Unfastening Screws of Consumer Behavior towards More Sustainable Decisions

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Acknowledgement

Have you ever, my dear reader, experienced starvation?!
What about terror or homelessness?!
Have you witnessed any extra-ordinary circumstances for no fault of yours?!

In such world, the majority of *Humans* suffer from lacking basic human rights; food, shelter or security. Meanwhile a little minority suffer from glut and squandering to the limit they lose the purpose of life. Sustainability first appealed to me as a potential solution of such unfairness.

Thus, thanks to those who suffered starvation because others greedily wanted food. And for those who suffered homelessness because of those who want it fancy in their homes. And for those who suffered of war because others wanted to have all peace, security and wealth.

To my parents and three loving brothers.

To Valeska Engesser for the unconditional love and support.
Abstract

Background: Society plays a central role regarding consumers’ attitudes, personal capabilities, emotions, and contextual which are the determinant variables of consumer behavior. Car industry as one of the most important economic sectors internationally enables to consume cars all over the world. The continuously increasing number of cars is accompanied with greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide which are set free to the environment. Those emissions are seen indicators causers of global warming and climate change. Despite the availability of more sustainable transportation alternatives, conventional cars are still predominantly consumed. This emphasizes the relevance of investigating societal influential factors influencing consumer behaviour.

Purpose: The aim of this study is to explore and explain the influence of societal factors on the formulation of consumer behavior regarding purchases of unsustainable products such as cars. Identifying these ‘screws’ proposes to not only contribute to existing literature but also to provide a tool marketer, organizations, or policy makers can use in order to reverse such behaviors.

Method: For conducting this study, a mixed-method approach was chosen. This implies to combine elements from quantitative as well as qualitative research approaches. Thus, quantitative data was collected by conducting a survey. Qualitative data was provided by interviewing an expert out of the field as well as making an observation. Data collected was analytically discussed afterwards.

Findings: The societal factor informational social influence was found to be influential on the four causal variables attitudes, contextual forces, personal capabilities, and emotions which represent determinants of consumer behavior in the framework applied in this study. Shared experience, as seen influential on individual due to previous literature, proofs to be influential only on attitudes and emotions. In the context of status consumption, only the factors self-distinction and financial success can be considered influential. However, the two factors do not have an effect on emotions of consumers. Group membership as the opposite to self-distinction does not reveal to be influential on one of the causal variables. The investigated and analyzed societal influential factors can contribute to developing concepts in order to reverse unsustainable behavior by for example working on habits of consumers.
Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Societal Influential Factors, Unsustainable Products, Causal Variables, Informational Social Influence, Shared Experience, Status Consumption, Group Membership, Self-distinction, Financial Success.
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1 Introduction

Introduction chapter aims to introduce the reader to the topic and to present the phenomena in focus of this study. Moreover, it illustrates the formulation of the problem, research question, and purpose of the study.

1.1 Background

"An overload of greenhouse gas emissions is causing global warming and climate change" (Greenpeace, 2016)

The amount of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere are indicators of global warming and the respective climate change (Blowfield, 2013). Since 1990 overall CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere on earth increased by around 50% (UNa, 2015). Due to this significant increase, the concentration of CO₂ counts for 397 parts per million (ppm) in 2014 (IEA, 2015). In order to prevent a rise of global temperature higher than 2°C from the current temperature, the amount of greenhouse gases should be stabilized at 450 ppm (Blowfield, 2013). Concerning the European Commission’s 2020 Energy Strategy, greenhouse gas emissions have to be reduced globally by 20% in 2020 in order to strive against climate change and reach a less dependency on fossil fuels (EU, 2011). Meanwhile, human activities in form of burning fossil fuels such as oil, gas, and coal are the main causes of global warming due to setting huge amounts of greenhouse gases free to the atmosphere (Greenpeace, 2016; UNb, 2015).

The previous century witnessed the birth of automobile industry that changed to a major extent daily life of humanity. Today the industry is one of the most important economic sectors internationally; cars are consumed all over the world and produced in many countries (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 2008). According to the UNa (2015), the year 2002 showed 550 million vehicles in OECD countries (Economic Co-operation and Development) of which 75 percent are passenger cars. The number of total vehicles will be increased by 32 per cent by 2020 and also motor vehicle kilometers will increase by 40% (UNa, 2015). Estimations go for a total number of 1 billion cars worldwide in 2010 which doubled since 1986 (Sousanis, 2011). According to estimations, more than 13 million passenger cars were registered in EU in 2015 (Statista, 2015). Considering the sustainable
alternative of passenger transportation, electric vehicles represent in 2015 only 0.15% of the total number of cars in the EU (EEA, 2016).

1.2 Problem Formulation and Research Question

Transportation in general enables connecting people and economies throughout the world and at the same time, the automobile industry generates growth and workplaces (EEA, 2016). Humans benefit a lot from owning cars to the degree that made it a basic need sometimes. Meanwhile, huge amounts of money are being spent in order to own, maintain, fuel, depreciate, insure, and to pay taxes among many others. On the other hand, social costs that manifest in road maintenance, use of land, air pollution and public health are of the most argumentative costs of oil fuel transportation methods (Peden, Scurfield and Sleet, 2004). Such methods imply burning fossil fuels such as oil, gas, and coal what remarkably harm the environment and cause global warming and climate change (Greenpeace, 2016). Moreover, the dramatically increasing demand of fossil fuels is forming great pressure on those scarce natural resources (Stolten, 2010).

Massive efforts were devoted so far for predicting consumer behavior accurately. However, those attempts have not shown significant validity and many debates are yet to be explored (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Armstrong, 1991; Garcia, Fearne and Wood 2010; Minton and Khale, 2014; Joshi and Rahman 2015). This existing strain is justified by the complication of the field. That is because it involves a combination of constituents from the different fields of psychology, sociology, and economics among others (Minton and Khale, 2014). Meanwhile, existing literature of sustainable consumer behavior concentrates mostly on the investigation of behavior of consumers who already have taken a step towards sustainability (Garcia et al. 2010; Joshi and Rahman 2015).

Joshi and Rahman (2015) investigated the inconsistencies between behavior and attitude when it comes to sustainable products which have never been researched before according to them. The authors conducted a massive literature review of 53 modern scientific articles and researches in order to explore the influential factors that are causing this inconsistency. In their recommendation for future research, they recommend researchers to consider the impact of cultural, social, or demographic factors. Furthermore, as their study was mainly conceptual, they recommend future researchers to conduct empirical studies of the same topic. Finally, they advise exploring other influential factors than the ones explored in their study. The paper
at hand investigates societal factors, *which were not studied before* in a similar context, that influence unsustainable consumer behavior. The study is conducted *conceptually and empirically* following the recommendation of Joshi and Rahman (2015).

In their study, Joshi and Rahman (2015) investigated a large variety of categories of influential factors in general. The study at hand deeply investigates one of those categories; the influence of societal factors on purchase intentions. This choice finds its justification as consumers are according to Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte, (2012) affected by their environment and societal sphere in every decision they take. Moreover, patterns of behavior of a consumer are shaped by their interactions with others within their environments (Rook and Fisher, 1995). Also, past sustainable behavior, attitudes, and sociocultural environments might affect future sustainable behavior of a consumer. Accordingly, consumer behavior is not only determined by attitudes and beliefs but also by other ‘personal and situational factors’ (Philips et al., 2013 in Joshi and Rahman, 2015, p.130). This reflects the importance of investigating societal influences a consumer might be exposed to and which might shape the behavior.

Additionally, many studies highlighted the influence of price when it comes to the purchase of a green product (Connell, 2010; Gleim, Smith, Andrews and Cronin, 2013; Padel and Foster, 2005, Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006 in Joshi and Rahman 2015). Yet, none of those studies was conducted to investigate a certain category of products. This research, and to more specify the topic, investigates high involvement products, more particularly combustion engine cars. This choice is justified by the negative influence of high involvement products (cars) on all three dimensions of sustainability as highlighted previously.

Lastly, this research adopts an opposite perspective; it investigates factors that influence consumers to make an *unsustainable decision*, which is in the case of this study purchasing combustion engine cars as they have a negative impact on sustainability as illustrated above. That aims to figuring the screws which need to be unfastened in order to motivate consumer behavior towards more sustainable decisions. On the other hand, it contributes to the general understanding of consumer behavior which lacks to accurate understanding (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Armstrong 1991; Sharifi 2014; Minton and Khale, 2014).

Based on the arguments illustrated previously, the research at hand curries the following research question: *How do societal factors influence consumer behavior to perform a purchase of unsustainable high involvement products (combustion engine cars)?* Thus, the
purpose of this study is to explore and explain the influence of societal factors on the formulation of consumer behavior regarding purchases of unsustainable products such as cars. Identifying these ‘screws’ aims to not only contribute to existing literature but also to define key elements of reversing consumer behavior towards more sustainable choices.
2 Theoretical Chapter

Theoretical chapter mainly consists of two subchapters, viz. theoretical frame and literature review. First one, theoretical frame, aims to introduce the model applied for the conduction of this study. In this fashion, the chosen three societal influential factors are reviewed and explained. These factors are informational social influence, shared experience, and status consumption. Afterwards, two main theories of Stern (2000) and Bhamra et al. (2011) of consumer behavior are illustrated. The combination of the societal factors and the two theories forms the model applied in this study which will be presented lastly in this section. The literature review section presents interesting researches previously done in this field and other theories of consumer behavior. These are useful for the analysis and discussion of data collected.

2.1 Theoretical Frame

Investigating the influence of societal factors on consumer behavior requires indeed adopting a model of consumer behavior. Reviewing the most famous models of consumer behavior was followed by getting familiar with the critique of traditional consumer behavior models being almost exclusively focused on attitudinal factors. Keeping in mind the main direction of this research towards sustainability, two models in particular were found most interesting, namely environmentally significant behavior by Stern (2000) and theory of sustainable design by Bhamra et al. (2011) which will both be applied for forming the model adopted in this research. This section starts with presenting the societal factors in focus. This is followed by the two main theories and the applied model.

2.1.1 Societal Factors

Social factors are considered to be affecting consumer behavior (Sethi and Chawla, 2014; Al-Azzam, 2014). Moreover, they have a key role when it comes to a purchase decision of a certain product (Al-Azzam, 2014; Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011). With regard to changing a behavior the complexity lies in the interrelation of information, own behavior, and social impact during a buying process (Bhamra et al., 2011).
In the following societal influential factors which are considered in the theoretical framework of this study are illustrated. The choice of those is justified as first they have not been investigated yet regarding their influence on purchases in the review of 53 studies by Joshi and Rahman (2015). Second, no previous study investigated their influence regarding purchases of unsustainable high involvement products, in particular cars. Moreover, they show a general high significance regarding their influence on consumers behavior as previous literature shows (e.g. Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011; Sethi and Chawla, 2014; Wilkie, 1994; O’Cass and McEwen, 2004; Eastman et al., 1999). Considering the purpose of this study to explore those factors influencing consumers’ purchasing behavior regarding the mentioned product, these factors are seen the most significant to be further explored and investigated.

