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# **COLLECTING VALUABLE CONSUMER DATA**

**Motivating consumers to disclose personal information**

Master's Thesis  
in Marketing

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background for the research

Nowadays, companies need to be able to operate in a data-driven environment. Firms collect and analyze more consumer data than ever. Companies ask consumers to register for websites and loyalty programs, and social networking sites induce people to share detailed information about their personal lives. Regarding mobile marketing, consumers are also asked to share their location in order to receive special offers. (Gabisch & Milne 2013, 140–141.) Gathering consumer data is essential for product development (Zimmer, Arsal, Al-Marzouq, Moore & Grover 2009, 404) and helps companies to offer better customized products, target marketing communication, and direct relationships with customers (Chou, Teng & Lo 2009, 466).

The amount of data is expanding in depth and volume (Roeber, Rehse, Knorrek & Thomsen 2015, 95), and companies need to have the capacity to analyze and transform the gathered data into valuable assets (Digitization and integrity – In search of the balance between cool and creepy 2016, 2). It is critical that organizations are able to collect and analyze consumer data in order to improve not only the value creation process of the company but also that of the customer (Saarijärvi, Karjaluoto & Kuusela 2013, 595–596). Simultaneously, consumers are becoming more aware of the value of the information they can provide, making them more reluctant to share it for free (Zimmer et al. 2009, 404). In addition, other factors, such as legislation, limit the possibilities to gather and use consumer data (Spiekermann, Acquisti, Böhme & Hui 2015, 162).

Consumers frequently share personal information in social media because they feel that the media provide more benefits than costs. However, they seem to consider more carefully whether to share personal information with companies. Since firms want to have as accurate consumer information as possible, it is essential to recognize the strategies, which help to gather valuable data. (Gabisch & Milne 2013, 140–141.) Companies use cookies in order to trace and analyze how consumers behave on their website (Hann, Hui, Lee & Png 2007, 15). Moreover, it is rather easy to track the purchasing histories of consumers. However, collecting data concerning, for example, psychological as well as sociological information is more challenging and requires more specific strategies and understanding of consumer behavior. (Kang, Park & Liu 2012, 22.)

Many companies justify the collection of personal information by personalization. Personalization means that services and buying experience are customized according to the individual preferences of customers. This requires that the respective company has sufficient data of its customers and the ability to process it. (Chellappa & Sin 2005, 181.) According to a recent study, 44 percent of European consumers are willing to disclose

personal information if they receive customized offers in return (Big Data – A European Survey on the Opportunities and Risks of Data Analytics 2016, 29). However, according to another study, 86 percent of consumers think companies have trouble finding the balance between personalization and privacy. In their opinion, many companies do not deal carefully enough with customer information. Consumers feel that the information is being abused, companies do not provide sufficient privacy policies, and customers receive spam. While personalization is commonly seen positively, neglecting privacy issues can reduce its positive influence. (Smith-Bingham, Jacobs, Buvat, Singh & KVJ 2015, 2–4.)

Consequently, the majority of consumers are concerned to some extent about the privacy issues regarding the use of the data they provide for companies (e.g., Xie, Teo & Wan 2006). At the same time, companies need that data in order to fulfill their customers' needs in the best possible way. Therefore, firms need to understand consumer behavior and what motivates consumers to share information despite the possible privacy concerns. Companies need to recognize the most effective strategies to win consumers' trust and to motivate them to disclose personal information about themselves.

## **1.2 Research gap**

When referring to prior research in the area of consumers' disclosure behavior, it has mostly concentrated on the factors that hinder or reduce consumers' willingness to share personal information. Previous studies have shown that consumers' privacy concerns are usually the main reason for their reluctance in disclosing information to companies (e.g., White, Novak & Hoffman 2014, 184). Therefore, it is clear that most of the people have some concerns regarding the privacy, but it is rather unclear what makes consumers share information in spite of their privacy concerns.

There is some research regarding the possible motives behind information disclosure but further research is needed. In related literature, it has been recognized that a consumer usually needs to benefit in order to be willing to disclose information (e.g., Culnan & Bies 2003; Zimmer et al. 2009; White et al. 2014). In this area, the effect of monetary rewards as benefits has been highlighted (e.g., Hann et al. 2007). However, other benefits have not been extensively examined.

## **1.3 Research purpose and research questions**

Companies collect consumer data implicitly and explicitly. Explicit data collecting refers to explicitly asking consumers to disclose personal information, whereas implicit data collection refers to gathering data via methods that do not require similar involvement



from the consumer. Implicit data collection is conducted, for example, via tracking consumers' website and purchasing behavior. (Linden 2002, cited in Huang & Lin 2005, 29.) The focus of this study lies on explicit data collection, which means that consumers provide accurate information about themselves or give permission to companies to address them with direct marketing or to utilize information that has been implicitly collected. In this study, personal information refers to accurate contact details (e.g., name, phone number, address, e-mail address), demographic information (e.g., age, annual income, gender, household related information), financial information (e.g., credit card numbers), and psychographic information, such as personal interests and hobbies.

The present study seeks to understand what types of benefits induce consumers to disclose personal information to companies. Concrete suggestions on how to motivate consumers to share valuable information about themselves or to give permission to use data that companies have implicitly collected are provided. In addition, this study seeks to understand how different factors in the disclosure context influence the consumer's motivation to disclose personal information. The disclosure context can have either a positive or a negative effect on the person's information disclosure behavior.

The main research question of the study can be presented as follows: "How can companies motivate consumers to disclose personal information?" The main research question is further divided into two subquestions:

- What types of benefits motivate consumers to disclose personal information?
- How does the disclosure context affect the consumers' information disclosure behavior?

This chapter has introduced the topic, the research purpose, and the research questions. In the following chapters, the consumer's disclosure behavior is defined and factors affecting the disclosure behavior are addressed. In addition, some motivational theories and specific benefits that influence information disclosure behavior are discussed. Next, the research methodology used in this study is explained; The research type of the study is multiple case study. The study was conducted by using qualitative methods, whereby representatives of companies from different industries were interviewed. In the latter part of the thesis, the research data is analyzed and answers to the research questions are given by linking the literature and the findings of the empirical research together. Finally, implications for research and practical business life are discussed. Moreover, the limitations of the study are evaluated.

## 2 CONSUMER'S INFORMATION DISCLOSURE BEHAVIOR

### 2.1 Defining disclosure behavior

The concepts of self-disclosure and disclosure behavior are important when considering consumers' willingness to provide personal information to companies. *Self-disclosure* is an important part of developing close relationships and it has been widely discussed in relationship literature. Jourard and Lasakow (1958) define self-disclosure as the “*process of making the self known to others*”. According to Jourard (1971), self-disclosure can be characterized by its breadth and depth. The breadth of self-disclosure refers to quantity; in other words, the number of topics that the given information covers. In contrast, the depth refers to quality; in other words, the intimacy of the information. (cited in Kang et al. 2012, 21.) Archer (1980) defines self-disclosure a decade later in a similar way. According to the author, self-disclosure is “*the act of revealing personal information to others*”. These definitions include both verbal and non-verbal ways in making oneself known to others. (cited in Joinson 2001, 178.)

Omarzu (2000, 178–179) has developed a model that describes the disclosure decision process in relationships. According to *the disclosure decision model*, different social goals direct people to disclose information. As examples for social goals, one can state the need to gain social approval, to discuss problems, or to clarify an individual's own identity. Subsequent to deciding on one's individual goal, a strategy to achieve is chosen as well as a suitable target. The whole process of disclosure consists of several decisions, which finally determine the breadth, depth, and duration of the disclosure; in other words, how much, how intimately, and how broadly a person is willing to disclose information to others. The model is illustrated in Figure 1.

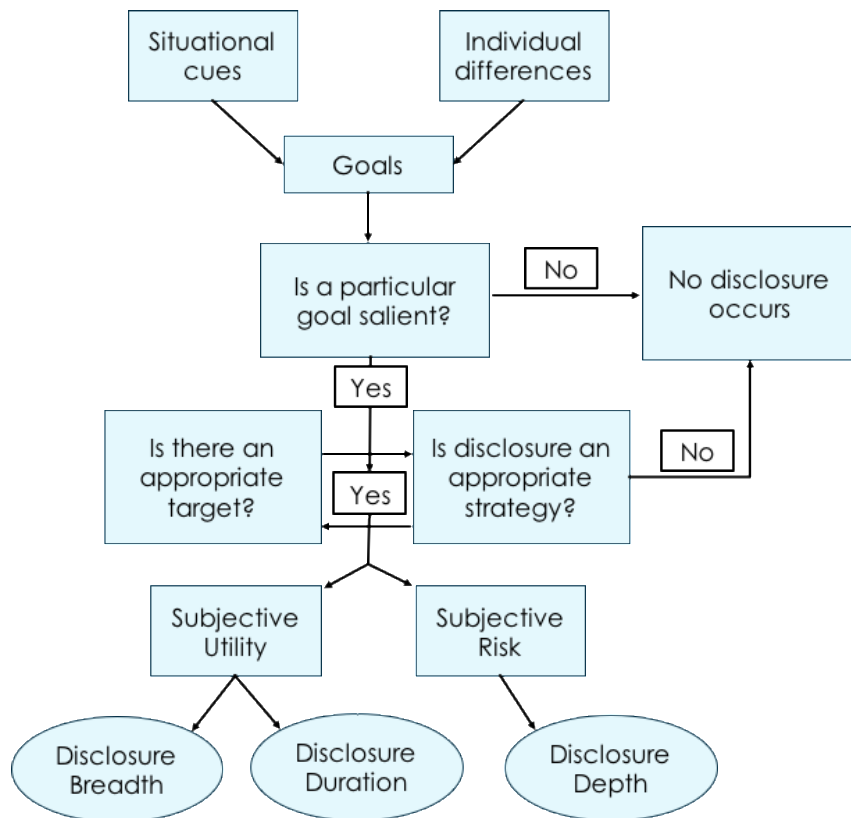


Figure 1 The disclosure decision model (adapted from Omarzu 2000, 176)

The final decision concerning the breadth, depth, and duration of the disclosure is made as the individual evaluates the subjective risk and utility of the information disclosure. The subjective utility depends on the importance and value of the goal. The more valuable the outcome is, the more the individual is willing to work towards it. The target, situation, and individual differences also have an effect on the subjective utility. High utility affects disclosure duration and breadth since it makes people concentrate on topics, which are the most relevant regarding their goals. Moreover, the individual evaluates the subjective risk, which refers to the possible costs that disclosing may cause. The perception of risks influences especially the disclosure depth. If the perceived risks are high, the individual will be more careful about how much information he/she will reveal concerning a certain topic. (Omarzu 2000, 179–180.)

In this study, self-disclosure and disclosure behavior mean providing personal information to a company either in an online or an offline environment. Previous studies have researched the influence of the online and offline environment on the disclosure behavior and discovered that people self-disclose online rather than face-to-face (e.g., Joinson 2001, 188). Culnan and Bies (2003, 327) argue that consumers perform a privacy calculus before disclosing information to a company. *The privacy calculus* refers to the evaluation of costs; in other words, privacy-related risks, in relation to benefits. If the perceived

benefits outweigh the privacy concerns, or if the risks are equal to the benefits, the consumer will disclose information. Therefore, information disclosure can be seen as a trade-off between the individual's privacy and gaining better services (Zimmer et al. 2009, 395).

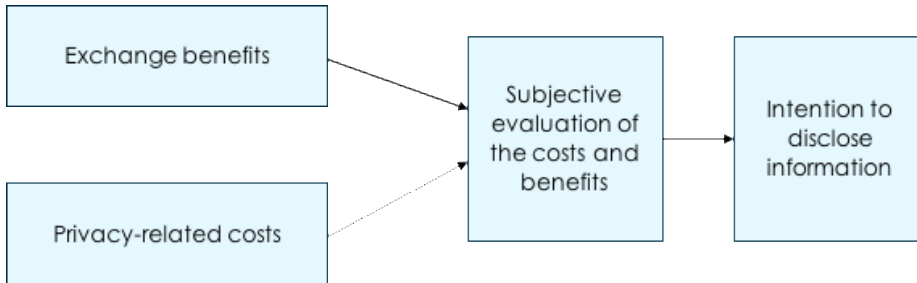


Figure 2 Privacy calculus

The privacy calculus is illustrated in Figure 2. Finally, consumers either favor or avoid information disclosure depending on the situational factors and subjective perceptions about the situation (Poddar, Mosteller & Ellen 2009, 423). Companies can diminish the perceived costs by offering more benefits (Hui, Tan & Goh 2006, 416). *Social exchange theory* addresses the significance of benefits and costs in people's behavior. Therefore, it is briefly discussed in the next chapter.

## 2.2 Social exchange theory

Homans (1961) defines social exchange as “*the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible between at least two people*”. The author believes that rewards and punishments guide people's behavior. He puts forward five propositions, which explain human behavior in social exchanges (cited in Cook & Rice 2003, 54–55):

- *The success proposition* states that people tend to repeat behavior that is being rewarded.
- *The stimulus proposition* claims that behavior that has been rewarded in the past influences how people act in similar situations in the future.
- According to *the value proposition*, the more valuable the reward is, the more likely people will act in a certain way.
- *The deprivation-satiation proposition* states that the perceived value of a certain reward will decrease if the same reward is offered frequently.
- According to *the aggression-approval proposition*, people have different emotional reactions when evaluating whether or not the reward meets their expectations.

As people gain positive outcomes when acting in a certain way, the perceived risk is diminished and they are more likely to behave in the same way in the future. In the context of online information disclosure, the perceived risk diminishes every time the person has a good experience of disclosing information online, resulting in increased information disclosure behavior. (Kang et al. 2012, 34.) Blau (1964) regards the social exchange theory from a different perspective. While Homans emphasizes reinforcement and past experiences as driving forces for future behavior, Blau (1964) suggests that people look more to the future when trying to maximize the benefits in each situation. Therefore, the nature of the reward does not need to be specified at the moment of the exchange. (cited in Cook & Rice 2003, 55.)

According to the social exchange theory, people act in a certain way only if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. The theory regards consumers as rational and calculating people, who seek to maximize their benefits. Social exchanges are a way to fulfill basic needs. Therefore, people look for relationships in which they can meet their needs. It is worth noting that these people are also the recipients of other people's behavior, who also seek to fulfill their needs by maximizing the profits in social exchanges. The theory considers people as goal-oriented and motivated by the rewards that are gained through a certain behavior. Since all action requires energy and is costly, people tend to repeat only those actions that are beneficial or those that are the least costly. If there are no rewards to be gained, people seek to avoid costs. (Chibucos, Leite & Weis 2005, 136–138.)

It has been presumed that information disclosure creates a commitment to the listener to give something in return. The favor in return can be a disclosure of information or something else that benefits the person who disclosed first. (Omarzu 2000, 176.) As *the norm of reciprocity* states, an individual should help people who have helped him/her. That is to say, benefits should be given to people who give them to you. Reciprocal behavior occurs when an individual has received something beneficial and thus feels the need to give something similar in return. According to the principle, people feel obligated to return the favor. (Gouldner 1960, 170–171.) In the context of information disclosure behavior, it means that, prior to sharing information, a person gets something valuable that makes him/her want to return the favor by providing information. (Schumann, Wangenheim & Groene 2014, 60.)

Homans (1961) developed the concept of *distributive justice*. According to the theory, people compare the rewards they get in relation to other people's rewards in a similar situation. Whenever a person's reward is evaluated to be overly generous in relation to the respective investments, the other person feels that injustice exists. Therefore, a bigger reward is not always seen as unjust, if the investments are perceived to be high. (cited in Adams 1965, 273.) Adams (1965) developed this idea further to be applicable in social exchange situations. According to Adams (1965, 280–282) inequity exists when the ratio of one's outcomes to inputs is not seen as equal to someone else's ratio of the respective

outcomes and inputs. This comparison is made with someone with whom a person is in an exchange relationship or in a situation in which both of the individuals are in an exchange relationship with a third party. The ratio depends on a person's own evaluations, and is thus dependent on individual differences. The inputs and the outcomes are a sum of all outcomes and inputs that are significant in the exchange. The perceived inequality leads to dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction can occur when a person feels that he/she is being under-rewarded but also when the person thinks that he/she is being over-rewarded. When two people are in an exchange relationship, it is usually the case that one feels inequity and the other feels the opposite. However, if these two people are in a relationship with a third party, their perceptions may be different. In the context of information disclosure, this means that if consumers perceive their own inputs and outputs to be equal to the company's costs and benefits of getting the information, they are willing to disclose information (Xu, Teo, Tan & Agarwal 2009–10, 144).

