Sharing economy: Comparing users' and non-users' perceptions of participation in clothes sharing practices

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Abstract

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Clothes sharing forms part of practices encompassed within the emergent phenomenon of the sharing economy, the growth of which has been facilitated by ICTs and social media channels in recent decades. Adoption of sharing platforms that support the practice of sharing clothes can contribute positively to addressing sustainability and humanitarian issues caused by fast fashion and over consumption. Recent studies have suggested environmental concern and economic appeal to be key predictors of intent to participate in sharing, yet not enough is currently known about the actual use sharing platforms. There is a dearth of research specifically pertaining to clothes sharing platforms and the motivations and attitudes of users. This study aims to expand our understanding of perceptions and motivations for participation in clothes sharing practices for users and non-users. The study was carried out in collaboration with Nuw, a mobile application for sharing clothes. A total of 110 usable responses were gathered from potential and current users of Nuw. Results show that environmental concern and economic appeal are statistically supported predictors of the use of clothes-sharing platforms. In addition, personal safety, safety of one's belongings and the reputation of the sharing platform emerged as factors of high importance when it comes to considering whether to participate in clothes-sharing. Practical implications, limitations, and future directions are highlighted.

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1. Introduction

The sharing economy and Collaborative Consumption practices are growing year on year as increasingly people are choosing to temporarily access products over owning them. This shift has been supported by the development of ICTs, including social media and other sharing platforms which enable people to connect with people who wish to share, and those looking for what they have. "PwC has estimated that the sharing economy today generates a value of 15 billion dollars compared with 240 billion dollars deriving from the traditional economy in the same sectors; it also predicts that, by 2025, this amount will reach 335 billion dollars, equivalent to 50% of the total value" (Guide: Introduction to Sharing and Collaborative Consumption 2015, p.16). Its development has attracted the attention of economists and scientists alike, as the proliferation of both sharing platforms and practices will have significant impacts for the nature of future economic growth and also sustainability movements. The movement away from the traditional economy and towards Peer-to-Peer transactions has the potential to impact rates of economic growth. Many of these types of sharing platforms appeared during the aftershock of the global financial crisis from 2008 to 2010 (World Economic Forum 2019). Sharing has a role to play in helping us better use the limited resources we have as many of the issues we face today in relation to climate change and sustainability are linked to the last 50 years of over-consumption on Earth.

The fashion and clothing industries have had a significant role to play in many of our most critical sustainability issues; pollution and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and waste/landfill contribution (Jacometti, 2019). Clothing sharing platforms within the sharing economy represent an opportunity to address some of these negative impacts through enabling more people to share, swap, rent and donate their clothing. However, many academics have noted a dearth of research pertaining to the emergence of the sharing economy and a relative slowness to address this phenomenon in comparison to rates of growth (Heinrichs, 2013, Hamari, et al., 2015 20; Laurenti, et al., 2019). While the number of studies is increasing, existing studies commonly focused on businesses and consumers participating in shared transport or shared space (Laurenti, et al., 2019). According to Hamari, et al. (2015, p.2048) "there exists a real practical problem of how CC (Collaborative Consumption) could become more widespread. In particular, the possible discrepancy between motivations and their effect on attitudes and behaviour warrants an interesting context for research."

In recent studies, both economic and sustainability benefits have been noted as major drivers of motivations to using a sharing platform for consumers (Boeckmann 2013, Magno, et al.). Magno, et al. (2016) conducted a study of users and non-users of sharing platforms to better understand their motivations and perceptions of sharing practices. The results of the study conducted by

Magno, et al. (2016) confirmed the relevance of economic appeal and environmental appeal of the sharing economy (H1 and H2), but did not support the correlation between the use of sharing platforms and community belonging or individual reputation (H3 and H4). Another study conducted by Tambovceva & Titko's (2020) provides insight into additional factors which could be considered by users and non users of sharing platforms. The results from this study concluded the most important factors for respondents regarding sharing economy activities are personal safety (C2.1) and money saving opportunity (C2.3). The purpose of this study is to test these hypotheses with users and non-users of clothes-sharing platforms. We are looking to understand whether environmental and economic appeal are predictors of user participation and whether personal safety and money saving opportunity are the most important factors influencing the decision to participate. This research aims to add to the current literature on the use of sharing platforms, and in particular to help us better understand user and non-user attitudes towards clothes-sharing practices within a study conducted in collaboration with Nuw (previously The Nu Wardrobe); a clothes-sharing platform.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Fashion and consumerism

Hyper-consumption is one of the greatest threats to our livelihood on planet earth today. An increase in rates of production and consumption of consumer goods started in the 1920's but took on significantly greater momentum in the 1950's with post WW2 desires to fuel economic-growth in the Western World. Consumption was encouraged, even rewarded; through the social capital gained by those who could afford to consume "lavishly visible goods such as jewellery and clothing to show they were prosperous and to differentiate themselves from the masses" (Botsman and Rogers 2011, p.20). Veblen (1899) first coined the term 'conspicuous consumption' to describe the development of an emerging 'leisure class,' describing the consumption of non-necessity goods and practice of leisure activities as a means of maintaining or improving one's reputation. The concept of consumption adding to our ideas about ourselves is also discussed by Belk (1988, p.139) through the concept of the extended self; "knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves." In the context of clothing and fashion, what we wear can reflect conspicuous effort in two key ways; 1. By and through one's ability purchase of luxury and branded goods and 2. By and through one's ability to continually purchase new items and follow clothing trends or "fast fashion". Rome (2018, p. 550) states "when styles change, no-longer-stylish things become useless, even if they are in perfectly good condition. To avoid embarrassment, the fashion conscious must keep buying into the latest trends… if people have the money and the desire, their demand for new looks can be insatiable." The clothing and

fashion industries provide an interesting context to research sharing and Collaborative Consumption as the importance of what we wear remains central to the evolving construct of the self.