Social influences as an overall term “work on all phases of consumer behavior - they affect which products we aspire to own, which styles we prefer […]”. In this matter, informational social influence occurs in case a consumer is influenced by the knowledge of others or information received from them (Goldsmith, 2006 in Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011; Wilkie, 1994, p. 353). Moreover, information seeking often affects decision making of consumers as this might reduce the risk of making a wrong decision. Yet, the extent to which a consumer relies on information received from others varies individually (Bearden et al., 1989, Bearden and Rose, 1990 in Goldsmith and Clark, 2012). The higher the degree of expertise, e.g. in terms of quality or trustworthiness of the information is, the stronger the influence (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Individuals of a society tend to share their cognition, knowledge and beliefs. Concludingly, an individual can be influenced by information received from others which is derived from past experiences (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011; Tindale et al., 2008 in Hogg and Tindale, 2008). In this context, in literature conforming behavior for example is described as an action that follows and is similar to the behaviors of others (Wilkie, 1994, p. 380). Considering the previous lines shared experience, as an influential societal factor, is seen as potentially relevant for investigating consumer behavior regarding purchases of cars.

Concerns of consumers with how others perceive them and which status they have in a society mold behavior (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011). Moreover, seeking for social status or social prestige belong to the social factors influencing consumer behavior (Sethi and Chawla, 2014; O’Cass and McEwen, 2004). There is a positive connection between the degree of which a consumer seeks for status and the extent to which one is involved in consuming status symbols as this in turn increases the status (Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn, 1999). Status
Consumption is defined as the intention to purchase an item or a service ‘for the status or social prestige that they confer on their owners (Eastman et al., 1999 p. 41).

Status consumption as a desire of belonging to a group is stated to be of satisfying character for humans (Scitovsky, 1992). Moreover, people seek for acceptance in groups by observing and imitating the members (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011). None of the studies reviewed in the context of this study have investigated the factor of belonging to a group regarding its influence. Majority of scholars go for considering it influential in general and in context of green behavior (Scitovsky, 1992; Eze et al., 2013; Welsch et al., 2009; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Dotson and Hyatt, 2000 in Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Furthermore, it is believed that every individual has a social group in deed. Such is influential in terms of forming collective norms that individuals will follow seeking for acceptance Joshi and Rahman (2015). However, two previous studies prove the opposite; Connell (2010) and Lee (2011) in Joshi and Rahman (2015) found a negative relationship between belonging to a group and consumer behavior.

Yet, group membership, in the context of status consumption and purchasing a high involvement product car is seen as worth to be explored more in depth with this study. As one step further to the desire of belonging to a group (Scitovsky, 1992), an individual may also purchase a product that represents a certain status and success in order to distinguish themselves from others (O’Cass, 2001 in O’Cass and McEwen, 2004; Scitovsky, 1992). Self-distinction as the opposite of group membership therefore finds its justification for further investigation. Expressing social and financial success is determined mainly by possessing certain material goods as this may express wealth and prosperity in front of others. Furthermore, Dawson and Cavell (1987 in Eastman et al., 1999) illustrate that consumers achieve recognition of their financial success by purchasing items and services that confer them a certain social status compared to significant others. However, there is sufficient proof that consumers purchase for social status regardless of their income. Thus, one cannot say it is a habit of the wealthy (Freedman, 1991, Miller, 1991, Mason 1992 in Eastman et al., 1999).

Yet, the extent to which a consumer desires a purchase for a social status value varies individually. That depends on to which level one believes that such a purchase would provide him with the desired social status ‘in the eyes of the significant others’ (Hughes 1996, cited in Eastman et al., 1999 p. 41). Considering the above mentioned, this study intends to prove or disprove financial success and its relation to one’s income as a societal influential factor.
2.1.2 Main Theories

This subsection aims to present the two main theories applied for the formulation of the model applied in this study. These are first, environmentally significant behavior by Stern (2000) and second, sustainable design by Bhamra et al. (2011).

Human behavior according to Environmentally Significant Behavior Theory by Stern (2000) has a huge impact on the environment. Environmentally significant behavior can be defined regarding both impact and intent. First one describes “the extent to which it changes the availability of materials and energy from the environment or alters the structure and dynamics of ecosystems or the biosphere itself” (Stern, 1997 cited in Stern, 2000, p. 408). Here, the intent-oriented definition refers to “behavior that is undertaken with the intention to change […] the environment” and concentrates mostly on motives and beliefs of an individual with the intention to understand a behavior (Stern, 2000, p. 408). On the other hand, the impact-oriented definition rather focuses on identifying a certain target behavior that has noticeable impact on the environment (Stern and Gardner, 1981a in Stern, 2000).

Environmentally significant behavior is shaped by many factors; the intention of an individual to contribute to the environment is only one of them. Furthermore, Guagnano et al. (1995 in Stern, 2000, p. 415) describe behavior as “an interactive product of personal-sphere attitudinal variables and contextual factors”. Thus, the relation between attitude and behavior is the stronger the more neutral contextual factors are and the other way around. This means not only behaviors that are related to certain contexts but also those “difficult, time-consuming, or expensive” ones show a less dependency on attitudinal factors (Stern, 2000, p. 416).
Stern (2000) distinguishes between four interacting types of causal variables: attitudinal factors, contextual factors, personal capabilities, and habits. Attitudinal factors basically involve norms, beliefs and values. Previous research shows evidence that personal commitment (e.g. Katzev and Johnson, 1987 in Stern, 2000), beliefs that are specific for a certain behavior as well as personal norms (e.g. Black et al., 1985 in Stern, 2000) are influential for environmental behaviors (Stern, 2000). Factors related to a context can be found on an interpersonal level; the same shared expectations, technological capabilities, or governmental regulations among others count for those (Stern, 2000). A third variable describes personal capabilities including for example knowledge, money, and social status. Finally, habits are claimed to be a key factor of environmentally significant behavior as changing a behavior often implies breaking old habits and at the same time adopting new ones. The above-mentioned variables cause different kinds of environmental significant behavior; thus, these cannot be generally referred to a certain behavior (Stern, 2000) (see figure 1).

The idea of Sustainable Design applied for the development of products is about reducing negative environmental and societal impact; last one mainly is to be referred to consumer behavior (Peattie and Shaw, 2007 in Bhamra et al., 2011). The concept of sustainable design considers impacts related to the three pillars of sustainability. Those are namely environmental, economic, and social acted out throughout a product’s lifecycle (Elkington,
1997 in Bhamra et al., 2011). While sustainable designs are mostly determined by environmental and economic matters, the social concern is less considered (Colantonio, 2007). That strengthens the justification of the choices made in this study.

In their study, Bhamra et al. (2011, p. 432), consider behavior and habits as two separated units which need to be investigated in order to set a strategy to improve products (see figure 2). They see [...] ‘shifting behavior’ as a complicated process that requires ‘weighing up’ the two determinants of behavior and habits in three levels of interventions, the most interesting part is their approach of behavior formulation. They consider intention formulation to be determined by three elements; attitude, social factors and affect. Furthermore, they state attitude to be determined by knowledge and beliefs, social factors to be matter of norms, roles and self-concept, and emotions to be the source of affect. The theory neither considers the contextual nor the personal capabilities elements which are essential for investigating behavior especially in the context of environmental impact according to Stern (2000).

![Figure 2: Framework of Sustainable Design (own illustration based on Bhamra et al. (2011))](image)

Habits are one of the elements of consumer behavior considered by many theories. Triandis (1977) interpersonal behavior theory considers next to social factors and emotions also habits when it comes to behavioral change. Habits are also considered by Stern (2000) as one of the causal variables. Bhamra et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of the consideration of habits even more than consumption. According to them, it is not only about the purchase itself but also about the routines of use. Stern (2000) considers habits to be a determinant ‘causal
factor’ of behavior while Bhamra et al. (2011) separate between habits and behavior as two inter-related approaches. Both views find justifications and critique. Yet, for this research habits will be considered rather interrelated to than a determinant of behavior. Simply, because the aim is to investigate unsustainable consumer behavior, in other words those who do not have a habit of purchasing the sustainable alternative yet.

2.1.3 Consumer Behavior Model

This section presents the model applied to investigate the phenomenon of this study (see figure 3) and is designed for the purpose of achieving this research. Traditional models of consumer behavior were always criticized for being exclusively focused on attitudinal factors (Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Thus, more recent models were taken into consideration in the design of the model adopted. That finds justification in the fact that modern theories consider attitudinal in addition to other factors.

Model applied in this research is based on Stern (2000) and Bhamra et al. (2011). Attitude and emotions are considered determinant elements of behavior following the majority of traditional and modern schools of behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Wilkie 1994; Stern, 2000; Bhamra, 2011; Ajzen, 2006 in Bhamra, 2011). Furthermore, personal capabilities and contextual forces are considered determinants of behavior following Stern (2000). While the societal factors in focus of this study are taken as influential, their influence on the causal variables of behavior and thus on behavior are the focus of this study (see figure 3).
2.2 Literature Review

Literature review aims to present interesting researches previously conducted in this field and other theories of consumer behavior. These are significant for conducting the analysis and discussion of this study. Literature review will follow the same order of the theoretical framework. Thus, previous work on societal factors are presented firstly followed by theories of consumer behavior.

2.2.1 Societal Factors

Social influences according to Wilkie (1994, p. 353) “work in all phases of consumer behavior - they affect which products we aspire to own, which styles we prefer, at which stores we shop, and so forth”. As normative social influence takes place in case a consumer cares a lot about the opinion of his or her group members or society regarding purchase decision, an individual may perceive pressure that can be influential. Informational, social influence on the other hand occurs in case a consumer is influenced by the knowledge of other
people. This is in line with Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) explanation of normative beliefs and beliefs about consequences.

In their conceptual study, Joshi and Rahman (2015 p. 128) found following societal factors influential on one’s ‘attitude – behavior inconsistencies in the context of green purchasing’; subjective norm, social group, social influence, reference group, knowledge and information, personal norms/values, promotion/diffusion, lifestyle, and self-image. Previous research found that there is a positive correlation between subjective norm, social norm, reference group and a consumer’s purchase intention of a green product (e.g. Eze and Ndubisi, 2013; Liu et al., 2012; Welsch and Kühling, 2009).