### 2.3 Role of privacy concerns

Westin (1967) defines *information privacy* as the right of individuals and groups to decide when, how, and to what extent information concerning them is provided to others. Meanwhile, Campbell (1997) defines *information privacy concerns* as the subjective views of fairness regarding information privacy. The subjective views are influenced by different factors such as culture, laws, personal characteristics, and past experiences. (cited in Malhotra, Kim & Agarwal 2004, 337). Consequently, perception of information privacy is always different depending on the person (Lee, Lim, Kim, Zo & Ciganek 2015, 48).

The negative effect of privacy concerns on consumers' disclosure behavior has been highlighted in related literature (e.g., Nam, Song, Lee & Park 2006, 216; Sharma & Crossler 2014, 313). Privacy concerns are seen as costs of information disclosure (Culnan & Bies 2003, 327). In general, consumers understand that companies need to ask for contact details and a credit card number when making a purchase online. However, they may find the company's practices intrusive if this data is later merged with data that has been collected in other processes. People are concerned that companies use information about them carelessly. (Hann et al. 2007, 33.) Consumers are afraid that personally identifiable information is given to third parties for marketing purposes or they are otherwise suspicious about the later usage of their personal information (Poddar et al. 2009, 437, 444). In addition, concerns are increasing as consumers realize that data is being collected without asking for permission or informing them about the data collection (Joinson & Paine 2007, 246).

Smith, Milberg, and Burke (1996, 172) have classified people's concerns about organizations' privacy practices into five categories. First, there is *the collection of personal*

*information*, which means individuals' general concern about the constant collection of personal information. The second and third concern relate to *the unauthorized secondary use of data*. People are concerned that the data collected by the company is used for secondary purposes without asking for the individual's permission, either inside the company that is collecting the data or in another company to which the data has been sold. Fourth, *improper access* refers to concerns that the data can be viewed and used by people who are not sufficiently authorized to work with the data. Fifth, *errors* refer to the fear that the protection of the data is not sufficient and errors regarding the data will occur.

Consumers have been classified into three categories depending on their sensitivity to privacy concerns. *Privacy fundamentalists* are the most concerned about their privacy. They do not approve that organizations collect information about them and they think people should refuse to disclose personal information. Similarly, *privacy pragmatists* value their privacy and laws, however, they are willing to provide information when they perceive the collection to be fair. Meanwhile, *privacy unconcerned* are not concerned about their privacy and they do not see any danger in providing information to companies. Among American consumers, Privacy Unconcerned represent the smallest group among consumers (8%). Most of the consumers are Privacy Pragmatists (58%) while a third of them (34%) are Fundamentalists. (Harris Interactive 2002, 20–22.)

*Procedural fairness* refers to fair information practices, which include giving reasons for the data collection and explaining how it is managed, and observing the practices. Informing consumers about fair practices reduces their privacy concerns. (Culnan & Armstrong 1999, 107–108, 112.) According to Zimmer et al. (2009, 398, 402), information disclosure behavior increases when reasons for the data collection are given prior to asking the consumer to disclose. Providing information increases the reciprocity and the social presence of the website and thus makes the website, and the company, appear more trustworthy.

Malhotra et al. (2004, 338–339, 350) have applied the social contract theory in the context of internet users' information privacy concerns (IUIPC). IUIPC consists of three parts – collection, control, and awareness. According to the theory, gathering personal data is fair only under the condition that consumers are able to control the procedure and are sufficiently informed about it. *Collection* refers to the equitability of the exchange; in other words, whether the collected information is equitable to the benefits that are gained in return. *Control* means that a consumer can explicitly approve that his/her information is being collected and modify, add or delete information. *Awareness* implies that the individual is informed, for example, about the use of the collected information. Control and awareness were recognized to be the most important factors. Therefore, they can most easily reduce an individual's information privacy concerns. The results of the study conducted by Vodafone Institute support this claim. 64 percent of European consumers say that being more transparent by explaining the reason for the data collection and usage

makes the company appear more trustworthy. (Big Data – A European Survey on the Opportunities and Risks of Data Analytics 2016, 14.)

However, other studies (e.g., Berendt, Günther & Spiekermann 2005, 103; Ackerman, Cranor & Reagle 1999, 7; Norberg, Horne & Horne 2007, 118) have shown that people's behavior is not always in accordance with their privacy preferences. Referred to as *the privacy paradox*, a consumer may have strong concerns about his/her information privacy but disclose information regardless of that (Mothersbaugh, Foxx II, Beatty & Wang 2012, 91–92). People are ready to abandon some privacy if relevant benefits are offered (Chellappa & Sin 2005, 198), which is in accordance with the concept of privacy calculus, described in Chapter 2.1. According to Berendt et al. (2005, 103–105), privacy concerns may become insignificant if the consumer enters an entertaining website that offers great benefits in return for the information. The entertaining online environment makes people unable to control their behavior. Nevertheless, this is not always beneficial for the company. Since people sometimes have trouble recognizing that their own behavior conflicts with their primary thoughts, they may become dissatisfied with the company and themselves if they later realize that they actually did provide personal information to the company. Correspondingly, Horne, Norberg, and Ekin (2007, 95) believe that people's actions do not always reflect their attitudes. However, Dinev and Hart (2006, 76) state that consumers' privacy concerns need to be taken into account and they cannot be totally compensated by other factors. The perceived privacy risks can be minimized by building trust. Similarly, Mothersbaugh et al. (2012, 91) note that trust reduces privacy concerns.

## 2.4 Type of information requested

Companies collect different types of consumer information but only some of it can personally identify the customer. The Federal Trade Commission has classified information into three types: anonymous, personally unidentifiable, and personally identifiable information. *Anonymous information* consists, for example, of a computer's IP address, and browser address and language. *Personally unidentifiable information* refers to information that cannot be used to identify or locate the individual, however, it can be used to create a customer profile. Different technologies, such as cookies, are used to gather this type of data. This type of information includes, for example, a person's gender, age, date of birth, postal code, interests, and work- or household-related information. Meanwhile, *personally identifiable information* can be used to identify or locate an individual. For example, a person's social security number, contact details such as address or phone number, and credit card number belong to this category. Personally identifiable information is explicitly gathered. (cited in Chellappa & Sin 2005, 188.) According to Chellappa and Sin (2005, 198), consumers' privacy concerns apply to all three types of information



which is due to the fear that different types of information are combined and used to create more detailed and possibly invasive profiles about customers.

The type of information requested affects consumer's willingness to disclose information. According to Mothersbaugh et al. (2012, 77, 93–94), the potential loss and risk associated with the information disclosure defines the sensitivity of the information. The greater the subjective view of the risk is, the more likely it is that the person will refuse to disclose. The authors deduced that consumers are more reluctant to share sensitive information, whereas information with low sensitivity can be provided in spite of high privacy concerns. Meanwhile, Li and Pavlou (2013, 32) discovered that asking for sensitive information has a negative effect on the perceived trust towards the company and increases privacy concerns. Moreover, if an individual is reluctant to disclose a certain type of information, asking for it can have a negative effect also on the individual's willingness to disclose other types of information. (Meinert et al. 2006, 12.)

Previous research has found contradictory results when it comes to consumers' willingness to provide contact details, demographic information or financial information. According to Poddar et al. (2009, 443), consumers are particularly concerned about sharing information that can personally identify them. In contrast to this, Ward, Bridges, and Chitty (2005, 30) discovered that consumers are unwilling to provide information concerning their finances, whereas they are willing to provide personally identifiable information. Meinert et al. (2006, 9, 12) found out that contact information is provided more easily than personally unidentifiable information (e.g., personal preferences, interests, and annual income). However, personally unidentifiable information is given rather than financial information (e.g., credit card numbers). Also, Roeber et al. (2015, 101) discovered that demographic information, such as age and gender, are provided more easily than financial or health related information. Phelps, Nowak, and Ferrell (2000, 38) discovered that demanding financial information reduces the customer's willingness to make a purchase if it is not in line with the company's business. However, consumers understand the need to ask for credit card information if the purchase is made online.

According to Li, Rathindra, and Xu (2010, 63–64, 69), perceived fairness increases consumers' intention for information disclosure and reduces privacy concerns. In this context, *exchange fairness* refers to consumers' perceptions about the relevance of the information requested. It means that consumers evaluate the appropriateness of the requested information in relation to the transaction; in other words, to what they are getting in return. If consumers feel that the asked information is irrelevant relative to the transaction, they may fear that their information is prone to privacy risks in the future. In this case, even if the current benefits outweighed the costs, consumers may refuse to disclose information because of the perceived possible future risks. Consequently, even information with low sensitivity should not be asked if consumers cannot establish a linkage

between the demanded information and the respective transaction. The collection of relevant information alleviates privacy concerns and improves privacy protection. The feeling of fairness is even more important in an online environment because it is seen as less secure than information disclosure in an offline environment. Similarly, Sharma and Crossler (2014, 313) discovered that asking for relevant information reduces the perceived privacy risks.

Correspondingly, Poddar et al. (2009, 438) found out that the fairness of the exchange is a significant force of information disclosure. Whenever consumers feel that they are receiving something valuable, they consider a favour in return to be fair. Contrary to these studies, Horne et al. (2007, 95–96) claim that people consider more carefully the cost-benefit aspect of the information disclosure than the fairness of the exchange. They propose that consumers think about the activity as a way to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits. This supports the idea of consumers as benefit-maximizers, as claimed by the social exchange theory, discussed in Chapter 2.2.

## 2.5 Website elements

Different website elements seem to affect the person's privacy concerns and the perceptions of trust, which in turn influence the disclosure behavior. Webb and Webb (2004, 430) have examined the factors that form the perception of a website's quality. Consumers' expectations about the level of a service's quality can be divided into two categories: the desired and the minimum level of quality. *The desired level of quality* refers to the quality that the consumer is expecting, whereas *the minimum level of quality* is the quality the consumer is ready to approve. Everything that falls in between these two categories, the so-called *zone of tolerance*, is accepted. (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1994, 202.) It could be argued that consumers are not willing to disclose personal information if the quality of the website goes below the zone of tolerance. In addition, the dimensions of website quality could have an influence on consumers' information disclosure behavior.

According to the study conducted by Webb and Webb (2004, 434, 439), the minimum level of quality consists of the website's reliability, assured empathy, perceived usability, and trustworthiness. Reliability indicates the online store's ability to perform its services without errors and to handle customers' requests accurately. Assured empathy means that the communication with the customer is friendly, customers' questions are answered fast, and their interests are a priority. Trustworthiness consists of accuracy and security. Accuracy means that information on the website is accurate, reliable, and relevant, whereas security refers to the protection of the customer's transactions and privacy. Perceived usability consists of the aesthetics and the navigability of a website. Aesthetics refers to

the visual elements of the website. A website has to look professional and pleasant. Navigability arises from the layout of the website, referring to the order and structure of the content and pages. It defines the amount of clicks needed to access the desired content. (Montoya-Weiss, Voss & Grewall 2003, 449.)

Other studies have recognized similar factors that influence the perception of quality. Davidavičienė and Tolvaišas (2011, 724) classified the factors affecting the quality of a website into five categories: the usability, navigability, security, real time support, and content of a website. Meanwhile, Bressolles, Durrieu, and Giraud (2007, 39, 41) have categorized the dimensions of quality into six categories: the usability of a website, the quality and quantity of information, visual elements and graphics, trustworthiness and privacy, and interactivity and personalization. Personalization refers to the website's ability to accustom its content and structure on the basis of the user's personal preferences and behavior (Kobsa, Koenemann & Pohl 2001, 3). Personalization is done by utilizing the data that the customer has explicitly provided but also the data that is implicitly collected (Alpert, Karat, Karat, Brodie & Vergo 2003, 386).

When it comes to the consumers' information disclosure behavior, certain dimensions of quality seem to be more important than others. Security, in particular, has been highlighted in the literature. Privacy notices on the website have been recognized as a basic prerequisite for sharing information. (e.g., Xie et al. 2006, 71). According to a study by Meinert, Peterson, Criswell, and Crossland (2006, 9, 12–13), strong privacy statements (which explain the company's privacy policy and guarantee that no information is given to third parties) have a positive influence on disclosure behavior, whereas weak statements (that explain the policy but do not provide any guarantee of the use of the information) are as useless as not providing any statements. People who are familiar with privacy statements require stronger statements. Accordingly, it is important that policy statements include a strong guarantee of privacy. Similarly, Hann et al. (2007, 33) recognized the importance of providing privacy policies.

Nevertheless, Poddar et al. (2009, 433) found contrary results when it comes to consumers' tendency to read privacy policies. According to their study, most of the consumers do not care noteworthy about the presence of privacy notices. The results of the study by Vodafone Institute support this statement. According to the study, only 12 percent of European consumers read privacy policies. However, 68 percent of the respondents think that keeping privacy policies short and clear increases trust. (Big Data – A European Survey on the Opportunities and Risks of Data Analytics 2016, 8, 14.) Also Milne and Culnan (2004, 24) note that privacy policies are not read if they are not understandable. The length and the juristic style of the statements influence a consumer's unwillingness to read them, whereas comprehensible privacy statements motivate consumers to read and also to trust them.

However, other elements in addition to a website's privacy protection can have an influence on consumers' willingness to submit information on a website. Chou et al. (2009, 474–475) state that giving identity information about the company, which includes, for example, contact information and introductions of the company, increases the consumer's likelihood to disclose personal information because it makes the company look more trustworthy. Johnson and Wells (2011, 3–5) claim that the navigation and visual elements on the website have a stronger influence on the information disclosure behavior than privacy statements. According to Poddar et al. (2009, 433), consumers evaluate the trustworthiness of a website on the grounds of its layout and design. Improving the ease of use, convenience, and navigation of a website can reduce privacy concerns, because the usability of a website has a positive influence on the perceived effectiveness of the purchasing process and the risks associated with online shopping. (Alcántara-Pilar, Barrio-García, Porcu & Crespo-Almendros 2015, 81, 98). In addition, the results of a study conducted by Nam et al. (2006, 216) indicate that the website design has an effect on how consumers perceive the website's trustworthiness. They discovered that the convenience of the website and third-party certificates are important antecedents of privacy concerns. The authors refer to convenience as user-friendliness and aesthetics of the website. Consequently, the more convenient the website is and the more it has trustworthy third-party certificates or logos, the more secure individuals feel. Applying these elements to a website can thus alleviate consumers' privacy concerns and increase the likelihood of disclosing information.

## 2.6 Business context

The tendency to disclose information is also dependent on the specific business context (Roeber et al. 2015, 103; Hui et al. 2006, 433). Depending on the business context, certain amount of information disclosure may be necessary in order to fully benefit from the service or in certain cases, even consume the service. For example, if consumers buy a product, which requires a warranty, they are usually willing to disclose information in order to receive the service. (Hui et al. 2006, 433.) Sometimes obtaining the mere service requires providing information. In this case, the service can be seen as an adequate benefit for providing information (Hann et al. 2007, 15).

Furthermore, even a brand name can reduce privacy concerns and diminish the need for benefits (Hui et al. 2006, 433). Brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand image. *Brand awareness* refers to the consumer's ability to recall or recognize a brand. Recognition occurs when the consumer knows that he/she has been exposed to the brand earlier when seeing the brand name, whereas recall occurs when the consumer re-

members the existence of the brand without cues concerning the brand name. *Brand image* refers to the consumer's associations with the brand. (Keller 1993, 2–3.) Li and Pavlou (2013, 28–29) examined the influence of brand awareness on consumers' tendency to register for a website. They discovered that brand awareness diminishes consumers' privacy concerns and increases their trust towards a company, which in turn increases the likelihood that consumers will disclose personal information.

As trust reduces privacy concerns, generating trust is especially important when asking for sensitive information (Lee et al. 2015, 54). When referring to governmental organizations, the organization's trustworthiness is considered as an extremely important factor affecting disclosure behavior (Beldad, Geest, Jong & Steehouder 2012, 172–173). Apart from that, Morosan and DeFranco (2015, 127) examined information disclosure behavior in the context of mobile commerce. They discovered that the trustworthiness of the mobile application was perceived to be more important than trusting the company.