2.2 The global impact of fast fashion

Besides its purpose in fashion, the practice of purchasing, owning and wearing clothing is also fundamental to human well-being. Clothing is essential to a functioning society; it keeps us protected from the elements in the warmer months as in the colder ones, however it is clear that a large portion of the world's population today is purchasing clothing at a rate that well exceeds basic human needs. The "democratisation" of consumer culture has meant that buyers of almost every budget level now have the desire and ability to spend on non-essential items such as clothing serving purely stylistic purposes. "Americans buy roughly 65 pieces of clothing per year, more than one a week… because clothing has become incredibly cheap, people can afford more of everything" (Rome, 2018, pp. 549-550). This shift has been supported by two related factors; "the shift in production towards emerging or developing countries with lower labour costs and the development of the so-called 'fast fashion' phenomenon" (Jacometti, 2019, p. 27). More affordable means people consume more; companies produce larger quantities and more frequently release new styles in order to encourage consumers to keep up with trends. The negative effects of fast fashion and overproduction on the environment have gained the attention of those at the forefront of climate change activism in recent decades. According to recent reports, "the global fashion industry emits 1.7 billion tons of CO_2 per year — more than the amount produced by international flights and shipping" (Young & Hagan, 2019). The UN Economic and Social Council affirmed that "sustainable fashion is key to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda" and specifically, according to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "it is essential to ensure that economic growth and development are accompanied along the whole garment value chains by social justice, job protection and reduction of environmental impacts through an efficient use of resources and sustainable production and consumption models" (Jacometti, 2019, p. 27). It is in the interest of academia, economists and sustainability experts alike to invest in initiatives that move us further towards these goals.

2.3 Recent events: the impact of the 2020 global pandemic

Recent events underscore an urgency behind the need to reshape and control the way this industry currently operates. The global coronavirus pandemic, commencing in January 2020 has had a profound impact on consumer demand and the ways we access goods. Store closures and excess stock have meant that many brands have fallen victim to these changes. Some examples include H

& M, which announced it will close 170 stores worldwide in 2020, Victoria's Secret, which is planning to close 250 stores in the US and Canada permanently in the coming months and Zara, who announced closure of 1200 stores worldwide by 2021 due to losses incurred by the closure of its stories during the initial lockdown period of the pandemic (Ng, 2020). We have not yet fully realised the economic implications of this pandemic at the time of this paper's publication, as the situation continues to unfold. As with any form of change affecting consumer or business demand for products and services, many companies will be required to rethink their models of operation in order to remain in business, while the situation also presents opportunities for new companies to be formed. Lost Stock is one example of such a company: formed in the wake of the pandemic, Lost Stock is a fashion box service where consumers can purchase a box containing 3 items or more of clothing which would have otherwise ended up in a landfill due to cancelled stock orders and non-payment from major UK retailers, at the same time supporting affected garment workers and their families (Lost Stock, 2020). Research that provides insight into understanding the factors that drive the formation of these types of companies in the wake of changes to the way consumers access goods is valuable to our understanding of the way our economies will be built over future years as well as what will be required by pressures on our biosphere.

2.4 The role of social media and ICTs in consumer demand creation

Consumers are increasingly aware of the need for change in the way their clothing is produced and are starting to demand that brands take note. At the same time, rapid development of ICTs and social networks has contributed to increased demand for products as well as easier access to consumers. The evolution of the Internet, the growth of Web 2.0 and Social networks in particular are factors that enable rapid dispersion of new trends and are now fundamental to driving this demand, particularly due to the increase in rates of adoption in recent decades. "Smartinsights (2020) report shows that by the end of 2019, number of social media users reached 3.5 billion worldwide. Furthermore… almost 55% of online shoppers conducted their shopping via one of three main social commerce platforms i.e. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter" (Alsharabat & Rana, 2020). Laurenti, et al. (2019) state "social networks and the development of ICT changed the way people communicate and interact worldwide paving the way to the modern sharing phenomenon. Innovative businesses exploit this market opportunity by creating a virtual space (online platforms) for enabling underutilised resource (information and assets) exchange among users (consumer-to-consumer, C2C) on the internet." The underpinnings of social commerce platforms such as these bring together several themes that are central to this research as discussed so far; 1. The role of conspicuous consumption through fashion in the formation of ideas about the self (Belk, 1988), 2. Fast fashion as a driver of increased frequency of purchasing and 3. The development and proliferation of these two phenomenon through social media channels as platforms for sharing

experiences via peer to peer interactions. Social media channels amplify diffusion of new trends in fast fashion, but they also provide a place for self-expression for individuals to be their own media outlets. "Individuals now have the freedom and opportunity to create their identities online in a variety of different ways, as Goffman (1990) posits, 'identities are like masks that can be worn and taken off in different contexts of social interaction' (Tagg and Seargeant, 2014). Research into social media platforms, applications and ICTs is therefore interesting and merits academic attention as this an area where fast fashion as a phenomenon is developing rapidly through consumer engagement and self-identity construction online.

2.5 Ownership and sharing and the self

In light of the widespread adoption of ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) and social media platforms has widened the playing field for where one may build one's 'reputation.' Belk (2013; 2016) posits that it as a result of many of these online sharing platforms that we have developed new ways to express our identity without ownership. Where ownership had been a primary means of expression through association of ownership to objects, the proliferation of sharing, renting, bartering and borrowing practices supported by ICTs has seen a shift in the way we access what we need and desire. De La Calle Vaquero & De la Calle Calle (2013, p.19) stated "products are no longer valued for their functionality or ability to meet needs, but rather by its symbolic value for what they represent to the consumers." Access over ownership is becoming increasingly popular, particularly with younger, more technologically savvy users. Bardhi and Eckhart (2012 p.881) similarly concluded "instead of buying owning things, consumers want access to goods and prefer to pay for the experience of temporarily accessing them."

2.6 Definitions of the sharing economy and collaboration consumption

These emergent practices have been grouped under the 'sharing economy'. The sharing economy is currently an umbrella term encompassing many different practices, including access-based consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012) and collaborative consumption (Botsman and Rogers, 2010); both of which are important to the central themes of this research. Hamari, et al., (2015) describe the sharing economy as "emerging economic-technological phenomenon that is fuelled by developments in information and communications technology (ICT), growing consumer awareness, proliferation of collaborative web communities as well as social commerce/sharing" (Hamari, et al., 2015). It has also been described as "a peer-to-peer model of relationship, in which people can exchange goods, services, expertise and other resources through the use of a digital or physical platform… to facilitate collaboration amongst peers and maximise the use of latent

resources" (CREATIve Urban Sharing in Europe, 2015). As outlined above, the shared commonalities of these practices are "1) their use of temporary access non-ownership models of utilising consumer goods and services and 2) their reliance on the Internet, and especially Web 2.0, to bring this about" (Belk, 2013, p.3). The definition of collaborative consumption I wish to use for the main purpose of this research is that of Belk (2014, p.11), which is defined as "people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee." The term "sharing economy" in this paper is used to describe the phenomenon of companies coming into existence that fit some of the current definitions of the collaborative consumption model.