Considering the influence, a social group or reference group may have, past research reveals that the closer these are to a consumer, the stronger the influence on their buying behavior and decision-making process is (e.g. Lee, 2010; Salazar et al., 2013 in Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Considering purchase intentions of sustainable products previous studies reveal evidence that environmental and social values as well as personal norms are highly influential on a consumer’s purchase intention (e.g. Eze and Ndubisi, 2013; Young et al., 2010; Gleim et al., 2013; Arvola et al., 2008 in Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Representing a certain image of an individual is due to the extensive literature review done by Joshi and Rahman (2015) revealed to be influential on consumers’ purchase intentions. Furthermore, existing literature claims that consumers purchase, own, and consume products to promote their sense of theirselves and to present a certain self-image they desire. Moreover, consumers purchase products which represent what they feel and think (Goffmann, 1959, Belk, 1988, Even 1988, Braun and Wicklund, 1989 in Eastman et al., 1999).

2.2.2 Theories of Consumer Behavior

This section presents the following theories of consumer behavior, namely intention theory, emotion theory, and involvement theory.

In their book, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) explain the relationship between beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behavior, the formulation of each of them as well as models for calculating them. In the following, **Intention Theory** is presented. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975 p. 131) definition of beliefs “(...) refer(s) to a person’s subjective probability of judgements concerning some discriminable aspects of his world. They deal with the person’s
understanding of himself and his environment’. By associating an object with attributes, humans tend to ‘learn’ and improve their beliefs towards the object by processing information, experiences and observations. There are two types of beliefs defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p.16); the first refers to the consequences of an action or behavior towards an object and one’s evaluation of the consequences of an action. This type of beliefs is the main factor in forming an individual’s attitudes. The second type of beliefs describes normative beliefs which are defined as “(...) a belief that certain referents would think that person should or should not perform certain behavior”. Normative beliefs on the other hand are the main determinants of subjective norms (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 16).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975 p. 216), attitudes are defined as “(...) a person’s general feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness towards some stimulus object’. An individual’s attitudes towards objects are determined by beliefs about the attributes of the object. Attitude is viewed as a major determinant of intention formulation. Each of the two types of beliefs leads to a type of attitudes. In this fashion, beliefs about the consequences formulate an individual’s attitudes while one’s normative beliefs formulate subjective norms. Furthermore, an individual’s attitude towards an object is a determinant factor in formulating the intention to perform certain behavior in relation to that object. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue that defining one’s attitude towards an object cannot predict behavior. Rather one’s intention to perform behavior in relation to an object is a function to her/his attitude towards this object and an indicator of behavior.

**Emotion Theory** by Wilkie (1994) states that consumer behavior in general is shaped by three dimension namely cognition, affection, and conation which are also known as the so called “think-feel-do” perspective. Cognition takes place in the early stages and is about rationality that influences a consumer’s way of thinking. Affection is related to one’s feelings or emotions during a buying process which is followed by the third dimension, conation, which refers directly to an individual’s way of acting (Wilkie, 1994). Sharifi (2014) calls these three dimensions trilogy of emotion. He investigated how this influences future purchase intentions of high involvement products. In literature, other studies that consider the three dimensions of emotion do exist (e.g. Meyer et al., 1997, Robbins and Judge, 2009 in Wilkie, 1994).

**Involvement Theory** works on two measures: the high/low involvement scale and the emotional/rational scale. In the first measure, there are considerations made concerning the amounts of time, the energy, and the levels of thought as well as additional resources that are
used in the purchasing of a product and could be measured from a little to a lot. On the contrary, the second measure assesses the impulse vs reason, the logic vs desire and prudence vs passion for the purchasing of a product. Therefore, on the basis of the two measures, consumer behavior can be categorized into four by consumer involvement theory as explained subsequently. In the category called high involvement rational, products that are involved tend to be of the higher price segment. A consumer in this case is required to make rational decisions before it comes to the purchase. Products related to this category are often of useful nature for a consumer which implies that a consumer might be involved in researching of product-specific information before engaging in the purchasing act. High involvement emotional refers to products having attachments to the emotions of a consumer. When it comes to the purchase of such a product, a consumer takes many aspects into consideration such as culture, society and own purchase power. For this case, processing of information is of high importance. Contrary to this category, low involvement rational classifies products bought due to a consumer’s habits and not requiring a high degree of information seeking. The fourth category, low involvement emotional, considers products a consumer might not spend considerable amounts of time for taking a choice (Foxall, 2002). The above-mentioned scales are illustrated in figure 4.

Figure 4: Product involvement (own illustration based on Foxall (2002))
3 Methodology

Methodology chapter aims to present the research approach and design in addition to the choice of data collection techniques, analysis techniques, and the limitation of the study.

3.1 Mixed-methods Approach

Contemporary research tends to adopt one of two competing areas of focus which are qualitative or quantitative research approaches. The difference usually lies in the favourableness of words rather than numbers, questions with open ends rather ones of closed ends or vice versa. Nature of the research, perception of reality, and researchers’ field of expertise are usually the motive of applying one of the two approaches. On the other hand, mixed methods stand in the middle of this line combining elements from both approaches into one research. Remarkably, the popularity of the new approach is increasing in academic writing (Biber, 2010). More interestingly, Newman and Benz (1998) reject the contrast between quantitative and qualitative research methods especially when it comes to social or behavioral sciences which are the core focus of this study. The authors argue that for such reality is rather the relationship between the two approaches than the neither exclusive nor interchangeable nature of one of them.

Creswell (2014), argues that applying the mixed methods approach serves creating greater strength and more fundamental understanding of the research problem besides increasing the generalisability of results. It furthermore curries greater prospect of addressing more complex questions and phenomena (Biber, 2010). Purposes of applying mixed methods approach were discussed by many scholars. Triangulation is believed to be the most cited motive behind applying mixed methods approach. Bryman (2006 in Saunders et al., 2009) defines triangulation as applying more than one to corroborate findings of a study. Saunders et al., (2009) explains triangulation as the use of more than one data collection techniques in one study to insure the accuracy of the information reflected by the collected data. While Jick (1979) argues that data generated in mixed methods enhances the trustworthiness of results. For the study at hand, and based on the arguments stated previously triangulation is the main motive for applying the mixed methods approach. Different methods are applied in order to fulfil the different purposes of the research.
According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, in Saunders et al., 2009, p. 153) qualitative data collection will serve collecting exploratory data, while quantitative data will serve the descriptive or the explanatory purpose of the study “(...) This would give you confidence that you were addressing the most important issues”. One important factor on the other hand is participant bias. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975, p. 108) state in their explanation of behavior measurement errors that “(...) subjects may differ in the extent to which they tend to agree with statements (acquiesce), to give socially desirable responses, and to use extreme or moderate response categories”. Thus, referring to Saunders et al., (2009) a sequential data collection and analysis technique is applied. That involves data collection and analysis techniques conducted one after another. In the context of this study, quantitative data will be collected and analyzed first and then qualitative data. That is in order to have an insight on any potential constant error of measurement, participant bias in the case of this study, and to investigate them deeper in the next stage in the interviews. This applies to another motive of applying mixed methods approach which is development. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) argue that designing a method of data collection based on the results of a previous one supports the refinement of a research by creating an interactive effect. The authors then give an example of interview questions designed depending on the quantitative data generated by a survey what applies perfectly to data collection methods of this research.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

The abductive approach is the one applied in this research. Saunders et al., (2009) illustrate the importance of this approach by allowing researchers to apply the existing theories and literature and at the same time to contribute new findings to the existing theory. The approach goes in line with methods of data collection and analysis in this cross-sectional study. The research is exploratory and explanatory as it aims to provide a deep understanding of new insights of an existing phenomenon so it goes in line with the abductive approach (Robson 2002, p. 59 in Saunders et al., 2009).
3.3 Data Sources and Collection

3.3.1. Research Settings

Data collection took place in Germany at the main sales department of a leading German car brand. There, latest models and technologies are shown in addition to some classical or even historic ones. The company was chosen firstly, because it is one of the leading car brands worldwide. Secondly, because of the status the brand has. One more factor is the possibility of access for the researcher. The brand name is held anonymous in order to keep the focus of the study directed to the studied phenomena rather than to the brand in addition to ethical commitment of the research. This subsection aims to take the reader on a trip to the place where data was collected. The purpose of the detailed description of it is to provide an understanding of the atmosphere consumer experience while performing the studied behavior.

The location is easy to reach by public transportation and it is located directly next to an underground station as well as by car, as it is close to the highway and located in an industrial area. Parking lots are available in the backyard of the building. Signs guide customers smoothly to the parking area. Alternatively, the sales department can be reached by bike as excellent biking infrastructure exists throughout the whole city. The building itself is designed in an outstanding way. It is mainly a giant showroom of cars. Moreover, the salesmen’s offices and a reception can be found in the same floor. Downstairs the sports edition of the brand can be found. However, customers do not go there by themselves. Only customers with a specific interest in such models are lead to this floor by a salesman. Considering the building is mostly made of glass, one is surrounded by a very light atmosphere. This implies the modern style of the building with modern interior which is in line with the modern cars shown in the room. The building is accessible for disabled people. A kids-corner does exist as well. Up to 500 customers are received daily at the sales department, including car inspection appointments.

The bistro which is located in the center of the huge, well-lighted area and next to the reception creates a cozy and comfortable atmosphere and represents a nice place. It is an open place and not directly separated from the rest. Only the order of tables and flowers border the bistro area, so customers stay on visual contact with the cars, screens, and happenings surrounding the place. In total, it consists of 16 tables with 4 places each, that which gives seats enough for 64 people. Further 15 people fit to the bar where coffee is prepared. The path going through the whole area directly leads to the bistro considering one comes from the main
entry. It is mainly supposed to be for customers; yet, also visitors and thus potential customers, or workers of the company have access and are welcome to enjoy a coffee or snack there. This makes the bistro a central meeting point. Bar tenders are asked to stick to a certain dress code. Good quality Italian coffee is served there as well as breakfast and some snacks for lunch. While sitting there, people can get in contact with each other, chat, exchange experiences, and share information. Screens are located here showing very new attractions, technologies, or special offers. The tables are empty, yet, there are shelves with magazines and brochures one can pick and read.

Contact with the sales department was established with the support of the researcher’s personal network. After that, a date for a personal interview was set. The agreement first was to conduct three semi-structured interviews. However, finally only one was allowed. The interview was done in the bistro in English in an unsophisticated atmosphere. The researcher was required to additionally hand the transcribed interview to the press department. The survey took place at the very same location, where a questionnaire was handed in to customers. In total, access for 5 working days for conducting the survey, was permitted. Later during the analysis period, some question needed to be answered and thus a telephone interview was conducted with one of the salesmen.

