

# Consumer Motivation for Co-Creation and Resulting Effects on Brand Knowledge

- Master Thesis -



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## **Preface**

This Master Thesis represents the final academic project in order to graduate as Master of Science in International Marketing and Brand Management from Lund University in 2014. Since the result would not have been possible without support, we would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone involved.

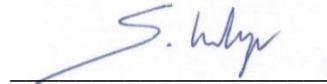
Our thanks especially go to the co-creators who were helping us by taking part in our interviews, to our supervisor Jon Bertilsson for his valuable insights, and to everyone who supported us during those ten weeks.

Lund, 26 May 2014

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## Abstract

Title	Consumer Motivation for Co-Creation and Resulting Effects on Brand Knowledge
Research topic	Co-creation
Keywords	Co-creation, motivation, brand knowledge
Authors	Corinna Jürgens and Sandra Leuenberger
Purpose	The aim of this study is to contribute to the existing literature on co-creation in investigating consumers' motives for participation on the one hand and possible effects of this participation on brand knowledge on the other. It thus provides a link between co-creation, motivation, and branding literature.
Methodology	A constructionist ontological stance and interpretive epistemology led us to the research philosophy of hermeneutical phenomenology and the implementation of a qualitative research strategy. By conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews in the context of a case study rich respondent data was gathered. The subsequent analysis followed the hermeneutic circle approach.
Main findings	Consumers are driven by a combination of motives for co-creation, with internalised extrinsic motivation as a main driver and skill development being the overall most emphasised incentive. Affected by consumers' motivation and expectations, co-creation was shown to change consumers' brand knowledge, however not necessarily with a positive impact on the brand involved.

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Literature review .....	1
1.1.1	Background.....	1
1.1.2	Positive versus critical perspective .....	4
1.2	Research gap and problem formulation .....	6
1.3	Purpose and research outline .....	8
2	Theoretical Framework .....	10
2.1	Introduction.....	10
2.2	Underlying theories of co-creation .....	10
2.3	Consumer motivation.....	13
2.4	Brand knowledge.....	17
2.5	Towards a theoretical lens .....	22
3	Methodology .....	24
3.1	Research philosophy .....	24
3.2	Research strategy .....	25
3.3	Research method .....	26
3.4	Data collection.....	28
3.5	Sampling method.....	30
3.6	Designing and conducting the interviews .....	31
3.7	Data analysis.....	33
3.8	Collection of primary and secondary sources .....	34
4	Analysis .....	35
4.1	The Cloetta case .....	35
4.2	Consumer motivation.....	36
4.3	Brand knowledge.....	46
5	Discussion and Conclusion .....	57
5.1	Discussion of consumer motivation.....	57
5.2	Discussion of brand knowledge .....	59
5.3	Conclusion.....	60
6	Implications and Limitations .....	63
6.1	Theoretical implications and contribution .....	63
6.2	Managerial implications and contribution .....	64
6.3	Limitations and further research .....	65
	REFERENCE LIST .....	66
	APPENDIX.....	75

## **Table of figures**

Figure 1 Research outline .....	9
Figure 2 Consumer motives for co-creation engagement .....	15
Figure 3 Dimensions of brand knowledge .....	21
Figure 4 Theoretical lens.....	23
Figure 5 Cloetta case schedule .....	36
Figure 6 Revision of the theoretical lens.....	62

# **1 Introduction**

*This introductory chapter provides an overview of the topics relevant for this study, starting off with a review of the development of both co-creation and marketing in society and academic research. This is of importance in order to lay the basis for the investigation of consumers' motives for participation in co-creation as well as possible resulting effects this participation might have on brand knowledge. The identified connection between consumer motivation and the co-creation of brand meaning as well as brand value in the context of co-creation projects will be explored. Following this, different definitions and the role of co-creation in relation to other approaches will be reviewed. This will then be followed by a literature review of both a positive and a critical perspective on co-creation. Relevant gaps in research will be revealed and problems in current literature formulated. Lastly, the purpose of this thesis as well as its structure will be presented.*

## **1.1 Literature review**

### **1.1.1 Background**

Before the 1960s, marketing was merely seen as adding value to commodities in order to facilitate the transfer of goods or ownership. Communication with the market took place in form of one-way mass communication from companies to the market (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the 1960s and 70s, major changes occurred and business became more flexible. Instead of working on their own, collaborations and networks started to form between companies (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). In line with this development, a change in marketing management research took place as a new understanding of consumers evolved. Consumers were therein seen as more than individuals who were buying things, but as those who wanted to fulfil needs and wants. The purpose of marketing consequently shifted towards satisfying consumers and creating value in use (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Based on the increasing importance of skills and knowledge as resources for organisations, a service-centred logic became the new dominant view of marketing in the beginning of the 21st century (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Services were herein seen as specialised competences capturing both tangible and intangible marketing offerings (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The service-oriented view placed great importance on the establishment of relationships and a two-way communication with consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

This evolution of marketing was also mirrored in the developments in branding literature. While brands were considered 'maker's marks' in earlier years, the term 'brand' is nowadays generally related to the image of a product or company in the minds of consumers, often conceptualised as a set of mental associations that add to the value of the product (Arvidsson, 2005; Keller, 1993). The new customer-centred view of brands and marketing led to customers becoming involved in the creation and personalisation of brands (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

These developments towards involving consumers were encouraged by the parallel evolution of the internet. With the rise of the internet it became easier for consumers to gather information, be more interactive, and share opinions and ideas with the business world (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004a/b). As a consequence of changes in society, highly qualified and educated consumers moreover emerged who had access to new sources of knowledge and creativity and who were eager to make use of these sources by being productive (Arvidsson, 2008). This changed the consumer-company interaction with consumers becoming a 'new source of competence' for organisations (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004a/b) by testing products and sharing ideas (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). The exchange of specialised skills and knowledge was seen as the main source of growth and value creation for both the company and their consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

This new focus on active participation of consumers and the interaction between companies and consumers led to the development of co-creation practises. The concept of co-creation was introduced as a collaboration between consumers and brands with the purpose of jointly creating value (Dijk et al., 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). These co-creation processes often consist of online competitions such as designing ideas and refining or developing new products (Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2013; Sawhney et al., 2005). They also involve interaction with other participants by discussing and commenting on submitted ideas (Füller, 2010). Various very similar definitions of the term co-creation exist in today's literature. Ind et al. (2013, p.9) define it as "an active, creative, and social process based on collaboration between organi[s]ations and participants that generates benefits for all and creates value for stakeholders". They base their conceptualisation of co-creation on the notion that co-creation "aims to provide an idea, share knowledge, or participate in the development of a product or service that can be of value for other customers" (Witell et al., 2011, p. 143). An important aspect in the co-creation process is moreover the equality between consumers and the company (Dijk et al., 2014). Co-creation is moreover described as being an act of high intellectual involvement (Ind et al., 2013). In line with this, Füller (2010) argues that co-creation is more than giving an opinion or being asked about one's needs and desires. It is in fact an act

of contributing one's creativity and problem-solving skills based on the premise that consumers' expectations are being met while doing so (Füller, 2010). The aspect of interaction is furthermore also of central importance. Arvidsson (2008) even represents the point of view that co-creation from a consumer's perspective is predominantly a means of constructing and fostering social interactions, while he sees the tangible output of the co-creation process as only of secondary nature. A comparison of these different conceptualisations of the phenomenon of co-creation shows that they all describe co-creation as a social process of active interaction between an organisation and its customers with the aim of creating value for both parties (e.g. Ind et al., 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a/b; Witell et al., 2011). The definition underlying this study will however be the one by Ind et al. (2013) as we think it covers all important aspects of the concept and thus forms a solid basis for our research.

A variety of concepts show certain similarities to co-creation (Ind et al., 2013). Based on literature, the concepts of open innovation and crowdsourcing could be identified as being relevant for our understanding of the phenomenon. Open innovation describes a recently evolved form of innovation in which companies acquire input from external sources such as partnerships or licensing while offering their own ideas to the market (Chesbrough, 2003). Open innovation is very similar to co-creation as its focus lies on making use of ideas generated from external sources (Chesbrough, 2003). It differs however in the respect that the external sources involved normally originate from other businesses such as start-up companies or companies focussing on other fields of expertise (Chesbrough, 2003). Crowdsourcing on the other hand describes how companies outsource work to the crowd in order to solve existing problems. In exchange for their voluntary participation those involved receive some form of compensation (Howe, 2006; Agafonovas & Alonderiene, 2013). Crowdsourcing differs from co-creation therein that higher levels of intellectual and personal involvement are needed in a co-creation project (Ind et al., 2013).

The evolution of co-creation is closely linked to the development of the related concepts presented above. All in all, it derives from three different backgrounds (Ind et al., 2013). First, the rise of the internet allows consumers to interact and socialise around a common interest without the limitation of space (Ind et al., 2013; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Second, organisations realised that they can benefit from collaborations with consumers (Ind et al., 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Third, marketing thinking has changed over the last years from focusing on the act of purchase to a stronger focus on the actual usage and the consumer itself (Ind et al., 2013).



Researchers have studied the phenomenon of co-creation from two different standpoints. Current research literature can thereby be divided into company focused and consumer focused research approaches. Within those two approaches, two different perspectives on the phenomenon evolved, a positive and a rather critical stance on co-creation. In the following, a review of existing literature from both perspectives will be presented based on a consumer-centred approach.

### **1.1.2 Positive versus critical perspective**

Various streams of literature treating collaborations between consumers and companies see the advantages and disadvantages of co-creation from different perspectives.

From the optimistic perspective, marketing is seen as aiming at “constructing consumers as partners in mutually beneficial innovation and production processes” (Cova et al., 2011, p. 232). The creation of value is therein seen as an essential driver of co-creation for both the company and the consumer. According to the service-centred dominant logic of marketing proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004), consumers are seen as co-creators and marketing as a process that derives from interactions with consumers. They also argue that the way value is perceived and determined depends solely on the consumer while the company can only “make value propositions” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 7). High-quality interactions enable the creation of unique experiences for consumers and can consequently be valuable for both since they also form the basis of a new competitive advantage for the company (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). This implies that if a brand is involved, the created value represents itself by an increase in brand value, often measured in terms of brand equity (Keller, 1993). Arvidsson (2005) argues in this context that consumers have the ability to create economic value on the basis of social relations, shared meaning and emotional involvements that evolve through consumers’ participation. He calls this basis for economic value ethical surplus (Arvidsson, 2005). As mentioned, consumers can furthermore create value for themselves by participating in co-creation, as a personalised co-creation experience is the basis for the creation of unique value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, 2004a) point out that as co-creation depends on each individual who takes part in the process it is of great importance that companies provide environments where consumers can live their personal experience. This is also relevant due to the importance of the brand involved in the co-creation project. Since consumption is a means for individuals to live and express their identity, brands

function as a resource that consumers use to symbolically form their self (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998). The meaning of the brand is herein not only created through promotions and advertising, but also through the actual purchase and usage of the brand (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Consumers are therefore likely to recreate their identity through co-creation. The value for participants therein derives from the interactions made during the process of co-creation as they provide meaning (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). This is in line with Fisher and Smith (2011) who argue that consumers are actually demanding the opportunity to personalise their market experience in order for it to be more authentic and unique so that they can express themselves appropriately. Based on the service-centred dominant logic, Vargo and Lusch (2004) furthermore point out that individuals benefit from exchanges with companies as it enables them to acquire specialised competences such as specific knowledge or skills. Co-creation is therefore not only a project where consumers offer their skills, but also a source for external competences that consumers could not acquire otherwise.

In contrary to the optimistic perspective, Zwick et al. (2008) state that companies are solely looking for a new way of creating a competitive advantage by involving formerly passive consumers. Zwick et al. (2008) criticise that both concepts - value co-creation and service-dominant marketing - propagate the importance of equal company-consumer relationships while they are actually focusing on how they can utilise consumers' productivity for their own good and consequently exploit them. Fisher and Smith (2011) come to a similar conclusion by stating that it is very unlikely that mutually reciprocal relationships between the participating parties will evolve. They argue that relationships can only be either in favour of the producer or the consumer. Zwick et al. (2008) argue in this context that two stages of exploitation exist. As a first stage, consumers provide know-how and social cooperation without being paid for their efforts. In addition to not being paid, they also pay a price premium for their own work as co-created commodities are considered more valuable (Zwick et al., 2008; Cova et al., 2011). Arvidsson (2005) agrees with this more critical perspective of the phenomenon of co-creation. He depicts brands as a tool for programming customers in a way which ensures that they enact the intended brand identity in order to keep the brand alive (Arvidsson, 2005). Furthermore, he sees brand management's influence on the involvement of consumers as a form of exploiting consumers while strengthening the brand with the help of their interaction. From his point of view, exploitation can be divided into a quantitative and qualitative dimension. In the quantitative dimension of exploitation, companies use brand management practices in order to influence

consumers in a way which allows the brand to absorb consumers' free time. The qualitative dimension of exploitation is concerned with making use of the productive activities of consumers and filtering their creativity in order to deprive it of undesirable aspects with the aim of leading to activities that produce measurable forms of attention for the brand (Arvidsson, 2005). Zwick et al. (2008) agree with this notion as, from their point of view, companies want to utilise consumers' creativity and knowledge by channelling it according to their own needs. A central argument of the critical perspective is that consumers' technical, social, and cultural competences and labour are misused in companies' production processes in order to facilitate a new form of value creation for the company. This is done at the cost of consumers' free determination (Zwick et al., 2008). Companies are consequently exploiting consumers' workforce by doing so and controlling consumers' actions in favour of their own company goals.

## **1.2 Research gap and problem formulation**

Reviewing current literature on co-creation showed that research encounters the phenomenon from two different perspectives, an optimistic as well as a more critical stance on the issue. Both perspectives have strong arguments for their point of view. However, to our knowledge none of the above mentioned authors have empirical evidence for their argumentation. We will take both perspectives into account in order to cover the whole spectrum of the phenomenon and to be open to all possible views on the topic. In considering both standpoints on co-creation, we also try to avoid imposing a frame of reference on the people studied (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A limitation of previous studies which could be identified is that co-creation has been primarily researched from a company's perspective, thereby for the most part neglecting consumers' point of view. Our study attempts to contribute to closing this gap in focusing on the consumers' perspective on co-creation. In line with Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), we look at postmodern consumers who are seen as engaging in productive consumption and thus creating value for both themselves and the company (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). As the service-centred view on marketing proposes, consumers are increasingly involved in companies' marketing activities, which has led to the emergence of co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This can be seen as exploitation of consumers from a critical perspective on co-creation or as creating value for consumers from a positive perspective (Arvidsson, 2005; Zwick et al., 2008). In order to understand these two perspectives from a consumer's point of view, it is necessary to investigate consumers' motives for participation in co-creation. The resulting co-creation of meaning which derives from consumers' productive practices around brands, contributes to the

creation of brand value (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Arvidsson, 2005, 2008). The concept of brand value has been researched in mainly managerial streams of literature and can be conceptualised as brand equity which is based on brand knowledge (e.g. Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993). The connection between the more managerial concept of brand knowledge and the more consumer-centred concept of motivation in the context of co-creation represents a meeting point of both perspectives. Applied to the consumer perspective, this constitutes a new angle in research which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been investigated yet. A first attempt towards closing this research gap has been made by Dijk et al. (2014). However, their findings are limited due to only including brand personality aspects as well as conducting their study among non-participants. The effect of co-creation on consumers taking part in the project and involving themselves in the development of new ideas has thus been left out of the scope of their study.

The topic of consumer motivation has been researched particularly in the area of purchase decisions. Only limited research has been done on consumer motivation for participation in co-creation (Füller, 2006, 2010). Dijk et al. (2014) state that more research needs to be done on identifying factors which motivate consumers to get involved. In this context, Iglesias et al. (2013) also mention that research lacks the inclusion of the consumer perspective. In addition, we could only identify one study which investigates a possible connection between brand knowledge and co-creation. The recently conducted study by Dijk et al. (2014) seems to be the first one researching this relationship. They argue that co-creation fits the process of brand knowledge creation proposed by Keller (1993, 2003) and propose that brand knowledge can be influenced by co-creation. However, they relate this idea to non-participants whereas we research this connection from a participant's perspective. We therein aim at investigating if and how the increased involvement with the brand can affect participants' brand knowledge. Another limitation of the study is that it only focused on brand personality and not the whole concept of brand knowledge. Brand personality therein only represents a small aspect of Keller's (1993) brand knowledge conceptualisation and does not cover product-related knowledge aspects which we see as important due to the focus of many co-creation projects lying on products. Brand personality is moreover argued to be limited to certain types of brands and thus not generally applicable (Low & Lamb, 2000). We therefore believe that further research is necessary in order to capture the full extent of consumers' knowledge about a brand and possible changes in connection to co-creation.

