

In terms of reliability, it is crucial to have an adequate number of interviewees who meet the established criteria for the target group (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015, p. 305). For this study, ten interviews were conducted, and all nine interviewees met the criteria set for them based on age, nationality and their previous consumption behavior regarding the sharing economy and Airbnb. Although this is a sufficient number of interviews to provide data for the analysis, increasing the number of interviews would have provided more reliable results. Nonetheless, due to limitations in time and resources related to the scope of a master's thesis, there were no more interviews conducted.

Although there are conflicting views on whether the term validity should be used in qualitative research, it is typically used to imply that the "report or description is correct." (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015, p. 305). In other words, the conclusions drawn from the study should clearly outline the relationship between the concepts and findings of the study. To ensure validity in this study, questions were formulated in a manner that interviewees could understand them accurately, allowing for relevant answers to be obtained. Furthermore, using the same interview questions throughout all interviews allows the comparison of the interviewees' answers in order to draw valid conclusions. To enhance the validity of the study, some questions were refined after the first interview and the order of the questions was adjusted slightly to create a more coherent interview guide. The responses from the first interview were incorporated into the analysis, since no major changes were made to the guide, and the subsequent 9 interviews followed the same guide to ensure consistency.

## 4 Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the research based on the qualitative interviews. In the following sub-chapters, the findings of the interviews are presented by themes. The first sub-chapter determines what meanings young Finnish consumers associate with travelling and accommodation. In the following sub-chapter, the participants' previous experiences of Airbnb and sharing economy platforms are discussed. The third sub-chapter presents the findings regarding the motives for accommodation sharing in regard to utilitarian, social, hedonic, and sustainability considerations. The following sub-chapter focuses on describing how interviewees perceive the safety and risk factor of peer-to-peer sharing and the final sub-chapter the impact of the travel destination on the choice of consumption mode.

### 4.1 Meanings related to travel and accommodation

As international travel is at the heart of this study determining what meanings are associated with travelling and what young consumers consider to be important when selecting accommodation while travelling abroad helps to understand what motivates consumers to select an Airbnb accommodation and participate in the sharing economy. At the beginning of the interview, interviewees were asked to describe their travel habits and what travelling means to them. The opportunity to discover new cultures, meet new people and learn new things was one of the meanings that emerged in the majority of the interviewees' responses.

*"I love seeing new places and meeting new people and above all either seeing or experiencing all kinds of new things such as different cultures and food." (Interviewee I)*

*"I like to learn about new places, people and cultures by seeing the local way of living and getting to know new people there [in the travel destination] and that is probably one of the reasons solo travel is so close to my heart." (Interviewee A)*



*"It means a sense of freedom and in a way an opportunity to get to know people from other countries with different cultures, outlooks and ways of doing things." (Interviewee B)*

The sense of freedom expressed in one of the previous answers was also evident in some of the other responses when interviewees were asked what travelling means to them.

*"Freedom, experiences and joy of the soul." (Interviewee H)*

*"The first thing that comes to mind, if I had to sum it up in one word or a couple of words maybe, it would be something like freedom and possibilities." (Interviewee A)*

Some interviewees also mentioned travelling to be mind-opening.

*"It [travelling] enables you to broaden your view of the world a bit, so you're not just in your own bubble" (Interviewee C)*

*"It broadens your mind and gives you a perspective on things that are different in different parts of the world and so on, so I think it's interesting." (Interviewee I)*

In addition to the above-mentioned meanings, some interviewees also mentioned that they associate travelling with getting away from their responsibilities and everyday lives.

*"It [travelling] also means relaxing and taking a break from everyday life" (Interviewee C)*

*"I also like to travel because no matter what kind of holiday it is, it's nice to get away from my everyday life by going somewhere else." (Interviewee B)*

*"It's a break from everyday life for me. We don't have a cottage in Finland, so travelling abroad offers a break from everyday life and*

*enables me to really get away from work, routines and obligations."*  
(Interviewee G)

Next, the questions guided the discussion towards the process of selecting accommodation and the features and attributes of an accommodation interviewees consider the most important, regardless of the type of accommodation they choose. The answers to this question were rather dispersed and interviewees approached the question from various angles. Some interviewees approached the question of the accommodation selection process with a specific provider, app, or site in mind.

*"I must admit that I always check Airbnb first, but if I don't find anything that I would like right away, or even if I would, just to see all the options, I also check hotels, booking.com, etc."* (Interviewee C)

*"So far it has followed a somewhat familiar pattern where I usually start the process by looking up local hostels through the Hostelworld app."*  
(Interviewee A)

*"I usually check a few different platforms like Airbnb and hotels.com, maybe TripAdvisor, booking.com and then choose the best one from there."*  
(Interviewee E)

Others approached the question primarily through the purpose of their travel and its impact on the type of accommodation, rather than a specific site or search engine.

*"It depends on the purpose of the trip. If I just want to go on a relaxing vacation, for example to enjoy some warm weather, I'll start looking at hotels, but if I want to see more of the local culture, I might start looking at Airbnbs."* (Interviewee G)

*"Generally speaking, my process starts with choosing the travel destination and by basically choosing whether to go on a city holiday or a so-called beach holiday. If I end up going on a city holiday, I've just started to search where to find the cheapest flights and what is the cheapest accommodation or the otherwise the best, not always the cheapest. Then again, if I've decided to go on a beach holiday, so then I've most often gone to those TUI,*

*Aurinkomatkat and Tjäreborg websites to find the best holiday package deals.” (Interviewee I)*

The factors influencing the choice of accommodation that were brought up the most during the interviews included price, location, and reviews. A few of the interviewees referred to their current life situation when justifying the importance of the price of the accommodation.

*“...at this point in life [recent graduate], the price level is still a significant factor when deciding which option to choose.” (Interviewee F)*

*“In this life situation [student and part-time employee] the price is a very important factor.” (Interviewee H)*

Other price-related factors that emerged from the interviews were cost-effectiveness, value for money as well as the influence of their travel companion has on the budget.