2.7 Current state of research into the sharing economy

Many researchers agree that not enough is currently known about the motivations of consumers for using sharing platforms and how to increase rates of adoption. In a recent comprehensive report of the state of the sharing economy in Europe, Andreotti, et al., (2020, p. 10) state that "in general there is still relatively little research expressly addressing motives for participation in the sharing economy or their role in mediating socio-economic effects on (non-)participation." At the same time, the number of publications that are being produced that touch some area of the sharing economy are increasing year over year. Data from (Laurenti, et al., 2019)'s 2019 suggests that the growth of the number of publications pertaining to the sharing economy is growing exponentially, with the number of studies growing from 18 in the year 2013, to 589 publications in the year 2018.

Currently, the majority of studies and publications that discuss the sharing economy fall into the category of shared space (21.4%) and shared mobility (18.1%), while on the contrary, "scarce focus has been employed to other subsectors of space and mobility, such as coworking office and bike sharing, finance, food, other tangible assets and other intangible assets" (Laurenti, et al., 2019, p. 5729). Some well-known examples include AirBnb in the shared space sector and Uber in the transport sector (Magno, et al., 2016). As a subsector, research into clothes sharing within the sharing economy only represents 2.2% of those publications. On the contrary, there are already a number of companies and platforms focusing on clothes sharing or renting that can be categorised as falling into sharing economy, such as "RentTheRunway where goods and services can be accessed by users for a certain amount of time and often for a fee …. (as well as) … services such as Swapstyle or ReSecond help users to swap unwanted clothes. Other examples are Zilch and ThreadUp" (Hamari et al., 2016, p.2049). One such study could be found pertaining to shared clothes consumption in China (Khan & Rundle-Thiele, 2019), however studies like these are few in number relative to the potential for growth in this area.

(Laurenti, et al., (2019, 5729) state "research on the motivation of users to engage in sharing practices beyond the accommodation and mobility sector is needed. Moreover, a deeper

understanding of the differences in motivations to participate in the sharing economy depending on the platform orientation." Given the far-reaching impact of the production of clothing and fast fashion on economic, sustainability and humanitarian issues and equally, the impending gravity of the problems if we do not start to address them quickly, research that adds to our understanding of clothes sharing platforms and why they are used is essential to our ability to build platforms that support participation.

2.8 Outcomes of recent studies of participation in the sharing economy

It is crucial to foster awareness of the consequences which the sharing economy is having on the behaviours, thoughts and interactions of participants and non-participants in order to understand how opportunities for growth and employment may be created and what kinds of challenges may arise in fostering this growth. Understanding the reasons why people participate in sharing practices can help us make them become more widespread. Belk (2013, p19) suggests "sharing makes a great deal of practical and economic sense for the consumer, the environment, and the community. It may also make a great deal of sense for businesses that are sufficiently flexible, innovative, and forward thinking." This is also supported by Laurenti, et al. (2019, p. 5729) who posit "a more refined understanding of why consumers engage in the sharing economy seems also crucial to guide the selection of the most suitable mechanism to safeguard the environmental benefits from resource sharing in its many forms."

Current analytical framework typically separates motivations and attitudes of participating in the sharing economy from the outcomes of participation, although research has shown they are in many ways intertwined. According to Hamari, Sjöklint and Ukkonen (2016, p.2048 citing Prothero et al., 2011; Sacks, 2011) "participation in CC communities and services is generally characterised as driven by obligation to do good for other people and for the environment, such as sharing, helping others and engaging in sustainable behaviour… However CC may also provide economic benefits (saving money, facilitating access to resources, and free-riding which constitute more individualistic reasons for participating." Boeckmann's (2013) study looked to gain insight into the factors which create value for consumers participating in the sharing economy. Dividing benefits into emotional and rational, he notes "financial perspectives were ranked first in the rational benefits list. This money-saving response becomes significant when considering that the highest ranked emotional benefit was chosen to be 'generosity to others and myself'. These two top responses indicate that in the shared economy consumers want to own less but gain more" (Boeckmann 2013, p.4). Perceived environmental benefits ranked second in this same study. Hamari, Sjöklint and Ukkonen (2016, p.2055) similarly concluded that "perceived sustainability is an important factor in the formation of positive attitudes towards CC, but economic benefits are a stronger motivator for intentions to participate in CC."

Likewise, in a study conducted by (Magno, et al., 2016)) economic and environmental attitudes were identified as being positively related to participation sharing economy platforms. In this particular study, the researchers surveyed respondents who had and had not participated in the use of sharing platforms (users and non-users). They specified four hypotheses for their study: "*H1: Consumers' environmental concerns are positively related to the use of sharing economy platforms*; H2 : *The search for economic benefits is positively related to the use of sharing economy platforms*; H3: *The search for community belonging is positively related to the use of sharing economy platforms* and H4: *The intention to build individual reputation is positively related to the use of sharing economy platforms.*" The intrinsic motivations, community belonging and individual reputation (H3 and H4) were not identified as being important predictors of the use of sharing platforms, while the extrinsic motivations, environmental concern and economic appeal (H1 and H2) were supported as predictors. This study and particularly its formulated hypotheses provide an ideal framework for further research that can be applied directly to clothes-sharing platforms.

Fig 1: Research framework for participation in the sharing economy
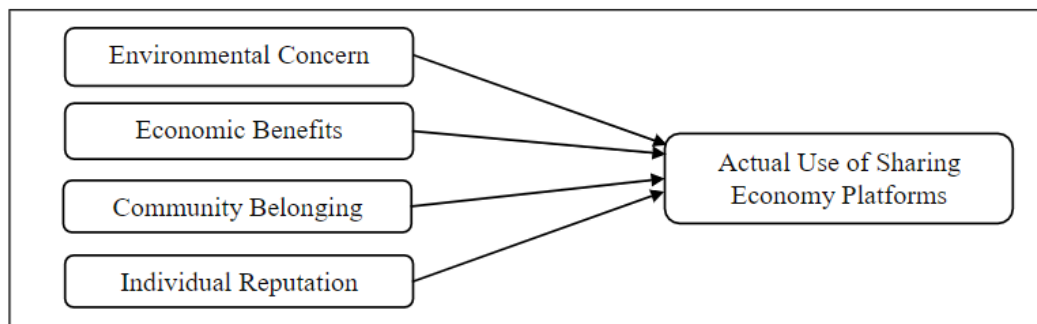
Source: Magno, et al., (2016)

Knowledge of motivations and attitudes of participants and non-participants is important to understanding why or why not sharing platforms may be used. Equally it is important to gain insight factors that characterise the use of sharing platforms which may encourage or prevent participation. Tambovceva & Titko's (2020) study provides insight into additional factors which can be considered by users and non users of sharing platforms. Among the results from this study, it is suggested that "the most important factors for respondents regarding sharing economy activities are personal safety (C2.1) and money saving opportunity (C2.3). These factors were rated '4' and '5' (somewhat important/very important) by most of the respondents (97.1% and 91% respectively). These factors rated the highest in importance from eight factors which were considered in this section, of which the remaining factors were: (C2.2) Possessions/home will be well-treated, (C2.4) making money, (C2.5) knowing something about the other person, (C2.6)

reputation of the sharing platform, (C2.7) helping the environment, (C2.8) having a unique or new experience, (C2.9) forming new relationships/friends or being part of a community (Tambovceva & Titko, 2020).