3.3.2 Primary Data

(Saunders et al., 2009) in their explanation of the applicability of surveys state that surveys enable researchers to collect large amount of data in a limited period of time from a limited number of participants. Furthermore, surveys serve well in collecting data of an explanatory nature to fulfil an explanatory purpose of a study. Questions of the survey were designed in English and in a similar way to the survey conducted by Sharifi (2014) who investigated the influence of emotions on purchase intention of high involvement products. Survey questions are designed respective to the societal factor and the four causal variables (see Appendix A).

(Saunders et al., 2009, p. 140) illustrate the importance of interviews as being “(...) one of the three principals of conducting an exploratory research; a search of the literature, interviewing ‘experts’ in the subject, conducting focus group interviews”. The interview guidelines can be found attached (Appendix B). It includes five sections covering the five societal factors to be investigated and contain four sub-questions respective to the causal variable each.
Saunders et al. (2009, p. 288) believe that observation is one of the ‘neglected aspect of research’ that enables researchers to better understand behaviour of humans. It furthermore provides the researcher with a better understanding of phenomena as it enables them not only to observe but also to feel the experience (Gill and Johnson 2002 in Saunders et al., 2009). The observation does not have any predetermined structure. Identity and purpose of the researcher were revealed to all participants. Thus, the observation is a participant observation. The researcher rather observed than directly participated in the process of car sales. Therefore, the case applies to observer as a participant category of observation (Gill and Johnson 2002 in Saunders et al. 2009). In spite of being not directly focused on the societal factors opposite to the survey and the interview, the observation achieves a significant contribution though. It enhances the general understanding of the whole experience of consumers’ decision making process. Such insight can never be gained through only asking questions or interviewing experts. Observation puts a researcher inside the context in which a behavior is performed. Describing the whole experience in details aims to take the reader into the same situation.

3.3.3 Secondary Data

Existing literature and findings of previous researches in the same field were reviewed in order to gather secondary data of the research at hand and to build up its theoretical framework.

3.4 Sampling

In the survey, the target group of participants is people who intend to perform a purchase of a combustion engine car. This is why the survey is distributed in face to face meeting of consumers at the described sales department. Thus, the sample framework is undefinable, as the number of those people who has such intention is undefinable. The same case exists for the expert interview. The non-probability sampling technique is adopted. Furthermore, all participants in all data collection techniques in this research meet the characteristics of the target population (Saunders et al., 2009).
3.5 Data Analysis

Collected data, both quantitative and qualitative are analyzed correspond to the theoretical framework. Yin (2003 cited in Saunders et al., 2009, p.489) state that ‘‘(...) where you have made use of existing theory to formulate your research question and objectives, you may also use the theoretical propositions that helped you do this as a means to devise a framework to help you to organize and direct your data analysis’’ In this study, analysis begins from a theoretical outlook. In this fashion, the study applies for the deductive approach. Yet, the study contributed new findings to the existing literature. That goes in line with Saunders et al. (2009) definition of inductive research. Concluding and because of applying both approaches, the analysis method is abductive (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.6 Limitations

The study is limited due to the applied data collection techniques as the amount of people responding to the survey is limited and response bias in interviews cannot be excluded (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, results of this study do not ensure generalizability because findings refer to combustion engine cars as a high-involvement product. That does not necessarily prove validity for other products of the same or different categories. Furthermore, data was collected from consumers of a certain brand. Besides, the limited timeframe for conducting this study needs to be considered.
4 Empirical Results

Empirical results chapter aims to present the results of data collection of this study; first, observation followed by survey results, and lastly expert interviews. Presenting the results of the survey and the interview follows the order of the societal factors in focus; informational social influence, shared experience, and status consumption (group membership, self-distinction, financial success).

In the following empirical results of data collection will be presented. Figure 5 presents an overview of the results of each data source. The tick stands for a positive influence of a societal factor on a causal variable, while the cross means that there is no influence found. A circle was chosen if no the data source did neither confirm nor disconfirm an influence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal Influential Factor</th>
<th>Causal variable</th>
<th>Result 1st data source (Survey)</th>
<th>Result 2nd data source (Interview)</th>
<th>Result Observation</th>
<th>Total result</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Emotions</td>
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</table>

Figure 5: Results - Overview
4.1 Observation

Latest models are located inside and outside of the sales department in a visible and attractive way. Generally, test driving service is very famous. Meanwhile, the interview stated in a telephone interview later that potential customers and previous owners of the brand are usually contacted by telephone and invited to try new models when they are launched. Each customer gets an individual introduction to the car of interest. However, on the company’s website where the test driving is announced, sport cars, classy cars and latest models are suggested. Electrical alternatives are neglected in this case. Customers usually book their appointment by telephone. Calling the sales department leads them to the reception. Here appointments are assigned to certain salesmen depending on the model of the car of interest. In case, a private person who has been customer for several years so far wants to have an appointment, these are already registered and directly assigned to their trusted salesperson. In some cases, customers also contact a sales person directly via e-mail; this happens in cases of long-term customer relationships.

At the appointment day and from the moment of arrival, consumers are flooded by impressions of the latest models. At the reception and until the contact person appears, customers watch a show-model equipped with special features and mostly highly motorized which is located immediately in front of the reception. Alternatively, they can read one of the flyers or advertisements available at the reception. When salesmen come, customers are usually first taken to the bistro. To give customers the chance to arrive completely and adapt to the new environment, sales personnel usually invite them for a coffee before starting sharing information with them. Afterwards, a salesman usually takes the customer to the office. The offices are equipped with a desk for the salesman, a table with two chairs for the customer and the salesman. Screens allow a customer to see the car of interest with all its details and characteristics. This includes features of interior and the different colour options for example. On the salesman’s computer calculations are done which again can be projected to the big screen for the customer. Duration of an appointment cannot be generalized as purchasing a car is a very individual process and dependent on many customer-related factors. After the appointment, customers are always invited to stay a bit longer or to have another look around or to enjoy another coffee, the appointment ends already close to the office.

Comparing the numbers of people who gather to have a look at a certain car it is obvious that the more special, innovative and unique the car is the larger the number of people who want to have a look or try. Questions to the salesmen are also more about that category of car. On
screens or flyers one can notice as well that those special feature cars are the most popular. This goes in line with advertisements the company has on their website for test driving. When asking about the reason, the answer was that the special ones are the most demanded for trial. That goes also in line with the trend of adding special features or sport characteristics even to family cars. It is very much demanded. Meanwhile, there are many editions of the same model or different options in order to add a bit of customization to the product. On the other hand, and by having a closer look at those who gather around the most expensive and fanciest models, it is obvious that they have a similar taste in many other things. For example, brands of clothing, watches, or mobile phones, mostly the ones famous for being expensive. In the same fashion, those who gather around the most innovative models are the ones who are dressed trendier and have the latest mobile phones. Meanwhile, and in spite of being not so many, those who are interested in electrical cars, which occupy only a small corner, look more educated and younger. It is notable also that the experience of being around the cars and discussing about their own experiences drives consumers to be satisfied. It is noticed from their postures and gestures while gathering and discussing that they are having a satisfying experience. Tracing their body language in such a situation, one can easily notice that they are happy about it.

4.2 Survey

The survey was divided into 5 sections containing 4 questions each. Each section investigates respectively the influence of one of the studied societal factors on the 4 causal variables of consumer behavior. The survey was in English language. In total 63 respondents were met at the described sales department. An overview showing entire results can be found attached (see Appendix C). In the following the results which the survey revealed regarding each societal influential factor will be presented.

4.2.1 Informational Social Influence

Assessing the survey reveals in total more than 60% of agreement with the first question in this section. Participants were asked if receiving information from society would increase their positive commitment and beliefs about a certain car. 38.1% of participants agree and 23.8% strongly agree. The question intends to investigate the influence of information
consumers receive from society on their attitude. Second question investigates the influence of the same factor on the second causal variable of consumer behavior (contextual forces). Here, the question intended to find out if consumers are more likely to buy a certain car when the context is labelled by receiving positive recommendation from society. This question shows strong agreement with 45.2% agree and 24.2% strongly agree. Afterward, when it came to questioning if receiving information from others about a certain car would make them feel more confident regarding their own knowledge about this very car 49.2% agree and 31.7% strongly agree. This question was designed to investigate the influence of the very same factor on the third causal variable which is personal capabilities. Lastly, fourth question also shows a clear result in the category of agreement with 30.2% agree and 34.9% strongly agree. The question investigates the informational social influence on the fourth variable (emotions) by asking participants if receiving positive information about a certain car from others would make them feel for buying it.

Concluding, the investigated factor informational social influence regarding its relation to the attitudes, contextual forces, personal capabilities, and emotions shows a positive influence on all of them due to the results of the survey.

4.2.2 Shared Experience

Investigating the influence of the factor shared experience on consumers’ attitudes, was answered by 36.5% with ‘I don’t know’. At the same time in total 39.7% show disagreement (9.5% strongly disagree and 30.2% disagree) with the statement of having positive beliefs and commitment to the car which close people own. Disagreement scored high as well regarding the second question with 39.7% disagree and 19% strongly disagree. The question aimed to figure out the influence of shared experience on the second causal variable (contextual forces). Further, people were asked if being close to people who own a certain type of car would make them more likely to buy a similar one. Investigating the same factor shared experience regarding the third causal variable (personal capabilities) revealed in total more than 50% disagreement with 27% disagree and 23.8% strongly disagree. Yet, 31.7% are not sure if they are more willing to spend resources, e.g. in terms of money, for a car that close people to them already own. Again, disagreement ranked high regarding the fourth question with 46% disagree and 19% strongly disagree. The influence of the factor shared experience
on the fourth causal variable (emotions) was investigated by asking participants if they were more likely to buy a car that is similar to which close people to them own.

Summarizing, the survey revealed that the societal factor shared experience has no influence on any of the causal variables attitudes, contextual forces, personal capabilities, and emotions.

4.2.3 Status Consumption (Group Membership)

Considering the factor status consumption and more particularly group membership, first question aimed to find out the influence of this factor on consumers’ attitude. Considering, 31.7% of the respondents are not sure, a noticeable number of 27% disagree and 25.4% strongly disagree which stands for more than 50%. Participants were asked if they are more committed to buying a certain car if that would make them belong to a certain group. Disagreement also led considering the rankings due to the influence of the factor group membership on the second causal variable (contextual forces) with 36.5% disagree and 31.7% strongly disagree. Here, people were asked to give their opinion about the following statement ‘In the context of being a member of a certain group I would buy the car group members own’. In order to figure out the impact of group membership on the third causal variable (personal capabilities), people were asked if they would spend more resources for the car that makes them belong to a certain group. The survey revealed 36.5% strong disagreement and 28.6% disagreement. In total an accurate number of 71% chose disagreement regarding the influence of the same factor on their emotions. 33.9% strongly disagree and 37.1% disagree that they would like to buy the car that makes them belong to a certain group.