*“...depends quite a lot on the budget, but in general, of course, the best possible value for money.” (Interviewee E)*

*“I'm usually going on a trip with someone, so it [accommodation] has to fit into the budget, so of course the price will impact the decision in that sense.” (Interviewee I)*

*“It [accommodation] should be as cost-effective as possible, because usually the accommodation serves mainly as a place to sleep, and I prefer to spend money on experiences in other things while travelling.” (Interviewee G)*

Location was one of the attributes that came up in one way or another in most of the interviews. Several interviewees wanted the location of their accommodation to be within walking distance of the main attractions and services if possible. In some cases, interviewees were willing to compromise on a central location if the available transport options were considered to be easily accessible.

*“The location is really important, including the safety of the location as well as accessibility. For example, I like to walk a lot and I like that the accommodation is at such a distance that you can walk to most places.”  
(Interviewee G)*

*“I like to be able to walk to places, especially if the holiday takes place in a city. Then again if I’m thinking about a longer trip, the location should be either close by or within easy reach of the central locations.” (Interviewee B)*

Reviews were also seen as an important factor influencing the choice of accommodation by several interviewees. Reviews are perceived as more reliable than the accommodation's own descriptions and they also make it easier to compare alternatives.

*“Another thing is that I read a lot of reviews” (Interviewee B)*

*“Reviews are quite important, because they give you a pretty realistic idea of the accommodation, at least in my opinion. The accommodation's own descriptions can be a bit embellished, but reviews are usually pretty honest and that's why I read quite a lot of them.” (Interviewee I)*

Other attributes mentioned by interviewees included privacy, general cleanliness and safety, but these factors were individual experiences rather than views expressed by a larger number of interviewees. This section of the findings focused on the process and factors that lead to the choice of accommodation regardless of the type of accommodation they choose. In a subsequent chapter of the findings the factors and motivations that influence specifically the choice of Airbnb will be reviewed.

## **4.2 Experience with Airbnb and other sharing economy platforms**

In the second interview theme, the aim was to guide the discussion from a more general perspective to travelling, accommodation and travel related consumer behavior towards sharing economy and Airbnb. The interviews revealed that not many of the consumers interviewed were actually familiar with the concept of the

sharing economy, although all interviewees had experience of at least one sharing economy site or platform. Four of the interviewees said they were familiar with the term, four of them said they had heard of it but wished to know more and the remaining two said they were not familiar with the term at all.

Interviewees were asked to describe their previous experience of using Airbnb. When selecting the interviewees, the aim was to find interviewees with experience of different types of travel destinations where they have stayed at an Airbnb. A list of travel destinations where interviewees had used Airbnb for accommodation is shown in the table below.

**Table 2.** Description of interviewees' prior experience with Airbnb.

Interviewee	Airbnb activity (times used)	Countries where Airbnb was used
A	3	Australia, Spain, Austria
B	3	Netherlands, Sri Lanka, Sweden
C	3	Belgium, France, Croatia
D	7	Hungary, Croatia, Montenegro, Portugal, Amsterdam, Greece
E	2	USA, Slovakia
F	3	France, Finland
G	4	Portugal, Estonia, USA, Norway
H	2	Spain, Netherlands
I	2	Denmark, Greece
J	4	Germany, Hongkong, USA, Czech Republic

The experiences of the interviewees had been mostly good, with only a few exceptions.

*"My experiences have been super good, everything has worked out just as agreed and the host has been easy to contact and the apartments have been just as they were in the photos so there hasn't been any scams, so I have nothing but good things to say." (Interviewee I)*

*"Good experience, we got a really nice apartment in the city center at a good price. It was very convenient with many people staying at the same accommodation and cleaning was also included." (Interviewee H)*

In contrast to the majority of positive experiences, the negative experiences were associated with the host's behavior in some way or another.

*"I've had nothing but good experiences, except once when I was in Belgium the Airbnb host sent me quite a few messages afterwards. First in the Airbnb app and then on WhatsApp, asking me how I was doing and stuff like that, so eventually I had to block them." (Interviewee C)*

*"This one time there were some problems with the Airbnb, so it was quite annoying. We had bought the early check in and the previous guests had bought the late check out. We couldn't get there at the time of the early check in even though this had been agreed in advance and the extra service was already paid for." (Interviewee A)*

Interviewees were also asked if they had experience with any other sharing economy services. Uber was by far the platform that appeared most often in these discussions. Some other examples also came up in the interviewees' answers.

*"Yes, I have experience, for example, here in Copenhagen they use quite a lot of SHARE NOW that is basically cars in the city and you can just book it and travel where you want to go, it's quite widely used here." (Interviewee E)*

*"I have been a passenger in one of those shared cars, but I have never used it myself. I've always been like wow, I'll have to remember that for future reference." (Interviewee B)*

*"One thing that came to mind now is these rental platforms, similiarly to renting apartments on Vuokraovi, there's this website called Nettivuokraus or something, where you can rent, for example, big lawn mowers for a day or two." (Interviewee H)*

Moreover, two interviewees mentioned that they had tried couchsurfing. However, according to the definition used in this thesis, it is not directly classified as part of the

sharing economy, as there is no monetary exchange taking place. On the other hand, some definitions also include forms of sharing such as couchsurfing, where there is no financial compensation involved.

### **4.3 Motives for accommodation sharing**

In the literature review, the motives for sharing economy participation were categorized into four value-based drivers which include utilitarian, social, hedonic, and sustainability values. From a self-determination theory perspective, consumers seek utilitarian values to serve their extrinsic motivations whereas social, hedonic, and sustainability values are sought in order to meet their intrinsic motivations (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). In the following subchapters the findings of the study are compared to the motivations and drivers proposed in the literature review with the aim to deepen the understanding of the motivational factors that drive consumers to participate in the sharing economy and accommodation sharing.