Fig 2: Research framework for consumer perceptions of the sharing economy

Table 3   Statements in the questionnaire section C2 and their labels

Factors	Content	Label
C2.1	Personal safety	Safety
C2.2	Property/home will be well-treated	Proper attitude
C2.3	Saving money	Saving money
C2.4	Making money	Earnings
C2.5	Knowing something about the other person	Human interactions
C2.6	Reputation of the sharing platform	Reputation
C2.7	Helping the environment	Environment
C2.8	Having a unique or new experience	Experience
C2.9	New relationships/friends or being part of a community	New friends

Source: Tambovceva & Titko (2020)

Besides the attitudes and motivations for participation of users and non-users of sharing platforms, it is also important to consider sociodemographic factors that influence the make up of people within each of these groups. (Andreotti, et al., 2020) suggest age, gender, ethnic minority, education, income and urbanity are factors that can influence participation. For example, with regards to age, large-scale systematic surveys have shown that age is "roughly correlated with participation in the sharing economy…. the 25-29 age group is the most likely to have heard of the sharing economy… (and) in the Pew Survey presented by Smith (2016), a third of respondents in the 18-45 age group had used a sharing economy platfrom in the past" (Andreotti, et al., 2020, p. 7). Conversely, gender does not appear to be a strong marker of the decision to participate in sharing platforms, however men and women have been shown to participate in different ways (Andreotti, et al., 2020). Insight into the sociodemographic make-up of research participants in these areas is essential to ensuring these factors are taken into consideration when undertaking research analysis.

As outlined, Magno, et al.'s (2016) and Tambovceva and Titko's (2020) studies provide insight into motivating and potentially deterring factors or concerns for participation in the sharing economy, however these studies are not platform specific. Magno, et al. (2016, summarising Edbring et al., 2016) suggest that one explanation as to different outcomes in these studies of motivations and attitudes is that they vary according to the kind of platform used for the exchange (commercial or non-commercial) and whether the exchanges involve monetary compensation or not. "In non-

profit platforms participants are driven by factors such as the desire to belong to a community, the need for reciprocity and other ideological reasons (e.g. political and environmental reasons). In for-profit platforms, economic and convenience-related reasons together with the search for novelty and the desire for variation prevail over motivations related to reciprocity and sustainability" (Magno, et al., 2016). Therefore, research that adds to our understanding of motivations and attitudes that is conducted in a platform-specific case can provide context to whether this explanation holds true.

It is clear we cannot afford to continue producing and consuming clothing and fashion goods at the current rate. Heinrichs (2013, p.230) states "given its potential for contributing to sustainable economy and society, inter- and transdisciplinary sustainability sciences should begin researching the sharing economy systematically." For this reason, research that adds to the current literature on consumer motivations and attitudes towards adopting clothes sharing practices and platforms can contribute to two important areas: 1. our understanding of the implications for economic growth, sustainability and humanitarian efforts within an economy that will increasingly 'buy less and share more' and 2. how we can motivate a greater portion of the population to use sharing platforms by understanding the underlying values and motivations of those users.

3. Research Question

As outlined, previous studies have looked to understand the motivations and attitudes of users' and non-users' participation in sharing platforms in generalised ways, focusing on overall use of many potentially different platforms. Studies have frequently focused on platforms that fall into the business sectors of shared mobility and shared space, yet only a small number of studies have looked to understand motivations to participate in clothes sharing practices and actual use by users of these platforms. The aim of this research is to confirm whether previous results and conclusions can be replicated, specifically those of Magno, et al. (2016) and Tambovceva & Titko (2020). Are users of clothes sharing platforms more likely to be motivated by environmental concern and economic appeal than current non-users? Are users of clothes sharing platforms most likely to rate personal safety and money-saving opportunity as highly important in their consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms?

Taking the original hypotheses from Magno, et al.'s (2016) study, and the factors from Tambovceva & Titko's (2020) study, the following hypotheses were formulated. Due to some crossover in each of the constructs included in each of these studies (environmental concern, economic appeal and community belonging), where these constructs crossed-over they have been combined into one hypothesis statement. At the same time, to maintain consistency with previous models, these

constructs and factors are assessed in keeping with the same structures. Finally, outcomes are discussed and compared in the discussion section.

Hypotheses:

H1: Environmental concern

Consumers' environmental concerns are positively related to the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H2: Economic or money saving appeal

 The search for economic benefits is positively related to the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H3: Community belonging

The search for community belonging is positively related to the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H4: Individual reputation

The intention to build individual reputation is positively related to the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H5: Personal safety

Personal safety is highly important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H6: Care or safety of one's personal belongings

The safety of one's personal belongings is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H7: Human interactions

Knowing something about the other person is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H8: Platform reputation

The reputation of the sharing platform is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms.

H9: New experience

Having a unique or new experience is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms.

4. Methodology

In order to survey a group of users and non-users of a clothes sharing platform, a collaboration with Nuw was organised. Nuw (thenuwardrobe.com) is a mobile clothes-sharing application where users can upload their clothes in order to be able to borrow from other users in their city or town. A monthly membership fee of £7.99/€9.99 is charged to users and they can then borrow unlimitedly from others. User communities currently exist in London, Dublin and Cambridge. Nuw's users are growing in numbers, with approximately 2000 users currently registered to the app. Nuw equally have an Instagram following of over 13,000 followers who are subscribed to their page. Nuw attracts a young (18-35 years old), predominantly female audience who are fashion-conscious and technologically-savvy.