Current developments in society and academic research suggest that the importance of brands in the life world of consumers and the co-creation of brand meaning are an increasingly

important area of study and therefore pose an interesting topic to investigate. Since consumer motivation and the co-creation of brand meaning and brand value are closely linked especially in the context of co-creation projects, the topic poses an interesting area for studying possible connections and thus contributing to existing literature in linking the two concepts. The topic of our thesis reflects this belief and takes into account the recent developments regarding branding and co-creation as a consciously implemented concept. This study therefore aims at examining factors motivating consumers to participate in co-creation as well as possible effects of their participation on their brand knowledge. The research questions are formulated as follows:

- What drives consumers to participate in co-creation?
- (How) does co-creation affect brand knowledge?

### **1.3 Purpose and research outline**

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to current co-creation literature by taking on a consumer perspective. More specifically, the aim of this study is to improve the understanding of consumers' motives to participate in co-creation as well as possible changes in brand knowledge resulting therefrom and thus contribute to literature by linking both concepts. This is based on the identified connection between consumer motivation and the co-creation of brand meaning as well as brand value in the context of co-creation projects. Since motivation has been researched mainly from a consumer perspective whereas brand knowledge is a concept that evolved from a managerial view, this connection forms a meeting point of both standpoints. As a consequence of the research questions, the nature of this study will be exploratory. In addition to the theoretical contribution, this paper will also be relevant in practice as it provides a more thorough understanding of consumers' motivation and possible changes in their brand knowledge.

This master thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the topic. It consists of a literature review which sets the basis for this paper and includes the problematisation of existing literature, the identified research gaps and the thereon based problem formulation and research question. In the second chapter, a theoretical review of relevant literature on the three core topics co-creation, motivation, and brand knowledge is presented. This provides us with a better understanding and forms the basis of our theoretical lens through which the empirical data is analysed. The third chapter is concerned with the

discussion of the methodology which the analysis in chapter four is based on. In the fourth chapter, the data is analysed and findings are presented. The findings are then discussed in chapter five and a conclusion is provided by answering the initially proposed research questions while presenting the contribution to current literature. Finally, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research as well as practical and theoretical implications are given.

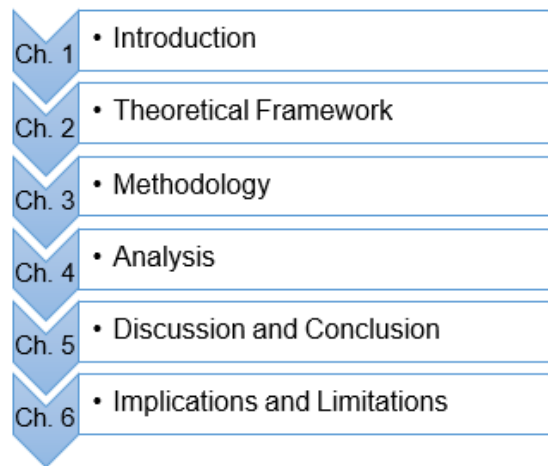


Figure 1 Research outline

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

*This chapter represents a theoretical framework based on the concepts relevant for our study. Thereby, a theoretical lens is developed which guides our understanding of the phenomena of co-creation, motivation, and brand knowledge.*

### **2.1 Introduction**

Based on current literature, the underlying concepts of co-creation will be reviewed in order to better understand the concept as a whole. Due to our consumer perspective in investigating consumers' motives for participating in co-creation as well as possible effects this participation might have on brand knowledge, the meanings consumers give these aspects are of utter importance. CCT as well as the concepts of social capital and social exchange theory are therefore important for a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of co-creation from participants' perspective. In addition, as the process of adding meaning to the brand originates from CCT, this common origin can help us to analyse possible connections and changes in participants' brand knowledge. As a second step, motivation and its different definitions and categorisations will be reviewed and explained in order to evaluate their usefulness when analysing consumers' motivation for participation in co-creation. Hence, this will simplify the identification and categorisation of motives in the following analysis. The concept of brand knowledge and its dimensions as represented in existing literature will also be reviewed. The different aspects of brand knowledge are depicted in order to gain an understanding of the concept's role in the market due to its importance for value creation. Since the concept is a major factor in developing the theoretical lens, a thorough literature review supports the determination of those aspects that have to be covered when studying consumers' brand knowledge. Based on existing literature, a theoretical lens will be developed. This gives an overview of the topics and their connections and thus provides the theoretical basis guiding the analysis of the empirical data which will be gathered.

### **2.2 Underlying theories of co-creation**

For the analysis of co-creation, a deeper understanding of the underlying theories is required. The concept of co-creation was introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000). Since then, many different conceptualisations of the phenomenon have been developed (see chapter 1.1.1). They all share the common denominator of describing co-creation as a social process of active

interaction between consumers and an organisation with the aim of creating value for both sides (e.g. Ind et al., 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a/b; Witell et al., 2011). For the purpose of this study, the definition by Ind et al. (2013, p.9) seems to be most appropriate and thought through as it describes co-creation as “an active, creative, and social process based on collaboration between organi[s]ations and participants that generates benefits for all and creates value for stakeholder”.

Due to the social nature of the co-creation phenomenon, CCT is seen as the underlying theory behind co-creation from the consumers' perspective. CCT can be described as different theoretical perspectives that focus on “the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 868). As described by Arnould and Thompson (2005), CCT puts an emphasis on consumption as being productive and can therefore be directly linked to the co-creation phenomenon. In line with this statement, participation in co-creation provided by companies can be seen as a way for consumers to consume experiences and produce brand meaning (Arvidsson, 2008). Co-creation can consequently be connected to CCT as proposed in Arnould and Thompson (2005). To the same conclusion come Gensler et al. (2013) who also state that co-creation, as a process of meaningful interaction, has its origin in CCT.

Consumption can be described as a pattern which allows consumers to rebuild cultural and symbolic meaning. The meaning is herein encoded in advertisements, brands or consumer goods, expressing consumers' social and personal circumstances and goals. As a consequence thereof, it also manifests their identity (e.g. Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2002). Consumers use goods in combination with today's accessible media culture to create a framework in which those goods can actually have a use-value (Arvidsson, 2005). This 'immaterial productivity' that consumers engage in becomes valuable for companies as it happens completely autonomous and offers a creativity which is beyond the control of capital (Arvidsson, 2005).

In line with the change in society which was discussed in chapter 1.1.1, researchers in the field of CCT understand consumers as being active participants in the process of co-creating brand meaning, instead of passively taking in information about the brand (Allen et al., 2008; Gensler et al., 2013). The same conclusion is drawn by Arvidsson (2005) who also argues that researchers see the modern consumer as an active participant in the social construction of value for consumer goods.

Cultural meaning is an essential aspect of culture, categorised and shared by like-minded groups of individuals in order to better understand the world they live in (Arnould & Thompson



2005; Gensler et al., 2013). Brand stories lead to a transfer of these shared cultural meanings to the brand (Holt, 2003; Gensler et al., 2013). The same applies when people involved in today's media landscape use brands to produce their stories and consequently add meaning to the brand by doing so (McCracken, 1986; Gensler et al., 2013).

When creatively engaging with brands, consumers themselves can generate value by adding meaning to the brand which then leads to the creation of economic value (Arvidsson, 2005). In this context, Arvidsson (2005) introduced the term ethical surplus which arises from social relations, shared meaning, and emotional involvement with and around the brand. Due to the fact that social relations can create value, we see connections to the concept of social capital and the closely related social exchange theory.

By interacting in communities, individuals can create social capital for themselves. Social capital describes resources that are embedded in social structures and relationships which create value for the individual, provided that those social networks are based on trust and reciprocal interaction (Mathwick et al., 2008; Paxton, 1999). Consequently, it can be defined as the sum of all possible and actual reachable resources that are integrated in a social network. This means that social capital does not only refer to the network provided, but also to the added value that can be generated through it (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Paxton, 1999). This added value is based on reciprocity, trust, friendship, and positive feelings to one another (Bourdieu, 1986; Paxton, 1999). Social capital is consequently very similar to the by Arvidsson (2005) introduced concept of ethical surplus. A common denominator between both theories is the creation of a sense of community which is one of the central aspects of brand community that also has its origin in CCT (e.g. Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Gensler et al., 2013; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). A brand community is centred around a brand and is characterised by like-minded individuals who admire and want to share experiences made with the brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand communities show certain similarities to co-creation as their focus also lies on a brand or product and the interaction between participants (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). They differ however from co-creation therein that members of brand communities show no interest in changing their brand. Instead, they aim at fostering their relationship with it and sharing this experience with like-minded people (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), whereas co-creation focuses on creating and changing a brand or product (Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2013; Sawhney et al., 2005). Because of the similarities and connections of social capital to ethical surplus and brand communities that all describe facets of human interaction, it can be seen as one of the underlying principles for the existence of co-creation which by definition relies on interaction.

Also closely related to these concepts is social exchange theory as they focus on interaction and the therein included social aspects and mechanisms. It proposes that any form of interaction equals the exchange of tangible or intangible resources of social or economic nature. Furthermore, it indicates that individuals form relationships with the expectation of benefiting therefrom (Blau, 1964; Füller, 2010; Homans, 1958; Lambe et al., 2001). If the outcomes of those exchanges are being experienced as positive over a certain period of time, trust in the partner and therefore commitment evolve leading to long-term relationship (Lambe et al., 2001). This means that the expectancy of getting a reward in exchange for a fulfilled task is being met and therefore maintains the exchange relationship between two parties. Rewards can herein be of tangible nature such as material goods or of intangible nature such as friendship (Füller, 2010). Co-creation is similar to this concept since participation in co-creation is motivated by either intrinsic or extrinsic drivers which can be of tangible or intangible nature (see figure 2) (Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2013). Similarities between both concepts can also be drawn when comparing the role of trust and commitment as they are among the main factors influencing and fostering a co-creation process (Ind et al., 2013). Social exchange theory can therefore also be seen as one of the underlying theories of co-creation.

## **2.3 Consumer motivation**

In order to analyse the motives for participation in co-creation, it is essential to establish an understanding of consumer motivation. Consumer motivation literature focuses mainly on why and how individuals make purchase decisions. Understanding the principles behind this phenomenon is essential as human beings create the market by becoming consumers (Britt, 1950). In order to understand consumer motivation one has to comprehend human drivers first. Human motivation can be generally described as a channel through which individuals express or fulfil their needs (Maslow, 1943). Due to its complexity and its situation-dependency, motivation is very difficult to categorise (Britt, 1950). Classifications can however be used as guidelines in order to better understand human behaviour. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that motivation cannot be fully explained by them (Britt, 1950; Maslow, 1943).

Despite those limitations, various researchers developed categorisations of human motives (e.g. Murphy et al., 1937, in Britt, 1950; Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) proposed a theory of human motivation based on human needs and their motivation to fulfil those needs which he categorised into physiological needs, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. The

motivation to fulfil needs depends on one's current personal circumstances which for their part depend on the needs that are already fulfilled and those that still need fulfilment (Maslow, 1943). Various authors agree that the main challenge with human motives is that they vary depending on the circumstances individuals encounter (Britt, 1950; David & Shapiro, 2008). As Maslow's theory of human motivation is the most widely known and used concept in marketing, we will keep his approach in mind as an underlying concept for the further review of motivation.

Similar to human motives, consumer motives derive from the need of satisfaction with the difference that consumer motives affect the whole market as opposed to human motives which focus rather on the individual. It is therefore essential to understand consumers' underlying motives of how and why they make purchases in order to understand market dynamics (Britt, 1950). As consumers are driven by more than mere physiological motives, it is substantial to be aware of the emotional drivers that lead their actions (Britt, 1950). In line with Maslow's (1943) view, consumer motivation evolves from satisfying consumers' needs and desires. Satisfaction can be achieved through product performance and consumers' social and psychological interpretation of this performance (Udell, 1964). Based on this assumption, Udell (1964) divides consumer buying motives into operational and sociopsychological. Operational motives are considered to be directly related to the performance of a product while sociopsychological buying motives focus on the personal social and psychological interpretation of the product (Udell, 1964). However, Udell (1964) specifies that most buying decisions are based on more than one source of motivation so that the actual motivation for a purchase normally underlies a combination of motives. This reflects the earlier discussed general complexity of human motivation.

Since basic human and consumer motives can however not fully explain why people decide to voluntarily participate in co-creation (Maslow, 1943; Udell, 1964), consumer motives for co-creation also need to be investigated. Participation in co-creation can be completely voluntary and without any direct reward (Füller, 2010; Füller et al., 2006). The question therefore arises why consumers dedicate their time to participate in co-creation and why they are willing to share their knowledge and ideas with companies (Füller, 2010).

Previous research shows that consumers participate in communities because they want to engage with like-minded people (Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2013; Kozinets, 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). While social interaction and a common interest are, according to Ind et al. (2013), motivation enough in naturally evolved co-creation communities, they argue that this is not the case in those generated by organisations. In several studies it has been shown that

consumer motives for participation in co-creation can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic criteria depending on participants' character (Füller, 2010; Füller et al., 2008; Ind et al., 2013; Oreg & Nov, 2008), the circumstances they encounter (David & Shapiro, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the type of co-creation (Roberts et al., 2014).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motives have their origin in self-determination theory which focuses on personality and human motivation. Self-determination theory distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motives based on reasons and goals from which an action derives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is thereby characterised by the tendency to explore the unknown and extend one's capabilities. If an activity is done for the inherent satisfaction of doing so it is intrinsically motivated. If however the activity is motivated by some separable outcome this activity is extrinsically motivated (Füller, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation leads to higher levels of self-determination and intention to fulfil an activity than extrinsic motivation. This is in conjunction with the fact that extrinsic motivation is normally based on some kind of outcome while intrinsic motivation is purely internally driven (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In line with the separation of motives into intrinsic and extrinsic as done in self-determination theory, Füller (2006; 2010) identified various potential motives for engagement in online co-creation from related research areas. In his study, he proposed a distinction between three different categories: intrinsic, internalised extrinsic and extrinsic (figure 2).

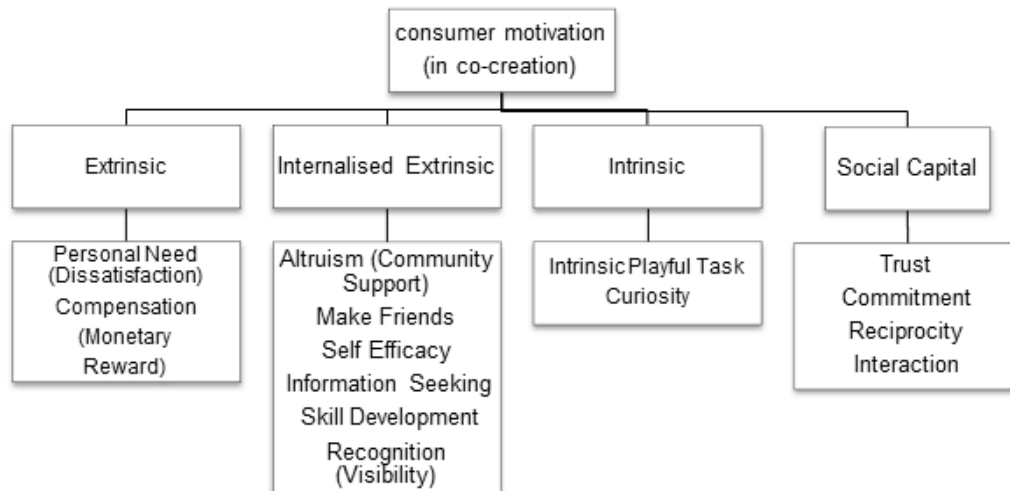


Figure 2 Consumer motives for co-creation engagement (Füller, 2010; Ind et al, 2013)

Intrinsic motives for engagement represent the first category of potential motivation and consist of the motives 'intrinsic playful task' and 'curiosity'. Both motives imply participation simply for

the sake of the task. Consumers either participate because it is considered an enjoyable project or just because they are curious about it (Füller, 2010).