#### **4.3.1 Utilitarian motives**

According to the literature review, both cost and convenience have been suggested as utilitarian motives for sharing economy participation. In this study, when asked about the attributes that have convinced the interviewees to select Airbnb accommodation in the past and what kind of value they gain from staying at an Airbnb, 9 out of 10 interviewees mentioned price to be a factor in their decision making. Price-related factors that emerged from the interviews included the fact that Airbnb is perceived to be more affordable than other alternatives, it is considered to offer more options in terms of price and some interviewees described it to be cost-effective. These findings reflect accordingly with the existing literature, since one of the most prominent motives for sharing in relation to utilitarian considerations was suggested to be cost benefits (Hamari et al., 2016; Liang et al., 2018; Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2016).

*“I would say that probably the first reason, the main reason in all cases has been money, in other words, the price.” (Interviewee A)*

However, cost benefits were not the primary motive for all, and for some it only came up at a later stage when discussing the motives.

*“It is at least partially influenced by the price, since they [Airbnb accommodations] may be cheaper than a hotel, at least some of them.” (Interviewee I)*

*“They are quite affordable in my opinion, or at least there are more options in terms of prices.” (Interviewee C)*

The majority of the interviewees mentioned more than one factor that had influenced their decision of selecting an Airbnb accommodation. Moreover, there were also interviewees who considered cost benefits to be the only value-adding aspect of an Airbnb accommodation compared to alternative accommodation.

*“Well, I don't feel like I get much added value from Airbnb other than just the financial value and possibly a better location, in other words "more bang for your buck"... I see it as a risk that if the door doesn't open with the code or there's a problem with it, I see there many potential risk factors, especially when you go abroad for a trip and want everything to run smoothly... but the price is an added value and it is perhaps the only thing that comes to mind.” (Interviewee H)*

As discussed above, convenience has also been suggested as a utilitarian motive for participating in the sharing economy. The interviews revealed some motives specific to accommodation sharing, which can be classified under the category of convenience. These include, for example location, the fact that the whole group can stay in the same accommodation as well as amenities such as kitchen and cooking facilities. All interviewees mentioned location as an important factor when discussing factors that influence either Airbnb or the choice of accommodation in general. However, what each consumer considers important in terms of location can vary, as the quotes below demonstrate.



*"Well, the hotels are usually so centrally located that I've sometimes wanted to stay somewhere a little more close to nature, for example in Sri Lanka, without it being some kind of holiday resort. (Interviewee B)"*

*"I'd rather choose an Airbnb apartment in a more central location than a hotel somewhere further away" (Interviewee F)*

Another functional benefit of Airbnb accommodation, which was brought up in the interviews, was that everyone fits in the same accommodation. This was justified on grounds such as practicality.

*"One good example is perhaps Valencia, where there were eight of us, so it was pretty clear that it was going to be some kind of group accommodation arrangement." (Interviewee H)*

*"If you're thinking of going with a big group, it's probably much more practical to have an Airbnb than several hotel rooms or one huge hotel room" (Interviewee B)*

Some discussions also revealed that the lower price obtained by accommodating a larger group of people in an Airbnb may sometimes play a mediating role in the selection of this type of accommodation.

*"Perhaps the three biggest reasons are cost-effectiveness, location and the fact that a larger group has been able to share the same accommodation and usually the cost-effectiveness is emphasized in situations where there is a larger group of people staying at the same place." (Interviewee G)*

*"Especially when there are more of us travelling somewhere I feel that it just makes more sense both financially and in terms of getting everyone to stay in the same place rather than everyone having their own room in a hotel." (Interviewee A)*

The availability of cooking facilities in an accommodation was also seen as an important motive towards choosing Airbnb accommodation. Some interviewees explained that this was considered especially important if they were travelling for a longer period of time. Similarly to accommodating everyone in the same place also the need for a kitchen

and cooking amenities was partly justified by the fact that the possibility to prepare your own meals saves money.

*"One really big factor for me is the possibility to cook so that if you go on a trip for a longer period of time, it will help you save a lot of money when not eating every meal in a restaurant." (Interviewee G)*

*"If you have a larger group and want to manage costs a little, Airbnb is a good option, because you can make breakfasts together and you don't have to eat out every night." (Interviewee J)*

*"About a year ago we were in Bratislava and decided to stay in an Airbnb so we can do schoolwork and have all the WIFI and kitchen etc. so you get the whole package and don't have to think about food because you can cook there in the apartment." (Interviewee E)*

#### **4.3.2 Hedonic motives**

As discussed in the literature review, when it comes to making purchase decisions, consumers often consider both functional and hedonic motives before making their purchase decision. While functional motives refer to practical aspects like price and location, hedonic motives are related to the experience and emotions associated with the product or service. The opportunity to stay in unique and authentic properties was one of the hedonic motives toward selecting an Airbnb accommodation that was brought up in the interviews.

*"I probably enjoy browsing them [Airbnb accommodations] a little bit more because I think that they are more interesting due to them being so unique when compared to for example hotel rooms that are pretty much the same anywhere you go." (Interviewee H)*

*"Authenticity is the main thing for me, and it has become something that I often consider even more important than the price." (Interviewee E)*

Some interviewees explained that in some cases the accommodation itself could be seen as an experience if it was perceived to be particularly nice or, for example, in a particular location or type of environment.

*"In Phoenix it was more about wanting to get somewhere as nice as possible and that the Airbnb would be an experience in itself. The one we found and ended up staying in was really cool and it was chosen basically because of what kind of place it was." (Interviewee E)*

*"You can have more of a special experience in the sense that you get to dive a little deeper into the local area and lifestyle, as opposed to staying in a hotel, which is usually located more in the so-called tourist area" (Interviewee D)*

In some cases, individual elements that are perceived as fun or appropriate for the moment may also influence the decision to choose a particular type of accommodation.