The perceived relationship level is also a determinant of information disclosure behavior. White (2004, 48) recognized that when the customer perceives to have a close relationship with a firm, he/she may be more willing to disclose personal information. In this context, offering customized benefits usually induces these customers to provide information more easily. In addition, Lee et al. (2015, 55) discovered that customers with previous experience with a company asking for personal information approve the requests for more sensitive information. Therefore, if a consumer feels that a certain company has been treating him/her well, the consumer may disclose information more easily (Hui et al. 2006, 433). However, White (2004, 48) recognized that if a customer has deep relationship perceptions, asking for information that is considered to be embarrassing reduces his/her willingness to disclose this type of information, whereas a person with lower relationship perceptions is more willing to provide embarrassing information.

Consumers allow social networking sites to collect information about them continuously. Even very intimate and personally identifiable information is frequently given to different social networking sites. (Krasnova, Spiekermann, Koroleva & Hildebrand 2010, 109.) According to Min and Kim (2015, 853), people disclose personal information in social networking sites regardless of their privacy concerns. However, this does not mean that people would not have privacy concerns in social media. They are willing to provide information because they feel that they gain positive outcomes which outweigh the risk of losing their privacy. Krasnova et al. (2010, 122) also discovered that people disclose information on social media because they consider the rewards to be bigger than the risks. Convenience, relationship maintenance and building, and enjoyment are especially important benefits that can be gained by using social media. Consequently, focusing on inducements that consumers find appealing is an efficient way to increase the likelihood of information disclosure and foster better results than the mere attempt to reduce privacy concerns.

### 3 CONSUMER MOTIVES FOR INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

#### 3.1 Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

Chapter three seeks to understand consumers' motivation to disclose personal information more deeply. There are several motivation theories, which can explain a person's motivation to disclose personal information. Common motivational theories are Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory (cited in Hackman & Oldman 1976, 251), Adams' (1965) equity theory, Vroom's (1964) expectancy-valence theory (cited in Gagné & Deci 2005, 340), Locke's (1968) goal setting theory, and Ryan's and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory. Adams' (1965) equity theory was briefly introduced in Chapter 2.2. However, the focus on this study is on Deci's and Ryan's self-determination theory and more precisely on their interpretation of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. This theory was chosen for several reasons. First of all, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is a commonly used classification which is applied to explain human behavior (Ryan & Deci 2000, 55). Secondly, as the interviewees of this study were representatives of companies, and not consumers, recognizing different motivational theories behind consumers' information disclosure behavior was not regarded as useful or even possible. However, giving a short theoretical description regarding consumers' motivation was considered to be important. Thirdly, the possible benefits motivating consumers' information disclosure behavior are classified into extrinsic and intrinsic benefits later in this chapter.

Ryan and Deci (2000, 54) state that motivation means "*to be moved to do something*". Hence, people are motivated when they direct their behavior towards an objective. There are different levels and types of motivation, which depend on several factors, such as the individual and the situation. The original motivation theory and more recent theories, such as the self-determination theory, classify motivation as extrinsic and intrinsic. *Extrinsic motivation* occurs when a person is acting in a certain way in order to achieve something through that activity. Performing a specific task can lead, for example, to a reward that the person wants to get. Carrying out this activity is a mere instrument to reach an end that is meaningful to the person in question. Consequently, if someone is externally motivated, the activity itself is not seen as interesting or enjoyable. (Deci 1975; Deci & Ryan 1985, cited in Wu & Lu 2013, 156.)

Hunt (1965) was one of the first theorists who suggested that in addition to be motivated by external rewards and reinforcements, people can be intrinsically motivated. According to the author, *intrinsic motivation* occurs when emotions, such as curiosity, drive

a person's behavior. This is due to an incompatibility between new information and earlier experiences. (cited in Petri 1990, 333.) Later, it has been defined that intrinsic motivation occurs if a person is genuinely interested in performing an activity. In this case, the activity itself brings pleasure and joy. (Deci 1975; Deci & Ryan 1985, cited in Wu & Lu 2013, 156.) However, most of the time, people are extrinsically motivated to perform different activities (Ryan & Deci 2000, 60). Deci's and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory addresses factors, which may have an influence on people's intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. A person's intrinsic motivation towards an action may increase if his/her needs for competence and autonomy can be fulfilled simultaneously. Interest, excitement, novelty or challenge are feelings that are always behind the actions of intrinsically motivated people. In addition, extrinsic factors, such as rewards and deadlines, can reduce a person's intrinsic motivation. (cited in Ryan & Deci 2000, 57–58.)

Deci and Ryan (1985) have recognized four different levels of extrinsic motivation. One of the extremes is referred to as *external regulation*, which means that a certain action is taken only to achieve a reward or to avoid a punishment. *Introjected regulation* is the second type of extrinsic motivation that occurs when people are acting in a certain way in order to improve their self-esteem. The third type of extrinsic motivation is called *identification*, which involves more autonomy than the aforementioned levels and includes a feeling that the behavior is relatively important to the person in question. In the other end, there is *integrated regulation* that is closest to intrinsic motivation. In this case, the person justifies the reasons for the action to him/herself and values the outcome. However, it is not the same as intrinsic motivation because the behavior is motivated by the need to achieve the outcome, not by the joy of behaving in a certain way. (cited in Ryan & Deci 2000, 60–62.)

It is to say that the classification explained above does not mean that certain behavior could not include more than one type of motivation. A person's motivation can change in either direction during the performed activity. However, increased internalization means that a person becomes more persistent and engaged and has a more positive self-perception. (Ryan & Deci 2000, 60–63.) Consequently, it is worth to take internalization into account when developing strategies, which aim at motivating consumers to disclose personal information. Raising consumers' intrinsic motivation could be an effective way to direct the person into provide personal information because it means that the consumer would be feeling positive emotions when sharing information.

### 3.2 Shopping motivation

Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994, 653–654) recognized that there are two values, which consumers seek to fulfill by consuming – utilitarian and hedonic values. The values motivate consumers to consume in a certain way and thus guide consumer behavior while shopping. Utilitarian values include accomplishments of tasks, whereas hedonic values refer to the enjoyment, pleasure, and excitement that the shopping experience brings. Two dimensions of motivation can be distinguished depending on which values are emphasized: a goal-directed and an experiential shopping motivation. A person who is oriented by utilitarian values is goal-directed, whereas a person who is motivated by hedonic values is experiential. Every consumer experiences both of these motivations. However, at a certain moment, one is usually predominant to the other. Therefore, it is important to recognize which one of these motivations consumers usually experience in order to improve the design of the website to that direction. (Hoffman & Novak 1996, 62.) Wolfinger and Gilly (2001, 35) have summarized the typical characteristics of these shopping motivations as described in Table 1.

Table 1 Goal-oriented and experiential shopping motivation (adapted from Wolfinger & Gilly 2001, 36)

Goal-directed shopping	Experiential shopping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility and convenience</li> <li>• Selection</li> <li>• Information availability</li> <li>• Lack of sociality</li> <li>• Freedom and control</li> <li>• Commitment to goal, not experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement with product class</li> <li>• Positive sociality</li> <li>• Positive surprise</li> <li>• Bargain hunting</li> <li>• Commitment to experience is important or more important than goal</li> </ul>

*Goal-directed shoppers* are extrinsically motivated, look for utilitarian benefits, and their involvement depends on the specific situation. Meanwhile, *experiential shoppers* are intrinsically motivated, look for hedonic benefits, and their motivation is enduring and thus not dependent on the situation. (Hoffman & Novak 1996, 62.) Hedonic benefits consist of excitement, flow, pleasure, and other positive emotions. Research has shown that consumers in flow state are more likely to revisit the website, spend more time on the website, and have a more positive attitude towards the company. (Alcántara-Pilar et al. 2015, 81, 98.) Experiential shoppers focus on the experience. For them, surprises or sociality bring additional value. On the contrary, goal-directed shoppers know what they are looking for and want to find the right product or service as soon as possible, without being disturbed. They are task-oriented and rational, and appreciate selection, lack of sociality, and convenience as well as information availability. The shopping experience is not important for them because they are only interested in meeting the particular goal they



can achieve through shopping. It is important that hedonic benefits are not offered in a way that can hinder goal-oriented shoppers' mission to fulfill a specific task (Wolfinger & Gilly 2001, 35–36, 52).

When it comes to consumers' information disclosure behavior, it could be beneficial to consider how consumers' shopping motivation affects their intention to disclose personal information. These two motivational orientations can help to understand why other tactics work better for consumers with different motivations. For example, linking hedonic benefits to information disclosure could encourage experiential shoppers to disclose personal information more easily because they would gain positive emotions through that activity.

### **3.3 Types of benefits**

This chapter discusses how offering different kinds of benefits or rewards in return for information disclosure affects consumers' information disclosure behavior. Research has shown that benefits motivate consumers to disclose personal information (e.g., White et al 2014; Xie et al. 2006; Li et al. 2010). Li et al. (2010, 69) state that benefits influence consumers' information disclosure behavior more than personal differences, such as age or gender. These findings support the idea of the social exchange theory, discussed in Chapter 2.2., which assumes that consumers are motivated by rewards and seek to maximize benefits in all exchanges. (Chibucos et al. 2005, 136–138.)

A number of researches have studied the influence of different kinds of benefits on consumers' information disclosure behavior. However, there is no common understanding of the benefits that motivate consumers. Most of these studies have focused on examining the influence of separate benefits on information disclosure behavior, and especially the effect of monetary benefits (e.g., Hann et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2015; White et al. 2014). Another more common research subject concerning the exchange benefits has been personalization in its various forms, such as website customization (e.g., Mothersbaugh et al. 2012; Chellappa & Sin 2005) and personalized products, services, and information (e.g., Morosan & DeFranco 2015; Xu et al. 2009–10). The type of benefit and other factors investigated in these empirical studies are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Research concerning benefits in information disclosure behavior

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Type of benefit</b>	<b>Other factors</b>	<b>Research design</b>	<b>Context</b>
Hui, Tan & Goh (2006)	Intrinsic and extrinsic benefits		Analysis of 100 websites + 2 focus group interviews + 3 surveys (316, 331, and 199 students)	Internet businesses
Mothersbaugh, Foxx II, Beatty & Wang (2012)	Customization benefits: customizing website content, layout and offerings	Privacy concerns and information control	776 students, experimental study	Online service: fictitious online TV program guide
Sharma & Crossler (2014)	Perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness	Perceived privacy risk, privacy apathy, perceived ownership	252 undergraduate students, online survey	Social commerce: e-commerce involving social networks
Hann, Hui, Lee & Png (2007)	Convenience and financial gains	Privacy concerns	268 undergraduate students, experimental study	Online stores from different industries
Lee, Lim, Kim, Zo & Ciganek (2015)	Monetary rewards	Information sensitivity	370 respondents, experimental study	Well known e-commerce company
Li, Sarathy, Xu (2010)	Perceived usefulness and monetary rewards	Privacy protection belief, privacy risk belief and perceived relevance of information	182 undergraduate students	E-commerce: internet fax service
White, Novak & Hoffman (2014)	Monetary savings (a coupon)	Exchange order and exchange contingency	487 adults, experimental study	Fictional Internet café
White (2004)	Customized and non-customized benefits	Moderating factors: Relationship level and type of information	80 students, experimental study	A grocery and drug-store delivery service

Author(s)	Type of benefit	Other factors	Research design	Context
Xu, Teo, Tan & Agarwal (2009–10)	Personalization, locatability, financial compensation	Privacy risks: industry self-regulation, government regulation	528 participants, experimental study	Mobile, location-based services
Ward, Bridges & Chitty (2005)	Cost savings and personalized service	Privacy concerns, type of information, individual characteristics	315 students, experimental study	Online bookstore
Xie, Teo & Wan (2006)	Monetary rewards	Firm's reputation and privacy notices	147 participants, experimental study	Online stores
Gabish & Milne (2013)	Economic and non-economic incentives	Safety cues, regulatory focus, privacy concerns, trust	115 participants (adults), experimental study	Online retailing
Chellappa & Sin (2005)	Personalization	Privacy concerns, trust	243 students, survey	Online stores from different industries
Morosan & DeFranco (2015)	Personalized benefits: time-saving, convenience, personalized information and services	Trust, risk, and positive and negative emotions	421 respondents, online survey	Mobile commerce: hotel applications

Hui et al. (2006, 420–423) have recognized seven types of benefits that may motivate consumers to provide personal information. They have classified benefits into extrinsic and intrinsic. *Extrinsic benefits* function as a means to achieve other goals, whereas *intrinsic benefits* are the ends the consumers wish to achieve. Extrinsic benefits include monetary saving, time saving, self-enhancement, and social adjustment benefits. Meanwhile, intrinsic benefits include pleasure, novelty, and altruism benefits. Sometimes different types of benefits, either extrinsic or intrinsic, can be fulfilled at the same time. For example, by enrolling in a loyalty program, a customer can gain a great number of different types of benefits, including monetary savings, convenience, and pleasure benefits (Ashley, Noble, Donthu & Lemon 2010, 755). According to the research conducted by Hui et al. (2006, 434), the most valuable benefits are time saving, monetary saving, pleasure, and novelty benefits, whereas social adjustment, self-enhancement, and altruism benefits are not considered to be as important by the consumer. The categories of the benefits are described in Table 3.

Table 3 Extrinsic and intrinsic benefits (Hui et al. 2006, 420)

Extrinsic Benefits	Intrinsic Benefits
<b>Monetary saving:</b> gain discounts and free gifts	<b>Pleasure:</b> gain enjoyable and fun experience
<b>Time saving:</b> attain convenience and efficiency	<b>Novelty:</b> fulfill information needs and explore unfamiliar domains
<b>Social-enhancement:</b> enhance and maintain self-esteem	<b>Altruism:</b> empathize and help others
<b>Social adjustment:</b> comply to social norm	

While most prior studies have concentrated on a detailed examination of a narrow range of benefits that drive consumers' disclosure behavior, Hui et al. (2006) provide a comprehensive categorization of various types of benefits as intrinsic or extrinsic. Thus, this study relies on Hui et al. (2006) for a generic categorization of possible types of benefits, while drawing on the work of others to delve into the specifics of each benefit.

### 3.3.1 Extrinsic benefits

Extrinsic benefits consist of monetary saving, time saving, social enhancement, and social adjustment benefits (Hui et al. 2006, 420). *Monetary saving benefits* include free gifts, coupons or other ways to save money. Research on this topic has shown that price has been the most common factor influencing consumers' buying behavior. Therefore, offering ways to save money can also have a positive effect on consumers' information disclosure behavior. (e.g., Hui et al. 2006, 422; Hann et al. 2007, 34.) For example, Preibusch, Krol, and Beresford (2013, 203–205) discovered that offering monetary incentives increases the likelihood that the consumer will disclose more than the requested mandatory information. Offering monetary rewards in return for providing information with low sensitivity can increase the likelihood that the consumer will give more medium and high sensitive information as well.

*Time-saving benefits* arise from better efficiency and convenience. Consumers appreciate time and value the possibility to perform activities faster. These benefits can result, for instance, from a faster process of ordering products. (Hui et al. 2006, 422.) Similarly, Hann et al. (2007, 34) recognized the importance of time saving for a group of consumers who value convenience when shopping online. If the website experience is customized according to the consumers' preferences, meaning that the structure and the content of the website serve the individual customer's needs better, which in turn leads to a reduced transaction time, they may be more willing to disclose information. Correspondingly, Chellappa and Sin (2005, 198) discovered that customers are willing to give personal

information in exchange for convenience created by website customization. Xu et al. (2009–10, 152–153) studied the influence of monetary compensation on the perceived localization and personalization benefits in mobile marketing. They note that it could be beneficial to offer time-saving and convenience benefits instead of monetary savings in the mobile environment. Location-based services enable offering services and information at the right time and in the right place. Morosan and DeFranco (2015, 128) discovered that firms should personalize their mobile applications in a way that enables customers to find the desired content faster.

People strive to achieve recognition and admiration from others. *Self-enhancement* refers to people's aim to move from their actual-self towards their socially desirable self. Socially desirable self means the person's perception about the best version of oneself, as one would like to be seen by others. By working one's self-concept towards it, the individual enhances his/her self-image. (Sirgy 1979, 4, 25.) Therefore, self-enhancement benefits help people to improve their self-image in comparison with others. They can be provided, for example, by inviting consumers to join a club. Meanwhile, *social adjustment* refers to an individual's need to adapt to social groups. Social adjustment benefits help consumers feel that they are part of a particular group to which they want to belong. (Hui et al. 2006, 421–422.)