The second category of consumer motivation for co-creation is composed of internalised extrinsic motives. Internalisation can herein be regarded as the degree to which consumers take in a value, transforming it into their own and at the same time raising their motivation to active personal commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This means that consumers' engagement is driven by internal albeit not intrinsic drivers. Motives that are included in this category are 'altruism', 'making friends', 'self efficacy', 'information seeking', 'skill development', and 'recognition'. Altruistically motivated consumers want to participate in order to support their community (Füller, 2010). The motive 'making friends' refers to those who want to meet like-minded people (Füller, 2006, 2010). It is based on the premise that consumers access different sources to communicate and interact with people (Kozinets, 2002). Consumers might furthermore also participate in co-creation because of their self efficacy. This is the case for individuals who are confident that they are capable of overcoming potential obstacles and solving tasks (Füller, 2006). They perceive the co-creation project as a challenge that they want to master (Füller, 2006, 2010). Others are simply seeking for new information regarding their field of interest and see participation in co-creation as a way of acquiring this information (Füller, 2006, 2010). Füller (2006) bases this on Butler et al. (2002) who state that online communities enable the acquisition of additional information that could not be accessed otherwise. Another motivational driver for engagement is the desire to develop new skills and expand one's knowledge (Füller, 2006, 2010). This motive derives from the basis that consumers want to improve themselves and gain additional knowledge and are therefore motivated to perform (Amabile, 1996 in Füller, 2006). Moreover, some consumers simply want to receive recognition from other participants and the company involved (Füller, 2006, 2010).

The last category is composed of extrinsic motives including 'personal need' and 'compensation'. They derive from a personal need for compensation for their engagement. The motive of personal need often appears in form of dissatisfaction with products that consumers aim at changing through their involvement in co-creation (von Hippel, 2007). The motive of compensation for the engagement often takes the form of a monetary reward in exchange for their efforts (Füller, 2010). Research revealed that monetary motives are generally not as common in co-creation as other types of motivation (Füller, 2010). Most consumers are rather interested in immaterial rewards such as recognition of their performance (Füller, 2010; Lambe et al, 2001). The critical perspective on co-creation and brands as argued for by Arvidsson (2005) criticises this phenomenon. He argues that companies make use of it by exploiting

consumers. While the involvement of consumers strengthens a brand through their interaction with it, they use the brand to absorb consumers' free time and lead to activities that produce measurable forms of attention for the brand. The differentiation of motives will clarify potential drivers of participants and facilitate a better classification in our data analysis.

In addition to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, trust and commitment are amongst the most important aspects and prerequisites for engagement with a brand within company hosted co-creation communities (Ind et al., 2013). Fournier (1998) argues in this context that high levels of trust and commitment are necessary to form a relationship between consumers and brands. In line with this, Zhou et al. (2012) found that commitment is positively affected by personal identification with a brand-related community. Trust in one another is especially important as it represents the foundation for consumers' willingness to share ideas and to interact. Without trust, no co-creation process would evolve (Ind et al., 2013). In their study, Ind et al. (2013) propose that participation increases as consumers begin to trust one another. It is therefore essential to encourage interaction from the beginning in order to foster the development of trust in other participants and eventually in the community and the brand itself (Ind et al., 2013). In their key mediating variable model focusing on relationship marketing, Morgan and Hunt (1994) also come to the same conclusion that trust and commitment build the foundation for cooperation. In addition to trust and commitment, reciprocity between consumers and the brand is also seen as an important factor for fostering interaction and encouraging consumers as it gives them the feeling of being taken seriously (Casalo et al., 2008 in Ind al., 2013). In order to ensure a positive and engaging experience for consumers and as a consequence the creation of value, an ideal environment needs to be given. As trust, commitment, and reciprocity are motives for co-creation, this shows the connection to social capital as they are also indicators thereof (Mathwick et al., 2008; Paxton, 1999). The motives identified in this chapter (figure 2) will form the theoretical lens and thus the foundation for the analysis of consumers' motivation in co-creation.

## **2.4 Brand knowledge**

In order to investigate possible effects of co-creation on brand knowledge, the concept of brand knowledge, its influencers and effects are being reviewed based on existing literature. Over the last decades, brand knowledge has been studied by various researchers who constructed different models and debated about the structure of brand knowledge in memory (e.g. Bettman,

1979; Keller, 1993; Mitchell, 1982). The generally agreed on model in branding literature is the associative model. It depicts brand knowledge as consisting of a concept node in memory – a unit of information – to which associations are linked. Those links vary in strength. A so called ‘spreading activation’ process from node to node determines the extent of retrieval of knowledge in memory (e.g. Anderson, 1983; Collins & Loftus, 1975; Srull & Wyer, 1989; Raaijmakers & Shiffrin, 1981). This process is the basis for many different models constructed in branding research that are dealing with knowledge that consumers acquire, store and recall about a brand, especially when it comes to decision making. Several concepts of brand knowledge as well as perceptual and cognitive factors influencing consumer decision making have been constructed. The topic is often linked to the creation of brand equity which is seen as forming the value of a brand (Aaker, 1991, 1996; de Chernatony et al., 2011; Keller, 1993, 2003, 2009). In the following, the terms brand equity and brand value will be used interchangeably.

Most of the models differentiate among similar sub-categories. They differ mainly in the way they see the interrelations of the different factors influencing consumer response to marketing activities. In his customer-based brand equity model, Keller (1993, 2003) differentiates between two factors of brand knowledge which affect consumer response. First, he mentions brand awareness which includes recall and recognition of the brand. Second, the factor of brand image is represented by the favourability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations in memory. While Keller (1993) focuses on brand knowledge as the leading concept influencing consumer response, Aaker (1991, 1996) sees brand equity as consisting of certain assets which create value for both the customer and the company (Aaker, 1996). These four components are brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations (Aaker, 1996). Two of the assets Aaker (1996) mentions – awareness and associations – are consistent with Keller’s (1993, 2003) model. The third factor, perceived quality, is moreover consistent with Keller’s (1993) concept of brand attitudes. Another model was constructed by de Chernatony et al. (2011) who distinguish between six types of brand attributes which affect consumer response and, in turn, the strength of the brand and the resulting brand equity. They categorise them into awareness, image, perceived quality, perceived value, personality, and organisational associations. While awareness and image are closely related to those in Keller’s model (1993), perceived value and organisational associations can be subsumed under Keller’s (1993) different kinds of brand associations. Keller (1993) also argued that his concepts of user and usage imagery can produce brand personality attributes which shows the similarity of these concepts. He also refers to perceived quality as consistent with his concept of brand attitudes (Keller, 1993).

As this comparison shows, Keller's customer-based brand equity model (1993, 2003) (figure 3) is the most inclusive model subsuming most of the aspects mentioned in the other concepts. Furthermore, it is one of the most widely used models in the field (Esch et al., 2006). The two dimensions of brand image and awareness were also confirmed by various researchers as being distinct aspects of brand equity (e.g. Agarwal & Rao, 1996; Pappu et al., 2005). Dijk et al. (2014) furthermore argue that co-creation fits the process of brand knowledge creation proposed by Keller (1993, 2003). Due to its focus on consumer-based value creation, it thus fits our purpose best and will therefore be used as a starting point for consecutive analyses.

Even though we see Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand knowledge as a suitable lens for this study, we identified a weakness concerning the importance of product-related aspects. Keller's (1993) definition of brands as a set of mental associations that add to the value of the product does not take into account that the product itself can express brand values. Since co-creation is in many cases not only related to brands but also related to products, we view this as an important aspect to consider. We therefore see the necessity of including product-related aspects in our conceptualisation of brand knowledge. Due to its close connection to brand-related knowledge, the consumer knowledge perspective proposed by Alba and Hutchinson (1987) will fulfil this purpose as previously applied by Oakenfull and McCarthy (2010). Their concept of consumer knowledge focuses on products with product-related experiences at the centre of the concept focusing on familiarity and expertise. Familiarity is herein related to the number of product-related experiences consumers have accumulated over time, including advertising exposures, information search, decision-making, purchasing, product usage, and the like (Oakenfull & McCarthy, 2010). Expertise is defined as consumers' ability to perform product-related tasks successfully and is enhanced through increased familiarity with the product (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). The authors furthermore propose that expertise also relates to consumers' ability of categorising products and decreasing the level of confusion regarding brand-specific information (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987).

Familiarity and expertise bear some connections to the slightly different conceptualisation of brand value proposed by Arvidsson (2005). He argues that not only a company's marketing activity can affect consumer response and thus brand equity, but also consumers' own interaction with the brand through the consumption process. Brand value thus also derives from the productive practices of consumers. Opposed to this view, Keller (1993) sees the value of the brand as created exclusively by the company by affecting consumer response through marketing activity. Arvidsson (2005) thus adds an important aspect to Keller's (1993, 2003) customer-based brand equity model in reasoning that consumption produces a community, a



shared emotion or an experience that adds use-value to products. Arvidsson (2005) argues that brand management sets the coordinates within which consumers can produce shared meanings and social relations through brands. Those, in turn, contribute to strengthening the position of brands in consumers' lives (Arvidsson, 2005). Hence, in our conceptualisation of brand knowledge, brand knowledge is not only determined by marketing activities but also affected by consumers' own productive practices involving the brand. If seen as complementary, as applied in this paper, the two views thus form a more complete picture of brand value creation in which brand value is based on consumer interaction as well as direct effects of marketing activities.

In order to fully understand Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity model underlying our theoretical lens, its dimensions need to be taken into account (figure 3). Brand awareness, the first of the two key dimensions of brand knowledge, refers to consumers' ability to recognise and recall the brand in different situations (Keller, 1993). Recognition constitutes consumers' ability to differentiate a brand they have already been exposed to when given the brand as a cue (Keller, 1993). Brand recall on the other hand, refers to consumers' ability to correctly generate and retrieve a brand from memory when only product category or needs fulfilled by the category are given as a cue (Keller, 1993).

The second key dimension of brand knowledge is brand image, which is represented by associations consumers hold in memory about brands (Agarwal & Rao, 1996; Keller, 1993; Pappu et al., 2005). Brand image is positively influenced by brand awareness since a certain level of awareness is needed in order to create brand-related associations (Esch et al., 2006; Keller, 1993). In the associative model, those brand associations are conceptualised as informational nodes which are linked to the concept node of a brand in memory and contain the meaning consumers attach to this brand (Keller, 1993). If they are strong, favourable and unique, associations have a positive effect on quality perception and result in a positive attitude towards the brand (Esch et al., 2006; Keller, 1993). Brand associations can be consist of attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993) (figure 3). Attributes are features that describe and characterise a product or service. They can be product related or non-product related which, in turn, can be divided into user imagery, usage imagery, price, and packaging. Benefits refer to the personal value consumers attach to the product or service. They can be functional, experiential or symbolic. The last aspect of the model, namely attitudes, describes consumers' overall evaluations of a certain brand.

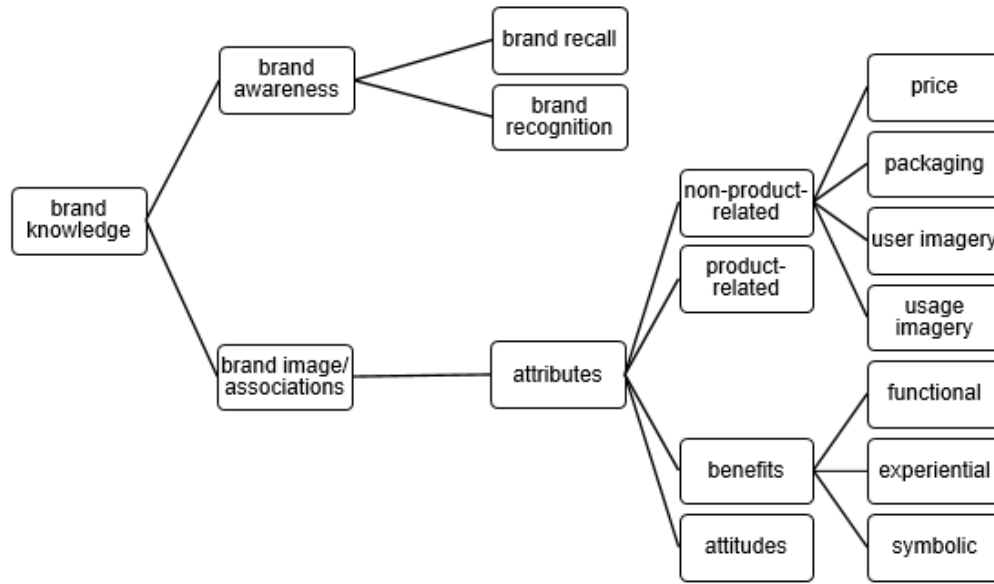


Figure 3 Dimensions of brand knowledge (adapted from Keller, 1993)

Based on a thorough literature review, two main factors that influence brand knowledge could be identified: the personal experiences with the brand itself and linking the brand to another entity (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Keller, 1993, 2003; Low & Lamb, 2000; Oakenfull & McCarthy, 2010).

Brands in general work as platforms for action. Through active involvement in the consumption process, a sense of community, a shared emotion or experience is produced which adds dimensions of use-value to the product (Arvidsson, 2005). Experiences are one aspect which can influence brand knowledge. Brands can be experienced both through direct interactions when consumers use a brand themselves and through indirect experiences which are generally based on marketing activities (Smith & Swinyard, 1983). The number of product-related experiences which consumers have accumulated over time furthermore leads to them being more familiar with both the product and the brand (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). A study conducted by Low and Lamb (2000) showed that consumers who are more familiar with a brand due to a higher number of brand-related experiences also tend to have a more multi-dimensional associative network. The result was confirmed by Oakenfull and McCarthy (2010) who found that through experiences with and exposures to brands, associations are developed (Oakenfull & McCarthy, 2010). In their study about the effect of brand usage on brand knowledge they revealed that a more developed associative network corresponds to a higher level of brand knowledge and a higher number of brand associations recalled from memory (Oakenfull &

McCarthy, 2010). Linking a brand to another entity is the second form through which brand knowledge can be influenced (Keller, 2003). The entity thus becomes a secondary source of new or altered brand knowledge. The entities mentioned by Keller (2003) are a person, a place, a thing, or another brand with prominent examples being celebrity endorsers, country-of-origin effects, and co-branding effects.

## **2.5 Towards a theoretical lens**

Based on the literature review, we develop a theoretical lens which should help us interpret the collected empirical data. As can be seen in the graphical illustration of the theoretical lens (figure 4), motivation and brand knowledge are linked to each other within the framework of co-creation which serves as a connecting device and underlying concept. The theoretical lens will be summarised and described in more detail below.

The in chapter 2.2 explained CCT serves as basis for reviewing literature from consumers' perspective keeping their perception of the world in mind and seeing the world through their eyes. As CCT describes relationships between consumers, the market, and cultural meanings, it emphasises the productive aspect of consumption and can consequently be directly linked to the co-creation phenomenon through which consumers produce brand meaning (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Arvidsson, 2008). Through their interaction and active engagement in co-creation, consumers create value which can be linked to economic value for the initiator of the co-creation process (Arvidsson, 2005). However, consumers also create value for themselves by interacting with like-minded people and consequently fostering social capital for themselves (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Paxton, 1999).

Human actions are based on motives with the general aim of fulfilling one's needs and desires (Maslow, 1943). These motives are also involved when consumers decide to participate in co-creation. For this study the motives were further divided into intrinsic, internalised extrinsic, and extrinsic motives (Füller, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation derives from the inherent satisfaction of fulfilling a task while extrinsic motivation is driven by a separable outcome (Füller, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Internalised extrinsic motivation is also driven by some kind of rewards, the outcome however is exclusively internal such as recognition (Füller, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, these motives are an antecedent for the participation in co-creation wherein consumers interact with a brand. The interaction occurring during co-creation will be reviewed due to its possible effect on brand knowledge and the thereon based increase in brand value as implied by Keller (1993). The conceptualisation of the brand knowledge

aspect researched in this study is largely based on the work of Keller (1993). The concepts which will guide our analysis are thus the two main aspects of brand knowledge: brand awareness and brand associations. The consumer knowledge perspective proposed by Alba and Hutchinson (1987) provides the additional aspect of product-related knowledge. This is seen as an important factor since co-creation often relates to both the brand and the product. Hence, together the two models form the basis for our understanding of brand knowledge.

The in-depth review of literature in the fields of co-creation, motivation and brand knowledge depicted above provides us with an initial understanding of the topic. Since the connections presented in the literature review are rather complex in nature, we herein provide a graphically illustrated summary which gives an overview of the theoretical lens that will thus guide the analysis of our empirical data.