*"Our Airbnb in Vienna had a bathtub which was really awesome and to be honest we ended up choosing this particular apartment largely because of the tub, because we were so exhausted after the interrail trip and all the travelling and just wanted to get in the tub." (Interviewee A)*

*"They are, after all, someone's home or at least their apartment, which they have decided to decorate in a certain way. When browsing the app, I might have found some cool things that are in someone's apartment, and I would definitely say that I'm more excited to browse them like "oh there's a pool" and stuff like that." (Interviewee A)*

### **4.3.3 Social motives**

Social factors have also been proposed as a motive for participating in the sharing economy. However, the qualitative data collected from interviews did not indicate that social factors would have directly influenced the decision to stay at an Airbnb, but some interviewees perceived the interaction with the host as a value-adding factor. Examples

of these value-adding factors mentioned by the interviewees include local knowledge, useful tips, and a more personalized experience through keeping contact with the host.

*"Well, at least in Mykonos, our host was almost like our local guide, he gave us all kinds of tips, from places to eat to beaches and transportation and all kinds of things like that. Considering that he gets nothing extra for giving us these so-called services it was super nice." (Interviewee I)*

*"Sometimes they [Airbnb hosts] have good tips that they share and they kind of assist you throughout your trip. Often it may also include other services such as a ride somewhere or restaurant reservations, which you may not necessarily receive from a basic hotel." (Interviewee G)*

*"One of the nice things about Airbnb is that if you happen to have a nice host, it's nice to interact with them. For example, the last time I was in Nice, the host whose apartment I was staying in was really nice and they even came over to say hello. It adds a more personal touch to it." (Interviewee F)*

*"I especially remember that in Barcelona when I handled our Airbnb booking the host was really nice and very much in contact in a way that I could somehow describe as something like good customer service even. He was more in contact with me than any hotel ever was so that really impressed me and on top of that he was really helpful with sharing all the tips on where to go and which places to visit." (Interviewee A)*

Other interviewees mentioned that they had never even met any of their Airbnb hosts and other practical matters had been arranged in other ways. Another factor that came up in the interviews that could be classified as a social factor was privacy. A few interviewees mentioned that they have a preference for a certain level of privacy.

*"Maybe the privacy aspect as well. Hostels for example are not an option for me, because I like to have my own room and my own space so that I feel comfortable." (Interviewee H)*

*"Peacefulness also, the fact that you don't have to be in the middle of all these people and can enjoy your own space and privacy" (Interviewee E)*

*"There are no other people staying there at the same time, so it suits a Finnish person like me just fine" (Interviewee F)*

#### **4.3.4 Sustainability motives**

One of the proposed motives for sharing economy participation in existing research is sustainability. For example, Hamari et al. (2016) suggest that partaking in the sharing economy is seen as a sustainable alternative and sustainability as a motive is found to be associated with one's ideology and norms. According to the literature review some consumers use sharing economy platforms to limit their consumption due to sustainability related matters (Seegebarth et al., 2016) and like to present their choice of consumption mode with the purpose of advocating their ideological interests (Bardhi & Eckhart, 2012). However, this did not occur in the discussions; interviewees did not feel compelled to promote their sustainable consumption habits and seemed to perceive other factors more important when selecting a short-term accommodation.

In the interviews, when asked about the degree to which sustainability has affected their decision of their accommodation type, the answers of the interviewees were fairly unanimous that it has not had a major impact on their consumption choice. Some interviewees openly admitted that they had not considered the issue, and some stated that they had not given it much thought in the past.

*"I would love to say that it [sustainability] has, but in my case, unfortunately, it hasn't had much of an impact, so... I can honestly say that when I have chosen this accommodation type, the reason has not been environmental reasons." (Interviewee I)*

*"Not really, I have to say I haven't really thought about it." (Interviewee E)*

Some interviewees did feel that they simply do not know enough about the sustainability impact of accommodation or know how to compare, for example, the environmental impact of different types of accommodation.

*"Well, I can honestly say that I've often wondered if it in fact is more sustainable, but I've never sought an answer to it. I can't say that it has been a factor in my purchase decision. The idea may have crossed my mind, but it hasn't influenced my decision." (Interviewee G)*

*"In some accommodations it says green option, so I've paid attention to that, but then I've instantly had some question marks about why this one is supposed to be greener than the other one. I've just noticed that when you look at them [accommodation options], they've tried to make sustainability a competitive advantage, but I'd say that with the information I currently have, I wouldn't be able to choose or really look critically at what would be a more environmentally friendly or more responsible choice." (Interviewee B)*

*"Well, I haven't thought much about it. I'm not aware of the figures, how much more sustainable it is to stay in an Airbnb compared to a hotel" (Interviewee H)*

Some interviewees mentioned that they feel that the sustainability aspect of their trip is influenced to a greater extent by other factors than accommodation, such as the mode of transport used to travel to a destination.

*"Maybe it's more about how you get there where I take it [sustainability] into account, like whether I take the train or fly, but I don't know, I haven't really thought about accommodation in that way." (Interviewee C)*

*"I don't see the accommodation as such a huge factor in all of this when compared to many other things such as the travelling itself." (Interviewee H)*

As discussed in the literature review, it has been suggested that the sustainability rationale for sharing economy most often is that it enables the utilization of underutilized assets and thereby reduces the need for new goods or facilities (Schor, 2016). However, the interviews revealed that this is not always the case, especially when it comes to Airbnb accommodation. Some interviewees pointed out that the

Airbnbs they have stayed in have seemed like they have been run in a rather professional and commercial manner. In many cases these apartments could not have been classified as temporarily idle capacity but rather properties that are explicitly intended for Airbnb use.

*"It seems to me that these three places that I've been to were all places that were bought specifically for the purpose of serving as an Airbnb."  
(Interviewee A)*

*"In Croatia, the host had two identical apartments available for rent that were just decorated in different colours. It was clearly just for the purpose of Airbnb and they were not the kind of apartments that the hosts themselves would live in."  
(Interviewee C)*

When asked about sustainability and its impact on the choice of accommodation, the interviewees' responses mainly focused on environmental factors, but individual responses also highlighted societal factors such as helping locals and local communities.