### 3.3.2 *Intrinsic benefits*

Hui et al. (2006, 420) have divided intrinsic benefits into three categories: pleasure, novelty, and altruism benefits. Experiential shoppers visit websites in order to enjoy or find new experiences (Wolfinbarger & Gilly 2001, 35–36). As discussed in the earlier chapter, people are intrinsically motivated if pleasure drives their behavior (Deci 1975; Deci & Ryan 1985, cited in Wu & Lu 2013, 156). Therefore, it can be beneficial to link information disclosure to something that consumers enjoy doing. *Pleasure benefits* can be generated, for example, by organizing contests and sweepstakes for customers. In addition, games, videos, or music on a website can increase the person's intrinsic motivation. (Hui et al. 2006, 422.) According to Sharma and Crossler (2014, 313), perceived enjoyment increases the likelihood that the person will disclose personal information in the social commerce environment. Morosan and DeFranco (2015, 127–128) discovered the importance of positive emotion when it comes to disclosing personal information via mobile applications. According to their study, positive emotions, such as joy and excitement, are a critical factor affecting information disclosure behavior. The authors suggest that firms should develop applications with gamification elements in order to create a more enjoyable user experience.

*Novelty benefits* can be achieved by providing, for example, special information about topics that raise consumers' interest or fulfill their information needs (Hui et al. 2006, 422). According to Hirschman (1980, 284), people are inherently looking for novel information. Because the future cannot be predicted, people look for knowledge that is not only profitable now but also in the future. They collect information in order to be better prepared for future consumption situations and problems. Dinev and Hart (2006, 68, 73) discovered that people's willingness to provide information online increases if the information or services obtained online through information disclosure meet the consumers' personal interests.

*Altruism benefits* can be achieved by providing means to help others (Hui et al. 2006, 423). Batson and Shaw (1991, 108–109, 114) state that “*altruism is a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare*”. A person with an altruistic goal wants to help another person in a way that only benefits that person who needs help, not the helper him/herself. The feeling of empathy creates the need to help. The more a person feels empathy, the greater is his need to help. If the helper's final goal is to increase his own welfare, helping somebody is not considered as altruism. Therefore, a person with altruistic motives does not expect to gain anything in return. Preibusch et al. (2013, 188, 202) conducted a field experiment on consumers' voluntary over-disclosure behavior on a website. In their study, over-disclosure means that customers submit more information than mandatory. They discovered that altruism affected the respondents' behavior. The respondents were willing to disclose personal information in order to be helpful.

### 3.3.3 *Moderating factors*

Even in the presence of attractive benefits, the perceived costs of information disclosure can hinder consumers' information disclosure behavior (e.g., Mothersbaugh et al. 2012, 91). For instance, a possible contact from the company can be seen as a cost that the consumer wants to avoid (e.g., Poddar et al. 2009, 436–437) or the privacy concerns, discussed in Chapter 2.3., can diminish the willingness to provide personal information (Culnan & Bies 2003, 327). Moreover, research has shown that offering benefits can also have a negative influence on information disclosure. Poddar et al. (2009, 436–437) have studied how the relevance of a benefit influences consumers' tendency to provide true or false information. According to the results, consumers may provide false information if they do not think that the benefit offered is valuable enough. The more valuable the benefit is perceived to be, the more easily the consumer provides information.

Similarly, other studies have recognized the importance of monetary benefits. According to Li et al. (2010, 68–69), consumers regard monetary rewards as benefits of the transaction. Offering rewards in exchange for the information itself can be seen as an unfair

way of collecting information, and it can reduce consumers' willingness to provide information. Consequently, if monetary rewards are not linked to the product that the consumer wants to buy, offering these types of rewards can reduce the consumer's information disclosure behavior. Linking benefits to the primary products and services and keeping information disclosure as a by-product of the exchange can thus be more beneficial. Correspondingly, Ward et al. (2005, 35) discovered that monetary savings that are offered separately can even raise consumers' suspicion, and they may think that the company is trying to trick them. However, if the discount is offered with a personalized service, privacy concerns may be slightly reduced and they will also be more willing to share personal information.

The effectiveness of benefits is also moderated by other factors, such as the sensitivity of information requested. According to Xie et al. (2006, 71), monetary savings have a greater effect on revealing personally identifiable information than demographic data. In contrast, Mothersbaugh et al. (2012, 91) state that customization benefits are more effective in motivating consumers to disclose information with low sensitivity. This is because the benefits can only compensate for certain amount of perceived risks. However, if the individual's privacy concerns are lower and the perceived information control is higher, customization benefits are an effective way to induce people also to disclose more sensitive information. Similarly, Lee et al. (2015, 50–54) discovered that monetary rewards might increase consumers' privacy concerns if the requested information is perceived as sensitive. Offering rewards makes the consumers realize that their information is considered valuable and they may become suspicious about the reasons behind the information collection. However, the authors claim that it is easier to solicit more people to disclose information when offering monetary rewards than without the rewards. Nevertheless, information collected by these means may not be beneficial because increased privacy concerns may cause people to falsify information. When it comes to information with low sensitivity, monetary rewards reduce privacy concerns. The effect of the type of information requested on the information disclosure behavior was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.4.

Moreover, *the exchange order* can have an effect on the efficiency of the benefit. White et al. (2014, 185–186, 192–194) have studied the effect of exchange contingency and exchange order on consumers' information disclosure intentions. They distinguish contingent from non-contingent marketer benefit offers. Contingent offers are those that require the customer to give resources (e.g., personal information) in order to receive the offers. In contrast, a consumer gets non-contingent offers without providing any resources to the marketer. In this case, information is asked but not required. Exchange order determines whether the exchange cost has to be provided prior to receiving the benefit. According to the results of their research, consumers' disclosure intention did not depend on exchange order when the benefits received were contingent. The results were different

when it comes to non-contingent offers: If the benefits were offered first, the consumer devalues the marketer's effort and will not provide information as likely as when the benefit is offered later. However, the results of Schumann et al. (2014, 60, 70) are different. They studied the influence of exchange order regarding sensitive information. They discovered that offering benefits prior to the exchange is usually more effective. Nevertheless, website characteristics influence the efficiency. According to the study, appeals to reciprocity work better only for websites with high quality and utility.

Moreover, the nature of the business, product or service, and website design can have an effect on the usefulness of different benefits. If the consumer trusts the company or sees information disclosure as essential considering his/her future needs regarding the product or service, he/she may not stress benefits as carefully as he/she would normally do. (Hui et al. 2006, 432–433, 435.) The findings of Xie et al. (2006, 71) support the presumption of trust as a moderator for information disclosure behavior. According to their research, the effectiveness of offering monetary rewards is dependent on the reputation of the firm. Monetary savings are more important for the firms that have a relatively low reputation, whereas privacy notices have found to be more important for firms enjoying a high reputation. The influence of website elements and business context on the information disclosure behavior were discussed in more detail in Chapters 2.5. and 2.6.

Hui et al. (2006, 429–430) point out that a person's personality affects the effectiveness of different benefits. While certain benefits can be efficient for some consumers, the same benefits can be useless or even disturbing for others. For example, offering self-enhancement benefits to modest people can diminish their willingness to provide information, while offering time-saving benefits to active people increases their willingness to provide information. Also Hann et al. (2007, 33) explored differences among consumers. They classified consumers into three groups concerning their information disclosure behavior. According to their study, most people are privacy guardians which means that their privacy concerns have a great influence on their information disclosure behavior. The two other groups are information sellers and convenience seekers. Information sellers are willing to submit information if they get a monetary reward in return, whereas convenience seekers are willing to disclose information if it improves the shopping experience by reducing, for example, the transaction time.

According to *the regulatory focus theory*, consumers can be split into two different types depending on their motivational orientation. A promotion-focused person is more sensitive to positive outcomes, whereas a prevention-focused person seeks to avoid negative outcomes (Higgins 1997, 1282–1283.) The effectiveness of monetary rewards depends on a person's regulatory focus. When a person is prevention-focused (i.e., his goal is to avoid losses), safety cues such as privacy policies increase trust, reduce privacy concerns, and increase the willingness to provide information. Offering rewards to these people can even hamper the willingness to share data because it can create an opportunistic



image of the company and thus lead to mistrust as well as increased privacy concerns. (Gabisch & Milne 2013, 149, 152–153.)

### 3.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the study combines the theoretical aspects that have been discussed in the last two chapters. The framework gives a basis for the empirical research. The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 3.

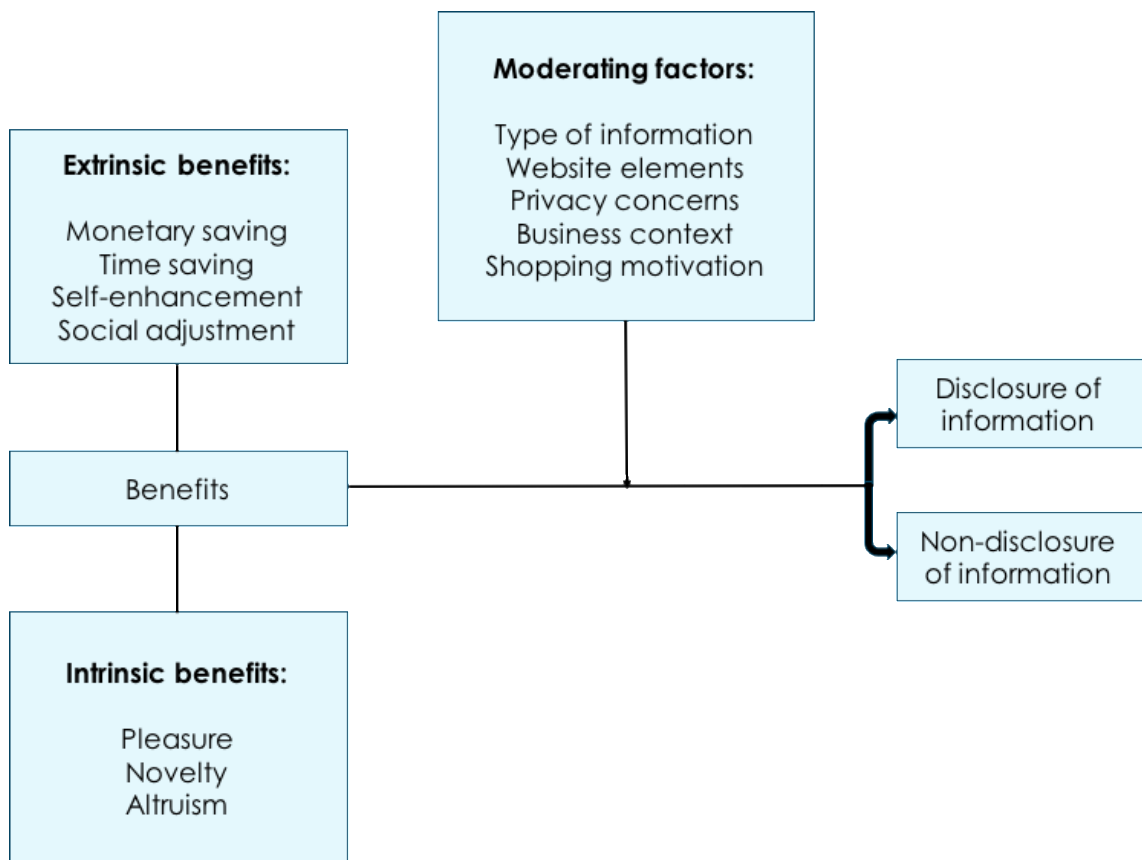


Figure 3 Conceptual framework

As discussed earlier, benefits are seen as a driving force for consumers' information disclosure behavior. According to the social exchange theory, people seek to maximize their benefits in all exchanges (Homans 1961, cited in Cook & Rice 2003, 54–55). In this study, the benefits are divided into two groups: extrinsic and intrinsic. This classification introduced in Chapter 3.3. was first made by Hui et al. (2006). Extrinsic benefits encourage consumers to disclose information because they work as a means to achieve some other objective. Meanwhile, intrinsic benefits are gained at the moment of the information disclosure. In this case, the consumers enjoy the information disclosure itself because it brings them pleasure or other positive emotions.

However, the literature presented above highlights different factors that moderate the effect of benefits and the information disclosure behavior. Even if the consumer finds a certain benefit valuable, other factors in the disclosure context may influence his/her information disclosure behavior and the consumer may refuse to disclose information because of this. Consequently, different factors in addition to benefits may hinder the consumer's motivation to disclose information. On the other hand, they can also motivate consumers to disclose information more easily. The moderating factors are the consumer's privacy concerns, the type of information requested, website elements, the business context and the consumer's shopping motivation.

## **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research approach**

In this chapter, the methodology and the methods used in this study are explained in detail. Deduction and induction are the two basic research logics. Deduction means that the researcher moves from theory to empirical analysis. This is often used for quantitative research, in which hypothesis based on theory are formed before collecting any data. Deduction cannot be directly implied to qualitative research. Induction is the opposite of deduction. The researcher starts by doing empirical research and theories are formed based on the empirical data. However, pure induction is seldom possible. Abduction combines these two research logics. In abductive research, the researcher can move from deduction to induction in different phases of the study. Therefore, a study cannot be strictly either deductive or inductive. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 22–23.) Abduction is the research logic followed in this study.

This study was conducted by using qualitative research methods. The starting point of a qualitative research is to describe the real world, which includes a thought about a multifold reality. This reality cannot be shattered into pieces. The events modify each other and it is possible to find divergent relations. The aim is to investigate the topic as comprehensively as possible. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 152.) Qualitative methods enable detailed and in-depth understanding of the topic. A quantitative approach gives broad and generalizable results, whereas a qualitative approach focuses on a notably smaller number of investigated people but gives more profound and detailed results. The disadvantage of qualitative research is that the results are not easily generalizable. (Patton 1990, 14.) However, as in-depth understanding of the topic was considered to be more important than the number of people responding to the questions, qualitative methods were thought to elicit more valuable results and were thus chosen as methods for this study.

A qualitative research does not concentrate on testing hypotheses but seeks to find unexpected issues that arise from a careful and profound analysis of the research data. The methods used in the research give space for the subjects' "voice" and personal perspectives. These methods can include, for example, thematic or group interviews, observation, and discursive analysis of different kinds of documents and texts. The research target is usually carefully selected, and it is not chosen by using the random sample method. The research plan can also be changed during the research process. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 155.) Likewise, the interviewees were carefully selected in this study and the interviews as a data collection method enabled the collection of a rich research data. The data collection of the study is further discussed in the next chapter.

The research type of the study is an explorative multiple case study. A case study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. It seeks to have an in-depth understanding of a complex social phenomenon. A multiple case study consists of several cases while each of them are bound to their own context. (Yin 2009, 18, 46.) The companies interviewed in this study are the cases of the study. In addition, the context plays a critical role in this study – for example, the industry of the company, the situation in which the consumer’s personal information is collected, and the consumer’s perception about the relationship with the company have an influence on the answers of the interviewees. Therefore, the findings of the interviews need to be reflected in their own context and they cannot be easily generalized. The goal is to understand the different viewpoints in various industries in order to draw a general understanding of the topic. On the other hand, the present study seeks to understand the influence of disclosure context on information disclosure behavior.

## **4.2 Data collection**

A single research can be conducted by using more than one source of data. Referring to case studies as a research type, it is typical and even recommended to use multiple sources of data. (Yin 2009, 114–115.) Primary data refers to data that has been collected by the researcher. In a qualitative study, it means interviewing or observing people. Secondary data refers to data that already exists. It includes, for example, documents or visual materials such as videos. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 77–78.) In this research, the interviews were the primary source of the data. However, also secondary sources were used. The researcher visited the case companies’ websites in order to find additional material and to get answers to themes that were not discussed profoundly enough during the interviews or remained unclear for some reason. Since the case companies decided to stay anonymous, the content of the websites could not be precisely analyzed. However, the privacy statements on the websites, for example, were used to review details concerning the topic and to deepen the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon.

Interviews are a common method to collect data for a qualitative research. They are a flexible method and thus have a great number of advantages. For example, compared to a survey, it is possible to control and modify the questions depending on the interviewees. In addition, there are numerous possibilities to interpret the answers. The interviews are also a great way to investigate topics that are new and unfamiliar. Moreover, they enable enquiring additional questions in order to find reasoning for the answers. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 194.) There are three general types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. A structured interview follows precisely the outline of the interview questions. The interviewer asks the same questions in the same order each time. An

unstructured interview is the opposite of a structured interview. It means that the interviewer can modify the questions according to the interviewee. Therefore, the interviewer receives individual insights that are impossible to predict beforehand. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 81–83.) In an unstructured interview, the researcher seeks to understand the interviewee's opinions, thoughts and feelings as they appear during the conversation. It is the most complicated type of interview and requires more talent from the interviewer since he/she needs to be able to steer the conversation. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 198.)