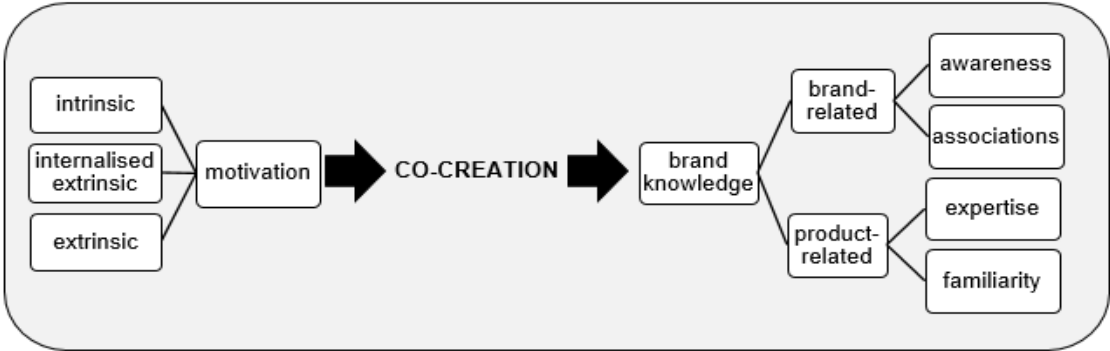


Figure 4 Theoretical lens (based on literature review)

### **3 Methodology**

*In this chapter, we discuss and reason for our methodological approach. In the first part, we depict the research philosophy as well as our ontological and epistemological position which are affected by the CCT context of our study. The philosophy, in turn, affects the choice of research strategy, method and data collection. Additionally, we reason for the chosen sampling method, the participant selection criteria and the design of the interviews we conducted. In order to create as much transparency as possible, we furthermore explain how the data was analysed.*

#### **3.1 Research philosophy**

In researching consumer perceptions of the co-creation phenomenon, we depart from the belief that reality is not externally given as seen by the ontological stance of objectivism but is continuously being constructed by people living in it. Hence, truth is dependent on one's perspective. We thus adopt a constructionist ontological stance (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Being aware of this constantly changing reality, we acknowledge that this study thus represents only a single truth and the specific version of social reality at the time the data was gathered (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A major strength of the constructionist paradigm is that it allows for a better understanding of people's meanings and contributes to the evolution of new theories which is a main aim of our research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). We see consumers and marketers who are involved in the market as the ones building social phenomena through social interaction (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Co-creation as studied in this paper is based on exactly this interaction process. Through interacting with companies, consumers contribute to building new ideas and products.

Our research questions are aimed at investigating the phenomenon of co-creation from consumers' point of view with the analysis of their motives, perceptions and feelings deriving from their culturally and socially constructed world at its centre. Those motives, perceptions and feelings present themselves for example in the form of consumers' participation in co-creation projects, their interaction with other participants and non-participants as well as their position towards the brand involved. Based on this, we see the interpretivist epistemological stance as the most appropriate due to its focus on examining how participants interpret the world they live in (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since we want to gain insights into consumers' motivation and the influence of co-creation on brand knowledge, we adopt an interpretive epistemology which sees reality as not being externally given but as presenting itself in the form of subjective meanings which have to be interpreted (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interpretive approach is common in

CCT research (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). It corresponds to the philosophical concept of hermeneutical phenomenology which takes an interpretivist standpoint (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011; Thompson, 1997). Phenomenological approaches have been commonly used both as a philosophy and a methodology in CCT research. They are especially useful for gaining a thorough understanding of complex issues, particularly the ones which may not be immediately implied in surface responses (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011; Goulding, 2005). This relates to our study since we attempt to uncover motives and meanings participants might not be aware of. We as researchers thus aim at revealing these meanings and interpreting the results from the consumer's point of view. This is in line with the approach of hermeneutical phenomenology which studies "interpretive structures of experience, how we understand and engage things around us in our world" (Smith, 2013, online). A basic assumption of phenomenology is that an individual's life world is a "socially constructed totality in which experiences interrelate coherently and meaningfully" (Goulding, 2005, p. 302). Hence, it can be applied to investigate consumers' motivation for participation in co-creation and the possible influence this engagement might have on brand meanings.

### **3.2 Research strategy**

The presented research philosophy led us to the decision of implementing a qualitative research strategy, which is consistent with most CCT research where theory is more often created rather than tested (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The developed theoretical lens based on literature review guides the research process in both stages of gathering and analysing our data. The analysis thereafter follows an abductive approach in starting from an empirical basis and combining data with previous theory and literature as a source of inspiration. This abductive approach is close to hermeneutics and often applied in case study research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Eco, 1990, in Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Compared to an inductive approach, abduction also considers theoretical preconceptions which we consider important for our study due to the therein provided initial understanding and thus minimised naivety (Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). In our analysis, we follow the close connection of abduction to deduction mentioned by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) as we lean slightly towards a deductive approach in that the analysis is rather strongly influenced by the theoretical basis. This is due to the broadness of the topic and data collected. The chosen approach helps us to understand the conducted interviews and classify the themes into relevant categories.

We aim at investigating consumers' motives for participating in co-creation as well as the possible effect this participation might have on brand knowledge. In order to answer the research questions, insights on consumer experiences with co-creation are therefore needed. Since we view consumers as having their own reflections of the social world, we want to see this world through their eyes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This stance is in line with interpretivism and shows the epistemological links with phenomenology and symbolic interactionism that form the research philosophy underlying this study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Gaining consumer insights requires a deep understanding of the matter through the eyes of the co-creators and an emphasis on explanations and descriptions. Words are thus the preferred form of data to be collected and a qualitative research strategy is consequently ideal (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This choice of research strategy is in line with the proposition by Dijk et al. (2014) who see qualitative research as the best way for finding out more about the consumers' perspective on co-creation. However, qualitative research also has some weaknesses that need to be taken into account. Researchers point out four major controversial aspects. Firstly, qualitative research is often believed to be too subjective, as it relies on the researcher's perception (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Due to this study being conducted and analysed by two researchers, we believe to counteract possible subjectivity issues. Secondly, there is a lack of transparency in qualitative methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We attempt to minimise this problem by thoroughly explaining our process of categorising and analysing the data. The third point of criticism is about the problem of not being able to replicate findings due to the unsystematic nature of qualitative research and its lack of objectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In line with the problem of replication is the issue of generalisation due to qualitative research focusing on a small number of cases and often being semi- or unstructured in nature (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, it is not the aim of this study to provide a generally applicable answer. Since the relationship between motivation and co-creation and the possible effect of co-creation on brand knowledge from a consumer perspective have not yet been researched, an initial understanding of the topic is needed. Due to quantitative methods being rather concerned with testing theory, they are less suitable for this study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **3.3 Research method**

By interpreting consumers' lived experiences, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach allows researchers as well as companies to get deep insights into consumer meanings (Fennell, 1985). The qualitative method which is referred to as "perhaps the most powerful means for

attaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences" (Thompson et al. 1989, p. 138) is the interview. Since it is our aim to uncover motives, perceptions and experiences which are individual to every participant, this approach is seen as providing the richest data possible. Qualitative interviews are used in order for consumers to be able to reconstruct events, in this case the co-creation project. This approach acknowledges that no 'objective view' exists which is in line with our ontological and epistemological viewpoints (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). In line with Goulding (2005), we therein view co-creation participants themselves as the only legitimate source of data. Therefore, we decided to conduct qualitative interviews with individuals who have participated in a co-creation project related to brands as the brand aspect is relevant for answering our research question.

Qualitative interviews can be either unstructured or semi-structured and allow the researcher to probe deeply as well as to uncover new dimensions of a problem (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The degree of how strongly the interview is being structured herein depends on the objective of the research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The method chosen for this study is the semi-structured in-depth interview. Herein, an interview guide with the most essential questions is constructed with the aim of guiding the interview. The questions are rather general and leave the opportunity to probe deeper when needed due to the possibility of including additional questions that are not included in the interview guide. We consider the possibility of probing deeper important since the aim of our research is to investigate individuals' perceptions and motives which might not be immediately apparent. This allows for a better adjustment to these individuals by allowing participants to elaborate on certain areas and opening up the possibility of uncovering new aspects and specifying the direction of analysis more precisely. Moreover, in line with Easterby-Smith et al. (2008), we assist them in exploring their own experiences and beliefs. By having a certain set of questions prepared for all the interviewees, data analysis is made easier compared to unstructured interviewing methods and more comparisons are made possible (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Furthermore, it allows us to guide the participants through telling us about differences between the time before, during and after the co-creation project which might be less clear without certain guiding questions. Nevertheless, we are still aware that this approach means that we as researchers are involved in the development of meaning and making sense of interviewees' answers and thereby including our own preconceptions as pointed out by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008), also due to one of the researchers having participated in the project herself.

We are conducting semi-structured interviews with the aim of letting participants consciously reflect upon their motivation and experience with co-creation and the brand involved. Holbrook



and Hirschmann (1982) reason that even though it might be argued that motivation for participation can be unconscious, symbolic meanings of experiences are rather pre-conscious or subconscious and thus retrievable as opposed to unconscious. Moreover, since the participants of the chosen case had to actively and consciously decide to take part in this co-creation project when applying for it, motivation is more likely to be retrievable. The co-creation process as such furthermore requires a high level of intellectual involvement (Ind et al., 2013). In line with the phenomenological assumption that people critically reflect on conscious experiences, as opposed to only acting upon subconscious motivations (Jopling, 1996, in Goulding, 2005), we believe that co-creation can be seen as a conscious process which can be retrieved through qualitative interviewing techniques. A limitation of the chosen method is pointed out by Moisander et al. (2009) who argue that phenomenological interviews as a method tend to downplay the more critical aspects of consumer culture, since it is not apparent in consumers' experiences. We try to counteract this problem by consciously asking the interviewees about negative aspects of their co-creation participation.

### **3.4 Data collection**

We chose to conduct interviews within one particular case study, namely with participants from the Cloetta case which was held at Lund University in March 2014. Case studies are a form of empirical inquiry which is especially applicable in investigating a phenomenon in-depth and within a real-life context (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), case studies are useful when "how" or "why" questions are being investigated and the research topic is about contemporary events which the researcher has little or no control over. We thus conclude that the case study design fits our study since co-creation projects constitute real-life events with increasing popularity over the last few years, over which we as researchers have no control. Moreover, the focus of our study on "why" consumers participate in co-creation as well as "how" co-creators' brand knowledge can change due to co-creation fits with Yin's (2009) description.

The decision between choosing only one case versus choosing multiple cases is seen from different standpoints among researchers. Our decision to focus on one particular case is in line with a majority of researchers taking on a constructionist stance (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The decision was made due to several aspects. The main aim was to conduct face-to-face interviews in order to gain the most comprehensive and accurate picture of the individual participants and understanding of their life world. This aim is in line with the approach of hermeneutical phenomenology underlying this study. Paired with time constraints it led us to

choose among co-creation projects in our region of residence (Skåne, Sweden). Furthermore, due to the focus on brands in our study, a certain knowledge of marketing or business concepts among participants was seen as advantageous in order to ensure that they can reflect upon those aspects more deeply than the average consumer and are familiar with the concept of brands. The high level of education is also in line with Füller's (2010) study among a variety of co-creation projects within new product development where most participants were highly educated.

The case study chosen for our research is seen as a good example of co-creation and valuable for our study particularly due to the focus of the task lying on branding and marketing aspects. Moreover, the project provided room for creativity as well as knowledge acquisition based on the extensive research involved. Due to the nature of the task and the limited time frame of two weeks, the involvement of participants in the project was anticipated to be high and could thus provide us with relevant and high quality data. Moreover, the case took place rather recently so that we could expect participants to still have good recollection of their experience so that they could easily reflect upon their participation. Direct interaction with the company was also guaranteed due to them presenting the case tasks, judging the results, and providing a contact possibility.

As mentioned, in line with the phenomenological approach, we decided to conduct interviews within the case study in order to get an in-depth understanding of consumers' experience and seeing it through their eyes (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). The main advantages of interviews in case study research are that they focus directly on the topics we want to cover as well as providing deep insights due to uncovering causal inferences (Yin, 2009). However, we are aware of the fact that interviews can lead to biased data due to poorly formulated questions, poor recall or poor articulation. As recommended by Yin (2009), we therefore corroborated interview data with information from published work when discussing the results. As Bryman and Bell (2011) proposed that face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participation in someone else's mind, we decided on conducting face-to-face interviews. The advantage of this direct interaction over other interview techniques like telephone or online interviews is that the level and richness of interactivity is higher, especially compared to text-based interviews. Non-verbal cues such as body language and tone of voice can for example be observed and thus lead to a richer picture of the participant (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). Another advantage is that participants are less likely to end the interaction early as opposed to online interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### 3.5 Sampling method

Due to our research questions being aimed at gaining insights into individuals' experiences and their motivation to participate in co-creation and the therefore qualitative nature of our research, the main aim of participant selection was to gain access to appropriate individuals (Laverty, 2003). Consistent with the preference for theoretical sampling rather than statistical sampling in qualitative research, generalisability and external validity of the data is thus less important (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since it was important that participants were ready to talk openly and reflect on their participation, we applied a convenience sampling method with certain requirements regarding participants' characteristics (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

We chose the sample size according to McCracken's (1988) principle for long interviews based on which he argues that no more than eight interviews should be conducted. Our decision of interviewing seven was due to time and budget constraints as well as due to the fact that those seven interview provided us with sufficient information to answer the research questions. Participants had to fulfil several criteria. Firstly, they had to have participated in the Cloetta case and thus lived the investigated experience therein constituting purposive sampling as part of the phenomenological process (Golding, 2005; Laverty, 2003). Secondly, they had to be ready to talk openly about their experience. Trust was therefore an important prerequisite as argued by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008). We attempted to minimise the trust issue by contacting people we knew for their participation. However, we were aware of the fact that our personal relationship to the interviewees might influence their responses (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but concluded that the benefits of openness exceed this risk. As the last criterion, participants had to be available for face-to-face interviews in our region of residence and having an excellent command of the English language. By choosing the Cloetta case which mainly master students of business and economics related areas of study attended, we ensured that these last criteria were met.

Interviewing business students of approximately the same age had an advantage regarding the interpretation of the data collected. It allowed us to more easily see through the eyes of the participants due to similarities in age and background (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In addition, we interviewed students from different cultural backgrounds. This was amongst other reasons due to the fact that we wanted to interview consumers who knew the Swedish brand beforehand as well as those who did not. This aspect was relevant in order to be able to explore possible differences between participants with and without prior brand knowledge. The final sample consisted of three participants with rather high prior brand knowledge (Jonathan, Emma, Lotta) and four with low or no brand knowledge prior to the project (Roberto, Alena, Daria, Antonio).

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Type of studies	Prior brand knowledge	Interview (in minutes)
Roberto	Male	25	Italy	Marketing	No	14
Alena	Female	25	Bulgaria	Marketing	No	24
Daria	Female	25	Bulgaria	Marketing	No	41
Antonio	Male	25	Italy	Marketing	No	32
Emma	Female	25	Sweden	HR, management	Yes	14
Lotta	Female	24	Sweden	Marketing	Yes	31
Jonathan	Male	25	France/Sweden	Marketing	Yes	33

Table 1 Overview of participants

### 3.6 Designing and conducting the interviews

An interview guide was constructed before starting the data collection due to the semi-structured approach. This was done by means of writing down a set of essential questions which were asked in every interview. Additionally, some ideas for further probing questions were noted. This was a measure taken in order to reduce the risk of failing to cover important topics and harming the value of the results due to our inexperience in interviewing (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The theoretical lens presented in chapter 2.5, based on our literature review, acted as a starting point for the construction of the interview guide. Since this provided us with some level of understanding about the phenomenon, it was mainly used to give us a general sense of guidance during the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In line with Alvesson (2003), we believe that a certain theoretical understanding is of vital importance in order to avoid that the use of the interview material during the analysis is naïve and thereby leads to uncertain interpretations. The theoretical concepts thus served as a reference point and guided the construction of the interview guide on the one hand and the analysis of the data on the other hand. The possibility of additional different kinds of probing questions provided by the semi-structured nature of the interview, made it possible to adapt to interviewees' answers and thus arrive at a more in-depth understanding of their individual point of view.

When conducting the interviews, both researchers were present and actively asking questions in a loosely pre-defined sequence letting a more natural conversation evolve. The interviews were conducted over a period of one week. Since the location is argued to be of importance when conducting interviews (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), we let the participants decide on both place and time, in order to make them as comfortable as possible. The locations chosen were study areas with the exception of one interview which was conducted at the participant's apartment. The setting thus provided a neutral environment.