*"The way I see it [Airbnb] is that it provides some income for an individual person versus a hotel chain, for example."  
(Interviewee B)*

*"I have also used the Airbnb app for booking these experiences such as walking tours offered by local entrepreneurs and things like that."  
(Interviewee C)*

#### **4.4 Perceptions of the safety and riskiness of peer-to-peer services**

Research has shown that trust is a crucial factor in the success of the sharing economy platforms, since they rely on individuals to share their resources with others. Interviewees' perceptions of the safety and riskiness of peer-to-peer services were very much divided in this empirical study. Some said that they feel that there are more risks involved compared to a more traditional form of consumption, while others said that

they did not really think it was any more risky or unsafe than other options. Some interviewees also stated that they had not really thought about the issue.

*"I personally feel that they are less safe than a hotel and there may be certain risks involved. I've heard about these cases where guests have discovered cameras in some Airbnb apartments. These types of cases don't really enhance the feeling of safety, but in my case, I have never felt afraid of anything related to the safety and security of the apartments." (Interviewee H)*

*"I don't see them as a riskier option. Usually, if I take Airbnb as an example, I first check the reviews and if the host has been a user for a while and has a lot of reviews, I have no reason not to trust them." (Interviewee G)*

*"I mean, I've never thought about it as not being safe. I've also used a platform called couch surfing, where we went to stay with a person and we didn't pay anything for it, so it could be considered a bit more dangerous, because in the end the person who accommodates us doesn't get anything from it." (Interviewee E)*

Interview C mentioned that reviews are an integral part of their decision-making process. Several other interviewees also emphasized the importance of reviews in peer-to-peer sharing.

*"It depends quite a lot on the reviews the host and accommodation has received" (Interviewee C)*

*"When I have booked an accommodation, I have favored hosts who have accommodated people before or have been granted the superhost badge, because this makes me trust that everything will work as expected." (Interviewee F)*

The support of the underlying platform and company was also perceived as a trust-building factor in peer-to-peer sharing.

*"Then again if you think about Airbnb, there is a company that operates in the background and maybe in a way it's the company that I trust to resolve any issues if something goes wrong." (Interviewee C)*



*“The fact that there is a well-known intermediary, in this case the platform, increases the sense of security and if any problems occur, they can be handled through the platform.” (Interviewee J)*

#### **4.5 The effect of country of origin and travel destination**

As Airbnb is a platform that is also used when travelling abroad, this study also examines the impact of the travel destination and destination country on the choice of consumption mode. Most of the interviewees explained that the travel destination influences their purchase decision. However, the reasons for how it may impact their consumption were varied. Several interviewees mentioned that cultural differences and security concerns may also influence the choice of accommodation in different countries and destinations.

*“Cultural differences play a big part and then also as mentioned earlier whether you have been to this destination before or not.” (Interviewee G)*

*“I often consider things like safety and maybe the political situation or what I've heard from other people and I would say that there are quite a lot of differences between different countries.” (Interviewee C)*

*“Especially in some of those higher risk countries and bigger cities I probably would not dare to book an Airbnb.” (Interviewee A)*

*“Well I think it [Airbnb] is easy to choose in Europe and why not in Asia or the US, but somewhere in the Middle East I would rather go to a hotel.” (Interviewee B)*

*“Maybe a country or region that I don't know so much about in general is one where I wouldn't dare to go to an Airbnb, but western countries in general are ones that I trust more and where it doesn't really matter which one you take.” (Interviewee H)*

*“In a destination which has big cultural differences, I maybe wouldn't dare to practice consumer-to-consumer consumption in the same way because I do not know what the general rules and ways of doing things are. The safety of the*

*destination also. For example, if there is a destination or area which you are going to stay at that is known to be a little less safe, I would not go to an Airbnb, because e I feel that maybe the hotel brings a sense of security in a way.” (Interviewee G)*

Some responses highlighted the juxtaposition between Europe and other countries in how, for example, cultural differences were perceived and taken into account when considering alternative forms of consumption, such as sharing economy participation.

*“European countries, for example, are quite familiar and I consider them safe, because I'm European myself. Then again, I find that some African countries for example, or some Asian countries, are destinations where I would have some reservations regarding for example staying at an Airbnb. This is probably because they are not as familiar to me, and I feel that I might have to take more things into account.” (Interviewee C)*

*“I consider Europe and European countries to be safer in general so I would say that there are differences in the way I see different countries and it certainly may impact the purchase decision, depending on the destination, especially if the destination would be elsewhere [not in Europe]” (Interviewee D)*

*“Well, if you're travelling somewhere in Europe, I'd say that most of the areas are safe or at least safe enough.” (Interviewee J)*

In most cases, the destination country was perceived to guide the purchase decision. However, one interviewee also said that it does not have a significant impact on them, and another interviewee explained that they think that it is not so clear-cut. Interviewee I emphasized that the decision is influenced not only by the destination itself but also by so various other factors, such as the travel company and their previous knowledge and experience of the destination.

*“At least with Airbnb, I've never experienced that a country could influence my decision to stay or not to stay in one. I think it is pretty reliable or at least I have the impression that it's a really reliable solution for accommodation, so I don't nowadays really have any specific continents or countries where I wouldn't dare to stay at one.” (Interviewee E)*

*“Maybe my first instinct would be to say that I wouldn’t go to an Airbnb in some African country, for example, but then again, when you think about it, it’s not always that straightforward. It would depend so much on the travel company and whether there is someone who is familiar with the destination or country and has prior experience of it and things like that.” (Interviewee I)*

One interviewee said that, in their case, the destination had influenced their choice of accommodation in the sense that there were limited options available. Another interviewee also mentioned, in relation to the availability of accommodation, that in their experience the destination also influences the choice of accommodation in the sense that not all countries tend to use the same booking sites or platforms and they may for example have some of their own local operators that they tend to favor.

*“Well, for example, if I go somewhere that is not located in the city, like more of a quiet spot where nature is the key, there might not be hotels available. I’m soon travelling to Portugal and there is this place which is by the beach that I want to go, but there are no hotels in that area, so it’s really nice that there is other option such as Airbnbs available.” (Interviewee B)*

*“For example, when I was in Portugal, I noticed that Airbnb was really expensive. I don’t know what it was about, but probably in some countries they are used to using a different platform and at least in Portugal Airbnb was considered more of a high-end platform and then for example Idealista and these other platforms were much more reasonably priced. So of course, you have to do a little research before you go, but I guess it always depends a little bit on where you go to and what the locals are used to and where to find the best solution.” (Interviewee E)*

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter discusses the key findings of the empirical research in relation to the theoretical framework presented earlier in the study. Furthermore, the chapter aims to answer the research questions of the study.