The above demonstrated results of the survey show that the societal factor group membership out of the category status consumption does not have an influence on one of the four causal variables.

4.2.4 Status Consumption (Self-distinction)

Results in this section vary regarding the four causal variables. Considering the influence of the factor self-distinction on attitudes revealed a clear agreement with 31.7% agree and 17.7% strongly agree. Participants were asked if they were more committed to buy the car that is different from the one close people to them have. A comparable number also agrees that in
the context of belonging to a certain group, they would buy the car that distinguishes them from group members (33.3% agree and 19% strongly agree). This question intended to investigate the influence of the same factor on the second causal variable (contextual forces). Agreement and disagreement ranked similarly regarding the next question about the willingness of spending more resources for a car that distinguishes one from others. Here, in total 41.9% disagree and a total number of 48.3% agree. The question was designed to investigate the influence of the factor self-distinction on the third causal variable (personal capabilities). The results show a more even distribution regarding the influence of the same factor on the fourth variable (emotions). Here, the majority agrees with 23.8% strong agreement and 20.6% agreement that they would like to buy the car that distinguishes them from others. However, disagreement and strong disagreement showed an almost similar high score with 19% each. 17.5% of the respondents are not sure about this point.

As a conclusion, the factor self-distinction has a clear positive influence on the causal variables attitudes and contextual forces. Regarding the impact on personal capabilities, agreements leads. Yet, the number is very similar to the one disagreement shows. Thus, a further investigation is necessary. The same is valid for the fourth variable due to its very even distribution of the results.

4.2.5 Status Consumption (Financial Success)

Results in this section showed that the factor financial success positively influences participants’ attitudes with 23.8% agree and 22.2% strongly agree which represents the majority. However, 20.6% disagree and 15.9% strongly disagree. Participants were asked, if they were more committed to a car that expresses their financial success. Results reveal clear agreement regarding the influence of the same factor on the second causal variable (contextual forces). Here, 34.9% agree and 15.9% strongly agree that in certain occasions they would express their financial success by owning a certain car. A nearly same number was revealed by the question about the willingness of investing more resources for a car that may represent financial success with in total 33.3% disagreement and 38.1% agreement. However, 28.6% are not sure about it. The question aimed to figure out the impact of the factor financial success on the third causal variable (personal capabilities). Regarding the fourth causal variable (emotions), the majority agrees with 27% agreement and 23.8% strong
agreement. People were asked, if they would like to buy the car that expresses their financial success.

Summarizing, the survey reveals that the factor status consumption, particularly financial success, has a positive influence on the causal variables attitudes, contextual forces, and emotions. Regarding the causal variable personal capabilities, there is a positive influence to be found. Yet, the number of people disagreeing is nearly similar which requires a further investigation of such.

4.3 Expert Interview

The aim of this interview is to get an in-depth insight of the influence of the factors in focus on consumer behavior. The interviewee was informed that all data collected will be used exclusively for the fulfilment of this research and treated anonymously. The interview consists of 5 main sections, each has four sub-questions regarding the four causal variables attitudes, context, personal capabilities, and emotions. It was conducted in English language. The outcome of the expert interview will be presented for each of the societal influential factors in respect to the structure of results of the survey.

4.3.1 Informational Social Influence

The influence of information consumers receive from others is confirmed on all four causal variables. It is seen as an important factor by experts.

‘That might happen intentionally (means I want to buy a car so I start asking), or normally in life you know people talk a lot. I would say what close people think about a certain car is an important factor, not only when it comes to rather purchasing anything than only purchasing a car, the shirt you have right now for example, if three or four people tell you it suits you very well you of course will be more likely to wear it more frequently’.

Customers’ attitudes towards a certain car can consequently be influenced as information is often exchanged among close people.
‘Customers sometimes have better attitude about a certain class of our cars. This can be noticed when the attitude is negative. Some customers are not willing even to talk about for example the bigger classes, they believe they cost a lot for tax and gasoline and so one. Some others want only to discuss the big ones as they have families and they think about their holidays pulling some house caravans. This is something they absolutely discuss with friends and family and exchange information about it. One could say after a summer holiday; I pulled the house caravan to south of Italy with my car and it functioned perfectly well.’

Furthermore, information exchanged by society positively influences the variable of personal capabilities.

‘This I can assure you, people get bigger loans to get a certain car they were previously convinced to have than the ones we try to convince them about, in this case they hesitate about loans. But when they come already knowing what they want they even know exactly what loan they would have, many times they say I know someone who pays less per-month, is that not possible? They ask.’

Also in terms of the popularity of a certain car, shared information might even shape consumers’ emotions. Furthermore, the expert confirms the informational social influence on contextual forces answering ‘sure’ and refers to the same example he mentioned when he was asked about emotions.

‘The relation between that and the information they received from close people I cannot certainly connect them but I would say it can be influential, what people around our consumers talk about form a sort of collective taste. When a car becomes popular you feel that everyone want to have it. And that is related somehow to what we hear about it. (...) they talk very positively about it, that’s a matter of fact. So, I would say those three things are related; a popular car, people like it and talk about it positively.’

4.3.2. Shared Experience

The influence of the societal factor ‘shared experience’ can be found influential on behavior of consumers. This factor, so the expert interviewed, is not very different from receiving positive information from the others.
‘(...) owning the very same car friends or family members have, happens especially when customers have very good driving experiences which made them very satisfied, this is indeed communicated.’

According to the interviewee, making a good experience with a certain car is followed by sharing this through communication. This fact affects attitudes and emotions of people.

‘When they for example go in a trip with a friend in his/her brand new car with all the modern options and enjoy the ride, they will absolutely have a positive attitude toward that car.’

‘Here I have an example, once a customer came; she wants to have a certain car the same her boyfriend had when they first met. That was related to very good memories for her and very good experience. She definitely was emotionally connected to the car someone else owned and wanted to have the very same one, even the same colour.’

It is also connected to certain contexts and to the willingness to invest resources for a car that made another close person satisfied by having a good experience.

‘Very much, consumers who hang around with people who have a better financial situation would always want to have higher status cars, this you can notice easily. Another example; employees who work for a company that adopt a green policy are more likely to buy the el cars. Again, those who have families and pet also have different choices from the single ones.’

‘Back to the example of the girl who wanted the same car her boyfriend owned previously; this girl did not have a loan I remember means she saved to get the car. Same time if she did not have a proper job that enables her to save such an amount of money she won’t buy it. So, it is mutual the relation’

4.3.3 Status Consumption (Group membership)

The interviewee assumes and believes that seeking for status in general is declining. Yet, it still happens ‘very rarely’ that customers buy a car in order to show a certain statement.
‘I think (!!) that the topic of status is declining. Today, people already pay more attention to fuel consumption, emissions, etc. and try to go keep up with the times. Customers have started to accept compromises. This leads to a phenomenon, that a biggest car body is not a must anymore as also a smaller one suits the needs very well. On the other hand, it happens that a customer clearly says something that means “I want to give a statement with having this or that car”. For example, a car out of a certain series is often bought in order to belong to that group (...) but that happens very rarely. I would say that people nowadays are more seeking for uniqueness and special features. This is one of the most important factors that makes such a brand popular internationally. So, I would say a small percentage of people still like the group thing, or imitate others. However, from a sales point of view one cannot for example tell a customer okay buy this car and you will be like somebody else. The opposite is rather the convincing statement.’

Therefore, ‘just in case’ this happens and people want to belong to a certain group by owning a certain car, positive influence on attitudes would exist.

‘Just in case this happens and a consumer desires being accepted by a certain group of people, they will have a positive attitude towards it. For example, with this trend of paying more attention to consumption and emission can also be considered a class by itself; it tells something if one owns a green car; it has some social value. It sort of communicates an ‘I care’ message of the owner. So, one might buy a green car as well to belong to those who care or not to belong to those who do not. At the same time, it still communicates some uniqueness owing such a car. Anyway, previously, people wanted to own very similar things and to form groups like the Harley Davidson community for example. Yet still in such a very clear group of people they do not own exactly the same model. Customization is stronger today and consumers really became more open, and they really seek uniqueness. As I said, a salesman always tries to highlight how special the product is, this is believed to be more convincing.’

Considering the other causal variables, the interviewee emphasizes that in case such happens, the desire of belonging to a certain group is something very emotional, it mostly happens in a certain context and people in such cases are of course willing to invest more resources.
‘This is pretty contextual, I would tell you it is not that popular anymore; to buy a car only to be one of those who have it. Yet, when it is the case it has a positive influence.’

‘If that happens, and a consumer wants a car to belong to a certain class or group, they would be very affected emotionally by the group I would say.’

‘This is absolutely contextual, it happens only in certain contexts.’

‘Pretty much, in case one wants to belong to a certain group or class through owning a car, those cars are usually special ones, not the cheapest!’

4.3.4 Status Consumption (Self-distinction)

When it comes to self-distinction by owning a certain car, the interviewee refers to a rather a big segment of consumers who do so. These are mostly the early adopters who are interested in the new, edge-breaking and innovative.

‘This is a common case; those who are keen in self-distinction are a popular portion. Let’s take the group of early-adopters as an example; these are exactly the ones who are interested in the new, innovative and edge-breaking models.’

These are the ones who like to try with the intention to be the unique ones. Mostly these are media people, creative, or rather alternative ones who don’t want to go with the mass. (…)

Customers attitudes are affected by the factor self-distinction. Yet, this is connected to a negative attitude towards a certain model which such do not want to have in addition to the positive attitude towards the innovative ability of a certain car or a brand.

‘This one can notice if a customer has a negative attitude towards a certain class or car, they might say; no, I do not want a car of this class, my brother has it, it is not economic. This is a simple example. However, those who seek uniqueness come to ask about the latest stuff. They take their time to decide about which is the one, however I would say they have a good attitude towards the whole brand and they know it is innovative and might meet their taste.’
The second causal variable, contextual forces, is according to the expert interviewed not affected. People who seek for distinction are like this from nature and not only in certain occasions.

'I do not think so, distinction seekers are like that in nature, mostly in every context and every occasion. In their clothing, food and all habits. It is more a lifestyle.'

Yet, considering personal capabilities, people who want to be unique are ready to spend the necessary amount of money. Taking the category of early adopters, these are the most willing to spend resources for the latest innovation.

'Absolutely, uniqueness and modernity is the most expensive category, early adopters are the ones who devote the most resources for such a purchase. Also, others who seek for some special features in their normal family cars are willing to invest more to get that.'

On an emotional level, people are affected by loving the uniqueness and a very special experience rather than the car as an object itself, so the interviewee.

'(...) if they love it or if self-distinction makes them love a car! I would say they would love the uniqueness it gives them not the car itself. They seek for special experiences and that what they appreciate.'