Concerning the level of openness towards our interviewees, we adopted a non-disguised approach. When telling the participants about the topic of our research in the beginning of each interview, we disclosed the aim of investigating the issue of co-creation connected to brands on the example of the Cloetta case. This approach allowed us to get deeper insights due to a higher degree of flexibility in asking questions while eliminating the ethical problem of deception (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). During the face-to-face interviews it was important to be closely involved in each interview as it allowed us as researchers to be able to see the world through the interviewee's eyes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, we tried to state our questions as clearly as possible and using comprehensive language with the aim of making the interviewees feel relaxed and comfortable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). By being sensitive to the participants' responses, we tried to ensure a good understanding of their view on the issue while providing our assistance when interviewees were exploring their own beliefs which is in line with Easterby-Smith et al. (2008). The close involvement in each interview was also an aspect which led us to recording the interviews as this gave us the opportunity to fully focus on the interviewee and the formulation of possible probing questions without having to take notes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews were also recorded in order to avoid forgetting parts of the conversations as well as giving us the possibility of repeated and detailed examination of interviewees' answers as recommended by Bryman and Bell (2011). Possible negative effects of the recording equipment on participants' perception of the interview situation were minimised by using a smartphone as a recording device (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviewees were furthermore informed about the recording of the interviews as well as asked to give their consent by signing the ethical protocol.

The interviews were structured so that we first of all thanked participants for their time and briefly explained the topic and the structure of the interview. We then asked interviewees to read and agree to the ethical protocol (appendix B) with the promise of anonymity in order to avoid any kind of ethical concerns that might arise (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). By promising anonymity, we aimed at ensuring a relaxed atmosphere and fostering trust. For the same reason, we also started off by asking some general open questions leading them to the actual aim of the interview. In the following, we gradually changed the focus to their motivation and later to aspects of brand knowledge. In order to ensure that no information was missed, we encouraged the interviewee to add anything he felt was needed to be said. Each interview was then ended by thanking participants for their participation and adding that they could always get in contact with us regarding the interview.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

As we conducted face-to-face interviews, the recordings of the interviews had to be transcribed as a first step towards the analysis. The transcription of the interviews allows for a better and more thorough examination of the content and therefore helped us during the analysis (Heritage, 1984, in Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews were conducted in English. All of the participants had advanced language skills even though no one involved in the interviews was a native speaker. All of them were studying a master's programme held in English and thus had a high command of the language. We therefore do not see language as a limitation to the quality of the empirical material gathered. All in all, the transcription of the interviews resulted in 55 pages of empirical material that needed to be analysed.

Our analysis was inspired by the concept of the hermeneutic circle. Hermeneutics derives from the premise that "the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 92). At the same time, the whole consists of many different parts so that an overall understanding is only possible on the basis of understanding these parts. As a consequence a so-called hermeneutic circle between the whole and the parts evolves (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). By comparing and analysing the data in an iterative process, a deeper understanding could be gained as iterations lead to preceding operations shaping subsequent ones (Spiggle, 1994). In line with the hermeneutic circle approach we looked at each interview individually, while relating different parts of the interview to the interview as a whole. Followed by this we compared the different interviews in order to relate them to each other and identify possible patterns (Thompson et al., 1989). For the analysis, significant statements were extracted and relevant parts identified.

In line with the abductive approach, we analysed our empirical material using pre-conceptions based on existing theory. By using a combination of the empirical data and the theoretical lens as background information we had the possibility of repeatedly moving through the content in a systematic way and consequently identifying new patterns and acquiring a deeper understanding of the issue (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

Overall, the transcriptions of the interviews were reviewed in an open manner leading to all possible directions of meaning being considered (Hycner, 1985). This is in line with the process of phenomenological reduction as proposed by Hycner (1985) that constitutes the attempt of entering an individual's worldview in order to understand what they mean while suspending as much as possible the researcher's interpretations. In other words, as Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) state, empathy is an important aspect in gaining a better understanding of the data gathered through interviews from the consumer perspective. Imagination helps to get a clearer

understanding of the meaning of the act by putting oneself into the position of the acting person. One of the main consequences of the hermeneutics approach is that the possibility arises that the interpreters understand the agents, in this case interviewees and participants in the co-creation process, better than they understand themselves (Alvesson & Sköldböck, 2009).

In line with our ontological and epistemological viewpoints, we recognise that there is no absolute objectivity possible due to our own biases (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). By having both researchers jointly conducting the interviews and independently interpreting them before discussing these interpretations together, we aimed at attaining a higher level of confirmability through triangulation as suggested by Wallendorf and Belk (1989). Through repeatedly reviewing the transcripts, we identified possible categorisations which we evaluated and refined based on our theoretical lens. By having both researchers reading and interpreting the transcripts separately and thereafter discussing arising discrepancies, triangulation across researchers is achieved which adds to the credibility of our study by ensuring completeness and accuracy as well as considering different perspectives on the topic (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

### **3.8 Collection of primary and secondary sources**

During the process of writing this study, literature was collected and analysed continuously in order to develop a thorough understanding of the topics involved. The primary data collected took the form of original published articles and books as well as the data we collected ourselves through the interviews conducted among co-creation participants. Concerning the original publications, we aimed at using mainly peer reviewed journal articles (meaning approved by two or more experts before publication) in order to ensure reliability and to include the most recent findings in our study (Fisher, 2007). These primary sources were found through academic databases such as EBSCO, Emerald, and JSTOR as well as Google Scholar. Additionally, sources such as conference proceedings were used in case they were of high importance for a better understanding of our research topic. All those sources provided the basis for the formation of our theoretical lens and were used in the subsequent development of our thesis. The primary data collected by ourselves provided us with the insights needed for answering our research questions and were linked to the existing publications. As a second aspect, secondary sources were used only if absolutely necessary. They consisted mainly of sources which analyse information from primary sources where we could not find the primary source. The decision to include those sources was based on an evaluation of the reliability of the secondary source as well as the importance of the insight to our study.

## **4 Analysis**

*We structured the following analysis according to the initially stated research questions. After presenting the Cloetta case, the motivation for co-creation participation is analysed and divided into different themes which were identified as being relevant. Those themes are subsequently linked to our theoretical lens and additional findings presented. Followed by that, the effects of co-creation on brand knowledge are reviewed. The analysis of brand knowledge is divided into two parts, namely product-related and brand-related brand knowledge.*

### **4.1 The Cloetta case**

The Cloetta case was a competition arranged by the Swedish confectionary company Cloetta at Lund University. The project took place over the course of two weeks and was limited to Lund University students. Interested students had to apply by stating their field of studies and previous experience as well as explaining their motivation for participation shortly in order to be considered for participation. Registration could be done individually or in groups of four as the task was supposed to be solved in teams.

The case assignment consisted of finding a more effective way to work with chocolate bars instore while enhancing the degree of loyalty among shoppers. Therefore, recommendations on how Cloetta could execute an effective loyalty campaign instore for their chocolate bars portfolio had to be made (Plopp, Center, Power Break 1 & 2, Taragona, Sport Lunch, Guld). The results were then submitted in form of a short report about the working process including the research findings, the developed campaign concepts and the reasoning for these recommendations. Secondly, the results were to be presented to Cloetta personnel by each of the groups. The winner was chosen by a jury and announced after the presentations.

The case was promoted online via social media and university newsletters as well as in the School of Economics and Management at Lund University. All in all, 24 international and Swedish students in 6 groups à 4 members took part in the Cloetta case.



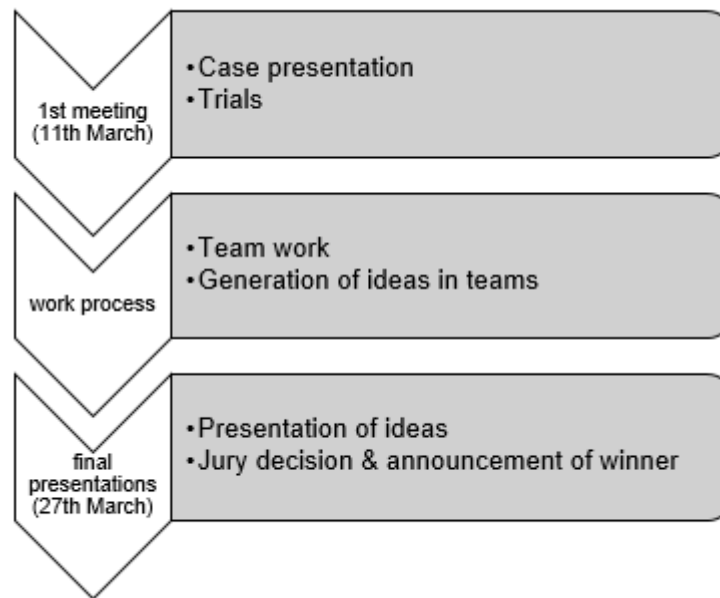


Figure 5 Cloetta case schedule

## 4.2 Consumer motivation

The transcripts were interpreted with support of the theoretical lens presented in chapter 2.5. Several in Füller's (2006, 2010) studies proposed motives were herein found to be relevant. For intrinsic motivation, 'intrinsic playful task' as well as 'curiosity' could be identified while internalised extrinsic motivation was represented by 'skill development', 'self efficacy', 'making friends', and 'recognition'. Extrinsic motivation was driven by 'monetary compensation'. In addition to the three major categories, 'social relations' and 'brand relations' could be identified as additional themes relevant for understanding consumers' motivation for participating in co-creation. Furthermore, participants' reflection on the co-creation process revealed critical issues.

### ***Intrinsic***

The revision of our data revealed that interviewees were curious about the case and ideas they could develop. They thought of it as a potentially pleasant project. Hence, due to the nature of these drivers, they can be attributed to intrinsic motives. Intrinsic motives mean that no form of reward is requested by participants as they are motivated by the project itself, perceiving it as valuable. In line with our theoretical lens, the identified themes could be assigned to the motives of 'intrinsic playful task' and 'curiosity' which are based on Füller's (2006, 2010) intrinsic motivation aspects for participation in co-creation projects.

### Intrinsic playful task

The aspect of fun was stated by participants as being relevant for their decision to participate in the co-creation case. From these statements we deduce that fun was in this case mainly related to enjoying this kind of project, especially due to its connection to the field of marketing participants were interested in. Fun can consequently be related to the, by Füller (2006, 2010) introduced, intrinsic motive 'intrinsic playful task' which describes participation in co-creation as being based on the premise that the activity itself could be enjoyable and fun and therefore valuable for the participant (Füller, 2006, 2010). This can be illustrated by the following excerpts:

*“So it was more for the...for the experience, for the fun.” [Alena]*

*“First of all, I thought it will be fun because I am very, very much into retail.” [Daria]*

### Curiosity

It was also found that participants saw the co-creation project as an opportunity to try something new and were specifically interested in the case and task. Based on participants' statements, 'curiosity' could be identified as the second intrinsic motive in line with Füller (2006, 2010). Being curiosity driven makes consumers participate just because they are curious about the project without further ado (Füller, 2006, 2010) as becomes apparent in the following statements:

*“And also the chance to maybe [...] do something a bit different, a creative project. [...] And it's I think also the whole area of the fast moving consumer goods that's also very interesting. [...]” [Jonathan]*

*“I think it's fun to just see what you can come up with [...]” [Emma]*

This curiosity was mainly related to the interest in being creative and exploring one's capabilities.

Findings showed that participants were partly driven by either curiosity or fun. Both categories are closely related as fun and curiosity were often stated within one sentence or line of thought. A distinct differentiation between both motives was therefore difficult. Intrinsic motives are highly valuable in co-creation projects as intrinsically motivated consumers show the highest levels of commitment and engagement while they are participating just for the sake of it, without the expectation of any kind of compensation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In our study, fun and curiosity were repeatedly stated as drivers for the participation in co-creation. However, intrinsic motives seemed to be of rather secondary nature as most participants put emphasis on learning and

acquiring new knowledge. This contradicts Füller (2006) whose findings revealed that intrinsic motives such as fun or curiosity are the main reason for participation in co-creation. This not being the case in our study could be due to the nature of the task being two weeks long as the participants devoted a certain amount of time and energy to it and therefore demanded some kind of reward as compensation. Nonetheless, the existence of intrinsic motives in our case leads to higher commitment as those who stated that they liked the idea and thought it would be fun also said that they put quite some effort into it. This finding is in line with Füller (2010) who discovered the same phenomenon. Intrinsic motives are therefore an important prerequisite in order for a co-creation process to be successful.

### ***Internalised extrinsic***

The analysis of our data showed that participants were eager to conquer the challenge of the task, learn and acquire new knowledge related to their personal interest and field of profession, and get feedback for their input. They could therefore be assigned to the internalised extrinsic theme of motivation. Internalised extrinsic motives constitute an intermediate form of intrinsic and extrinsic motives as they are based on some kind of compensation which however originates from the participants themselves (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The motives identified correspond to the co-creation motives of 'self efficacy', 'skill development', and 'recognition' stated by Füller (2006, 2010) which is in line with our theoretical lens.

### **Self efficacy**

The idea of challenging oneself and accomplishing the case task by developing new and creative ideas was shown to be a motive amongst participants of the case study. These characteristics can be linked to the co-creation motive 'self efficacy' proposed by Füller (2006, 2010). 'Self efficacy' relates to consumers being driven by the aim of accomplishing a task and mastering a potential challenge (Füller, 2006, 2010). As shown in the following excerpts, participants clearly expressed this motive:

*"Yeah I like the challenge, what we had to do. So come up with ideas, be creative [...]"*  
*[Roberto]*

*"So that's kind of interesting and since they have this [sic] big problem it could be fun too, digging deep to solution." [Lotta]*

Participants declared their interest in competing and challenging themselves by finding solutions and being creative. This illustrates that the challenge of the task was mainly seen as interesting and as a positive aspect of the project. Those interviewees who mentioned the challenge as motive for their participation and were therefore motivated by 'self efficacy' also showed signs of strong engagement as they stated that one can only develop a good idea if one puts an appropriate amount of time and effort into it. Furthermore, the project was not perceived as being time consuming which could be due to the fact that they saw it as an interesting task. We conclude that 'self efficacy' can in our case lead to higher commitment and engagement and shows similarities to intrinsic motives. In line with Füller's (2010) categorisation, 'self efficacy' can therefore be seen as closer to intrinsic motives than to extrinsic as they are strongly internally motivated. The commitment of participants motivated by self efficacy was consistently found to be rather high which becomes apparent in the following excerpt:

*"We wanted to be one step ahead of the others. We wanted to think outside the box and yeah things like that. [...] I wouldn't say that much time consuming. I mean it was up to us how much time we were willing to spend on that. Personally for me it was interesting. I think I devoted a lot of time on that." [Daria]*

### Skill development

By reviewing our empirical data, we found that participants wanted to learn new things, especially about the industry and retail marketing. This is consistent with the motive of 'skill development' as consumers participate in co-creation activities because they want to improve themselves by acquiring new skills and knowledge and consequently find new solutions (Füller, 2006, 2010). As can be seen in the following excerpts participants were mainly interested in learning more about real-life marketing situations:

*"So it's amazing to get...you know... into real life situations because I figured that if I am in the marketing field there will be some point in my life or my career that I will be doing projects or I will be working with different companies." [Daria]*

*"So yeah it was also an economic benefit but especially it was the subject. [...] Also the important thing is to participate so you get some more experience, some knowledge so you always win." [Antonio]*

As shown in the excerpts, participants were very interested in learning new things and expanding their knowledge with a special focus on marketing related content. This is in our case most likely due to them being business students who are aiming at pursuing a career in the marketing field. Our participants consequently seemed to be striving for an internal reward for

their participation which they might be able to apply to their own advantage for future career prospects. From participants' wish to learn something new, we deduce that they saw the project to a certain degree as an educational event. Due to the nature of this co-creation project taking place in cooperation with the university and therefore focusing on students only, this finding is not surprising. Kaufmann et al. (2011) define the acquisition of new skills and knowledge which are possibly leading to potential future material advantages and value creation as the motive 'human capital advancement' (Bourdieu, 1986; Weiss, 1995). It can thus be directly linked to our findings on 'skill development' as participants emphasised their objective of learning something new and seemed to be striving for enhancing future career possibilities. In line with Kaufmann et al. (2011) this would mean that our participants are consequently acquiring human capital in form of a delayed payoff. The importance of acquiring new skills and knowledge is also in accordance with the service-centred dominant logic proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) it can be stated that consumers can acquire new skills and competences through exchanges with companies and benefit from this exchange.