The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews, also called theme interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 47). Semi-structured interviews give space for some free conversation because the questions can be asked more informally. The outline of the themes is defined in advance, but the order and the wording of the questions can be modified depending on the situation and the interviewee. Therefore, this method allows the interviewer to go deeper into a specific topic while the interview still follows a systematic outline, as all the themes need to be discussed to some extent. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 82.)

The interviews were carried out between December 2015 and March 2016. The first two interviews were pilot interviews, the purpose of which was to test and improve the interview questions. However, there seemed to be no need to change the questions remarkably after the two interviews. The interview guideline is presented in Appendix 1. Companies from various industries were interviewed in order to get a better overview of the topic. The criterion for choosing the companies was that the company either offers a loyalty program or is otherwise advanced in collecting and utilizing consumer data. Several companies were contacted and, finally, eight companies participated in the research. The case companies are presented in more detail in Chapter 5.1. The date, duration, the title of the interviewees, and the industry of the case company are described in Table 4. To facilitate the reading of the findings, the companies are named according to the industry. The names are listed in the first column in Table 4.

Table 4 The list of interviews

Company	Title of the interviewee	Industry of the company	Duration	Date
PostCo	Marketing Manager	Postal and logistics	43:35	3.12.2015
PostCo	Senior Marketing Manager	Postal and logistics	30:38	8.12.2015
GamCo	Customer Relations Manager	Gaming	39:06	15.12.2015
AutoCo	Customer Relationship Manager	Automotive	1:06:15	18.12.2015
TradeCo	Executive Vice President	Trade	54:19	28.1.2016
TourCo	Customer Analytics Manager	Tourism	29:37	2.2.2016
PubCo	Head of Customer Insights and Analytics	Publishing	50:10	4.2.2016
EnerCo	Head of Customer Service	Energy	29:20	11.3.2016
InsurCo	Two Service Advisors	Insurance against loss or damage	25:00	18.3.2016

Seven of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, whereas the remaining two were conducted via phone and Skype, respectively. All the interviews that were carried out face-to-face took place at the case companies' headquarters. The reason for the phone interviews was that the interviewee and the interviewer were not working and living in the same city. The duration of the interviews varied from 25 minutes to one hour and six minutes, the average duration being 41 minutes. There were no distractions during the interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Because the interviewer and all of the interviewees speak Finnish as their mother tongue, all of the interviews were conducted in Finnish. Therefore, the quotations presented in the next chapter are translations made by the author of this study.

It is important that the researcher does not wait too long before starting to deal with the data because the more current the data is, the more inspiring the researcher usually finds it (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 135). All the transcriptions were written within a week or two after the interview had taken place. Also, the analysis of the conducted interviews started before all the interviews had taken place. Thematic analysis was the analysis technique used in this study. Once the interviews are transcribed, the analysis of the data starts

by finding similarities among the interviews and classifying the data into themes. It is common that the themes are based on the themes of the interviews. However, also new themes arise. The topics that emerge from the data are the researcher's interpretations of the theme because it is very unlikely that the interviewees express the issue in the exact same way. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 173.) Analysis of a multiple case study is a cross-case analysis. It means that similarities and differences across the cases are analyzed and these findings are also compared by relating them to the theory. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 130.) The transcriptions were read several times and the data was organized into themes. The themes changed throughout the analysis, as the amount of empirical data increased with the number of interviews that were conducted.

### **4.3 Evaluation of research approach**

A research can be measured through reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the repeatability of the results. It means that if another researcher conducted the same study later by using the same methods, he/she should arrive at the same conclusions as the researcher who conducted the study first. (Yin 2009, 45.) Validity is the instrument's ability to measure what it is supposed to measure. In the context of interviews, it means that the subject's answers respond to the asked questions. A study's validity is diminished if the respondent misunderstands a question. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 216.) In this study, questions were specified and additional questions were asked whenever the interviewer thought that it might improve the quality of the answers. However, it is possible that misunderstandings occurred, thus decreasing the validity of the study.

The reliability of a qualitative study can be improved by carefully documenting all the steps taken in the research process. For example, when the data is collected through interviews, the conditions under which the interviews were conducted, such as the time and place of the interviews, and the possible distractions that occurred during the interviews need to be outlined. In addition, as the researcher discusses the conclusions of the study, it is necessary to explain how the conclusions were drawn. The validity of a study can be improved by using multiple methods, referred to as triangulation. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 217–218.) Triangulation reduces the likelihood of errors when analyzing the data. In this study, data triangulation was used to reinforce the validity of the study. As the interviews may contain flawed information due to a misunderstanding of a question and thus lead to decreased validity, it is beneficial to use more than one type of data in order to increase the validity. (Patton 1990, 187–188.) In this study, additional data was collected by visiting the case companies' websites. However, the usage of the secondary material was not

extensive, meaning that the content of the websites was not precisely reported. The secondary data was mainly used to check details and reinforce the interpretation of the interviewees' answers.

In qualitative research, the evaluation of the reliability can be summarized as the reliability of the whole research process. The researcher is a central instrument in the research and is thus the main criterion for the reliability of the research. (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 210.) In addition, Patton (1990, 11) emphasizes that the reliability and validity of qualitative research depend greatly on the skills of the researcher. Conducting the interviews in a way that provides the best answers requires competence and sensitivity from the interviewer. According to Yin (2009, 67–69), the researcher needs to be able to ask relevant questions, be a good listener, and be open and flexible to new ideas as well as perspectives. All in all, in order to conduct a successful case study, the researcher needs to have good social and analytical skills. In this study, the researcher did not have a broad knowledge of or experience conducting a qualitative research prior to conducting the interviews for this study, which may have affected the reliability and the validity of the research.

Moreover, the following aspects need to be taken into consideration when evaluating the trustworthiness of interviews as a research method. First, interviews are situation- and context-dependent. Because of this, interviewees may speak about the topic in a way which is not consistent to how they would talk about the same topic in a different context. Consequently, the researcher needs to be careful when generalizing the results. In addition, the interviewer's ability to interpret the answers in the presence of cultural meanings is critical. People secure their own position in relation to others in numerous ways, and this can have an influence on the answers of the interviewees. People also tend to give socially desirable answers, meaning that the interviewee may give answers to questions which are not even asked by the interviewer but are told because the interviewee wants to be seen in a certain light. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 195–196.)



## 5 FINDINGS

### 5.1 Presentation of the case companies

This chapter begins with a short description of each case company that was investigated in this study. Understanding the nature of the business of the case companies fosters the understanding of the findings.

**PostCo:** PostCo operates in the postal and logistics industry. Recently, handling data has become a more central part of the company's strategy. Currently, the company seeks to find more useful ways to analyze and utilize data. So far, consumer data has been mainly used for marketing automation and customer communication purposes.

**GamCo:** GamCo operates in gaming activities. Customer data is a fundamental part of the company's strategy and its most important value asset. It is mainly used to manage and develop customer relationships. With the help of the data, new services are developed and customer experiences are improved by offering services that meet the customers' needs better. In addition, potential target groups are created by analyzing existing products.

**AutoCo:** AutoCo operates in the automotive industry as an importer and a marketer of cars. The company sells cars and provides maintenance and repair services. Customer data is collected mainly for the purpose of improving the way in which the company addresses customers. Knowing and identifying the customer is core to the company's strategy. Consumer data is also exchanged with the company's retailers.

**TradeCo:** TradeCo is a Finnish trading sector company which operates, for example, in grocery and specialty goods trade. The most important functions of consumer data are to execute the company's loyalty program, to target customer communication, and to customize the communication according to individual customers' needs. The customer is at the core of the company's business. The company seeks to improve customer experiences, for example, by redesigning the stores' shopping environment with the help of the gathered consumer data.

**TourCo:** TourCo operates in the tourism business. The company sells transportation and trips. Consumer data has become more central in the company's strategy during the past few years. The data is used for managing the operative business and the loyalty program but it also has other important functions. For instance, it is utilized for marketing communication and product development purposes.

**PubCo:** PubCo is a publisher. The main purpose for collecting customer data is to manage the customer relationship by producing and billing for the services the customer has bought. When taking a broader view, the data is used to analyze the profile of the customers and the future behavior of these customers, for example, when the customers

of a certain profile would most probably rebuy the product. In addition, the data is used to analyze the profile of potential customers. The customer data, customer understanding and analytics are the key elements in the company's strategy.

**EnerCo:** EnerCo operates in the energy business. The collection of customer data is strictly regulated by law which means that the company needs to report and compile statistics of the collected data to different authorities and operators. Therefore, the legislation forces the company to collect certain types of data. The data is utilized to manage the relationship with the customer, to develop the business, and to improve the quality of electricity supply. The fundamental objective is to develop the customers' service experience.

**InsurCo:** InsurCo operates in the insurance business. Collecting consumer data is central in order to be able to offer services to the consumers. In addition, consumer data is used to manage the relationship with the consumer and to execute marketing communication campaigns.

The results of the interviews are analyzed in the following chapters. The findings are classified according to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3.4.

## **5.2 Consumer motives for information disclosure**

All informants emphasized the importance of benefits in motivating consumers to disclose personal information. The answers show that benefits guide consumers' actions and companies seek to offer benefits according to their customers' needs. The interviewees believe that offering benefits help in soliciting consumers to provide personal information. According to the research data, the benefit does not need to be offered immediately. It is enough that the customer knows he/she will benefit in the future. The Customer Relations Manager at GamCo claims that consumers can be motivated to disclose information by substantiating the benefit regardless of the type of benefit in question:

*I believe that the customer acts rationally... I think that if customers get concrete benefits, whether it was monetary, tangible or something else, like communication, I believe that then we get the customer to provide more personal information. (GamCo, Customer Relations Manager)*

The Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo says that the relevance of benefits is even more significant because personal information is asked everywhere and all the time. It becomes harder to define to whom to give information and how much. The Marketing Manager at PostCo notes that the benefit needs to be linked to the service or business in order to be relevant for the customer. Similarly, the Executive Vice President of TradeCo

highlights that consumers expect to gain benefits in return for the information they provide. The informant claims that it is essential that the benefits are communicated to the customers as clearly as possible because customers are willing to provide information if they know how they will benefit. The better the communication is, the more likely the customers are to provide personal information.

### **5.2.1 Extrinsic benefits**

#### **5.2.1.1 Monetary saving**

The case companies use different monetary savings as a way to encourage customers to provide information. Some of them have loyalty programs through which they offer discounts on products or additional services to customers who are enrolled in the program. According to the research data, monetary rewards can work as incentives to provide information whether or not they are offered as a part of a loyalty program. Some of the case companies have a common loyalty program with their partners. That means that the customer can collect points and get discounts when doing business with the company or its partners. The interviewees claim that monetary benefits should not be given prior to the information disclosure because some people only take the benefit and do not disclose information after having received it.

For some of the case companies, monetary savings and loyalty points are a key part in motivating the customers to join their loyalty program and to disclose information about themselves. Being a member of the program provides customers with the ability to collect points and receive special offers that are exclusive to the members. The Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo says that as a member of their loyalty program, the customer also gains loyalty points when doing business with the company's partners. The advantage for the customer is that he/she collects twice as many points when being a member of both loyalty programs. The points can also be used in whichever company the customer chooses to.

The Executive Vice President of TradeCo says that a headstone of their loyalty program is the rebate that is paid to their customers on the purchases that have been registered on the loyalty card. In addition, customers receive special offers and discounts that are relevant to them. TradeCo aims to link the offers and discounts to products that the customer usually buys and is interested in buying again. According to the Executive Vice President, personalized offers need to be in conformity with the customer's needs. Oth-

erwise, they do not have any value. This is due to the digitalized communication environment and especially the mobile environment, which requires an even more relevant message in order to get noticed:

*We give you offers personally on products you have used before. We no longer provide you offers concerning things you are not interested in. We aim to give you reductions on products that you normally use and which are relevant to you. And this is even emphasized now as the digital communication environment is strongly developing. E-mail has, of course, been there for long already, and now as the mobile environment has developed substantially during the past few years, it requires relevant messages. In the mobile environment, you cannot overload the customer with thousands of products and think that some of them will work. We need to be able to guess, or know, the things that you are interested in and then really personalize the content according to the customer's needs. (TradeCo, Executive Vice President)*

The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo says that they offer certain services for free and other services with a remarkable reduction for people who buy a car and become their customer. Furthermore, the informant says that even though they offer several monetary benefits, they do not explicitly mention the service's value in monetary terms, however, it is stated as percentages of cost savings. The monetary savings are closely linked to services that a car owner has to buy, such as inspections and insurances. They also offer a customer magazine for free for registered customers. The manager states that they have wanted to concentrate on giving monetary rewards concerning their own products and services:

*The card was the symbol that we primarily gave as a reward in exchange for information. And then again with the card the customers have got certain benefits, certain campaign benefits, which include reductions on individual products and some services. And then we have promised that as our loyalty card owner, you receive our customer magazine, you get our insurance, you get some benefits from our rental car partners, and we have also promised you our roadside assistance for free when you have your maintenance record at our company. (AutoCo, Customer Relationship Manager)*

Some of the case companies cannot offer monetary savings on their products because of the law. Similarly, the Head of Customer Service of EnerCo explains that they cannot

offer any discounts on their products because of the legislation made by Energy Authority. Also the Customer Relations Manager of GamCo states that the legislation restricts their possibilities to offer monetary savings linked to their products and services. However, these companies can offer monetary rewards, which are not linked to their products to their regular customers. These types of benefits are discussed in section 5.2.2.1.

### 5.2.1.2 *Time-saving*

According to the interviewees, consumers appreciate the possibility to save time. The case companies offer different time saving benefits for members and registered customers. By registering for the online services, consumers can monitor different kinds of information, such as the amount of loyalty points they have accrued or other details concerning the services they have bought or consumed. The Head of Customer Service of EnerCo says that by using their online services, customers are able to check their energy consumption and bills, and they can also contact the customer service more easily. The Executive Vice President of TradeCo states that registered customers have the possibility to monitor their purchases and warranties in detail. The warranty receipt service saves the receipts and enables customers to access the warranty receipts wherever they want.

The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo explains that the customers see their car's repair and maintenance records on the website as it is shown on the bill. In addition, the company's mobile application offers advantages that bring concrete convenience and time savings to the customer's everyday life:

*The users who have registered for our mobile application can turn the heater on or check the location of their car on the map via the application. They can also access the driver's log and check the level of remaining fuel in the tank in order to assess whether they have enough gas to drive, for example, to their grandmother's place or whether they need to fill up the tank. You can also lock or unlock the car from a distance. All of this works via the application. It is natural for the customer to submit the information because otherwise the application does not work. Hence, the information is needed. (AutoCo, Customer Relationship Manager)*

The customers can facilitate their purchasing process and bring convenience to their service experience as registered customers. The Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo states that, as a member of their loyalty program, the customer can make the journey more enjoyable in numerous ways. For instance, by customizing his/her profile, the customer can expedite the reservation process by choosing a seat preference beforehand. Once the

information has been given, it does not need to be filled in again. At PubCo, the service experience is made more comfortable by giving the customer, for instance, the possibility to order e-mail alerts and newsletters about new blog posts. Consumers do not need to remember to check if the blogs that they are following have been updated because they can order automatic notifications about updates. Nevertheless, the Head of Customer Insights and Analytics of PubCo says that the customer needs to recognize the value of the service before subscribing to a newsletter.

### ***5.2.1.3 Self-enhancement and social adjustment***

According to the research data, self-enhancement and social adjustment benefits are relatively irrelevant reasons to provide information. However, the Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo and the Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo referred to certain people's needs to create and maintain a self-image that looks positive and appealing to others. Offering benefits, which help in maintaining the desired status, could be beneficial for these types of consumers. According to the Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo, the possibility to grow one's network is a growing trend, however, it only interests a small proportion of consumers at the moment:

*There are more and more people who are ready to go to insane measures in order to reassert themselves or to gain visibility or network or something. It does not actually bring them a concrete advantage or a benefit. The benefit is more about the status you get. But this does not apply to a very large proportion of consumers. However, it is probably a growing phenomenon. (PostCo, Senior Marketing Manager)*

According to the Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo, some people are willing to share information in social media in order to gain respect or admiration from people in their network. For example, consumers can boost their status by publishing a Facebook post in a place that is seen as trendy or cool in the person's and his/her acquaintances' eyes. In addition, the presence of a known brand can enhance the positive impression of the person. The informant claims that being associated with a known brand or with something that is perceived as "cool" by the customer could induce providing personal information more easily. This information is not only given to the company but it is also shared in social media.