4.3.5 Status Consumption (Financial Success)

Expressing financial success, according to the interviewee, in general depends on the definition of such. For some, owning a certain car means a tool for expressing financial success. Sometimes a certain smaller car is intentionally chosen in order not to express this very factor.

'(...) this is often dependent on the branch also. If we take for example the biggest class of cars, it happens that customers (especially CEOs) do not necessarily want to show up with that car; they rather think about having a smaller one as this is good enough. This is often done in cases where the customer does not want others to think he or she has too much money. At the same time, there are those who always want to have the most expensive ones. Sometimes in an exaggerated way that they need to have big loans to cover the payments.'
As a result, an influence on consumers’ attitudes exists. Yet, this might have different dimensions. The same factor can be seen as very context-related and is often related to very certain choices. Therefore, the influence on the causal variable ‘personal capabilities’ is strongly connected to the context and thus valid.

‘Back to the same example of the CEOs, they do not have a favourable attitude towards the more expensive cars as they do not want to show off. Rather they prefer a mini cooper for example.’

‘This is pretty contextual, back to the example of those CEOs, if they would have a different job they will for sure have a different choice. I am sure they own also different cars for different contexts; like the family car.’

‘It is also related to this, not all models show financial success, most expensive once do!’

Considering the impact of the factor status consumption and more particularly financial success on emotions of people, the interviewee does not see a positive correlation. According to him, the choice about a car due to the desire of expressing or hiding financial success is rather rational than emotional.

‘Such a decision I would say might be rather rational than emotional I mean for the CEOs. But for those who like to show off I would say they are emotionally attached to the experience rather to the car itself.’

To summarize, the results of the second data collection method revealed that the influence of the first two societal factors (informational social influence and shared experiences) is positive on all of the four causal variables of consumer behaviour (attitude, contextual forces, personal capabilities, and emotions). On the other hand, the fourth societal factor, self-distinction in the context of status consumption, is seen influential on of the causal variables namely attitude and personal capabilities. Yet, the influence of this factor on emotions and contextual forces is argumentative based on the statements of the interviewee. Lastly, the societal factor financial success is found influential on three of the causal variables; (attitude, contextual forces and personal capabilities). However, the factor has no influence on emotions.
5 Analytical Discussion

Analytical Discussion chapter aims to analytically discuss the results demonstrated in the previous chapter. Data analysis took place sequentially respecting the order of the sequential data collection. For such, societal factors which were confirmed or disconfirmed by both survey and expert interview were not further looked at from an observational perspective. On the other hand, factors which showed contrasting results by the first two data collection methods deserved additional insight from observation for approval or disapproval. The chapter will follow the same order of the societal factors in focus; informational social influence, shared experience, status consumption (group membership, self-distinction, financial success).

5.1 Informational Social Influence

Both data sources, the survey and the expert interview, revealed that the societal factor informational social influence has a positive impact on all causal variables. Accordingly, customers’ attitudes, contextual forces, personal capabilities as well as emotions are influenced by it. Thus, this factor can be confirmed regarding its positive influence on consumer behaviour.

The obvious majority of participants of the survey agrees that receiving information from others about a car would increase their commitment about it. Consequently, it is affecting their attitudes as the first causal variable. The same was stated by the expert interviewed as he frequently notices customers’ attitudes, positive and negative ones, about a certain car which is caused by information consumers receive from society. This illustration finds clear parallels with literature reviewed. It is stated that in case a consumer is influenced by this very factor due to knowledge or information received from others, the factor informational social influence will occur (Goldsmith, 2006 in Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011; Wilkie, 1994, p. 353). On an attitudinal level, it can be proved that personal commitment among others is influential for certain behaviors (Katzev and Johnson, 1987 in Stern, 2000; Stern, 2000).

Also regarding contextual forces, this factor is seen influential by both participants of the survey and the interviewee. Additionally, results of the observation provide confirming information about the relation between this factor and a certain context or occasion. In this matter, being permanently surrounded by impressions and selected information about various
models as it is the case in the observed sales department, confirms the impact of receiving information due to a certain context. The before-mentioned proves that factors which are related to a certain context according to Stern (2000) do occur on an interpersonal level when information among people is shared or latest technologies become apparent.

Considering personal capabilities, a huge impact due to information consumers receive from close people is confirmed by the results of the survey. This is approved by the expert as well; customers appear at the sales department with already having a broad knowledge about a car and even its payment possibilities. This implies their willingness of spending more resources, e.g. in terms of money or getting deeper knowledge about it, for the car that was recommended by others. Thus, personal capabilities, as stated to be a determinant of consumer behaviour (Stern, 2000) and regarding informational social influence can be confirmed. Moreover, the model of Bhamra et al. (2011) can be criticized as they did neither consider contextual forces nor personal capabilities in their framework.

Lastly, also emotions are highly influenced by the same factor based on both survey and expert interview. The expert interviewed mentioned here the factor popularity of a car. In this context, it is convincing that what people talk and the kind of information they exchange, forms a ‘collective taste’ which makes a car more demanded. Considering this, Bhamra et al. (2011) and Wilkie (1994) are proved when claiming emotions as a source of affect determine the formulation of intentions and thus consumer behaviour. However, this study goes beyond this and proves that informational social influence is influential on emotions. That does not go in line with involvement theory which denies the influence of emotions on consumer decision when it comes to high involvement rational products such as cars.

Concludingly, the influence of the factor informational social influence on the four causal variables (attitude, contextual forces, personal capabilities, and emotions) is confirmed. Thus, it is proved to be a determinant of consumer behavior in the context of this study.

5.2 Shared Experience

The investigated societal factor shared experience shows contrasting results on all causal variables. While the survey revealed this factor to be not influencing attitudes, contextual forces, personal capabilities, or emotions, the second data source states the opposite. According to the interviewee, the factor shared experience is similar to the factor informational social influence. It is argued that if somebody had a good experience with a car,
this will most probably be shared. Sharing past experiences happens through communication which will be received by the other in terms of information. Thus, it has a comparable positive influence as the factor presented in the previous section on the four causal variables.

Regarding attitudes, participants of the survey mostly disagreed that experiences they share with others makes them more committed to a certain car. A nearly same number is not sure about it. However, only a minority agrees. These results are not seen sufficient in order to prove or disprove the influence of the factor shared experience on people’s attitudes. Considering the second data source, the opposite is revealed. This is absolutely in line with Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011) and Tindale et al. (2008, in Hogg and Tindale, 2008); the authors state that knowledge and beliefs are shared in a society. Information which is spread and received by doing so influences others and is derived from past experiences. Interestingly, similar can be concluded due to the observation. Observing consumers identifies them as communicative individuals. In the very atmosphere of being surrounded by cars and car-related magazines it is not far to seek that people start discussing such. On the other hand, observation revealed that shared or common interests are obvious in the way they gather around certain models or in how some shows on the screens or catalogues catch attention of the majority. Hence, the influence of the factor shared experience on consumers’ attitudes can be confirmed. Although results of the survey revealed a vague majority of participants disagreeing, the second data source as well as the observation identified this factor to be influential. Moreover, this argumentation finds its justification by the comparably high percentage of people who chose the answer ‘not sure’. Similarly, attitudes can be confirmed to determine consumer behaviour as stated in past literature (e.g Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Bhamra et al., 2011, Stern, 2000).

The second causal variable, contextual forces, is not influenced by the same factor as the survey revealed. This objects Wilkie (1994) describing conforming behavior as an action that is followed by others and shows similar characteristics of behavior. Moreover, the expert interviewed mentions the example of people working for a company that is adopting a green policy. Those are often more likely to buy the sustainable alternative what implies the influence of shared experience on contextual forces. At the same time the interviewee refers to those who want to have a car that is even better than the one their peers own. Yet, the examples given in the interview are not seen convincing enough in order to prove a positive influence of the factor shared experience on contextual forces. Likewise, the observation did not allow to assume if there is a positive relation between the two. Considering the negative
impact that was revealed by the survey, this factor cannot be claimed to have an effect on the second causal variable, contextual forces.

Based on the results of the first data source, participants disagree that sharing experiences with others would make them invest more resources for owning a certain car. This means that personal capabilities, accordingly, are not affected. Taking an example, the expert mentions in the interview, the two variables contextual forces and personal capabilities are often related. If one decides to buy a family car derived from the experience another had with the same car and in the same family context, shows the relation of both. Meanwhile observing consumers does not give an insight about the influence of experiences they share on their personal capabilities. In previous literature (e.g. Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011; Tindale et al., 2008) the factor shared experience is claimed to be influencing individuals’ behavior. Yet, it was not investigated in the context of purchasing cars. However, data sources neither prove nor disprove the influence of such. Therefore, the influence of the factor shared experience on personal capabilities requires further research.

Similarly, contrasting results were revealed regarding the causal variable emotions. The survey reveals that the majority disagrees that sharing experience influences their emotions. Yet, the expert interviewed had the opinion that people can be emotionally connected to a car. It happened that customers came and wanted to have exactly that car somebody owns and referred that to good memories and experiences. Considering the observation, changes of people’s emotions could be noticed. Especially those, who gathered around a certain model and talked to each other, looked convinced, delighted and satisfied after they moved further. Thus, communicating with others and sharing experiences or information affects consumers’ emotions. In view of the illustrated discussion, the influence of the factor shared experience on the causal variable emotions can be confirmed. Hence, Wilkie (1994) and Bhamra et al. (2011) can be agreed with that emotions are crucial for consumer behavior. However, that illustrates a contrast with involvement theory regarding high involvement rational products.

In total, the factor shared experience was found influential on both causal variables attitude and emotions. However, the influence of such on contextual forces was disconfirmed. At the same time the study at hand is not able to confirm or disconfirm the influence of shared experience on personal capabilities. Thus, the societal factor shared experience is found influential on consumer behavior in the context of this study. This influence is manifested on attitude and emotions. Yet the factor requires further investigation.
5.3 Status Consumption (Group Membership)

Data collection revealed interesting although argumentative results. First, the survey showed strong disagreement with the influence of this factor on all of the four causal variables. Furthermore, expert interview did not reveal significant results about this factor. More particularly, the expert interviewed denied the whole influence of this factor. Hence, an insight from observation was required for drawing a better understanding.

Observation showed that customers are more unique products oriented. Consumers were keener in those cars that have special features and options. They seek more for what distinguishes them as individuals than what makes them more similar to others. Afterwards, it was obvious that this factor cannot be considered influential in the context of this study. Majority of participants did not agree that this factor influences their attitudes. While the expert stated that this very rarely has a positive influence on consumers’ attitude. Moreover, it was obvious that consumers have better attitudes towards more unique features. Thus, and as it was disconfirmed by all data collection methods, group membership was found to have no influence on consumers’ attitudes in this study.