### Recognition

In our interview data, the desire to get feedback from the company for submitted ideas was mentioned as a motive for participation. The main focus was the wish of working in the company's field in the future and therefore using the feedback for personal development. It was also seen as a motivational driver that the submitted ideas might get attention and admiration from the company. These findings could be assigned to the motive of 'recognition' as proposed by Füller (2006, 2010). The emphasis was put on the wish to be recognised and valued as can be seen in the following excerpt:

*"[...] also it would be fun to get comments from them since they are working [in the field] that I would like to do as well. [...] And you know... come up with creative ideas that they [the jury] maybe, hopefully will feel valuable [...]" [Lotta]*

This shows that learning and improving oneself was a driver for participants' involvement in this project. As all participants in this study were students, their need for recognition can also be interpreted as the wish of a positive evaluation of their performance. This could be especially due to students' performances generally being measured in grades and them consequently being accustomed to being judged.

## **Extrinsic**

The examination of the data collected in this case study unveiled that for our interviewees the prize of 10'000 SEK showed to be incentive for their participation. As this is an external motive for their participation, interviewees were extrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation thereby means that participants expect a direct reward for their engagement. This is consistent with the by Füller (2006, 2010) stated motive of monetary compensation as motivation for participation in co-creation.

### Monetary compensation

The prize could be identified as a motive for consumers to participate. Consisting of a direct reward or payoff for their participation (SEK 10'000 for the winning team) it was therefore corresponding to Füller's (2006, 2010) conceptualisation of the extrinsic motive of 'monetary compensation'. Interviewees showed interest in monetary compensation as a relevant motive. As the following excerpts illustrate, the prize was considered an appealing incentive among some participants:

*"I think it was both... the chance to win the money because it is always nice... 10'000 SEK. And also the chance to maybe get to know a bit more the company and do something a bit different, a creative project." [Jonathan]*

*"[Q: So what was your main motivation among those reasons?] - It was money. Mine was money, yeah." [Roberto]*

While some saw the prize as their main motive or at least as important as other motives to participate in the project, others ascribed only secondary importance to the monetary reward as can be seen in the following statements:

*"Yeah. I think it's not about the money really. It an incentive but it not the first reason to participate." [Antonio]*

*"[...] and of course they had this prize, they were offering 10'000 SEK to the winner group I think. So yeah of course this was an additional motive." [Daria]*

The identified aspect of money as extrinsic motivation for co-creation can also be found in other studies similar to co-creation such as ideas competition (Leimeister et al., 2009). Our results are partly in line with previous research which states that monetary motives are less common in co-creation than other types of motivation (Füller, 2010; Lambe et al, 2001). Leimeister et al. (2009)

come to the same conclusion in their study about an IT related ideas competition in which the prize was identified as being a less activating driver. We believe that in our case study this is related to participants' role, as students are likely to aim at acquiring new skills and knowledge for their personal and professional development and consequently better career prospects in the future.

### ***Additional motives***

#### Social relations

When reviewing the transcript of the interviews, additional motives to the ones included in our theoretical lens could be identified. The aspects of social relations and interaction were present as well as commitment. As illustrated by the following excerpts, participants emphasised the fact that their friends were an incentive to participate since the competition was to be undertaken in teams:

*“We applied as a team because we were working together on a previous project so we figured that we were fitting perfectly to do it again.” [Jonathan]*

*“Mmmh it was also that we had a good group I think ‘cause it was like three friends of mine that yeah that we set up the team with.” [Lotta]*

In line with these statements, literature suggests that it is due to a network of interactions that consumers can create value for themselves. Generally, consumers can create value by interacting on the basis of reciprocity, trust, friendship, and positive feelings to one another (Bourdieu, 1986; Paxton, 1999). In connection to this interaction and as a consequence thereof, social exchange theory implies that interactions lead to trust and commitment if perceived as being positive and valuable (Lambe et al., 2001). Both aspects are reflected in the excerpts above as Jonathan stated that he had worked on other projects with the same group of people in the past and Lotta mentioned that they were friends beforehand. The aspect of trust is of major importance in co-creation as according to Ind et al. (2013) no co-creation process would evolve without it. In their study, Ind et al. (2013) therefore propose that with higher levels of trust, engagement increases. This was confirmed in our study as it was stated:

*“[...] since it was a good group it didn't feel like this kind of working and it was also voluntary that we have decided to do it so...I think we put enough that we want into.” [Lotta]*

Even though most participants stated that the Cloetta case did not have first priority status during those two weeks, they all committed quite some time and energy to the project. This leads us to the belief that trust in the team members must have already existed prior to participating or must have been developed during the project. This assumption is made in line with Lambe et al. (2001) who state that if exchanges are being experienced as positive, trust in the team members and therefore commitment evolve (Lambe et al., 2001). To the same conclusion come Morgan and Hunt (1994) in their study on relationship marketing where they found a positive relation between trust and relationship commitment. This phenomenon could be identified in our study as most interviewees knew their teammates before and had successfully worked together on other projects. A connection to social exchange theory is also reasonable since it is based on the premise that individuals get a reward in exchange for their engagement. In the expectation of receiving something in return, which can take the form of material goods but also intangible goods such as friendship, they are maintaining the relationship (Füller, 2010).

#### Brand relation

In addition to the above mentioned motives, the interviewees' interest in the field of marketing and related aspects could be identified as motivation for their participation in the co-creation project. These findings were related to the industry, product and the brand involved. Due to the focus of this study being on brands and branding, seeing the brand as a motivator is of special interest. The following statement illustrates this connection:

*"Yeah I think [the brand was also a reason] because as a consumer I like the brand, I like the products they have. And... also as a potential employer, it's also interesting."  
[Jonathan]*

The focus on brands led us to conduct a deeper analysis of this matter and consequently to the formation of an additional category of motives supplementary to our theoretical lens. All participants are pursuing a degree in business and apart from one student all of them are therein focussing on the field of marketing. The fact that most of the participants in our study are consequently active in this field could explain their thorough personal interest in brands. They seem to see this as an opportunity to learn more about the field of branding they might be working in in the future, possibly with the aim of acquiring a competitive advantage for themselves. This can consequently be related to our findings regarding 'skill development' which was identified as a motive for participation in co-creation both in our case and in Füller's



studies (2006, 2010). We thus see the brand as representing an additional aspect to be considered when looking at consumers' motives to participate in co-creation.

A mere personal interest in the brand is also possible as can be seen in Jonathan's statement in which he says that he liked both the brand and the products beforehand and therefore saw them as a reason for his participation. This is in line with Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schröder's (2008) study which found that consumers decide to participate in community-related activities in case their perception of and their relationship to the brand and product are already positive. They state that a certain amount of brand knowledge is thus a prerequisite for the development of interest in engaging in general brand-related contribution. This finding could however not be identified to this extent in our study since participants without any prior brand knowledge were also participating in the co-creation project. Nevertheless, in line with their study, our findings showed that brand knowledge can be an aspect in the decision to engage in co-creation.

### **Reflection**

When reviewing participants' personal reflection on the project, an additional element not mentioned as an initial motive could be identified as being of great importance for the participants in our co-creation case. Some interviewees stated that they perceived the project as equally beneficial for both the company and themselves while other interviewees emphasised their discontent with the company's behaviour. They consequently criticised the lack of reciprocity which is seen as an important factor for co-creation as it fosters interaction and encourages consumers by giving them the feeling of importance and being taken seriously (Casalo et al., 2008 in Ind al., 2013). This relates to the initial motive of recognition proposed by Füller (2006, 2010) previously reviewed. As mentioned, some participants perceived the co-creation as equally valuable for themselves and the company:

*“Cause I think it is a win-win situation. The consumer I mean can help and get what they want actually and the companies they improve their brand awareness and they also get good insights from the consumers.” [Roberto]*

*“I think it's useful both for the company that are organising this challenge and also for the members, participants because both sides learned something more and it's a way to exchange knowledge for company to students and from students to company.” [Antonio]*

These statements reveal that consumers may see the co-creation project as providing them with both learnings and knowledge exchange. By taking part, interviewees felt that they could help the company by contributing ideas and insights which at the same time allowed them to promote

their own visions. In accordance with this finding, McAlexander et al. (2002) mention that participants see co-creation in the context of brand communities as a means for contributing to the company's success. Roberto stating that consumers can "get what they want" moreover seems to correspond with Fisher and Smith (2011) who argue that consumers are demanding opportunities which allow them to personalise their market experience so that they can express themselves. Other participants however stated in this context that they were rather dissatisfied with the feedback and recognition they got from the company:

*"And the feedback that you get after each presentation is like 'oh thank you' and it's not constructive feedback, it's just 'thank you for your participation' which is quite frustrating because you expect to know what are the strengths and weaknesses of your idea. [...] No I wouldn't say they were using me... I would say that they got what they wanted but they didn't give back. Because I don't feel like I'm being used, I just think I could receive more as an experience from all this." [Alena]*

*"And I don't know...sometimes it feels like... ok they give a prize to one group and they get like so many view from like so many people that they can use. And if you are like...that's a way to spare their time so they can just read all it." [Lotta]*

Participants mentioned that they were dissatisfied with the feedback they received as they perceived it as not being very useful. For this reason, we conclude that in this case study participants felt the need of a more thorough evaluation of their performance as well as more transparency regarding the evaluation criteria. Their need for feedback from the company is also shown in Ind et al.'s (2013) study. In addition, interviewees mentioned that the information they received with regards to the task was perceived as being unclear and not detailed enough. In this context, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a/b) propose that the four aspects dialog, access, risk assessment, and transparency are needed to foster interaction between the company and consumers. Dialog herein means interaction, while access means providing information and tools. Risk assessment refers to the likelihood of a consumer being harmed in any way during co-creation and transparency emphasises that companies cannot keep information from consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy; 2004a). It is apparent from participants' statements that the company did not manage to fulfil the aspects of access and transparency due to them providing confusing information about the task and insufficient information about the judging criteria. The lack thereof thus sheds a negative light on the company's communication activities. Participants consequently expressed their frustration regarding this matter as for example shown in Alena's statement. This is in line with Ind et al. (2013) who claim that the lack of reciprocity led to the participants being irritated and frustrated. The perceived

non-existence of a mutually beneficial relation is line with Fisher and Smith (2011) who state that it is more likely that a relationship is either in favour of the consumer or the company. In addition, Zwick et al. (2008) criticise that even though equal company-consumer relationships in co-creation are being propagated, companies are actually focusing on how they can make use of consumers' productive activities and capitalise on them. However, even though participants expressed their discontent, none of them felt exploited in the way proposed by the critical perspective presented by Arvidsson (2005).

The critique which became apparent in participants' statements seemed to have a negative influence on their perception of the company as a whole. Since we depart from the view that references to the company represent the image participants have of the corporate brand, this leads us to the analysis of the effect of the co-creation project on participants' brand knowledge.

### **4.3 Brand knowledge**

When analysing the effect of co-creation on consumers' brand knowledge, we distinguished between participants who had prior knowledge of the brand and those that did not. This was done in order to explore if there was a difference between the two groups regarding the change in brand knowledge and consequently whether co-creation can lead to different outcomes regarding the brand. The interest in this topic was raised due to Keller's (2003) proposition that the effect of branding on brand perceptions may be different for familiar and unfamiliar brands. Participants who stated that they had limited knowledge of the brand were thereby allocated into one of the two categories depending on the extent of their knowledge. The sample consisted of consumers with rather high prior brand knowledge (Jonathan, Emma, Lotta) as well as consumers with low or no brand knowledge prior to the project (Roberto, Alena, Daria, Antonio). Consistent with the fact that Cloetta is a brand mainly present in Sweden, brand knowledge was higher among Swedish participants as opposed to non-Swedish participants. In the following, the detailed analysis is presented.

#### ***Product-related brand knowledge***

When analysing participants' answers related to the knowledge about the products involved in the project, it was found that consumers mentioned getting to know the differences between the products as well as having researched information in order to develop ideas for the project. Based on this, we deduce that among our participants both expertise and familiarity as

proposed by Alba and Hutchinson (1987) and as included in our theoretical lens were affected by the co-creation activities.

### Familiarity

Participants' statements regarding their knowledge of Cloetta's products were related to an increase in knowledge about the taste of the chocolate bars as well as a general increase in knowledge about the products themselves. The former aspect was found to be due to product trials, enhanced by the company handing out free samples. The latter was due to information-delivery through the company's initial presentation as well as information-seeking activities. Information-seeking was represented especially in the strong involvement of participants in developing ideas and thus engaging in research activities. This finding corresponds to the concept of familiarity defined as the number of product-related experiences accumulated over time (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987) included in our theoretical lens. Differences identified between the groups of participants without and with prior brand knowledge are presented in the following.

By definition, participants **without** prior brand knowledge exhibit a low level of or no familiarity with the brand. The analysis of our dataset revealed that the co-creation project seems to have increased product familiarity among our interviewees due to product trials as well as through repeated engagement with the products during research activities. This effect was probably enhanced due to the fact that Cloetta supplied every participant with a free bag of products. However, for some participants without prior knowledge, the increased familiarity led to a negative perception of the products as represented in the following excerpts. They expressed their dissatisfaction clearly and used very vivid body language and descriptions:

*"[...] I expected the chocolate bars to be more tasty, very much more tastier. [...]" [Daria]*

*"No I didn't like the chocolate bar at all, they are awful guys, no really, I didn't like them. [...]" [Roberto]*

Especially Roberto emphasised his discontent by using hand gestures and raising his voice which amplified his negative opinion even more. We see the negative perception of the taste found among these participants of this study as negative associations towards the products which is consistent with Keller's (1993) product-related brand attributes. He mentions those as one type of association. Hence, we deduce that in our case study, enhanced familiarity can have a negative effect on the associations towards the product brands due to perceived lack in performance. This corresponds to research results in marketing and psychology which indicate

that direct experiences with the product, for example through trials, form strong attitudes towards the brand involved which act as a good predictor of purchase behaviour (e.g. Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kempf, 1999; Smith & Swinyard, 1983).

When looking at the group of participants **with** brand knowledge prior to the co-creation project, a certain level of familiarity is already given due to previous consumption. Lotta for example exhibited a rather high familiarity with the brand:

*"[...] They have this 'taste right, think Cloetta' 'cause it rimes in Swedish. And then I know... like they have been sponsoring the skiers in Sweden. I don't know if they do it now but that was like their whole suit were like this Kex choklad brand, it was really similar. 'Cause also in the... they had a commercial like... when the skiers.. like comes from so many different angles and then you see the pattern of Cloetta's brand... not Cloetta but Kex choklad, so it's mainly Kex choklad I would say that I had... and also Plopp and Center because it's always this like 'oh they are the same'. And 'Sport', yeah I remember when that was launched because I was playing tennis at that time and then I thought like oh I can maybe try that fun while I'm on his tennis course." [Lotta]*

As this excerpt shows, her familiarity before the project was rather high and originating from different kinds of exposures to and experiences with the brand. These were based on advertising and marketing activities of the company as well as everyday life situations. The reference to the 'Sport' brand implies that her familiarity is furthermore also attributable to a specific situation in her personal life, in her case playing tennis. This speaks for the importance of brands in consumers' life world as proposed by Arvidsson (2005). Another interesting theme in her statement, emphasised by her body language, was the apparently existing issue in society about the differences between the two product brands Plopp and Center. This shows that she is aware of aspects related not only to the brands themselves but also to the brands' role and perception in Swedish consumption culture. In CCT research, this kind of brand stories are seen as leading to a transfer of shared cultural meanings to the brand which can be identified in Lotta's statement. She herein refers to the ongoing issue regarding the brands and their role in the marketplace (Gensler et al., 2013; Holt, 2003).