PubCo owns several magazines and blog portals. These websites contain discussion forums where people discuss everyday life, fashion, food, and sports. Consumers have a possibility to participate in discussions and to connect with people with similar interests.

Meanwhile, GamCo offers an environment where the customer collects points by playing games and performing tasks. The customers can monitor their performance in comparison to others and see their ranking among all the players. In addition, most of the case companies offer loyalty programs. Belonging to a loyalty program could be a way to enhance one's status. In addition, one of the case companies offers exclusive clubs to the most loyal customers.

## 5.2.2 *Intrinsic benefits*

### 5.2.2.1 *Pleasure*

According to the research data, creating a fun shopping environment can tempt consumers to provide information more easily. A great number of the case companies organize contests or sweepstakes in order to give customers fun and memorable experiences. The ultimate objective is to encourage consumers to register for the loyalty program or for a website and to engage them to visit the company's website more often and stay active. The Customer Relations Manager at GamCo explains how they have included sweepstakes in their loyalty program: By gaining a certain amount of points, customers earn the right to participate in a contest and win small prizes such as e-books. For them, fun activities and playful elements are a central part of their strategy to engage customers and keep them active.

The Head of Customer Service of EnerCo says that they have induced customers to participate in campaigns by organizing small-scale lotteries. Also, the Service Advisors of InsurCo state that they have used lotteries to motivate customers to update their personal information. According to the research data, the prize of the contest does not need to be valuable because customers are interested in the experience itself. Even giveaways of low value can encourage people to participate if they are offered as a prize for a fun contest. Some of the case companies also offer more valuable monetary rewards as a prize. According to the research data, the prize of a contest does not necessarily have to be linked to the company's products or services. Nevertheless, according to the Head of Customer Insights and Analytics of PubCo, the value of the prize is not as important as the relevance of the prize. By selling the prize in a way that creates positive associations leading to an even more alluring appearance, induces more people to participate:

*I don't think that the value of the prize matters. I believe that the relevance of the prize matters... We asked people to write travel reviews. One year the prize was a dream holiday to Paris and another year it was a gift card*

*of 1000 euros, which is basically almost the same thing. But the dream holiday to Paris gathers considerably more participants than saying that you get something for the value of 1000 euros... People believe more in images: the images are more efficient. Of course, it is an old classic: A story is more effective than a fact, and people are more interested in the story than the fact. (PubCo, Head of Customer Insights and Analytics)*

However, not all of the interviewees agreed on the effectiveness of soliciting customer information via creating a website that has playful elements. On the contrary, the Executive Vice President of TradeCo states that they do not want to mix their customers' confidential information and pleasure. Moreover, they are careful about not being too playful on their website. The informant sees it as a part of building and maintaining a trustworthy image of the company:

*Actually, we are very careful about not being playful on the website where we give information to regular customers and where the customers can, for example, monitor their purchasing behavior. We see it as a part of building trust capital. It is like a benefit, a benefit that the customer gains. (TradeCo, Executive Vice President)*

### **5.2.2.2 Novelty**

According to the informants, consumers value information, and especially information that has been targeted according to their needs and preferences. The case companies inform their customers about new products and services, special campaigns, and events. Sometimes registered customers receive the information before it is public on the website or in other channels. Therefore, the customer may perceive subscribing to a newsletter list or registering to a website as a privilege to receive the information prior to others. The interviewees claim that offering customized and interesting information is an efficient way to induce people to provide more accurate and valuable information about themselves:

*We offer our customers the possibility to participate in something before others or gain something if they start using a service they have not used beforehand, we raffle something among the people who have acted. Our customers who have registered for our online services get some benefits before the customers who have not registered. (PostCo, Marketing Manager)*



The Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo states that the better the customers fill out their profiles, the more customized communication they receive. For example, customers may outline the types of holidays of interest in order to receive newsletters concerning those topics. Similarly, the Customer Relations Manager at GamCo states that consumers can choose which service messages they want to receive. The informant believes that the customer appreciates the possibility to subscribe only to lists which interest him/her. The customer feels the immediate benefit because he/she has the power to choose. On the other hand, the lack of irrelevant information is a great advantage from a consumer's point of view.

Some of the case companies organize events where they invite customers on the basis of the information they have given. For instance, the Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo states that their company and their retailers use the information concerning the customer's hobbies and interests to, for instance, invite people who are interested in boats to boating events. They also inform the customers about new models and exhibitions. Similarly, the Executive Vice President of TradeCo explains that their retailers organize regionally special events and shopping moments outside the regular shopping hours in order to create a closer relationship with the customer. In addition, the informant notes that they aim to send only relevant information to their customers. However, as the customers may fear that giving a marketing permit leads to receiving spam, it is important to be able to convince the customer about the quality of the information which means that the customer will only receive information that has been targeted to him/her.

The Service Advisor at InsurCo states that customers receive topical information, such as reminders to change their winter tires, and offers concerning insurances that suit the person's profile. For example, they send information about child insurances to customers with children. The Head of Customer Service of EnerCo explains that the customers receive guidance for energy consumption and other topical information concerning energy. When the customer provides more detailed information about his household, he receives more detailed reports on his energy consumption. The company's communications are quite informative and some of the customers hope that they would receive even more information.

### **5.2.2.3 Altruism**

As the earlier analysis of the findings shows, most of the informants believe that benefits from which the customers themselves benefit are the best way to encourage them to provide more information about themselves. Nevertheless, the research data reveals that con-

sumers do not always need to benefit themselves in order to be willing to provide information to a company. For example, the Executive Vice President of TradeCo explains that the customer can direct the rebate to charity:

*One manifestation of this is that some of the customers direct the financial benefits, such as the rebate, straight to charity. We offer our customers the possibility: If you do not want the rebate for yourself, we have negotiated a few charity targets to the program... Some of the customers have given us information and belong to our loyalty program, however, not because they want to benefit from the rebate themselves but because they want to give it to a target that is important to them. (TradeCo, Executive Vice President)*

According to the research data, personal information could also be provided for product development purposes. The Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo states that consumers take part in panel discussions because they want to participate in the product development process. They know that giving as precise information about themselves as possible creates additional value to their opinion. Similarly, the Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo thinks that people are willing to provide information for altruistic reasons. However, the willingness is dependable on the industry. For example, health-related information will be provided if it fosters cancer research. On the other hand, the Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo mentions that consumers are becoming more and more self-absorbed and the majority of them would not be willing to provide information if they do not benefit from it themselves:

*This kind of charity work, that someone would do just because it would benefit others, is diminishing all the time. People see themselves as the centre of everything: me, myself, and I. They want to have all the benefits for themselves and at once. (PostCo, Senior Marketing Manager)*

## **5.3 Moderating factors affecting information disclosure behavior**

### **5.3.1 Type of information request**

The need to be able to consume a certain product or service can be an adequate reason to provide personal information. According to the research data, consumers provide personal information usually without hesitation if the requested information is necessary for

producing and consuming the product or service. In this case, there is a clear connection between the service and the information. Sometimes the information disclosure enables access to a certain product or service or at least improves the service experience substantially. On the contrary, asking for an excessive amount of information, which is not clearly linked to the company's business, can be harmful to the company.

According to the research data, consumers provide contact information rather easily because asking for this type of information is usually a natural part of the purchasing process. At PostCo, providing certain information is essential for producing and consuming the service. The company asks only for information that is mandatory considering the delivery of the service. The only additional information they ask for is the marketing permit. The Marketing Manager of PostCo claims that it is extremely hard to get the customers to give the permission because they do not see how they would benefit. Therefore, it is essential to be able to communicate the benefits as concretely as possible to the customer, whether it is a monetary benefit, interesting information or something that makes the customer's life more convenient. The Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo claims that the customers are willing to give an e-mail address as soon as they do not want to receive a paper bill. The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo states that customers give contact information easily when knowing that it will be used for useful purposes, such as sending reminders about an upcoming maintenance and notifications about the completion of the maintenance.

Some of the case companies have collected information about consumers' interests. The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo claims that their customers provide this information commonly, whereas the Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo states that this information is not usually given because it is not required as obligatory information. On the contrary, EnerCo does not collect information about interests, and the company's Head of Customer Service believes that asking for it could make the consumer suspicious about the purpose for which the information will be used as it would be hard to see the connection to their business:

*We ask for the basic information in order to be able to do credit sale with the customer. But maybe if we started to ask for personal preferences or interests, so that we would go a bit closer to the customer, many of them would probably reflect on how we use the data, where we store it, and how we utilize it. (EnerCo, Head of Customer Service)*

In addition, referring to consumers' interests, there is a challenge of dealing with outdated information in the database. The Executive Vice President of TradeCo notes that their customers give the information related to their interests but they do not actively

update it. Therefore, it is hard to maintain valuable information about interests. The informant claims that customer data is the most ecological product and it decomposes in less than a year. The informant suggests detecting a customer's current interests by using other means, which are more convenient for the customer, as the customer does not want to trouble him/herself.

The interviewees note that the information that is being asked should be somehow linked to the product or service that the company offers. The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo states that their customers are willing to provide demanded information easily because it is well linked to the company's business. As the required information is suitable to their business and their communication purposes, customers also provide their interests and family-related information rather easily. What is more, the Service Advisor of InsurCo states that consumers are asked to provide even relatively intimate information. In their business, this is essential in order to be able to offer the correct insurance. However, questions arise when customers are asked to provide information that has not been asked earlier in a similar context. However, customers provide the information when an explanation is given.

According to the research data, asking irrelevant information that does not have any connection to the business helps neither the company nor the customer. The Executive Vice President of TradeCo says that they do not even want to collect information that is not somehow beneficial to the customer too. Similarly, the Customer Relation Manager at GamCo and the Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo state that the asked information needs to be somehow linked to the service in which the customer is interested. The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo claims that asking something that is not relevant considering the company's business can raise suspicion among the customers. The customer may start to think about the reasons and purposes for collecting the information. Moreover, if customers do not see a clear connection with the company's business, they may refuse to provide any information as the irrelevant questions make them suspicious.

The Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo believes that being transparent and giving explicit reasons for the data collection are key to receiving more consumer information, even information that is not clearly linked to the company's products but to its business more broadly. If the consumers understand why the information is being collected, they are willing to provide it. However, the informant states that irrelevant information should not be gathered because it makes it more complicated to utilize and analyze the relevant information. Regardless, gathering valuable information becomes more and more complicated because consumer data becomes outdated rapidly. One-year-old information is already soon to be outdated when thinking about its value in analyzing customer behavior:

*The first rule of data mining is: Do not collect unnecessary information because unnecessary information most probably messes up what you are doing. The ideal nowadays is to collect all the information and, of course, you can collect all the information, but if you do not have any model to analyze that information, I do not understand why you collect it. It is good to have information so that you can look back on the analysis. However, if it used to be that three years' old information had significance in analyzing human behavior, now it is only one-year-old information that is significant. (PubCo, Head of Customer Insights and Analytics)*

### **5.3.2 Privacy concerns**

Most of the interviewees think that people have privacy concerns, which could prevent them from providing personal information to companies. However, some consumers are more concerned than others. Concerns arise because consumers are uncertain about how and for what reasons the companies collect and utilize consumer data, and some of them fear possible data leakage. The Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo states that the main reason behind the concerns is the fear of losing control, which means that the information cannot be controlled once it has been disclosed. Similarly, the Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo claims that the unawareness concerning the usage of the information causes concerns. In addition, most of the customers do not believe that the companies act according to their privacy statements. According to the Customer Relations Manager at GamCo, consumers are becoming increasingly skeptical. This is foremost due to recent news about data leakage that is commonly spread in the media. However, the informant claims that being transparent and stating explicitly the purpose of the data collection can diminish the fear and will become even more important in the future:

*Probably consumers do not want to disclose information because of the privacy protection and because of the fear that big brother is watching. And the lack of trust is another reason, people fear that their information goes somewhere they do not want, they are aware of the possibility of data fishing. Both data fishing and preparing for it are growing trends in the world. (GamCo, Customer Relations Manager)*

Some of the case companies give information to third parties for marketing purposes. However, as the law states, the customer has the right to prevent direct marketing communications. The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo states that they have asked customers for permission to provide data to their retailers and partners in Finland and

abroad. In contrast to this, the Executive Vice President of TradeCo emphasizes that they are notably strict about providing customer data to third parties, and that they only give information to the partners who also belong to the loyalty program. According to the informant, the customer needs to trust that the information stays inside the company and it is used only for those purposes that are communicated to the customer. However, the informant claims that in addition to trust, customers need to benefit from the information disclosure because they need a reason for their behavior. Moreover, the Head of Customer Service of EnerCo points out the importance of benefits in the future. Consumers' concerns will increase because the media alerts people to be more cautious with their personal information. Therefore, the importance of benefits will be reinforced.

### 5.3.3 *Website elements*

The interviewees stress different viewpoints referring to the significance of the design of a website in consumers' disclosure behavior. Most of them say that a user-friendly website can induce the consumer to disclose personal information. That means that the website has a clear navigation structure and is easy to use. However, the informants do not believe that it is one of the most important factors affecting disclosure behavior. The Marketing Manager at PostCo states that the usability of a website has an effect on the customer experience, which in turn affects consumers' willingness to provide information to a company. The Head of Customer Service of EnerCo states that they improve their online services continuously on the basis of customer feedback. According to the interviewee, a user-friendly website that concretely communicates the benefit to the customer may increase the motivation to submit more information. For example, the information request is positioned next to the energy reporting service on their website, which allows the customers to notice that they receive more detailed reports when submitting more information.

In accordance to the other interviewees, the Service Advisor of InsurCo also claimed that convenience on the website is an important factor. Therefore, the company eliminated some unnecessary questions in order to make the purchasing process more convenient. Similarly, the Customer Analytics Manager of TourCo notes that they continuously aim at improving the usability of their website and optimizing its content, for example, by eliminating questions that are irrelevant. Moreover, the informant states that communicating to the customer the profile completion status in terms of completeness of information in percentages, and giving the customer a reward for providing more information could encourage information disclosure behavior.

According to the Customer Relations Manager at GamCo, consumers' information disclosure behavior can be solicited by carefully designing the user interface. The design

of the user interface can be fostered by adding text or other elements that make the benefits the consumer receives for disclosing information more concrete. It is crucial to analyze the gathered data and to provide different website content depending on the user. The company also aims at shortening the transaction time by pre-filling the information for online games on the basis of the customer's earlier behavior. Subsequently, the company encourages customers to submit more information by informing customers on how the comfort level of their service experience will improve if they submit more information. The informant notes that the information should not be asked prior to the completion of the consumer's primary task on the website because the customer appreciates a fast purchasing process. In this context, the case companies use cookies, which help them to design their website content to better meet their customers' individual needs. When the consumers enter a website, it is explicitly explained that by accepting cookies, they get better customized service.

The Customer Relationship Manager at AutoCo states that they advise their customers to update the information on the website after the customer has signed in. In addition, when a customer does a reservation for a car maintenance, he/she fills out a filled-in form in which the customer sees whether the previously provided information is up-to-date or not. The Customer Relationship Manager claims that these elements encourage customers to check and update their information. Moreover, the company will offer fun content in the future in order to induce consumers to enter their website and then indirectly encourage consumers to submit personal information:

*We are going to offer entertaining content through which we induce the customers to enter the site and then, as they are surfing on the site, they remember their information and check that it is up-to-date. We solicit them to update the information indirectly. We do not directly tell the customers to update their information in order to see something fun or vice versa. (AutoCo, Customer Relationship Manager)*

Both the Customer Relations Manager at GamCo as well as the Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo emphasize that it is important not to ask for personal information right after the user has signed in. They believe that it is more useful to let the customer do his/her primary task first and subsequently ask him/her to update the information. When it comes to subscribing for a newsletter or registering for a service, the Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo highlights that it is important to bring the customer as close to the actual service experience as possible. The aim is to embed the registration in the service experience itself. Once the customer perceives the advantages of submitting more information, the information request will be regarded more positively:

*We have purely aimed at bringing the registration remarkably closer to the normal experience. That is to say, the service experience. It is a part of the service experience, like subscribing to a newsletter list is [on the website]... But the user paths in the first place... When it comes to these things, I usually prefer that, when the person enters the website, you do not ask him/her to provide his information right away. It is almost the same as asking a person at a night club to marry you. It is not the best opening because you need to be able to warm up and soften the person. Like hey, this really benefits me. (PubCo, Head of Customer Insights and Analytics)*

All the interviewees state that providing privacy guarantees on the website is essential although most of them believe that the majority of people do not read them. The presence of privacy policies is closely linked to the trustworthiness of the company. In this context, the Executive Vice President of TradeCo, the Marketing Manager at PostCo, and the Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo believe that trusting the company reduces consumers' willingness to read privacy policies. However, they agree that the privacy statements need to be available in clear language and in a way that they can be easily found. The Customer Relations Manager at GamCo claims that the absence of privacy statements could raise consumers' suspicion and, moreover, reduce the company's trustworthiness.