### **5.1 Determining the motives for sharing economy participation**

According to several studies, one key question in consumer behavior research is whether consumers' behavior is governed by intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. From a self-determination theory perspective, consumers seek utilitarian values to serve their extrinsic motivations whereas social, hedonic, and sustainability values are sought in order to meet their intrinsic motivations (Kozlenkova et al., 2021).

In current literature the most acknowledged motive for sharing in regard to utilitarian factors is cost benefits (Hamari et al., 2016; Liang et al., 2018; Möhlmann, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2016). The empirical findings based on the interviews reflect accordingly, since nine out of ten interviewees mentioned price-related factors as a factor guiding their purchase decision when it comes to choosing a short-term accommodation while travelling abroad. However, cost benefits were not the primary motive for all participants and the majority of the interviewees mentioned more than one factor that had influenced their decision of selecting an Airbnb accommodation. Moreover, there were also some interviewees who considered the only benefit of an Airbnb rental over another type of accommodation to be its lower cost. This is in line with the study by Kozlenkova et al. (2021) which suggests that consumers who are price sensitive may find that the perceived value they obtain from the cost benefits is enough of a reason to participate in the sharing economy, since saving money can provide them satisfaction that outweighs any possible psychological hurdles.

Furthermore, the findings from the interviews also revealed that convenience may also play a role in selecting an Airbnb accommodation. Participants emphasized factors such

as location, group accommodation, and cooking amenities as convenient attributes of Airbnb. In fact, all interviewees mentioned location as an important factor when discussing factors that influence either Airbnb or the choice of accommodation in general. These results are consistent with previous research that has suggested convenience as a utilitarian motive for sharing economy participation (Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Moeller & Wittkowski, 2010). These findings are also in line with the prior research which indicates that convenience driven is one of the prevalent buying orientations that influences generation Z consumers (Thangavel et al., 2022).

The literature suggests that along with utilitarian value, hedonic value plays a significant role in consumer decision-making processes (Kozlenkova et al., 2021). Previous studies suggest that the hedonic value received from authentic, pleasurable experiences may act as a driver to participate in the sharing economy (Lang, 2018; Wu, Zeng & Xie, 2017). The findings of this study support this notion, indicating that the opportunity to stay in unique and authentic properties was a motivating factor for some participants. For the majority, however, this was not the main reason for choosing this alternative form of accommodation. Furthermore, one interviewee expressed that the perceived authenticity or uniqueness of the experience could outweigh the importance of price. This is contradicting previous research that suggests cost benefits to be the most prominent motive for sharing economy participation, but since this is an isolated finding, no major conclusions can be drawn from it. Other benefits that could be classified under hedonic value that were mentioned to potentially influence the choice of accommodation include the opportunity to dive deeper into the local area and lifestyle as well as individual elements that are perceived as fun or appropriate for the moment.

Social value has also been suggested as a motivating factor for participating in the sharing economy (Belk, 2014; Botsman & Rogers 2010). The potential social benefits highlighted in extant literature include broadening one's social network, experiencing meaningful interactions with others in the community and forming friendships between like-minded participants (Schor, 2016; Hamari et al., 2016; Kozlenkova et al., 2021). The

qualitative data collected from the interviews did not indicate that social factors would have directly influenced the participants decision to stay at an Airbnb. However, some participants perceived interaction with the host as a value-adding factor. Examples of these value-adding factors appreciated by the interviewees include local knowledge, useful tips, and a more personalized experience through keeping contact with the host. This reflects accordingly with the literature review, in a sense that Bardhi & Eckhardt (2012) suggest peer-to-peer sharing to be a more social form of consumption when communicating directly with one another and Kozlenkova et al. (2021) suggest that it has the potential to offer meaningful interaction encounters between users and providers of the platform.

Sustainability has also been proposed as a motive for sharing economy participation (Seegebarth et al., 2016). This has been justified, inter alia, on the grounds that sharing can decrease the demand for new goods and facilities and (Schor, 2016). Furthermore, Francis & Hoefel (2022) suggest that generation Z as consumers have more ethical consumption styles compared to other generations. However, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews contradicted the initial theoretical notion that sustainability would be a motivating factor for sharing economy participation by revealing that sustainability was not a major factor in the decision-making process of the participants. Most of the interviewees did not consider sustainability issues when choosing their accommodations. Some participants expressed that they have not given much thought to the sustainability impact of their accommodation in the past. A few of the interviewees did not feel compelled to prioritize sustainability in their accommodation choice, which was justified, for example, by the fact that the transport mode to the destination was viewed as a more significant factor with environmental impact. Others admitted to not knowing enough about the sustainability impact of accommodations to be able to compare options effectively.

Thangavel et al. (2022) argue value consciousness to be one of the prevalent buying orientations for generation Z along with the aforementioned convenience driven orientation. Researchers have also suggested that sustainability as a motive may be

linked to some consumers' willingness to present their choice of consumption mode with the purpose of advocating their values and ideological interests (Bardhi & Eckhart, 2012). Based on the interviews there was no indication that participants would have felt compelled to promote their sustainable consumer behavior and it appeared that the interviewees placed greater importance on other factors when making a decision about a short-term accommodation.

## **5.2 The role of trust in peer-to-peer sharing**

According to several studies, the success of the sharing economy platforms relies heavily on trust, which is a crucial factor in the sharing of resources between individuals (Kozlenkova et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Raisanen et al., 2021). The social exchange theory suggests that people participate in transactions involving social and material resources with the expectation of receiving beneficial outcomes and value in return (Emerson, 1976). Therefore, motivation research that is grounded in the social exchange theory argues that trust is a crucial element in people's motivation (Turner, 1987). In this study, trust was approached by exploring interviewees' perceptions of the safety and riskiness of peer-to-peer sharing. However, interviewees' perceptions of the safety and riskiness of the peer-to-peer sharing seemed to be somewhat divided. While some perceived these platforms to be inherently more risky or unsafe than traditional forms of accommodation, others said they did not see them as any riskier than other options.