Similar to the group of participants without prior brand knowledge, based on an increase in the number of experiences with the product an increase in familiarity could be identified. This resulting effect can be argued due to the definition of familiarity and supported by further pursuing the example of Lotta:

*“Yeah, now I have a better understanding of them as like you know behind the company not just what I’m perceived by the commercials and yeah... and their products.” [Lotta]*

Lotta seems to have both a better understanding of the products as such and an understanding of the company which goes beyond advertising activities. However, based on participants’ statements, the change in familiarity seems to be less pronounced in the group with prior knowledge compared to the group without prior knowledge. We think that this might be due to them already having a certain knowledge of the products because of prior consumption. As learning curve theory implies, we believe that the rate of knowledge acquisition flattens the higher the level of already acquired knowledge is (Wright, 1936). Nevertheless, the change was found to derive from the same sources, namely product trials as well as information from the company and research activities during the project. The product trials however seemed to have a different effect on the two groups of participants. In contrast to those participants without prior knowledge, interviewees with prior knowledge did not mention any newly formed negative perception of the products’ taste. This might be due to them already having been familiar with several Cloetta product brands prior to the project as stated in the following:

*“Yes, they gave us... each of us one chocolate bar of all the different chocolate bars. So I tried them because some of them, I knew them, I bought them before, but the others, I didn’t know how they taste so I was a bit curious to know how they tasted at least.” [Jonathan]*

*“[Q: Do you think know them better now, after your two weeks participation?] - [...] The products, yes. Yes of course, because otherwise I think most of them... I would never have tried them.” [Jonathan]*

As illustrated by the excerpts, interviewees mentioned that they would not have tried the products without the co-creation project. It thus shows that in our case, co-creation can lead consumers to try products that normally are not included in their purchase considerations. However, due to Cloetta supplying the participants with their products, these findings are to be treated with caution.

### Expertise

From the statements of the participants **without** prior brand knowledge, we identified that they experienced a better understanding of the products mainly related to the ability of categorising them, especially regarding the different target groups as well as the differences in taste. Those aspects are in line with Alba and Hutchinson’s (1987) conceptualisation of expertise which

includes consumers' ability to categorise products. However, in the group of participants *with* prior brand knowledge, rather the contrary could be observed. None of our participants with brand knowledge prior to the co-creation project stated that they have a better understanding of the differences between the products now, instead it was even expressed that the additional knowledge gained caused more confusion regarding the product differences:

*"[...] But I think it's a bit clearer and at the same time a bit more confusing. [...] But then again they started explaining the different concepts, the differences between the products and it was blurred again everything. [...]" [Jonathan]*

This finding stands in contrast to Alba and Hutchinson (1987) who propose that more experienced consumers confuse brand-specific information less often than novices. In our case, the confusion seems to be due to the complexity and amount of information given by the company. Especially the information about their different brands and the product portfolio seems to have caused confusion instead of providing clear information.

Another aspect which was found to be contrary to Alba and Hutchinson's (1987) definition of expertise was related to consumers' ability to perform product-related tasks which was not identified in our study. This is moreover also contrary to what Ind et al. (2013) discuss in their research about co-creation in an online brand community. They state that brand participation generates a better understanding of the products involved. We regard our finding as being caused by the nature of the product category. Chocolate bars, the for this case relevant product category, do not require special insights in order to be handled correctly. This aspect was therefore found to be irrelevant to the case study at hand.

### ***Brand-related brand knowledge***

The analysis of our interviewees' answers regarding the brands involved revealed changes in the alertness to the brands as well as changes in the perception of the brands. The former mainly presented itself in form of consumers being able to recognise the brand in store and in everyday life situations. It can thus be related to brand awareness as conceptualised by Keller (1993) and included in our theoretical lens. The latter was highlighted by participants revealing new knowledge about the brands' target groups, the Swedish origin, and typical aspects of the brands. This can be seen as brand associations in line with Keller's (1993) definition.

## Awareness

When analysing participants' answers to the questions related to their alertness regarding the brands involved, we found that they tended to speak about aspects such as the increased consciousness of the brands instore, which can be related to the concept of recognition as defined by Keller (1993). Changes in the ability to recall the brands from memory however seemed to be less pronounced. This even persisted when participants were asked specifically about recalling the brands. We believe that this could be the case because it is easier for consumers to recognise a recently encountered product when thinking about that situation than to recall it (Haist et al., 1992).

Among those participants categorised as **without** prior brand knowledge, awareness of the brands before the project ranged between no brand knowledge at all and a very low level of brand knowledge in form of awareness. Daria for example knew one of Cloetta's product brands which was however not part of the Cloetta case project and Antonio recognised Cloetta due to a university lecture. The following excerpts illustrate how their awareness has changed:

*"Of course now I am familiar with it so I recognise it in the store. Or for example we were walking in Malmö and we saw the office and I knew that it's Cloetta's office. But yeah I mean of course now I'm more familiar with it. I see it more in the store or offline or online."* [Alena]

*"When I used to go to the supermarket I always bought [sic] Snickers or Twix, all these famous brands. I never like recognised them, the Cloetta bars. So now I do."* [Roberto]

*"It was more after the competition and presentation that [sic] I say yeah now I remember this products but before no. I didn't recognise the products."* [Antonio]

The answers regarding their alertness to the brands after participating led us to believe that the level of recognition has increased amongst our interviewees after the co-creation project. Brand awareness was therein not limited to instore recognition but was also mentioned in terms of recognition of office buildings. This shows that the new information that was acquired during the co-creation project was in our case also transferred to participants' personal life world, possibly due to the increased level of the overall brand recognition. This speaks for the co-creation project being a series of intense exposures to the brand and therefore leading to an overall increase in awareness on various channels (online, offline, instore). In related contexts, it was also shown that repeated exposures to logos and advertising lead to increased recognition and recall (van Grinsven & Das, 2014; Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008) and thus awareness. Another



observation that might be linked to the profound work with the brand during the co-creation process is that Cloetta bars are now being recognised in direct comparison to other, internationally well-known chocolate bar brands.

Regarding the group of participants *with* prior brand knowledge, it could be identified that similar to the other group the co-creation project increased the number of products they are aware of, as participants mentioned recognising more products instore. Based on their thorough explanations of the project, the information they got from the company, and their involvement in the project, we believe that their intense interaction with the brand was the reason for this. The same intense interaction was also found in those participants categorised as without prior brand knowledge. Furthermore, an increase in the level of recognition of product brands could also be found. However, with the limitation that this would not increase the likelihood of product purchases due to participants' personal values as mentioned by interviewees. This shows that in our case, awareness alone does not lead to positive effects on purchase behavior. It consequently contradicts the suggestion of the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) that consumers may base choices regarding low involvement products on brand awareness considerations. However, Keller (1993) mentions that not only awareness, but also strong, favourable and unique brand associations are needed in order to create customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993). Hence, this finding is in line with Keller's (1993) model, as these statements illustrate that some of our participants do not exhibit increased purchase likelihood, despite their heightened awareness of the brands:

*"[Q: Okay. But you know them... that they exist now and see them in the supermarket now...?] - Yeah, but I wouldn't buy them. I would buy maybe... I like Daim better. So I would probably choose that one." [Emma]*

*"Of course like... 'cause you put a lot of thoughts to them you get affected about the brand. That's with everything that you put extra time with but... Yeah a little bit but not... I wouldn't... it's still like... I think I... I'm more resistant to buy them now. 'Cause I read more about them and yeah. I know more about their production I would say yes and... yeah also with their ingredients that they are using. I try to buy more organic as I can so then they are also excluded for that reason." [Lotta]*

As these statements show, interviewees reported an unchanged level or even a decrease of purchase likelihood, despite increased brand awareness. As it was found by Esch et al. (2006) that brand associations affect current purchases more directly than brand awareness does, we

believe that our finding might be attributable to the consumers' brand associations which we will analyse in the following.

### Associations

The associations participants have towards a brand as mentioned in Keller's (1993) model and included in our theoretical lens were also found to be changed during the co-creation project. When talking to participants about their view on the brand, it could be identified that they had developed new associations towards both the product brands and the mother brand Cloetta. It became especially apparent when they talked about their learnings regarding the origin of the mother brand and the differences between the product brands. In agreement with findings related to general brand experiences this implies that the number of brand associations recalled from memory increases through experiences with a brand (Oakenfull & McCarthy, 2010). Furthermore, this finding is strengthened by recent studies which imply that co-creation especially influences brand associations (Dijk et al., 2014; Fuchs & Schreier, 2011; Ind et al., 2013). It also corresponds to researchers taking on the view that co-creation is a means for consumers to actively create brand meaning (Allen et al., 2008; Gensler et al., 2013). However, contrary to the propositions made by various researchers, no signs of co-creation leading consumers to building their identity based on the brand involved could be identified (e.g. Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2002). We believe that this is due to the nature of the brand involved in our case as it was mentioned that the brand is neither seen as the main reason for buying the products nor are they bought in order to show off the brand:

*"I would still buy them. But I think it's because the products are still very good. And for me, chocolate... the brand is more a reference because I know the product. But I'm not buying it because I want to be seen with Cloetta products or something like that. It's more because of the quality of the product I buy it." [Jonathan]*

As illustrated, the brand Cloetta is for Jonathan only of secondary importance in his purchase decisions. The main aspect remains the taste of the products which can be seen as product-related attributes in line with Keller (1993). For him, the brand thus acts as an indicator for the good taste. He is not aiming at showing off the brand so that the brand thus does not form an important part of his identity as proposed by Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998). However, we acknowledge that consumers might not be aware of the symbolic meanings they attribute to products or brands (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

In the group of participants **without** prior brand knowledge, associations before the project were either wrong or non-existent. When analysing their answers, a change in associations could be identified. The new associations are mainly related to the target group, the Swedish origin of the brand as well as specific to products. The target groups of the different product brands were herein the aspect most strongly emphasised by consumers. In line with Keller's (1993) model, this implies high importance of the non-product-related attribute 'user imagery'. It relates to the type of people who are generally using the products and can thus produce brand personality attributes (Keller, 1993; Plummer, 1985). Dijk et al. (2014) already ascribed importance to this aspect when investigating the effect of co-creation on brand personality perceptions. They showed that brand personality perceptions are affected by the co-creation claim. Apart from these new associations identified, the only newly developed association regarding the mother brand was related to the Swedish origin of the company. This becomes apparent in the following excerpts:

*"I thought it was Italian when I first heard the name, it's kind of an Italian name. [...] Yeah, I know what they stand for now. It's more, I think they are really sports related and... I mean yeah now I know the brands [...]" [Roberto]*

*"I didn't know the brand before that. I mean I researched it before joining the competition but when I saw Cloetta I didn't know what it stands for. [...] Now [sic] I know the brands, I know mainly who they are [sic] targeting. [...] But I think I know more about the products than the corporate brand because we were working more for the products and the corporate brand is kind of hidden [...]" [Alena]*

As participants mainly worked with the product brands, the acquired knowledge and new associations are herein shown to be limited mainly to the products involved in the project. We also base this on the fact that in general no other products were mentioned and hardly any new associations were related to the mother brand. This shows us that in our case, the positive effect of the co-creation project on the number of brand associations in participants without prior knowledge seems to be limited to the products involved in the project. Another important aspect concerning brand associations is their favourability (Keller, 1993). Regarding their favourability, the new associations were either neutral or negative when related to the taste of the products which is summed up by Daria's statement:

*"I don't have bad impression because of the branding, or positioning or communication or anything like this I just don't like the products." [Daria]*

This statement shows that despite the personal negative associations due to the taste of the products, for Daria this seems to have no influence on the mother brand itself or the way it is communicated in the market.

The analysis of participants' answers in the group **with** prior brand knowledge indicated that the number and strength of brand associations before the project had been mainly related to the Swedish origin of the company and some product brands:

*"I didn't know so much. I knew that Cloetta was a big brand in Sweden and they are big in some other countries and that they do Kex choklad, but I didn't know the other brands that they have done." [Emma]*

*"I think more that I recognised the products. I didn't know that the company had a special value anything [...] But you also know Cloetta as a whole but not in the same... I think it's really you know it because you've tried the product and you've seen it in stores but I wouldn't have been [sic] able to tell you Cloetta means this and this and this. [...] I knew that it was the main chocolate company, that they were Swedish." [Jonathan]*

The second statement shows that familiarity and recognition aspects seem to have been the basis of these participants' brand associations before the project. This is consistent with Esch et al. (2006) and Keller (1993) who mention that brand awareness influences the strength of brand associations and the way they are formed and thus consumers' decisions.

When reviewing the participants' perception of the brand after the co-creation project, we found diverse responses ranging between neutral and rather negative changes. An interviewee pointed out that her image of the brand has not changed during the project at all. We see this as unchanged favourability of her brand associations when relating it to Keller's (1993) model. However, for other participants, the additional information obtained during the co-creation project has created confusion regarding the mother brand and product brands as well as differences between product brands as shown in Jonathan's statements:

*"Some are for older people, some for younger. So that way it's a bit difficult I guess. But then I learned this concept of Munchy Moment [guiding concept included in company's mission and vision] which I think is very good, which they apply for the chocolate and the candy part." [Jonathan]*

*[Q: Has your view [of the brand] changed to the better or to the worse?] - Maybe to the worse I think because this... it was confusing. Not just this about the brands and the mother brand and how they relate to one another. But also for example about the case that didn't make it... it wasn't very clear. That doesn't make the company or the brand very attractive. Especially as someone that's going to look for a job you're thinking, I was expecting maybe something a bit different. So I'm more confused." [Jonathan]*

These excerpts illustrate that after participating, additional insights about target groups and internal brand management concepts were added to the existing associations. However, this new information created confusion. The confusion shown in these statements is related to the differences between the product brands and shows that more information did in this case not lead to more clarity and a better view of the brand but had a rather negative effect on consumer's brand image. In close relation to the product-related theme of expertise mentioned above, the confusion found in participants with prior knowledge contradicts Alba and Hutchinson's (1987) proposition regarding product categorisations. In addition to this aspect, it was also mentioned that the communication of the tasks during the co-creation project has led to a more negative view of the brand and the company. The rather disadvantageous change regarding the favourability of brand associations was also observed in Lotta's explanations. Starting from an already rather negative image regarding Cloetta's production processes and ingredients before the participation in the project, her view of the brand even worsened during the co-creation project:

*"[...] I think I... I'm more resistant to buy them now. 'Cause I read more about them and yeah. I know more about their production I would say yes and... yeah also with their ingredients that they are using. I try to buy more organic as I can so then they are also excluded for that reason." [Lotta]*

This statement shows that due to the participant's values, the information she acquired during the co-creation project led her to be more critical about the company. Since the mother brand Cloetta is a corporate brand and represents the company, we deduce that this negative view on the company might translate to negative associations towards the mother brand. The deterioration is believed to be due to her health consciousness as well as her focus on the preservation of the environment.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

### 5.1 Discussion of consumer motivation

The aim of the first research question was to answer what motivates consumers to participate in a co-creation project related to brands. The rich interview data which we collected allowed us to answer this research question. In line with previous research we could show that participants are intrinsically as well as extrinsically motivated (Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2013). In addition to that, we could identify new co-creation motives.

In the analysis we could identify various motives from different categories. Intrinsic motivation in the Cloetta co-creation project consist of 'intrinsic playful task' as well as 'curiosity' while internalised extrinsic motivation could be identified as 'skill development', 'self efficacy', and 'recognition'. Finally, extrinsic motivation was represented by 'monetary compensation'. Empirical data showed that all participants were similarly motivated albeit with different emphases. It also showed that all participants were driven by a number of motives from different categories with almost all of them having three or more different motives of why they decided to participate. This is in line with Udell (1964) who states that within consumer motivation the source of motivation underlies a combination of different drivers. This can be moreover influenced by participants' character, circumstances, and type of co-creation activity (e.g. Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2013; David & Shapiro, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Roberts et al., 2014). In this context, internalised extrinsic motivation could be identified as the most emphasised motive category followed by intrinsic motives. The expectancy of getting something in return can therefore be seen as an argument for the participants to fulfil their task and finish the case. It came strongly forward in the interviews that for most participants this reward was of immaterial nature and could be fulfilled in form of new skillsets and knowledge as well as friendship. The motive of 'skill development' was therein found to be the most emphasised amongst all motives. Participants repeatedly stated their interest in acquiring new skills and knowledge with a special focus on future career prospects. Aspects of this motive could be found within a variety of other motives identified in this study, which further emphasises its meaning for this case.

Extrinsic motives were also stated as a potential driver but with the limitation that they are only of subordinate importance. This result reflects previous research which revealed that in terms of rewards and compensation, consumers are more interested in immaterial rewards such as

recognition of their performance rather than monetary compensation (Füller, 2010; Lambe et al, 2001).

In addition to those three categories of motives, it was found that participants emphasised the team aspect and having successfully worked together beforehand as a reason for them to take part in the project. For this case study, already existing social relations can thus be identified as additional motive to our theoretical lens as well as the co-creation motives identified by Füller (2006, 2010). Underlying this new motive were the concepts of interaction, trust, and commitment. The identified strong focus of participants on friendship and personal relationships to other team members is believed to be due to the nature of the case as participants had the option of signing up in teams and explicitly mentioned this as a reason for participating. This motive can, due to its focus on trust and commitment, be related to social exchange theory which we identified as underlying theory for co-creation in our literature review.