The Head of Customer Service of EnerCo notes that more condensed and illustrative privacy notices could make them more understandable. However, the legal style of them limits the possibilities to present them in a more customer-friendly way. The Marketing Manager at PostCo emphasizes the importance of transparency but thinks that customers do not usually read the information. In contrast, the Senior Marketing Manager at PostCo thinks that privacy policies need to be as clearly presented as possible. A person who is about to give information on a website has to understand why the asked information is collected either before or simultaneously with the information request. However, the informant also believes that the language used in the statements diminishes the consumer's willingness to read the statements.

#### **5.3.4 Business context**

Referring to the consumers' willingness to provide personal information, the interviewees emphasized the significance of the brand, the industry, and the type of acquisition. In addition to that, the consumers' subjective view about the company's trustworthiness affects their disclosure behavior. The Customer Relations Manager at GamCo claims that



a well-known Finnish company or another company with a good reputation are in a better position when asking for information. Moreover, the nature of a website influences the willingness to subscribe to a newsletter list. The Head of Customer Service of EnerCo states that the brand value and the degree of trust have an influence on consumers' willingness to take risk and disclose information. In addition, consumers with a positive perception about a company may assume that disclosing information to that company is safe.

As discussed earlier, benefits are an important aspect of the motivation to disclose information to companies. Moreover, the benefits need to be relevant to the consumer. In this regard, the business context has an influence on what kind of benefits the company can offer. The Senior Marketing Manager of PostCo states that their products and services are need-based. Therefore, the informant claims that it makes it more difficult to offer appealing benefits:

*The majority of our services are clearly need-based. They have no value if you do not have the need. Let's say that you get a service for free that would normally cost you. If you do not need the product or service then it is not a benefit, even if you got it, you value it differently. If you do not send letters or cards, you do not benefit from stamps. (PostCo, Senior Marketing Manager)*

Although most of the interviewees claim that consumers are willing to disclose information only in return for benefits, the Customer Relationship Manager of AutoCo believes that customers show trust towards the company by providing information, and their customers do not think about the benefits when providing information. In his opinion, they are willing to disclose information because they feel that it belongs to their responsibility to do so and also because of the positive perception about the brand. The informant claims that providing personal information is a natural part of the car trade as the acquisition of a car is emotionally and economically significant. Providing information is not considered as intrusive and the customer does not perceive a risk of losing. On the contrary, they appreciate the possibility of receiving useful and topical information regarding their car.

Most of the interviewees highlighted the difficulty to get a permission to do direct marketing. However, the Head of Customer Service at EnerCo and the Service Advisor at InsurCo tell that most of their customers do not refuse to receive direct marketing. Both of them state that they do not send a great number of newsletters and their communication is mainly information-driven. The Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo notes that marketing permits are relatively easy to get in the tourism business:

*We have quite many marketing permits from our customers. Maybe it relates to the industry, travelling is interesting and everyone links it with holiday or nice things, there is, among other things, holiday dreaming. I would say that we have more newsletter subscribers and marketing permits than any other industry in Finland. (TourCo, Customer Analytics Manager)*

### **5.3.5 Shopping motivation**

According to the research data, a consumer who has entered a website with the goal of completing a purchase should not be distracted by asking for additional information. The Customer Analytics Manager at TourCo thinks that asking for an excessive amount of information that is not necessary considering the purchase, such as the customer's gender, annual income, and hobbies, can interfere with the customer's buying process. Therefore, the customer may not complete the purchase. The manager also states that customers who only buy work-related trips are not interested in giving information because they do not see how it would benefit them. On the other hand, people who surf for fun and dream about holidays could be more willing to disclose information.

Similarly, the Customer Relations Manager at GamCo thinks that a user who is surfing on a website for fun, without having a specific goal of doing any purchases, is more willing to disclose information. The informant states that a website, which has an excessive amount of elements and is thus complex, can hinder the user's purchasing process and make him/her leave the website without completing the transaction. It is vital to ensure that the purchasing process is as easy and fast as possible, meaning that asking for additional information should not hinder the customer in making the purchase. However, the Head of Customer Insights and Analytics at PubCo claims that customers who really want to have a product or service are willing to give information although it was not directly linked to the product. The interviewee also thinks that a customer who is surfing for fun would be willing to provide information when perceiving increasing enjoyment through information disclosure:

*If you want to have the product you are willing to give information about yourself... If it brings you additional value... If you want to enjoy yourself, for example, and you think that what you are doing is pretty cool, you ask yourself how you could have even more fun. And then if you are told that by disclosing personal information you can have even more fun. Then probably most people want to enjoy themselves. (PubCo, Head of Customer Insights)*

## **6 DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 Benefits in motivating consumers to disclose information**

This study confirms that benefits guide consumers' behavior in social exchanges with companies. This finding is in line with the social exchange theory's view of human behavior, according to which people seek to maximize the benefits in all exchanges (Homans 1961, cited in Cook & Rice 2003, 54–55). Since consumers are continuously looking for benefits, companies can offer them as a way to solicit consumers to provide personal information (e.g., White et al 2014; Xie et al. 2006; Li et al. 2010). Consequently, it is essential that consumers know how they will benefit. Consumers are more willing to disclose information even if they would not benefit immediately, however, knowing that they will benefit in the future. Moreover, the better the benefits meet the needs of the customers, the more the customers value the benefits.

The study contributes to the existing understanding of the types of benefits affecting consumers' motivation to disclose personal information. The findings of the study showed support for the classification made by Hui et al. (2006) by recognizing the existence of all seven types of benefits. However, not all of these benefits seem to be equally attractive ways to motivate consumers to disclose information. Monetary saving, time saving, pleasure, and novelty benefits were emphasized in the research data compared to self-enhancement, social adjustment, and altruism benefits, for which there was found less support. This finding is congruent with the findings of Hui et al. (2006) who discovered that these three types of benefits are valued less than the others by the consumers. However, it is worth noting that the appearance of the benefits is inherently linked to the business context of the case companies. Applying the research to different business contexts could have lead to the emergence of other types of benefits. The types of benefits which arose from the research data are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 Types of benefits

Type of benefit		Examples
<b>Extrinsic benefits</b>	<b>Monetary savings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discounts on the company's or its partners' products and services</li> <li>• Free products and services</li> <li>• Loyalty points and rebates</li> <li>• Personalized reductions</li> </ul>
	<b>Time-saving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of information concerning the purchased products or services</li> <li>• Accessibility of different records such as loyalty points, purchasing history, and receipts</li> <li>• Convenience of the purchasing process (e.g., faster ordering of products)</li> <li>• Convenience of the service experience</li> <li>• Newsletters and reminders</li> </ul>
	<b>Self-enhancement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of the desired status via a brand</li> <li>• Possibility to grow one's network</li> <li>• Invitations to special clubs</li> </ul>
	<b>Social adjustment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion forums</li> </ul>
<b>Intrinsic benefits</b>	<b>Pleasure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contests and sweepstakes</li> <li>• Videos and music</li> <li>• Games</li> </ul>
	<b>Novelty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Customized information about events, campaigns, new products and services</li> <li>• Special content only for registered customers</li> </ul>
	<b>Altruism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility to donate to charity</li> <li>• Possibility to participate in product development</li> </ul>

Extrinsic benefits affect people's extrinsic motivation to provide information (Hui et al. 2006, 420). The literature emphasized the significance of monetary rewards in soliciting consumers to disclose personal information (e.g., Hann et al. 2007). Almost all of the case companies used some type of monetary saving benefits as a way to induce consumers to disclose information. Monetary saving benefits include, for example, discounts on products and services, free services, and loyalty points that can be used when doing business with the company or its partners. In general, monetary rewards are used as a means

to solicit the customer to join a loyalty program. The companies communicate to the consumer about personalized offers and reductions, which they receive by joining the program. The better the offers meet the customers' needs, the more the customers value them. It is noteworthy that the case companies use arguments about possible future benefits, meaning that the monetary benefit does not need to be gained at the moment of the exchange. These findings support previous literature findings, which suggest that monetary benefits should not be offered in return for the information itself but they should be linked to the primary products and services (Li et al. 2010, 68–69).

As stated in the literature, consumers value time (Hui et al. 2006, 422). Correspondingly, offering ways to save time is one of the central factors through which companies seek to improve customer experience and motivate customers to provide more personal information about themselves. In addition to a more convenient buying experience (Hann et al. 2007, 34), time-saving benefits include better accessibility of information concerning the purchased product or service, or a better service experience. The results of the study showed that time-saving benefits are usually present in an online environment, created by a customized user interface, which allows the customer to access the desired content fast and conveniently. For example, the personal profile facilitates the customer's purchasing process, or makes it possible to consume the purchased service in a more efficient way.

Hui et al. (2006) discovered that possible benefits asserting a person's self-esteem or social approval might lead to personal information disclosure. In this study, self-enhancement and social adjustment benefits did not receive remarkable support as motives to disclose information. Only some of the case companies offer benefits that can be classified into these categories. However, it is possible that these benefits interest a certain group of consumers. Namely, the group of consumers to whom others' acceptance is important and who want to be seen in a certain way by others (Sirgy 1979, 4, 25). Offering a possibility to improve one's status or grow one's network can work as a sufficient incentive to provide information for a certain group of people.

Intrinsic motivation emerges from positive emotions (Hui et al. 2006, 422). This study complements the existing research, which has discovered that a consumer is more willing to disclose information if the information disclosure is connected to an enjoyable activity (Sharma & Crossler 2014, 313). All of the case companies organize contests in order to create fun experiences, and some of them have used lotteries as a direct way to ask for information updates. However, it seems that the main reason for creating fun content is to enhance the relationship with the customer, which will eventually lead to more loyal customers who will thus be more likely to disclose information. A few of the case companies have raised the pleasure aspect to a whole new level by adding gamification elements to their websites. On the other hand, some of the case companies see that gamification can be harmful and decrease consumer's trust. They have wanted to keep a more

professional style because they see it as a more trustworthy way to approach the consumers. Therefore, the effectiveness of pleasure benefits remains slightly unclear. These types of benefits will most probably work better for companies in certain industries, or for certain types of consumers. It can be argued that pleasure benefits could motivate the consumers with experiential shopping motivation to disclose information, whereas they could diminish the goal-directed shoppers' motivation to disclose personal information (Wolfenbarger & Gilly 2001, 52).

As people are born to gain novel information (Hirschman 1980, 284), a number of different types of novelty benefits can motivate consumers to disclose information (Hui et al. 2006, 422). In addition to novel information, the case companies also use other means to fulfill consumers' needs for novel experiences. For example, they organize special events and campaigns for registered customers. The study highlights that it is important that the information or other advantages are offered to those customers who are interested in a particular topic. Therefore, the information should be personalized according to the interests of the customer. This supports the finding of Dinev and Hart (2006, 68, 73) who discovered that consumers' information disclosure behavior is ameliorated when information disclosure helps them to attain interesting information.

There were only a few altruism benefits that arose from the research data. Therefore, they are not seen as a very relevant benefit affecting consumers' information disclosure behavior. The results of the study emphasize that the consumers themselves want to be targets of the benefits, whereupon offering benefits which ultimately help others (Batson & Shaw, 1991, 108–109), is not seen as an effective tactic to motivate consumers to disclose personal information. However, as there are also people who are more prone to help others, offering altruism benefits to these people could be beneficial.

## **6.2 The effect of disclosure context**

The study showed that the benefits are not necessarily a sufficient reason to provide information and the effectiveness of different benefits is dependent on several factors. The information disclosure behavior is a context-dependent phenomenon, which cannot be encouraged solely by offering attractive benefits. Consumers' privacy concerns, the type of information requested, the business context, website elements, personalization and the consumer's shopping motivation can have a noteworthy influence on consumers' information disclosure behavior. Therefore, they can either undermine or enhance the effectiveness of benefits.

The study contributes to the existing literature findings, which have recognized the significance of the type of information requested on the consumer's willingness to provide information. Previous studies have shown that information which cannot personally

identify the consumer is provided more easily than personally identifiable information (e.g., Poddar et al. 2009, 433) but contradictory results have also been found (e.g., Meinert et al. 2006, 12). The findings of this study indicate that contact details, which can personally identify customers, are usually provided more easily than, for example, information about personal interests. However, this can be due to the fact that providing a certain amount of contact information is usually necessary with regard to ordering the product or service. However, it is noteworthy that consumers are usually reluctant to give companies their e-mail address because they do not understand how it would benefit them. Furthermore, they may fear that disclosing the e-mail address will lead to receiving unnecessary advertising. Moreover, the study confirms the finding of Meinert et al. (2006, 12) who discovered that asking for information that the consumer does not want to disclose affects his/her willingness to disclose any other information.

The more sensitive the information is perceived to be, the more likely the person will refuse to provide it (e.g., Mothersbaugh et al. 2012, 93–94). However, if the company can justify the requests for sensitive information, consumers may be more willing to provide it. Asking for sensitive information, such as health-related information, is not seen as intrusive if it seems reasonable regarding the company's business. Therefore, information is provided whenever it is perceived as necessary or relevant with regard to consuming the product or service. This finding endorses the concept of perceived fairness, according to which the likelihood of disclosure is greater when the asked information is perceived to be relevant in relation to the transaction, whereas asking irrelevant information can diminish the intention to disclose information at all (Li et al. 2010, 69). The asked information should be linked to the company's products and services, or to its business more broadly. In addition, being transparent and giving an explanation for the data collection helps in making the information request more relevant to the customer.

It is also notable that maintaining certain types of information can be difficult for the company. Since data becomes outdated increasingly fast, it is hard to maintain accurate details, for example, about consumers' interests, which change rapidly. Moreover, as consumers may reconsider the whole decision to disclose personal information if an excessive amount of questions is asked, asking for certain types of information should be considered more carefully. It could be more useful to collect some types of information through other means, in other words by not directly asking the customers.

The previous literature highlighted the significance of privacy concerns as a cost of information disclosure (Culnan & Bies 2003, 327). This study supports this claim as the interviewees stated that privacy concerns might hinder some people to disclose information even in the presence of benefits. According to the research data, privacy concerns arise because of uncertainty concerning the reasons for data collection and the subsequent use of the data. The fear can also arise as consumers cannot control the information after it has been disclosed. These findings support the discovery of Malhotra et al. (2004, 350)

who found out that control and awareness are the two most important factors affecting a person's privacy concerns. However, in accordance with the findings of Lee et al. (2015, 48), this study also showed that privacy concerns depend on the people and some people are more afraid than others. However, as the news about data leakage are increasing, the skepticism of consumers will be increased in the future, which in turn increases the importance of offering concrete benefits in exchange for data.

Also different elements on the website influence the consumer's information disclosure behavior. Referring to the quality of the website, the security as a dimension of quality (e.g., Webb & Webb 2001, 439) is critical. The earlier research found contradictory results with regard to consumers' tendency to read privacy statements. Hann et al. (2007, 33) found out that consumers look for privacy statements, whereas Poddar et al. (2009, 433) discovered that consumers show indifference regarding privacy policies. It seems clear that consumers do not always read the statements, which can be explained by two factors that arose from the research data. The reluctance to read the policies is due to the difficult language of the statements but more importantly, to the perceived trust towards the company. The results of this study suggest that when consumers trust the company, they do not read the statements. As trust alleviates consumers' privacy concerns (Dinev & Hart 2006, 76; Mothersbaugh et al. 2012, 91), the need to read the privacy statements is also diminished. However, this study confirms that the absence of the statements can raise consumers' suspicion and reduce the trustworthiness of the company. Therefore, the privacy policies have an influence on consumers' information disclosure behavior. They need to be easily accessible and the language used in them has to be as clear as possible.