Despite the divided perceptions on safety and risk of peer-to-peer sharing, the interviews revealed that reviews are an integral part of individuals' decision-making processes when using peer-to-peer sharing platforms. Reviews were considered to be a trust-building factor, as they provide information about the experiences of previous users and can increase trust in the platform and its users. The interviews also suggest that the support of the underlying platform and company was considered a trust-building factor as well. This is consistent with previous research that has demonstrated that users' trust in a platform may impact their tendency to trust other users of that

platform (Teubner et al., 2019). Mähönen et al. (2023) also suggest that the trustworthiness of a digital platform from the user perspective is evaluated based on how trustworthy the technology, other users and the company are perceived as.

### **5.3 The effect of cultural factors**

In this study, as the interviewees were young Finnish consumers, the literature review has examined Finnish culture through Hofstede's cultural dimensions and reviews it in relation to the extant research and literature on the relationship between cultural dimensions and sharing economy participation. One example of this in the light of previous research is that Lee et al. (2021) have found that uncertainty avoidance is a cultural dimension that has a negative impact on the propensity of consumers participating in Airbnb. According to Hofstede Insights (2021), Finland has a relatively high preference for avoiding uncertainty with a score of 59, which suggests that Finnish consumers might interpret the unknown elements linked to sharing economy participation as threat. The findings based on the interviews found mixed perceptions on this topic, as discussed in the previous section discussing the findings on trust.

Prior research has also suggested that the cultural dimension of indulgence would positively affect the attitude towards Airbnb (Lee et al., 2021). This argument was supported by Wallace, Cao and Wang (2022) who found that indulgence significantly affects the hedonic value of sharing, which subsequently influences the behavior of indulgent consumers to participate in the sharing economy. As reported by Hofstede Insights (2021), Finland is considered an indulgent country with a score of 57 on the indulgence scale. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews revealed that Finnish consumers consider both functional and hedonic motives before making purchase decisions. The opportunity to stay in unique and authentic properties was one of the key hedonic motives among the interviewees. They perceived Airbnb accommodations to be more interesting than hotels as they are often unique and different from one another. Furthermore, some interviewees noted that the



accommodation itself could be seen as an experience if it was perceived to be particularly nice, in a particular location or type of environment.

The study by Gupta et al. (2019) suggests that collectivism has a significant positive effect on consumer willingness to participate in the sharing economy. Similarly, Lee et al. (2021) found that individualism had a negative effect on the attitude towards peer-to-peer accommodation. Hofstede's individualism score for Finland indicates that is an individualistic society which would suggest that based on existing research Finnish consumers would not be the most optimal target group for sharing economy services. However, for this study, the potential impact of this dimension was perhaps mainly reflected in the fact some interviewees expressed a preference for a certain level of privacy. However, no conclusions can be drawn from this and, for example, a comparison between two cultures could provide a deeper insight into culture and its influence. Overall, the small sample size in this study makes it difficult to say what is specifically due to culture. There are so many other factors, such as demographics and individual differences, that influence consumer behavior. Moreover, some aspects for which Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been criticized in extant literature include their lack of attention to individual differences (Van Ness et al., 2005) as well as their broadness and inability to capture the complexity of cultural differences (Taras et al., 2010).

#### **5.4 The impact of travel destination on sharing economy participation**

The qualitative data collected from the interviews suggests that consumers' views of the travel destination or country may influence their decision on whether or not to participate in the sharing economy. The factors explaining this, which emerged most frequently in the interviews, included cultural differences and safety concerns. These findings align with the arguments presented in the literature review, which state that individuals' assessments of the country's overall image or country-of-origin image (COI) may affect their evaluations and buying behavior of specific products and services

(Nadeau et al., 2008) and that products and services produced in a foreign country may be perceived as risky by consumers (Elliott & Cameron, 1994).

Moreover, prior research suggests that some consumers may prefer purchasing from countries that share similarities with their own rather than from such countries that are culturally highly distinct or located far away (Khan et al., 2012; Zafer Erdogan & Uzkuurt, 2010). The findings of this study support this argument since several interviewees highlighted the differences in their perceptions towards Europe and the rest of the world regarding cultural differences and security concerns. However, the interviews also revealed some contradicting findings regarding the impact of destination country on the choice of accommodation. While some interviewees emphasized that the destination country plays a significant role in their decision-making process when choosing Airbnb over traditional accommodation providers, others did not perceive the destination to impact their decision as heavily. Additionally, some interviewees cited limited availability of accommodations as a reason for choosing Airbnb over other options. These findings are contradictory to the COI effect in a sense that not all individuals evaluate the quality of the accommodation based on their perception of the destination's overall image.

## 6 Conclusions

This chapter concludes the main findings of the study and presents its managerial implications. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research.

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate the motives behind sharing economy participation among young Finnish consumers. The topic was studied in the context of international travel and the aim was to explore not only the general motivations but also the influence of cultural factors and the destination country in the choice of an alternative short-term accommodation, such as an Airbnb. The findings from the empirical research supported and contradicted some of the existing literature on these topics. Cost benefits were found to be the most prominent factor guiding purchase decisions, followed closely by convenience factors such as location and group accommodation. When stressing the importance of cost benefits, many interviewees referred to their current life situation, with many of them having just recently entered the workforce, being recent graduates or working part-time alongside their studies. According to this study travelling in large groups and the willingness to stay in the same accommodation was found to be quite common among young consumers.