Another interesting finding was the additional motive related to the branding aspect of this co-creation project. The brand was found to be one of the motives for consumers' participation in this case study. Our analysis showed signs that a positive perception of the brand prior to the co-creation project might lead consumers to participate. To the best of our knowledge, this motive has not been found in previous co-creation literature so that we regard it as a contribution to our theoretical lens and Füller's (2006, 2010) set of co-creation motives. The brand as a new motive found in this study moreover underlines the importance of brands in consumers' life world (Arvidsson, 2005). It reflects the notion that brands can influence consumers and act as drivers for consumers' actions (Arvidsson, 2008).

When participants reflected upon their experience with the case and the company, dissatisfaction regarding feedback and transparency of the evaluation of ideas was stated. This led us to a more thorough investigation of that matter both from the optimistic and critical perspective on co-creation. It was found that participants reflected upon the project as being an overall good experience but due to the company's lack of communication, the project exhibited certain weaknesses. Those were especially relevant since it was found that the participants seemed to have expectations regarding learning outcomes which were not met. However, they did not feel exploited as proposed by Arvidsson (2005). All in all, we conclude that despite obvious signs of a critical perspective on co-creation, the positive perspective seemed to predominate in this case study. Participants' perception of the project was overall rather positive and perceived as valuable. The identified imbalance between participants and company was

consequently not viewed as strong enough to influence participants' overall opinion on co-creation.

## **5.2 Discussion of brand knowledge**

In our second research question we aimed at investigating the effect that the participation in co-creation has on consumers' brand knowledge. Our overall finding regarding this relationship is a general change in brand knowledge found amongst all participants.

Certain differences between the changes in brand knowledge among participants with versus without prior brand knowledge could be identified. The change in familiarity was generally found to be less pronounced for participants with prior knowledge which is in line with learning curve theory (Wright, 1936). Furthermore, this group of participants did not develop new negative perceptions regarding the taste of the products which is in contrast to the group without prior knowledge. In the case of participants with prior knowledge, the new associations developed throughout the co-creation process were moreover related more to the mother brand and the company as a whole than to the product brands. In contrast, participants without prior brand knowledge developed new associations mainly related to the product brands. All in all, we therefore found that in our case study the level of brand knowledge prior to co-creation affected how brand knowledge changed during the co-creation project. It is thus in line with Keller's (2003) proposition that branding - and thus co-creation - may have a different effect on brand perceptions for familiar and unfamiliar brands.

Despite these differences between the two groups, an overall increase in brand knowledge, both product- and brand-related, could be identified. This is based on the finding that all dimensions of brand knowledge as included in our theoretical lens and defined by Keller (1993) and Alba and Hutchinson (1987) were affected by the participation in the co-creation project although to a varying degree as mentioned above. Furthermore, a review of the analysis as a whole shows that the aspects of product- and brand-related brand knowledge are interrelated on various dimensions which is consistent with Keller (2003). Associations are in this case study for example closely related to familiarity since it is shown that they can be changed due to an increase in familiarity. This is in line with existing literature which suggests that familiarity should lead to an increase in brand awareness through repeated exposures and that brand awareness, in turn, affects brand associations (Esch et al., 2006; Keller, 1993).



The for us most prominent finding is related to negative changes in the favourability of brand associations. It was found that higher familiarity and therefore increased knowledge can lead to a negative perception of the brand. In our case, these were related to both the taste of the products and the company as a whole. Reasons were the products' taste, confusion about brand architecture, a negative view on Cloetta's production processes, as well as perceived flaws in the company's communication during the co-creation project. To the best of our knowledge, this finding is new in the context of co-creation. Other researchers found contrasting results in that they identified a positive change in brand perception due to co-creation activities (e.g. Dijk et al., 2014; Fuchs & Schreier, 2011; Ind et al., 2013). In summary, it was found that the increase in number and strength of associations due to co-creation does not necessarily lead to a positive image of the brand as proposed in earlier studies.

Overall, the changes in participants' view of the brand, their alertness to the brand as well as their knowledge about the products could be related to the dimensions of our theoretical lens and thus imply an increase in brand knowledge among our participants. The sources of this increased brand knowledge could be identified as being four-fold, represented by the company presentation, product trials, individual research activities, as well as teammates and people not involved in the project. Those four sources of knowledge show in our view that co-creation acts as a platform which leads consumers to increase their knowledge about the brand and related topics.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

A thorough literature review let us identify a gap in current research concerning the consumer perspective on motivation for co-creation as well as the relation of co-creation to consumers' brand knowledge. This study hence aimed at closing this gap. The research questions were consequently formulated as follows:

- What drives consumers to participate in co-creation?
- (How) does co-creation affect brand knowledge?

We based our research on one specific case study carried out by the Swedish confectionary company Cloetta and focusing on chocolate bars. Rich data was collected by conducting seven

semi-structured face-to-face interviews with participants of the case study. The analysis of the data was supported by the priorly developed theoretical lens based on a literature review. This allowed us to systematically interpret the data collected from an optimistic and critical perspective on co-creation. Both perspectives could be identified. The finding that consumers mentioned a lack of feedback and transparency in the co-creation project contributed to the up until then mainly theoretical critical perspective. The positive perspective was represented in terms of consumers seeing the co-creation project as an overall valuable experience.

Regarding consumers' motives for their participation in co-creation, our findings revealed that consumers are not driven by a single motive but by a combination of at least two or three motives from different categories. Based on participants' statements, internalised extrinsic motives could be shown to be the category most referred to in our study. The most emphasised motive amongst participants was skill development as defined by Füller (2006; 2010). We could also identify two new motives that have not been researched within co-creation as far as we know. Those motives are social relations and brand relations. Social relations emphasise the importance of successful relationships for co-creation activities which are conducted in teams as was the case in Cloetta's project. The brand as a driver for participation illustrates the importance of brands in the life world of consumers as included in CCT. Furthermore, it shows the relevance of our study due to it connecting both streams of literature - co-creation motivation and brand knowledge - and thus leading to valuable new findings.

In terms of brand knowledge, our findings show that additional brand knowledge is gained from different sources during the co-creation project. Based on Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand knowledge as being a source of brand equity, consumers have the potential of co-creating additional brand value (e.g. Arvidsson, 2005; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a/b). A generally applicable definition of how this manifests itself can however not be given due to differences in participants' knowledge prior to the project as well as individual aspects regarding the personality of the co-creators. However, since no positive but rather a neutral or even negative change in the favourability of brand associations could be identified, it remains questionable if brand equity is really increased as implied by Keller (1993) or even decreased due to a more negative perception of the brand. Overall, it was found that brand knowledge of all participants was affected by the co-creation project, however not necessarily with a favourable outcome for the company involved.

Taking all findings into consideration, we were able to answer both research questions as well as contribute to existing literature. In line with the adopted consumer perspective, co-creation was overall shown to be a platform for consumers to embrace their role as active participants in the social construction of value for consumer goods and co-creating brand meaning. This illustrates the meaningful interaction in co-creation projects mentioned by CCT researchers (Allen et al., 2008; Arvidsson, 2005; Gensler et al., 2013).

After reflecting upon our findings, we decided to revise our theoretical lens by adding the newly revealed aspects found in the analysis. In terms of motives, we extended the theoretical lens by including our findings regarding the additional motives found in our analysis. Social relations were added as a new motive, representing the importance of existing personal relationships as a driver for participating in co-creation. Furthermore, brand relation was added as a second new motive in addition to the theoretical lens underlying our data analysis. Brand relations as a motive can however only apply if participants have a certain brand knowledge prior to their participation in a co-creation project. In terms of brand knowledge, we did not include any additional facets due to the nature of our research question being aimed at investigating how brand knowledge is affected. The revised theoretical lens could be used as a departing point for further research.

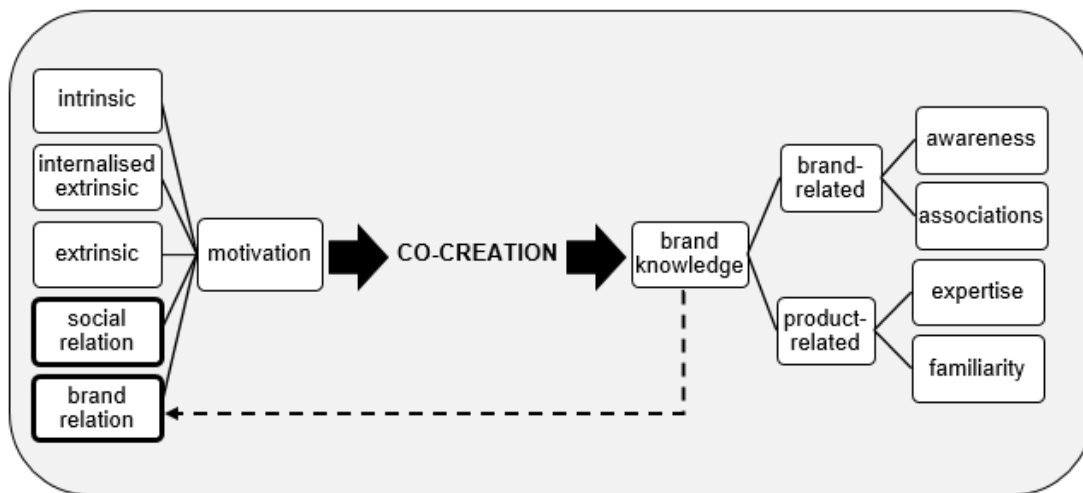


Figure 6 Revision of the theoretical lens

## **6 Implications and Limitations**

*In this chapter, the contribution of our study is presented in the form of theoretical as well as managerial implications. Furthermore, limitations are acknowledged and suggestions for further research given.*

### **6.1 Theoretical implications and contribution**

This study is contributing to the existing co-creation literature as well as branding literature as it links both streams of research. As stated in the beginning, we approached the co-creation phenomenon with an open mind, allowing for both the optimistic and the critical perspective to emerge. Our findings contribute to both perspectives as aspects of dissatisfaction were stated by participants, but the general perception of the co-creation process as a whole was rather positive. A critical aspect was found in consumers' perception of a lack of feedback and transparency in the company's communication which led to the development of new negative associations towards the brand. This perceived weakness and the therein resulting dissatisfaction, as expectations were not met, can be related to the critical perspective on co-creation proposed for example by Arvidsson (2005) and Zwick et al. (2008). Our study contributes to the hardly empirically researched critical perspective on co-creation by revealing an imbalance between consumers and the company and thus consumers' perception of a lack of mutually beneficial collaboration. However, this critical view was not fully supported since participants did not feel exploited despite this criticism. Therefore, we could also contribute to the optimistic perspective as our findings showed that, in line with Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a/b), consumers perceived the co-creation process as an overall positive and valuable experience for themselves and thus allows them to live their role as self-determined and empowered postmodern consumers.

This study also contributed to literature about consumers' motivation in co-creation. On the one hand, we were able to confirm motives for co-creation found in previous studies. On the other hand, we also found contradicting results to existing literature which make further research in this field necessary. Additionally, we could find social as well as brand relations as motives for co-creation participation and link it to previous studies supporting these findings. A possible transferability of our findings regarding consumer motives to related research areas can furthermore be drawn.

In terms of brand knowledge, our study contributes to branding literature in showing a new perspective on the concept which predates the term "co-creation". This is achieved by linking brand knowledge to the co-creation process and reviewing it from a consumer's perspective. We

thus provide not only a better understanding of how consumers' brand knowledge changes during a co-creation project, but also a basis for further research related to possible negative outcomes of co-creation activities.

A main contribution of our study to existing research is achieved by linking the more consumer-centred motivation literature to the more managerial brand knowledge literature in the context of co-creation. A special focus herein lies on linking both concepts by reviewing them from consumers' perspective. Due to its exploratory nature, the connection allowed for new insights to be gained and moreover showed the importance of the brand for co-creation projects.

## **6.2 Managerial implications and contribution**

Apart from contributing to current literature on co-creation we could also identify important implications for future management decisions regarding co-creation projects.

As most participants stated at least two motives that led to their participation, we conclude that most consumers have a variety of motives at the same time so that companies should cover incentives that cover different kinds of motives. In addition, the co-creation project needs to be well planned in order to avoid potential dissatisfaction from participants due to communicational weaknesses. As our study revealed that some participants were dissatisfied with the lack of information and transparency regarding judgment criteria, open communication between the company and the co-creators is indispensable. In general, it can be stated that companies need to keep in mind that co-creation might possibly lead to a more negative perception of the brand or the company rather than fostering the relationship with the brand and adding value to it. Careful consideration is therefore essential. Our findings regarding motivation and brand knowledge show that companies have to be aware of consumers' motives regarding their specific co-creation project and take into account that different target participants (in our case students) might have different goals. These motives have important implications for companies since they affect what participants expect from the company and consequently also how they evaluate the project. If those expectations are unmet, this might lead to dissatisfaction on the participants' side. As it was shown that co-creation led to changes in the brand knowledge of our participants due to the increased interaction with the brand, this dissatisfaction can also lead to negative brand associations. This implication shows that there is an important connection between consumer motives to participate in co-creation and changes in brand knowledge as a result of this participation. Furthermore, based on our results companies need to take into account that the level of brand knowledge their targeted participants have prior to the co-

creation project might affect how their brand knowledge, particularly associations, is changed during the process.

### **6.3 Limitations and further research**

Even though we were able to answer our research questions and could therefore contribute new insights to current literature, we are aware that our study has certain limitations. We furthermore acknowledge that the sample offers limited variety due to the interviewees' age and profession being very similar caused by the nature of the co-creation project which was investigated. In line with the qualitative nature of our study as well as the small sample size and considering that we only used one case study, the results lack generalisability. However, the aim of this study is to explore the topics at hand in order to allow for further research to build on our findings.

Due to its exploratory nature, this study provides a starting point for future research in the field of the co-creation phenomenon. As researchers often let qualitative findings guide quantitative studies, a quantitative follow-up study could be interesting in order to gain generalisable knowledge and a verification of our results (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since our case study involved exclusively business students, it would be intriguing to investigate the issue of motivation and the importance of brands in other contexts. Moreover, as chocolate is a low involvement product, it would also be interesting to see if the results are different when brands of high involvement products are at the centre of the co-creation project. We also found indicators that the brand itself can act as a motivator for consumers' participation in co-creation. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the situational factors influencing the importance of this motive, further research is necessary. Regarding brand knowledge, our findings indicate that new associations are not necessarily favourable. Hence, it is questionable if brand equity is increased even if brand knowledge has been shown to increase significantly. Further research on the matter would thus be of importance for companies.

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# APPENDIX

## A: Interview guide Cloetta

### 1. Introduction

#### 2. Personal information / Background

- Can you tell us something about yourself?
- What do you normally do in your free time?
- Is this the first time that you took part in this kind of competition or have you taken part in something similar before?

#### 3. Co-creation

- Please tell us something about the Cloetta project you took part in?
- What was it that you submitted?

##### **a) Motivation:**

- How did you find out about the Cloetta competition?
- Can you tell us why you chose to participate?
- How important was it for you to win the competition?
- During co-creation, what motivated you to continue?

##### **b) Co-creation process:**

- Can you tell us about what you did during the co-creation process?
- How did you interact with other participants?
- Do you feel you got something in return for your participation?

#### 4. Brand knowledge:

##### **a) Product-related:**

- What did you know about the product(s) before you participated?
- Could you tell us whether you had to inform yourself in order to participate?
- Do you think you understand the products better after participating?

##### **b) Brand-related:**

- Can you tell us how much you already knew about the brand before you participated?
- Could you describe if your view/understanding of the brand changed while participating?
- How do you see the brand today?
- When thinking about the product category chocolate bars, do you think you are more likely to think of Cloetta or the product brands than other chocolate bar brands than before the co-creation project?

#### 5. Finishing off:

- Would you take part in something like this again?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with us?



**B: Ethical protocol**

First of all, we would like to thank you for your participation. As explained in our first message we are master students at Lund University in Sweden who are writing their thesis about co-creation and brands.

Before we start the interview, we would like to reassure you that as a participant you have several rights. First, your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time. You are also free to withdraw from the interview at any time. Secondly, this interview will be kept strictly anonymous. Your personal information is only available to us, the researchers. Parts of this interview may be used in the final report, but under no circumstances will your name or other identifying characteristics be included. We also want to inform you that the interview will be recorded.

Please confirm that you have read and agree with these rights before we start the interview by signing your name below:

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