In addition to privacy statements, other elements on the website can influence consumers' information disclosure behavior as well. The findings contribute to the existing research, which has discovered that also the navigability and user-friendliness influence the information disclosure behavior by increasing trust and reducing privacy concerns (Poddar et al. 2009, 433; Nam et al. 2006, 216). The usability of the website seems to be an important factor affecting consumers' perception about the quality of a website. It may have an indirect or direct effect on a person's behavior. The amount of clicks needed to attain the desired content affects the service experience which in turn can have an effect on a person's willingness to provide information. Moreover, asking questions that are not relevant regarding the company's business or its products and services can reduce the perception of user-friendliness of a website.

The case companies use visual and textual elements on their websites to inform the consumers about the benefits and to ask them to register for websites or update their personal profiles. Some of the case companies use more direct ways to ask customers to disclose information, whereas the majority of them emphasize the importance of letting the customer accomplish his primary task on the website before asking for information. This finding reflects Hoffmans' and Novak's (1996, 62) idea of goal-directed shoppers



who know what they are looking for and want to make the purchase as efficiently as possible. Asking something that is not necessary regarding the purchasing process can interfere with their purchasing process. (Wolfenbarger & Gilly 2001, 35–36, 52.) The present study suggests that although the person's primary goal does not involve purchasing, it could be more beneficial to ask the consumer to register for the website subsequent to experiencing how providing more information could help him/her to enjoy more. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that consumers know how they benefit by disclosing information before asking for information.

Personalization, which can also be seen a dimension of website quality (Bressolles et al. 2006), can encourage people to provide information more easily. As consumers perceive that their service experience on the website is improved and offers an increased convenience after disclosing personal information, they will also be more willing to disclose personal information in the future. This study complements the existing research which suggests that different types of benefits should be offered according to customers' personal preferences (Hui et al. 2006, 432) and personalized benefits in different forms induce people to disclose information (e.g., Morosan & DeFranco 2015; Xu et al. 2009–10). In the studied cases, personalization was used to increase the desirability of certain benefits: monetary saving, time-saving, and novelty benefits, in particular. However, customization can be seen as intrusive when asking for embarrassing information (White 2004, 48). Therefore, it seems that personalization is a moderator of information disclosure behavior since it can both increase and alleviate the likelihood that consumers will disclose information.

This study complements the existing literature which has suggested that the business context has an influence on information disclosure behavior and the effectiveness of different types of benefits (Hui et al. 2006, 433). Moreover, not all of the companies have similar possibilities to offer attractive benefits to customers. However, in some cases, benefits are not necessarily the main factor affecting consumers' willingness to disclose personal information which could be, for example, due to type of service purchased. In addition, customers who have received customer service that has helped them to make a purchasing decision may be willing to provide information because they perceive it as a responsibility to return the favor. This supports the idea of reciprocity which means that a person helps another person if that person first helped him/her (Gouldner 1960, 170–171).

Moreover, a mere trust towards the company can significantly affect a person's information disclosure behavior. If the company has a good reputation or if the consumer has previous positive experience with it, he/she may be more willing to disclose information even in the presence of fewer tangible benefits. This supports the finding of Li and Pavlou (2013, 28, 29) who discovered that brand awareness reduces perceived risks and increases

trust which in turn lead to increased information disclosure behavior, as well as the findings of Lee et al. (2015, 55), who recognized that a perceived relationship level between the firm and the customer has an effect on the consumer's information disclosure behavior.

### **6.3 Revised conceptual framework**

In light of the findings, the conceptual framework is revised. The revised conceptual framework is presented in Figure 4. Since all of the benefits did not seem to be equally attractive ways to motivate consumers to disclose personal information, the most relevant benefits are presented separately. The benefits that did not show a straightforward support to the original classification made by Hui et al. (2006) are presented in parentheses. The research data revealed that self-enhancement, social adjustment, and altruism benefits were not offered as extensively as the other types of benefits. Moreover, the pleasure benefits were also seen to have a negative effect on consumer's information disclosure behavior by decreasing the level of trust. It is worth noting that different results could have arisen if more people were interviewed or if the studied cases had been different. Moreover, these types of benefits could be more valuable to a smaller proportion of consumers. Therefore, offering these benefits could still be an effective way to motivate certain types of consumers to disclose personal information.

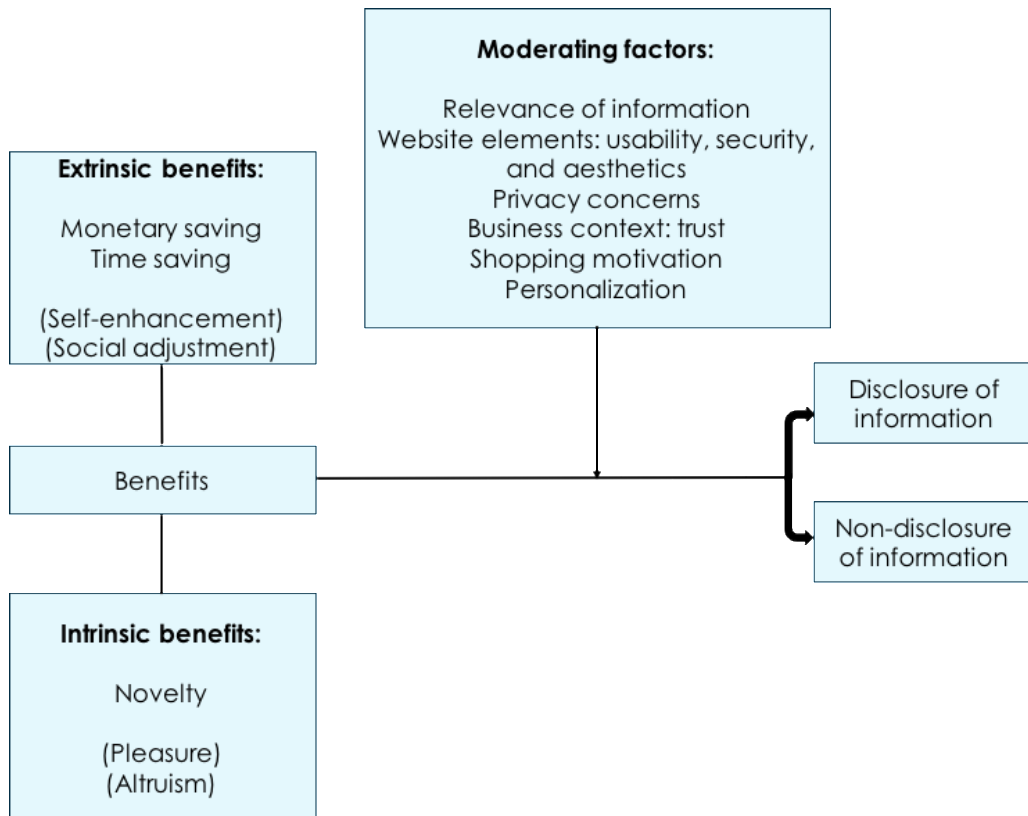


Figure 4 Revised conceptual framework

Referring to the disclosure context, the relevance of the information was found to be more important than the type of information. In other words, consumers are willing to disclose even highly personal information if it is deemed relevant for obtaining the desired product or service. In addition, regarding website elements, the usability, security, and visual elements of the website seem to be the most important factors, which can increase or decrease the likelihood that consumers will disclose information online. Furthermore, trust seemed to be the most dominant factor regarding the business context. If consumers trust the company, they are willing to disclose personal information even if no special benefits were offered. However, privacy concerns can be a significant hindrance for disclosure behavior and cannot always be compensated by offering attractive benefits. Moreover, personalization seems to be a moderator rather than a single benefit since it can increase the attractiveness of different types of benefits when used effectively.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Theoretical contributions

The study sought to understand what types of benefits motivate consumers to disclose personal information and how the disclosure context affects the consumers' willingness to disclose personal information to companies. The main research question of the study was "How can companies motivate consumers to disclose personal information?" and the first subquestion was "What types of benefits motivate consumers to disclose personal information?". The study contributes to the existing theory by emphasizing the influence of benefits on consumers' information disclosure behavior. The prior research has mostly concentrated on studying individual benefits in motivating consumers to disclose information, whereas this research aimed to understand the types of benefits more broadly. The original classification of benefits made by Hui et al. (2006) was revised and certain types of benefits were found to be more effective than others.

Previous research has suggested that certain benefits can have a negative influence on consumers' information disclosure behavior if it conflicts with their personality traits (Hui et al. 2006, 429). This study indicates that providing certain type of benefits can also have a negative effect on information disclosure behavior at a more general level. Offering pleasure benefits as a way to solicit information can be seen as an unreliable way of collecting information. Moreover, as the results did not lend as much support to the use of self-enhancement, social-adjustment, and altruism benefits as to the use of other types of benefits, this study suggests that consumers' motivation to disclose personal information can be mainly affected by monetary saving, time saving, and novelty benefits.

The second subquestion of the study was "How does the disclosure context affect the consumers' information disclosure behavior?". The findings of the study show that the consumers' information disclosure behavior is highly influenced by different context-dependent factors. Such factors that were recognized in this study are the business context, the type of information requested, website elements, personalization, and the consumer's privacy concerns and shopping motivation. These moderating factors can both alleviate and increase the effectiveness of the benefits.

When it comes to the business context, trust can have a significant positive influence on consumers' disclosure behavior and it can even reduce the need for benefits. Prior research has studied how the type of the information requested influences the consumer's disclosure behavior, and has recognized especially the negative impact of asking sensitive information (e.g., Mothersbaugh et al. 2012) and irrelevant information (Poddar et al. 2009). The findings of this study indicate that even sensitive information is provided if it

is well justified. Therefore, it is argued that the relevance of the type of information requested has more impact on consumers' information disclosure behavior than the sensitivity of the information.

The study contributes to the previous research by highlighting the importance of website elements and website quality as factors affecting the consumers' information disclosure behavior. As dimensions of quality, security, usability, and aesthetics of the website seem to have the greatest influence on their information disclosure behavior. Especially, if the usability and security do not match the person's expectations, they have a negative effect on the consumers' information disclosure behavior. For example, the absence of privacy statements could be critical even though the consumers do not often read them. Personalization is also a website element that can be used as a means to increase the likelihood that consumers will disclose information. However, a number of researchers have also studied personalization as a benefit that affects consumers' disclosure behavior (e.g., Xu et al. 2009–10). This study complements the existing theory by suggesting that personalization can increase the effectiveness of benefits but it is not classified as a single type of benefit.

In addition, this study suggests that a person's shopping motivation can influence his/her willingness to disclose information. When the consumer has a clear shopping goal, he/she will be less willing to provide additional information because the consumer wants to complete the transaction as fast as possible. On the other hand, the person with experiential shopping motivation (Wolfenbarger & Gilly 2001) may be more willing to disclose information. In this case, offering benefits that raise positive emotions could increase the likelihood of consumers disclosing personal information.

## **7.2 Managerial implications**

The study has also several managerial implications. First of all, it is important to recognize that there are several types of benefits, which can motivate consumers to disclose information. However, managers need to understand that the efficiency of the benefits is dependent on different context-dependent factors and all the benefits described in this study are not necessarily attractive to all businesses. Therefore, companies need to consider what types of benefits they can offer and how different types of benefits suit their business and the needs of the consumers. Moreover, as it is essential that the consumers know how they benefit by disclosing personal information, the company needs to set a strategy on how to communicate the benefit to the customer.

Second, managers need to take into account the influence of the disclosure context. Offering appealing benefits is not enough when motivating consumers to disclose infor-

mation. Central factors affecting the ultimate disclosure decision are the consumers' privacy concerns, the perceived relevance of the asked information, the perceived trust towards the company, the quality of the company's website, personalization and the consumer's shopping motivation. It is important to understand that the individual's perception of trust towards the company can influence his/her behavior substantially. In some cases, trust can be an adequate reason to provide information. Therefore, ensuring a trustworthy image of the company is essential. However, it is worth noting that the importance of developing professional websites could be dependable upon the industry. Some of the companies do not see that using gamification elements harms their trustworthiness. With regard to privacy concerns, managers can increase the likelihood of information disclosure by improving the transparency of their data collection practices since providing reasons for the data collection alleviates consumers' concerns.

Moreover, managers need to understand the significance of asking for only relevant information, referring to information that is relevant not only from the company's but also from the consumer's point of view. One irrelevant question can lead to a refusal to disclose any information to that company. Therefore, managers need to ensure that the customers understand why certain information is asked. Stating the reason for the data collection also helps in making the information request more relevant for the customer.

Managers can also influence consumers' information disclosure behavior by improving the usability, aesthetics, and security on their websites. They need to ensure that the company has up-to-date and understandable versions of their privacy statements on their website. In addition, developing a logical navigational structure and eliminating irrelevant information from the websites improves the user experience and thus increases the likelihood of information disclosure. Moreover, managers can use visual and textual elements which concretely inform the customer about the benefits. However, whenever possible, it is wise to embed the benefits into the service experience itself. The timing for the information requests and registrations should be carefully planned because it should not interfere with the consumer's initial purchasing goal on the website.

Furthermore, managers need to take into account that consumers' shopping motivation can affect their willingness to disclose information, and different shopping motives can have an influence on the effectiveness of different types of benefits. It is useful to notice how people are usually motivated on the website and take different shopping motives into account when planning ways to solicit people to disclose personal information.

### **7.3 Limitations**

This study has a number of limitations which need to be taken into consideration when evaluating the results of the study. First of all, because of the limited number of studied

cases, the findings are not generalizable. The case companies were selected from different industries. During the interviews, it became evident that consumers' information disclosure behavior depends greatly on different context-dependent factors.

Second, the fact that the interviewees were representatives of companies can also be seen as a limitation of this study. The benefits that emerged from the research data are benefits that the companies use to induce consumers to disclose information. However, the reality could be different as consumers' wishes may differ from the companies' practices. Moreover, as expert interviews were the primary data collection method of the study, it was not possible to investigate the influence of consumer's individual characteristics on information disclosure behavior, which according to prior research, could have an impact on his/her behavior.

Moreover, the amount of interviews was not significantly high and the areas of expertise of the interviewees varied to some extent. Since all of the interviewees had a different background and knowledge of the topic, they may have emphasized certain factors, which are closest to their own expertise. Moreover, their personal opinions as consumers may have influenced their answers.

## **7.4 Suggestions for further research**

Several interesting topics can be raised for possible future research. In the future, the effectiveness of benefits should be further investigated. It could be worthwhile to investigate whether the consumers appreciate the benefits that the companies offer in motivating them to disclose information. Moreover, since this study found contradictory results when it comes to offering pleasure benefits, it would be interesting to study the influence again from the consumers' point of view. Also, the effectiveness of self-enhancement, social adjustment, and altruism benefits need further research. In addition, it would be useful to know if there are other benefits, which would help companies to collect more valuable consumer data.

Since the study raised the importance of security, usability, and aesthetics on the websites, it would be interesting to study more precisely how the design of the user interface and different dimensions of the website's quality affect consumers' information disclosure behavior. Moreover, as mobile commerce has been growing rapidly, it could be investigated if there is a difference between consumers' information disclosure behavior in mobile and e-commerce environment. Finally, it would be interesting to investigate in more detail how a person's shopping motivation influences his intention to disclose personal information.

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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

Author's note: The original interview questions have been translated from Finnish to English.

### BACKGROUND

- For what purposes do you use your consumer registers and databases? What information has been recorded to those registers?
  - What type of information has been asked explicitly from the consumer and what type of information is collected automatically?
  - Have you asked for the customer's permission to use the data that has been automatically collected?
- Explain briefly, how the collection and usage of consumer data has been taken into account in the company's strategy?
- How does your company analyze and utilize the consumer data?

### TYPE OF INFORMATION

- In what situations and by which tools do you ask consumers to provide data? How does the method of data collection affect the customers' willingness to provide data?
- What type of information are your customers willing to disclose? And what type of information do they provide the easiest?
- Can requests for very sensitive information impact a customer's willingness to provide any other information?
- What is the significance of asking for information that is relevant considering the service?

### CONCRETE COMPENSATION

- What kind of benefits does the customer receive in return for the information?
  - What types of monetary benefits can he get?
  - What other concrete benefits can he receive?
- How does the exchange order affect the customer's willingness to provide information?

### SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

- For what reasons has the customer provided information without getting any concrete benefits?
- How do you use your website to influence your customers' willingness to disclose personal information?
- Why would the customer disclose information more easily on social networking sites? Can you offer similar benefits?

### INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND CONSUMER WORRIES

- How can you classify your customers in relation to their willingness to provide information?
- Why does the customer not always disclose information even in the presence of attractive benefits?
- Part of the customers visit websites for fun while others have a clear goal to make a purchase. How does the primary purpose to visit the website influence the consumer's willingness to provide information?