Second causal variable (contextual forces) was disagreed to be influential by the majority participants. Expert interviewed stated that if this happens it would be in a very special contexts and occasions. The statements of the expert regarding this particular causal variable do not confirm the influence significantly. Yet, keeping in mind the approach of contextual forces which are the consumers willing to behave in a certain way in certain context. It is believed through the interpretation of expert statement that this factor enhances contextual forces regardless of its rarity. Observation does not give a clear insight about this factor as consumers were observed as individuals regardless of their backgrounds or group memberships. Hence group membership cannot be considered influential on contextual forces.

Disagreement hit a high record regarding the influence of being a member of a group on the resources they devote for buying a car. Expert interviewed denied this idea as well by stating that people invest more for what is exceptional and unique. So, the factor group membership is found not influential on personal capabilities.

Lastly the largest percentage of the participants refused the influence of this factor on their emotions. The high percentages of disagreement can be assessed by the explanation of the interviewee who stated that group membership is declining. Yet, the expert thinks that this
particular factor when exist to be very influential on emotions. Meanwhile, the expert believes this is a rare case. Observation as well does not give an insight about this causal variable. Thus, the influence of group membership on consumers’ emotions is denied in this study.

As a result, the influence of the societal factor (group membership) is not found positive on all causal variables. Hence, this factor is disconfirmed to be influential in the context of this study. In literature, there is a disagreement about this factor. Majority of scholars go for considering it influential in general and in context of green behavior as well (see Scitovsky 1992; Eze et al., 2013; Welsch et al., 2009; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Dotson and Hyatt 2000 in Joshi and Rahman 2015). Furthermore, it is believed that every individual has a social group in deed. Such is influential in terms of forming collective norms that individuals will follow seeking for acceptance Joshi and Rahman (2015). However, two previous studies prove the opposite; Connell (2010) and Lee (2011) in Joshi and Rahman (2015) found a negative relationship between belonging to a group and consumer behavior. Thus, the study at hand goes in line with these two studies. The factor self-distinction which comes next is considered opposite to group membership factor. Hence, it is logical that proving one of them means disproving the other. In this sense, disproving the factor group membership to be influential in the context of the study at hand would be first evidence in proving the self-distinction factor.

5.4 Status Consumption (Self-distinction)

Data collection revealed interesting results regarding the societal influential factor Status consumption in particular self-distinction. Due to previous literature, the same factor was stated influential (e.g. O’Cass, 2001 in O’Cass and McEwen, 2004; Scitovsky, 1992).

Considering customers’ attitudes, results show that the factor self-distinction has a clear influence. Participants agree that owning a car, that might distinguish them from others would make them more committed to buying it. The interviewee proves this factor regarding its influence as well. Yet, he emphasizes a negative attitude towards a certain model rather than a positive one. In other words, having a negative attitude towards a product that does not distinguish consumers from others has the same meaning.

Regarding the influence of the same factor on contextual forces, the survey revealed a clear positive influence. Participants mostly agree that in the context of belonging to a certain group they would chose a car that distinguishes them from others. However, the interviewee devoted
the opposite by stating that people seeking for distinction are like this in nature and it appears in certain situations. Hence, the desire of being different is not related to a certain context or occasion according to the expert. However, in this particularity, the study at hand aims whether self-distinction as a societal factor contributes to consumers’ contextual forces. Stern (2000) defines such as the availability of a certain context that promotes or hinders a certain behavior. In this fashion, the influence is confirmed even if the expert does not see it. Self-distinction can be considered as a personal characteristic that develops through one’s social life. Being in the context of buying a car enhances or allows this characteristic to appear and influences behavior (see Guagnano et al., 1995 in Stern, 2000). As explained in the previous factor; observation revealed a connection between the context of buying a car and seeking self-distinction. Thus, the factor is seen influential.

**Personal capabilities**, as the third causal variable, is influenced by the factor self-distinction as results of the survey revealed. However, a similar number of participants disagreed with investing more resources for a car that would make them distinguish from others. However, interviewing the expert revealed interesting findings that contribute to confirming the influence of the factor self-distinction on personal capabilities. Especially the group of early adopters or those who seek for uniqueness are according to the interviewee the ones devoting most resources for such a product or those who seek having special features in their ordinary cars. Accordingly, Stern (2000) can again be proved regarding the determining variable personal capabilities on consumer behavior. Here comes another connection to the previous causal variable contextual forces. Because when been asked, consumers disagree that they invest more for cars that distinguish them from others. While in reality, and as confirmed by the expert and by observation they are getting big loans to buy those cars. Obviously, the case here is a consumer bias towards what is socially acceptable as defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Here, it is worth mentioning that the research at hand adopted a mixed-methods approach for this very reason.

Survey results show nearly even distribution regarding the impact of the factor self-distinction on **emotions**. This does not allow to either confirm or disconfirm the influence of such. Yet, the results of the interview disprove the influence of the same factor on emotions. According to the expert, a car as an object is not emotionally binding for those who seek for distinction. It is rather the uniqueness of the product that makes them in a next step loving a car. Again, the study at hand, and for this particular variable, is an attempt to investigate whether or not self-distinction is influencing consumers’ emotions in a way that leads to influence behavior.
What the expert expressed means in other words that the uniqueness of the experience of owning the car is what influences consumers’ emotions. Back to the main principle, self-distinction motivated consumers’ emotions in this case regardless if these emotions are for the object or the experience. That justifies the fragmented results of the survey as consumers are maybe confused about their emotions or want to look more rational. Observation revealed that consumers prefer the unique products shown. However, observation does not indeed prove or disprove the influence on emotions. In total, the influence is proved by one of the data collection methods and can be neither proved nor disproved by the other two methods. Accordingly, this study shows contrasting results regarding the factor self-distinction to Bahamra (2011) and Wilkie (1994) who believe that self-distinction is emotionally influential factor. On the other hand, that does not go in line with involvement theory either. Because emotions cannot be excluded in this case even if not 100% proved. Hence, this particularity is recommended for future research.

Although the influence of the factor self-distinction regarding the causal variable emotions was neither approved nor disapproved in this study the factor is still considered influential. The strong relationship between attitudinal factors and behaviour as well as the obvious influence on personal capabilities and contextual forces leads to confirm the influence of this factor. In this fashion, it is proved that an individual may purchase a product that represents a certain status and makes one distinguished from others (see O’Cass, 2001 in O’Cass and McEwen, 2004; Scitovsky, 1992). So in total, and particularly regarding the influence of self-distinction on emotions, the result of this study goes in line with the involvement theory regarding high involvement products. That is because the influence is confirmed on all causal variables except for emotions.

5.5 Status Consumption (Financial Success)

The societal factor status consumption in terms of financial success shows a positive influence according to the results of the survey on all causal variables. However, agreement and disagreement scored almost similar results when it comes to the influence of financial success on personal capabilities. Second data source revealed contextual forces as well as personal capabilities being influenced by the factor financial success. The causal variable attitudes according to this data source, is affected somehow while on emotions there is no influence to be found.
On an *attitudinal level*, the factor financial success is clearly confirmed to be influential by the results of the survey. Participants were more committed to the car that would represent their financial success. The expert interviewed agrees so far, that there are always those who want to have the most expensive cars even if this requires big loans for the payment. On the other hand, there are customers, often CEOs, who intent exactly the opposite by purchasing a smaller car; those do not want to show off or to give an impression of having a lot of money. Thus, the interviewee questions ‘financial success’ as it depends on the definition of such. This implies that for some a certain car might be an object that represents a certain financial success. Thus, this goes in line with Hughes (1996 in Eastman et al., 1999, p.41) stating that the extent to which a consumer seeks for social status by purchasing a certain good cannot be generalized. According to the same author, it is dependent on the level to which one believes that a purchase would provide him with the desired social status ‘in the eyes of the significant others’. This is also in line with literature reviewed in this study; purchasing for social status is not related to a certain income. And as the assertions of the expert prove, not to be referred to a habit of the wealthy (see Freedman, 1991, Miller, 1991, Mason 1992 in Eastman et al., 1999).

Summarizing, the factor financial success is confirmed to be influential on consumers’ attitudes. This in turn proves previous researchers regarding attitude as a determinant of behavior (see Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Bhamra et al., 2011; Stern, 2000; Katzev and Johnson, 1987 in Stern, 2000).

Considering the second causal variable, *contextual forces*, participants of the survey claim the influence of the factor financial success to be positive. The majority agrees that in certain occasions, they would express their financial success by owning a certain car. The expert interviewed agrees by stating that expressing one’s financial success is pretty much related to a context. A job for example might be determinant for choosing a certain car. Moreover, the family status or background can influence the choice of a car. This confirms contextual forces to be influenced by the factor financial success. Considering this, the description of contextual forces according to Stern (2000) can be extended. As the same author mentions factors related to a context such as interpersonal dimensions, technological capabilities, or governmental regulations among others, this study allows to add the factors working environment and family background. Yet, those require further research.

The survey shows almost similar results of agreement and disagreement when it comes to investing more for a car that expresses financial success. Still, the percentage of agreement
represents the majority. The expert interviewed sees personal capabilities strongly related to a context. Observation revealed interesting results regarding this very factor. Consumers who were sighted to be more interested in the classy models have some other similarities like dressing up with the most expensive brands of clothing, watches and expensive mobile phones. They express their financial state in the way they look like through costly items. This means that those are more likely to invest more resources for the car that serves the same purpose as well. Thus, the results of this study are again in line Stern (2000) as according to this author personal capabilities involve money and social status among others. Furthermore, results expose the framework of Bhamra et al. (2011) to lack a consideration of this causal variable as well as contextual forces, as determinants of behavior.

Yet, the fragmented result in the survey is justified by what was explained by the expert. There is a portion of consumers who wish to express the opposite by owning the car which does not express their financial success. Hence the factor should be named rather financial state than financial success.

Consumers emotions due to the participants of the survey, are clearly influenced by the factor financial success, as the majority would like to buy a car that expresses financial success. However, the second data source reveals the opposite. According to the interviewee, a purchase decision is taken rather rationally than emotionally. In case of job-related car choices this is mostly a very rational and need-based decision. In other cases, consumers are more affected by the driving experience than the car itself. In the light of the opposing results, an influence of the factor financial success on the fourth causal variable, emotions, can neither be confirmed nor disconfirmed. In this fashion, previous studies about emotions as determinants of consumer behaviour cannot be verified in the context of the factor financial success (e.g. Wilkie, 1994; Sharifi, 2014; Meyer et al., 1997, Robbins and Judge, 2009 in Wilkie, 1994). Thus, this requires deeper investigations in same or similar contexts by future researchers.