4.1 Research design

Quantitative methods help researchers to draw conclusions based on statistical outcomes. This is appropriate here as we are looking to understand the relationship between variables; namely, user status and factors that can influence participation in clothes-sharing practices. Here we took a sample of the population (both Nuw users and current non-users) in order to potentially draw inferences about the wider population and the motivations and perceptions between groups. The questions used in the survey were mainly compiled from two previous research papers to ensure validity and consistency; 1. a study conducted with Italian consumers "Sharing economy: comparing users and non-users' perceptions" (Magno, et al. 2016) and 2. a survey conducted with Latvian consumers "Consumer perception of sharing economy: pilot survey in Latvia" (Tambovceva and Titko, 2020) which has also been used for studies conducted in the UK and USA. Qualitative research in this area could also be useful to explore; for example, specifically looking at the 'what' and the 'why' of participation for very active users of Nuw or other clothes-sharing platforms. However quantitative methods have been preferred here as it enables us to derive actionable insights from the data that can enable businesses operating in these economies to make decisions about how to increase participation.

The research design used is also both correlational and descriptive. Correlation methodology is used to determine if a relationship exists between two variables and if there is a relationship, to what extent does the relationship exist (Clark, 2005). Correlational research methods were used in part one of the survey order to understand if any of the independent variables – environmental concern, economic motivation, community belonging and individual reputation - are correlated with user status, particularly for the first 8 set of questions taken from Magno, et al.'s 2016 study. The second part of the research, using questions derived from Tambovceva and Titko's 2020 study, is descriptive and uses frequency analysis to quantitively describe the characteristics of the

respondents. Both methods enable us to pull key analyses from the data provided. Correlational research is appropriate as we are looking to understand if there is a potential relationship between being a user of Nuw and the underlying perceptions and motivations of these users for participating in clothes sharing practices. Descriptive research is useful for providing insight into the characteristics of the respondents and enabling us to make a direct comparison between the profiles of users and non-users. Here descriptive research can help us better understand the need for research in these areas and therefore understanding other potential barriers and limitations to participation in clothes-sharing practices can help us to reveal other areas that warrant exploratory research.

All the independent variables were rated on five-point agreement disagreement and importance rating, Likert type scales. The questions were formulated as closed answer questions in order to be able to infer the relationship between usage and motivations and avoid confounding variables. Probability sampling was used, however the methods of distribution mainly being social media and through channels affiliated with Nuw, meant that the survey was able to be found by an appropriate audience, where users and non-users of similar demographics with regards to age, income and education levels were found. A simple random sampling method is conducive to creating a sample that is highly representative of the population. Overall, this type of sampling method is appropriate to this type of quantitative research.

4.2 Procedure adopted

In order to achieve the aims of this research, in collaboration with Nuw, an online survey was conducted from the 15th of June until the 15th of July 2020. The survey was distributed through social media channels including Instagram and LinkedIn as well as through Nuw's email newsletter. The same questionnaire was distributed to users as non-users, using a questioning formulation that could be adapted to both e.g. "Using sharing services allows (would allow) me to get in touch with people who share my interests." Keeping the sets of questions identical for both groups facilitated comparison at the time of analysis.

The survey can be broken down into three main parts and the findings section has also been labelled accordingly for analysis. Part 1 contained questions pertaining to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondent (age, country, gender, education, income level) as well as whether or not they are a current user of Nuw. Part 2 contained questions pertaining to the motivations and values of the respondent, taken from Magno, et al.'s 2016 study. The questions were kept the same as those that were used in this study with slight adaptations in order to make the questions relevant to the research topic. For example, "My family approves (would approve) the usage of a sharing service" became "my family approves (would approve the usage of a clothes-sharing service." One question that was originally used in their study was excluded due to its

similarity to another question in the same construct. Part 3 of the survey contained questions taken from Tambovceva and Titko's 2020 study. Not all of the questions from Tambovceva and Titko's 2020 study were used in this survey. The primary question from which the factor importance rating was measured (rating the importance of a number of factors when using a clothes sharing service) was also adapted to pertain specifically to clothes sharing practices.

In order to incentivise participation, respondents were informed that they would have the opportunity to win one of two 6-month memberships in exchange for their responses. In total, the survey was estimated to take approximately two minutes to complete and most participants completed it in less than 2 minutes. This positively contributed to the rate of completion, as we had a completion rate of 100%. Responses were collected using Survey Monkey. The survey was closed off after 1 month in order to allow for adequate time for analysis. In order to analyse the responses, data was exported from Survey Monkey into Excel and identified using identifiers in Survey Monkey. The coded data was then transferred and coded into SPSS in order to be analysed.

4.3 Sample selection

In total we received 118 responses. As respondents received the invitation to participate in the survey solely via distribution channels (social and email) managed by Nuw, it can be assumed that respondents have some affiliation to or awareness of the platform and therefore may have potential to become future users. This decision is further discussed in the limitations section.

All data points in all responses were 100% completed with the exception of 1 respondent who chose not to disclose their annual income. The largest percentage of respondents (36.7%) had an annual income of between €30,000 and €49,999, with 18.3% earning under 15,000 per annum, 19.3% earning between €15,000 and €29,000 and 16.5% earning between €50,000 and €74,999 and 9.17% earning between €75,000 and €99,000. Income levels can be an important predictor of the use of sharing services as they allow participants to save money and also make money (Hamari, et al., 2015). However, income is not a dependent variable in this particular study and therefore it was decided this was not a factor that would warrant the exclusion of that response. It was decided not to exclude responses on the basis of their age, income or country of residence. 91.8% of total respondents were between 18 and 34 years of age, with 65.5% aged between 25 and 34. Only one respondent was older than 45 years of age. This confirmed what has been discovered in previous studies; age is inversely related to the use of sharing platforms (Andreotti, et al., 2020). In previous studies, nationality or ethnicity has been recognised as factor influencing perceptions and attitudes towards sharing as ideas about sharing are inherently tied to cultures and the ways we are raised (Andreotti, et al., 2020). Of the total responses received, 58.2% were domiciled in Ireland, 30.9% in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, with a small number of respondents located in Australia, New Zealand, Denmark and Germany. It was decided not to exclude responses based on country of residence as we do not know enough about the ethnic backgrounds of the respondents

in order to make inferences about the influence of this factor on motivations and attitudes towards participation. Approximately 92% of respondents were female, 7% male and 1% other. As Nuw app is currently only available for users who identify as female, in order to better match the profiles of users and non-users in order to compare them, only responses from respondents who identified as female were included. In total, we had 110 useable responses from which to draw our analyses.

4.4 Limitations and ethical considerations

Nuw app is a relatively new application and company and is only starting to build its usership and following. As such, having received only 118 responses in total, this is a relatively small amount of the population from which to draw inferences, although it is possible to produce a statistically significant result from this number. Further limitations are discussed in the discussion section in relation to findings.