Hedonic value, such as the opportunity to stay in unique and authentic properties, also played a role in their decision for some participants. Social and sustainability factors seemed to be less influential in the decision-making process of young Finnish consumers. The study also found that trust was a crucial factor and reviews played a vital role in building trust as they were considered to provide trustworthy information about the prior experiences of other visitors and consumers using the platform. Cultural factors, such as Finland's high preference for avoiding uncertainty, were found to have mixed influences on sharing economy participation, with some interviewees perceiving sharing economy platforms to be riskier than traditional options while others did not share this view. The impact of travel destination on sharing economy participation was found to be influenced by cultural differences and safety concerns, but mainly only in

cases where the travel destination was perceived to be either culturally highly distinct or located far away.

### **6.1 Managerial and practical implications**

The findings of this study provide some managerial implications for businesses as well as individual service providers operating in the sharing economy. Sharing economy platforms and service providers utilizing these platforms should strive to understand the motivations of their target audience in order to effectively market their services. The findings of this study suggest that cost benefits and convenience are key utilitarian factors that motivate many consumers, while hedonic factors such as authentic experiences are also important to some. Based on this study companies should not assume that sustainability and social factors are key determinants in the decision-making process of consumers using sharing economy platforms. At least not in peer-to-peer accommodation rentals, as the majority of interviewees did not consider sustainability or social factors when choosing where to stay during their travels.

Moreover, platforms providing accommodation should design their marketing strategies to emphasize the most relevant benefits to their target audience, highlighting elements such as competitive prices, prime locations, and unique experiences. Similarly, individual service providers can highlight such elements when compiling a description for their own accommodation that they offer for others to use on the sharing economy platform. In addition, age specific consumption habits, such as travelling with a large group, are aspects that platforms and individual service providers should also consider highlighting in their marketing. Furthermore, segmenting the customer base and customizing offerings to better meet the needs and preferences of users that represent for example a certain demographic could be beneficial. Platforms could for example explore adding new features or filters to cater the specific needs of consumers that belong to a certain age cohort.

Another implication is related to building trust. The findings of the study suggest that sharing economy platforms should focus on developing and promoting trust-building measures in their sharing economy platforms. Reviews were found to be an integral part of the decision-making process for many interviewees, indicating that platforms should highlight user reviews and encourage or even consider incentivizing users to leave feedback. Companies should also consider investing in customer support to further build trust among their users.

The study highlights the potential impact of cultural factors on sharing economy participation. Digital platform businesses should be aware of the cultural dimensions that may influence their target audience's behavior and adapt their marketing strategies accordingly. Additionally, companies operating in the sharing economy whose platforms are also available to tourists and travelers should be aware that consumers' perceptions of travel destinations may impact their decision to participate in sharing. Thus, emphasizing the platform's safety and security related practices and policies is essential.

## **6.2 Limitations and future research**

Just like any research, this study also has certain limitations. First, the research is limited to studying the participation in short term peer-to-peer accommodation sharing and does not consider other forms of sharing. In addition, the study only focuses on the motivations and perceptions of Airbnb users and does not include other sharing economy platforms, limiting the scope of the study. Future research should examine other sharing economy platforms to understand how their users' motivations and perceptions differ from the ones found in this study.

Second, the empirical research was conducted as qualitative research, which decreases the number of participants. The study only includes a small sample size of ten Finnish consumers, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the study by including a larger and more diverse sample to increase the

generalizability of the findings. Future research could also benefit from incorporating quantitative data or a mixed-methods approach, with both qualitative and quantitative data, to provide a more comprehensive understanding and to validate the findings.

Third, apart from age, the study does not examine the impact of demographic factors on consumers' motivations and perception, which could provide some valuable insights. Future research could examine the impact of demographic factors such as gender, income, and family status on participation in the sharing economy. Similarly, a comparison of the perceptions and motivations of consumers from two or more different cultures could be useful in exploring the topic.

Fourthly, this research focused mainly on the motives and did not specifically consider the factors that hinder participants' behavior. Exploring the barriers for using sharing economy platforms could help identify some of the critical bottlenecks related to their more widespread adoption. Lastly, this study focused on an already internationalized platform. What if we looked at internationalization of a peer-to-peer digital platform and the factors that influence it?

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview guide

Topic	Guiding questions
Background information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age, gender, education level, profession/current life situation (employed, unemployed, student) and residence</li> </ul>
Generally about consumption habits related to travel and accommodation choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please describe your history and experience with travelling, especially abroad (i.e. how often and where)?</li> <li>• What does travelling mean to you?</li> <li>• When you are in the process of selecting an accommodation (in your travel destination), how does this process usually go (starting from the idea of travelling/staying at a certain location to the actual booking)? Tell examples of your two latest bookings for accommodation.</li> <li>• What features or attributes of an accommodation would you say are most important to you? Why?</li> </ul>
Sharing economy and Airbnb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe how you first became aware of the sharing economy? How about Airbnb?</li> <li>• Could you describe your prior experience with Airbnb?</li> <li>• Do you have experience with other sharing economy services? <i>For guidance: Uber, Autolevi, GoMore, Fixura</i></li> </ul>
Motives for selecting peer-to-peer accommodation (Airbnb)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which attributes have convinced you to select Airbnb accommodation in the past? Why are these attributes important?</li> <li>• What kind of value do you receive from staying at an Airbnb? <i>For guidance: utilitarian (e.g. cost, location, convenience), hedonic (e.g. authenticity, unique experience), social (e.g. encounters with local hosts, new acquaintances)</i></li> <li>• To what extent did sustainability influence your decision to stay at an Airbnb?</li> <li>• How does booking an Airbnb accommodation make you feel compared to a more traditional accommodation (e.g. hotel/hostel)? Why does it make you feel this way?</li> <li>• On the occasions when you have chosen a hotel/hostel over Airbnb, what influenced your decision to do so?</li> <li>• How do you feel about the safety of peer-to-peer sharing economy services? How do you perceive the risk-factor?</li> </ul>

Cultural perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the country/destination guide your choice of accommodation type? If yes, how?</li><li>• Is your perception of and attitude towards all foreign countries equal or are there differences between them? Why? (Accommodation and traveling)</li></ul>
To conclude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank you for all that valuable information, is there anything else you'd like to add before we end?</li></ul>