The ethical considerations for this study did not present very many risk factors for participants. In order to ensure compliancy with ethical requirements, participants were informed of their right to choose whether to participate and consent was obtained through the survey landing page, hosted on the Nuw website. They were equally informed of the confidentially and anonymity of the data provided. Data collected is untraceable to individual respondents as no personal identifying data was collected (e.g. names or email addresses) within the survey itself. Email addresses were collected on the Nuw website for those who wished to avail of the competition incentive, however this information was not connected to the survey data which was collected through Survey Monkey. This complies with the basic principles for research on human subjects as consent was "freely given and based on full information about participation rights and use of data" (MacDonald, 2019, p. 12).

5. Findings

In the findings section, an overview of the methods of analysis that were used and the significance of the results of each stage of analysis is provided. Any significant findings have been noted however the implications for these findings is explored in the Discussion section.

5.1 Findings from Part 2

Table 1: Results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Construct	Item	Mean	S.D	Factor Loading
Environmental concern α = 0.74	ENVCONC_1 - For me, environmental protection is very important	1.21	0.430	0.78
	ENVCONC_2 - In my purchasing decisions, I strongly take into consideration the purchase of environmentally friendly products (eco)	1.73	0.703	0.88
	ENVCONC_3 - I am willing to support sacrifices (e.g. paying more) if the goods I buy are environmentally friendly	1.65	0.722	0.82
Economic Benefit α = 0.48	ECONBEN_1 – In my purchasing decisions, price is a key variable	2.36	0.955	0.79
	ECONBEN_2 – In general I always compare prices	2.26	1.178	0.93
Community Belonging α = 0.91	COMMBEL_1 – Using sharing services allows (would allow) me to get in touch with people who share my interests	2.38	1.058	0.95
	COMMBEL_1 – Using sharing services allows (would allow) me to get in touch with people who think like me	2.34	1.034	0.95
Individual Reputation α = 0.64	INDREPUT_1 – My friends approve (would approve) my usage of a clothes-sharing service	1.94	0.881	0.82
	INDREPUT_2 My family approves (would approve) the usage of a clothes-sharing service	2.25	0.900	0.86

The first step in data analysis was to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales used to measure the independent variables – the above constructs that form part of our hypotheses. To achieve this, confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to analyse the individual constructs. The constructs did not all produce a Cronbach's alpha of greater than 0.70. When individually analysing the constructs, H1 and H3 (Environmental concern and community belonging) were the two factors which produced a Cronbach's alpha of greater than 0.70 while H2 and H4 (Economic benefit and individual reputation) did not. Cronbach's alpha is a

measure of scale reliability which tells us how the items are related to each other. In this case, it is possible that the fact that only two questions exist in each of these constructs, a low Cronbach's alpha is more likely to be produced because the variance in the patterns of responses to each question within the construct suggest that the items are not highly correlated.

The standard deviation values produced equally suggest a high level of agreement amongst respondents as standard deviation scores are all less than 1.2, indicating that there was a relatively low level of dispersion in the data set. With regards to the mean value, a value closer to 1 indicates a stronger agreement to the statement of the construct, while a value closest to 5 indicates a stronger disagreement. Here we can see that statements with the highest positive agreement to the statements are the three statements in the Environmental concern construct (1.21, 1.73 and 1.65). The second highest positive agreement is found in the Individual reputation construct (1.94 and 2.25) while Economic benefit generates third most positive agreement (2.36 and 2.36) and Community belonging (2.38 and 2.34) the least. It is notable that all constructs generated a relatively strong level of agreement (a score of 3 "denoting" neither agree nor disagree).

Finally, the factor loading scores produced suggests high level of reliability of the overall scale. Factor analysis was used here to ensure that the data input produced sufficient loadings and would confirm that the scale used was fit for purpose. All factors produced loadings above 0.70 which indicates the scale used is reliable.

Table 2: Results of the Hosmer-Lemeshow test

Hosmer-Lemeshow test:	
Chi-square:	4.5
Df	8
Sig.	.809
Over hit ratio (%)	69.1%

The Hosmer-Lemeshow test was used to test the goodness of fit of our data to the model used. In general the model fit was satisfactory (Chi-square greater than .5). The hit ratio indicates that 69.1% of the outcomes were correctly predicted by the model used.

Table 3: Results of the logistic regression

Independent variable	B	E.S	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
ENVCONC_1 - For me, environmental protection is very important	1.114	.769	2.097	1	.148	3.046
ENVCONC_2 - In my purchasing decisions, I strongly take into consideration the purchase of environmentally friendly products (eco)	.387	.449	.744	1	.389	1.473
ENVCONC_3 - I am willing to support sacrifices (e.g paying more) if the goods I buy are environmentally friendly	-.098	.380	.067	1	.796	.906
ECONBEN_1 – In my purchasing decisions, price is a key variable	.523	.257	4.131	1	.042	1.687
ECONBEN_2 – In general I always compare prices	.017	.221	.006	1	.939	1.017
COMMBEL_1 – Using sharing services allows (would allow) me to get in touch with people who share my interests	.401	.393	1.040	1	.308	1.494
COMMBEL_1 – Using sharing services allows (would allow) me to get in touch with people who think like me	-.030	.418	.005	1	.944	.971
INDREPUT_1 – My friends approve (would approve) my usage of a clothes-sharing service	.237	.311	.581	1	.446	1.267
INDREPUT_2 My family approves (would approve) the usage of a clothes-sharing service	-.195	.273	.512	1	.474	.823
Constant	-3.415	1.242	7.561	1	.006	.033

Dependent variable: User status

Observing the B value produced for each statement, the results of the logistic regression indicate that in two statements out of three, Environmental concern is a predictor of the use of clothes sharing platforms. With regards to both statements concerning the Economic appeal of clothes sharing, each are positively correlated with the use of clothes sharing platforms. Conversely, Community belonging, and Individual reputation do not appear to be consistent predictors of the use of clothes sharing platforms, as each produced one positive and one negative B value.

5.2 Findings from Part 3

In order to analyse Part 3 of the survey, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on the perceived task values scale comprising 8 items.

Table 4: Confirmatory factor analysis

Statements	Label	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Personal safety is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Personal Safety	.388	.735
The safety of one's personal belongings is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	My clothing will be kept safe	.539	.704
Money saving potential is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Money saving	.400	.728
Knowing something about the other person is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Knowing something about the other person	.416	.726
The reputation of the sharing platform is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Reputation of the sharing platform	.537	.708
Helping the environment person is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Helping the environment	.564	.706
Having a new or unique experience is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Having a new or unique experience	.378	.735
Making new friends experience is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms	Making new friends	.419	.726

Source: Author's original compilation based on data processing in SPSS.

Cronbach's alpha showed the questionnaire to reach acceptable reliability, α = 0.74. All items (statements) appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted (α = <0.74 if any item were to be deleted). The Corrected Item – Total Correlation score tells us how much each item correlates with the overall question score. The scores indicate that each item correlates well with the overall score (r more than .30). The scores also indicate that Personal Safety and Having a new or unique experience are possibly the statements that are the least related to the rest of the statements in this model.

Table 5: Frequency analysis: results from all respondents

Label	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Safety	6.4	4.5	6.4	31.8	50.9
My clothing will be kept safe	1.8	4.5	1.8	20.0	71.8
Money saving	1.8	7.3	12.7	53.6	24.5
Knowing something about the other person	3.6	13.6	32.7	39.1	10.9
Reputation of the sharing platform	1.8	.9	4.5	33.6	59.1
Helping the environment	2.7	0	0	16.4	80.9
Having a new or unique experience	6.4	12.7	30.9	35.5	14.5
Making new friends	7.3	17.3	28.2	37.3	10

In the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms, within the combined pool of users and non-users

- 97.3% of respondents rated **Helping the environment** as somewhat or highly important
- 92.7% of respondents rated the **Reputation of the sharing platform** as somewhat or highly important
- 91.8% of respondents rated the safety of their clothing (**My clothing will be kept safe**) as somewhat or very important
- 82.7% of respondents rated **Personal safety** as somewhat or very important.
- 78.1% of respondents rated Money saving as somewhat or highly important.
- 50% of respondents rated Knowing something about the other person as somewhat or highly important
- 50% of respondents rated Having a new or unique experience as somewhat or highly important
- 47.3% of respondents rated Making new friends as somewhat or highly important

Table 6: Frequency analysis: results from users

Label	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Safety	2.4	4.8	7.1	35.7	50
My clothing will be kept safe	2.4	0	0	19.0	78.6
Money saving	0	7.1	45.2	33.3	19.1
Knowing something about the other person	2.4	19.0	40.5	28.6	9.5
Reputation of the sharing platform	0	0	4.8	35.7	59,5
Helping the environment	0	0	0	11.9	88.1
Having a new or unique experience	9.5	16.7	31.0	33.3	9.5
Making new friends	7.1	14.3	23.8	45.2	9.5

- 100% of users rated **Helping the environment** as somewhat or highly important
- 97.6% of users rated the safety of their clothing **(My clothing will be kept safe)** as somewhat or very important
- 95.2% of users rated the **Reputation of the sharing platform** as somewhat or highly important
- 85.7% of users rated **Personal safety** as somewhat or very important.
- 54.7% of users rated Making new friends as somewhat or highly important
- 52.4% of users rated Money saving as somewhat or highly important.
- 42.8% of users rated Having a new or unique experience as somewhat or highly important
- 38.1% of users rated Knowing something about the other person as somewhat or highly important

Table 7: Frequency analysis: results from current non-users

Label	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Safety	8.8	4.4	5.9	29.4	51.5
My clothing will be kept safe	2.9	5.9	2.9	20.6	67.6
Money saving	2.9	7.4	11.8	58.8	19.1
Knowing something about the other person	4.4	10.3	27.9	45.6	11.8
Reputation of the sharing platform	2.9	1.5	4.4	34.4	58.8
Helping the environment	4.4	0	0	19.1	76.5
Having a new or unique experience	4.4	10.3	30.9	32.4	10.3
Making new friends	7.4	19.1	30.9	32.4	10.3

- 95.6% of non-users rated **Helping the environment** as somewhat or highly important

- 93.2% of non-users rated the **Reputation of the sharing platform** as somewhat or highly important

- 88.2% of non-users rated the safety of their clothing (**My clothing will be kept safe**) as somewhat or very important

- 80.8% of non-users rated **Personal safety** as somewhat or very important.

- 77.9% of non-users rated Money saving as somewhat or highly important.

- 57.4% of non-users rated Knowing something about the other person as somewhat or highly important

- 42.7% of non-users rated Having a new or unique experience as somewhat or highly important

- 42.7% of non-users rated Making new friends as somewhat or highly important

6. Discussion

These results suggest that the findings from Magno, et al.'s (2016) study can be reproduced for users of clothes-sharing platforms. Our study equally reveals the importance of environmental concern and economic appeal as predictors of participation in sharing practices in Part 2 of the study, of which the hypotheses and questioning model were adapted from Magno, et al., (2016). However, it is important to highlight here that environmental and economic motivations for participation were mentioned in both Part 2 and Part 3 of the questionnaire, where in Part 3 environmental concern was rated the number 1 most important out of the 8 factors for both users and non-users. 100% of users of Nuw rated helping the environment as somewhat or very important, of which 88.1% specified that this factor was very important. In total 97.3% of overall respondents rated helping the environment as somewhat or highly important. While this is positive, at the same time, previous studies have identified that environmental concern does not necessarily easily translate into an adjustment in behaviour. Hamari, et al., (2015, p. 2052-2053) state, "with respect to motivation to participate or consume certain goods, consumer behaviour literature suggests that although consumers may be ideologically and ethically minded, their aspirations may not translate into sustainable behaviour." This hypothesis was confirmed by Hamari, et al., (2015, p.2054) in this same study, who concluded "perceived sustainability predicted attitude to CC, however it did not have a direct association with behavioural intentions." It is a promising sign that 100% of users of Nuw identified helping the environment as a somewhat important or very important factor. However, further insight into the actual use and the frequency of use of the platform by those users could provide more insight into the real impact of participating in clothes sharing.

Conversely, in Part 3 of the survey, money saving appeal did not emerge in the top 4 factors of importance when considering the use of clothes sharing platforms. While 77.9% of non-users rated this factor as somewhat or highly important, only 52.4% of actual users of the platform voted similarly. Comparing the statements in Part 2 with Part 3, the statements in Part 2 do not directly address money saving potential through use of clothes sharing platforms, but rather how survey respondents consider price as a factor when making purchases. While the statements in Part 2 (ECONBEN_1 and ECONBEN_2) speak to attitudes towards price considerations, which appear to be consistent with user status, money saving potential as a factor in Part 3 does not appear to be the strongest motivator for current users of Nuw. One explanation for this is found in Böckmann (2013), who states "people start to engage in collaborative consumption because they see it as a means to save or earn money." This is consistent with our findings, however it could be inferred from the findings of this study that actual users who have engaged in clothes-sharing factors have come to see other factors as more important through engagement with the platform. Overall the hypothesis for H2: *The search for economic benefits is positively related to the use of clothes*

sharing platforms could be confirmed but the outcomes of this study warrant further investigation. In future studies it would be interesting to explore the reasons why users initially engage with a clothes-sharing platform and to understand how those motivations may change over time through engagement with the platform and its community.

Community belonging, and Individual reputation (H3 and H4) do not appear to be consistent predictors of the use of clothes sharing platforms, as each produced one positive and one negative B value in the analysis of Part 2 of the survey. With regards to Community belonging, in Part 3, 54.7% of users rated 'making new friends' as somewhat or highly important, while 42.7% of non-users voted similarly. It appears that community belonging is somewhat interesting to both users and non-users, however it does not serve as a predictor of propensity to participation. This is consistent with the results of both Magno, et al. (2016) and Tambovceva & Titko (2020). Individual reputation as a predictor of use of clothes sharing platforms in Part 2 of the survey only. According to Magno, et al. (2016) individual reputation was not supported as a predictor of use in their study and this is consistent with similar studies "conducted by Hamari et al. (2015) but not with the study performed by Anthony et. Al (2009)". The sharing economy is evolving rapidly; in particular, due to its relationship to ICTs and social media platforms. As such, it is notable that most recent studies conclude that desire to build reputation is not an important factor influencing the decision to participate.

Of the remaining 5 hypotheses, 3 of these emerged from the analysis as top factors of importance when considering the use of a clothes-sharing platform. 97.6% of users rated the safety of their clothing as somewhat or very important, which was the second most highly rated factor for that group confirming H6: *The safety of one's personal belongings is very important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms*. In comparison, 88.2% of non-users rated the safety of their clothing as somewhat or very important. Users engaged in actual use of these platforms tended to value the safety of their clothing slightly more than current non-users. One point worth noting here is that as a user of Nuw, in order to engage in borrowing with other users, all users must upload some part of the wardrobe to share with other users. This is one possible explanation for the slight difference in the level of concern, as active users have engaged in the process of lending their possessions to others and therefore this concern may feel more tangible to them. According to Tambovceva & Titko (2020, p.79) "the most frequently mentioned reasons for non-participation in sharing economy activities are the unwillingness to share personal things with strangers and the lack of understanding (18% and 17.6% respectively)". Therefore, businesses that operate within the sharing economy should greatly consider how their platforms are or are not serving to build trust with and between users.

Both users and non-users gave high ratings to the importance of the reputation of the sharing platform, confirming that H8: *The reputation of the sharing platform* is very important *in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms* is statistically supported. 95.2% of users in

Part 3 of the survey rated this factor as somewhat or highly important while 93.2% of non-users rated similarly. In comparison, in Tambovceva & Titko's (2020) study, platform reputation was not as highly rated, particularly in comparison to other factors. The last factor that emerged as having a high level of importance is personal safety; H5: *Personal safety is highly important in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms.* 85.7% of users rated personal safety as somewhat or very important while 80.8% of non-users rated personal safety as somewhat or very important. This is consistent with the results of Tambovceva & Titko's (2020) study, however, our study produced a slightly lower percentage of total respondents with this concern. Personal safety is a known grey area for participation in sharing platforms and not a lot is known about how to regulate them to improve this (GCFGlobal, 2020). Ultimately, the company is responsible for investigating issues of personal safety that may arise as part of its operation. If the sharing economy is to grow at the rate predicted, it is certain that the safety of users will be at the forefront of eventually tighter regulations. In this way, further research that enables us to understand the risk factors involved in clothes-sharing practices and the wider sharing economy would support the path towards increasing user participation through improved personal safety measures.

Finally, for the factors 'knowing something about the other person' and 'having a unique or new experience' less than 50% of each group rated these as somewhat or very important. In this case, H7: *Knowing something about the other person* is very important *in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms* and H9: *Having a unique or new experience* is very important *in the consideration of the use of clothes sharing platforms* are not supported. Although it is concluded by Hamari, et al., (2015) that perceived enjoyment can positively affect attitudes and behavioural intention towards participation in CC, participants and potential participants in clothes-sharing practices here appear to be focused on the benefits and/or risks that sharing can provide, rather than the secondary effects of participation such as these.

7. Conclusion

The phenomenon of fast fashion is powerful and pervasive. Its proliferation in recent decades has been supported by rapid development in ICTs and social media platforms, which has enabled trends to be created, released and updated again faster than ever before. For a great portion of the world's population, what we wear is important as we see it as central to the ever-evolving ideas we formulate about ourselves. Now, users of social media platforms are encouraged to use these channels as places to explore self-expression and reflection, as they are continually exposed to new and other people who can help them to rethink these ideas, often through the medium of fashion. The democratisation of consumer culture has created downward pressure on price and as a result, upward pressure on the quantities of clothing and other garments that need to be produced to generate a profit. Recent events highlight the potential for fast fashion to destroy

economies, families and most of all our planet and underscore the need to find alternative solutions.

Equally, the emergence of the sharing economy has also been supported by the rapid development of ICTs and social media channels. Now, a growing number of businesses are able to support consumers in getting access to the goods and services they need temporarily for a fee, rather than owning them permanently. The popularity of access over ownership is increasing, particularly with younger, technology savvy users. Research into the sharing economy is also gaining traction in academia recent years, however, currently only a very small number of studies have looked to provide more insight into fashion rental and clothes sharing platforms in this category, despite the potentially far-reaching implications for growth in this sub-sector. It is imperative to foster better understanding of the reasons for participating in clothes sharing practices in order to know how to make them become more widespread.

In previous studies environmental concern and economic appeal were found to be positively related to participation in the sharing economy. The results of our study proved that these findings were also consistent for users of clothes sharing platforms. Additionally, while environmental concern is rated highly as a motivator, further research is required to understand how we can instigate behavioural change which is more important for creating lasting impact on the fashion industry. Economic appeal was found to be a predictor of participation in clothes-sharing practices, while it was concluded that measuring the actual frequency of use of the platform following sign up would be more insightful to understand if economic appeal is reduced due to other factors driving reasons for participation. Qualitative studies may be better suited to helping us understand the evolution of user benefit perception and the relationship to actual use.

Lastly, personal safety, the safety of one's belongings and the reputation of the sharing platform were found to be the most important factors in the consideration of usage of clothes sharing platforms in this study. The common theme in among these factors is that they require the building of trust. In the context of this paper, it would be useful for further research to look to understand trust and safety building factors in the sharing economy and researching businesses that are build trust to drive user adoption.

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