In the light of the above discussion, the factor status consumption (financial success) is found influential on three of the four causal variables. Thus, it is influencing consumer behavior in the context of this study.
6 Findings and Implications

Findings and implications chapter illustrates the final outcome of this study reveals based on the results and the analytical discussion. From those, implications can be derived. As said in the beginning of this study, confirming or disconfirming societal influential factors will identify ‘screws’ of consumer behavior. Unfastening these screws can be helpful for marketers, organizations, or policy makers in order to move consumers towards a more sustainable consumption behavior (see figure 6).

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Figure 6: ‘Screws’ of Consumer Behavior (green = influential, yellow = further research, red = not influential)

This study reveals a clear positive influence of the factor informational social influence on consumer behavior. An influence of this factor on all causal variables is proven. Thus, this factor is recommended to be highly considered when it comes to designing strategies to promote sustainable products or to reverse consumer behavior towards more sustainable alternatives.

The investigation of the factor shared experience identified attitudes and emotions as being affected. This factor is helpful for marketers, organizations, and policy makers, as the influence of shared experience on consumers’ attitudes and emotions is notable. Hence, it is recommended that attitudinal and emotional elements should be in focus when considering it. Yet, influence on contextual forces needs to be excluded regarding the validation of this influential factor. The study does not reveal sufficient evidence regarding the influence of the same factor on personal capabilities. Thus, this requires further investigation and is left to future studies.
Group membership was found not to be influential in the context of the consumer behaviour model adopted in this study and considering high-involvement products such as car. On the other hand, the factor self-distinction can be seen as the opposite to group membership. There is a clear influence of self-distinction on attitudes, contextual forces, and personal capabilities. Thus, specialist who aim to motivate consumer behavior towards more sustainable products should be rather focused on self-distinctive characteristics than those that make people similar to others. In other words, to focus on unique and special features and not on common and popular ones. Furthermore, as the influence of the factor self-distinction is not proved on emotions, such strategies should be more rational oriented. Meanwhile the influence of the factor on emotions requires further investigation.

The factor financial success was confirmed to be influential on consumer behavior in the context of this study. Thus, it is recommended for stakeholders who aim to promote sustainable consumer behavior, to consider it. However, it is remarkable that some consumers would seek expressing their financial success by owning classy products. That means a sustainable alternative is required to express financial success by being labelled expensive. On the other hand, there is a portion of consumers who prefer to express the opposite of their financial success. This special category can also be taken into consideration. The study at hand does not prove the influence of financial success on emotions. That means, such strategies should be more rational oriented. The influence on emotions is left one more time to future research.

Another finding due to this study refers to the contextual forces which was considered as a causal variable. According to the framework of Stern (2000), shared expectations, technological capabilities, and governmental regulations count for this variable. Moreover, it works on an interpersonal level. Additionally, this study found the factors working environment as well as family status belonging to contextual forces. Thus, the two can be added to the framework of Stern (2000) (see figure 7).
As revealed by observation, the whole atmosphere where the behavior is performed, contributes to motivate consumer behavior towards the unsustainable alternative. Regarding the very well-arranged situation in a systematic way, the influence of consumer behavior in this case is believed to be notable. Thus, and because of the importance of the situation where the behavior is performed, one more causal variable can be added to be considered by future research which is situational forces. Stern (2000) defines contextual forces in the context of behavior that is enhanced in general by shared expectations, technological capabilities, or governmental regulations. However, situational forces are rather related to the situation in which a decision is made and a behavior performed. This causal variable was neither considered by Stern (2000) nor by Bhamra (2011). In the context of this study, situational forces are significantly directing consumers towards unsustainable behavior. Hence, those who are interested in motivating sustainable consumer behavior, should consider all of the 5 causal variables; attitudes, contextual forces, personal capabilities, emotions, and situational forces.
7 Conclusion

The study at hand investigated the influence of societal factors on consumer behavior. Reviewing literature led to the choice of five societal factors to be in focus. Those are informational social influence, shared experience, group membership, self-distinction and financial success. The aim behind such was to provide a better understanding of what influences consumers to purchase unsustainable products. Then it came to choosing one product to be investigated. Here, high involvement products were chosen as consumers are supposed to invest the most resources in matters of efforts and finance to own such. Afterwards combustion engine cars were chosen out of the category of high involvement products due to the harm they cause environment wise. The research has the ambition to contribute to figuring key elements for reversing unsustainable consumer behavior.

Existing studies show rather argumentative and contrasting than valid and rigid findings due to the reported complexity of the field. However, there is a need for those who aim to investigate consumer behavior to adopt one of the existing many contrasting models. For the fulfillment of the purpose of this study, a new model of consumer behavior was formulated. That was the first contribution of the study at hand.

Mixed-method approach was adopted in order to achieve triangulation and to avoid consumer bias. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through observation, survey and expert interview. Data was collected and analysed sequentially in order to get a more complete perception of the phenomenon. The study revealed interesting findings that does not always go in line with existing knowledge and literature. Furthermore, elements of revising consumer behavior towards more sustainable choices were defined regarding the chosen product and category of products. That implies the other side of contribution of this study which is implicational in addition to the theoretical contribution. On the other hand, not all of the investigated factors were proved influential by applying the model of consumer behavior of this study and for the particular product investigated. Thus, the study opens new horizons for future research of sustainable consumer behavior which reportedly lacks for further exploring and development.
Finally, the findings of this study contribute to unfastening consumer behavior towards more sustainable decisions by defining the key elements which can be significant for setting strategies to reverse such behaviors. Thus, marketers, organizations, and policy makers are recommended to focus on following factors in order to motivate consumers towards more sustainable choices; informational social influence, as it is influential on all causal variables, shared experience, considering that this factor is influencing mainly attitudes and emotions, in the context of status consumption, the factor self-distinction and financial success as they are influential on attitudes, contextual forces and personal capabilities. The influence of these two factors on emotions is left to further research. The study revealed that in order to reverse consumer behavior towards more sustainability, rather self-distinction than group membership must be in focus. Figure 6 shows an overview of the ‘screws’ of consumer behavior. Considering causal variables future researchers as well as marketers, organizations, and policy makers are recommended to consider adding two more elements to contextual forces; these are working environment and family status. Furthermore, it is highly recommended to take into account another causal variable revealed by this study which is situational forces.
References


Interview (2017). Interview conducted with sales representative at the main sales department of a leading German car brand in Germany, 07.04.2017.


## Appendix

### A: Survey (Questions + Reference)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal factor to be investigated</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Respective question for data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational Social Influence</strong></td>
<td>Goldsmith (2006 in Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011); Wilkie (1994); Goldsmith and Clark (2012); Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)</td>
<td>Attitude: Receiving information from society increases your positive commitment and beliefs concerning buying a car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Context: In the context of receiving information from others I am more likely to buy a certain car that I was recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Capabilities: When I receive information from others about a certain car I feel more confident about my knowledge about that car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions: Receiving positive information about a certain car from others makes me feel for buying it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Shared Experience**             | Goldsmith and Goldsmith, (2011); Tindale et al. (2008 in Hogg and Tindale, 2008); Wilkie (1994); Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) | Attitudes: I have positive beliefs and commitment to a car to which my close people own. |
|                                   |                                                                           | Context: Being close to people who own a certain type of car makes me more likely to buy a similar one. |
|                                   |                                                                           | Personal Capabilities: Having a car that is similar to which close people to me own would make me more capable to buy a similar one. That includes that I would pay more money for it. |
|                                   |                                                                           | Emotions: I would like to buy a car that is similar to which close people to me own. |
| Status Consumption | Group membership | Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011); Sethi and Chawla (2014); O’Cass and McEwen (2004); Eastman et al. (1999); Scitovsky (1992); Flynn et al. (2016); Fishbein and Ajzen (1975); Wilkie (1994) | Attitudes | I would be committed to buying a certain car that makes me belong to a certain group. |
| | | | Context | In the context of being a member of a certain group I would buy the car they have. |
| | | | Personal Capabilities | I would invest more resources for the car that makes me belong to a certain group. |
| | | | Emotions | I would like to buy the car that makes me belong to a certain group. |
| Self-distinction | | | Attitudes | I would like to buy a car that is different to which close people to me own. |
| | | | Context | In the context of belonging to a certain group I would buy the car that distinguishes me from them. |
| | | | Personal Capabilities | I would invest more resources for the car that distinguishes me from others. |
| | | | Emotions | I would like to buy the car that distinguishes me from others. |
| Financial Success | | | Attitudes | I would be committed to the car that expresses my financial success. |
| | | | Context | In certain occasions, I would express my financial success by owning a certain car. |
| | | | Personal Capabilities | I would invest more for the car that might express my financial success. |
| | | | Emotions | I would like to buy the car that expresses my financial success. |
Appendix B: Interview Guidelines

1) How does receiving information from people who are close to them influence your customers about buying a certain car?

- How would that influence consumer’s attitude about that car?
- How would it influence their emotions about the car?
- Is that related to special contexts? How?
- How does such cases influence or be influenced by personal capabilities?

2) How does having a car that is similar to what close people have influence your customers’ decision about buying a certain car?

- How would that influence consumer’s attitude about that car?
- How would it influence their emotions about the car?
- Is that related to special contexts? How?
- How does such cases influence or be influenced by personal capabilities?

3) How does the desire of belonging to a certain group of people, influence your customers’ decision about buying a certain car?

- How would that influence consumer’s attitude about that car?
- How would it influence their emotions about the car?
- Is that related to special contexts? How?
- How does such cases influence or be influenced by personal capabilities?

4) How does the desire of distinguishing oneself from others, influence your customers’ decision about buying a certain car?
- How would that influence consumer’s attitude about that car?
- How would it influence their emotions about the car?
- Is that related to special contexts? How?
- How does such cases influence or be influenced by personal capabilities?

5) How does expressing their financial success influence your customers in their decision about buying a certain car?
- How would that influence consumer’s attitude about that car?
- How would it influence their emotions about the car?
- Is that related to special contexts? How?
- How does such cases influence or be influenced by personal capabilities?
### Appendix C: Entire Results Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal factor investigated</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Causal Variable (Bhamra et al., 2011; Stern, 2000)</th>
<th>Respective question for data collection</th>
<th>Results in % (Survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational Social Influence</strong></td>
<td>Goldsmith (2006 in Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011); Wilkie (1994); Goldsmith and Clark (2012); Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Receiving information from society increases your positive commitment and beliefs concerning buying a car.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 4.8 Disagreement: 7.9 I don’t know: 25.4 Agreement: 38.1 Strong Agreement: 23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>In the context of receiving information from others I am more likely to buy a certain car that I was recommended.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 3.2 Disagreement: 9.7 I don’t know: 17.7 Agreement: 45.2 Strong Agreement: 24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Capabilities</td>
<td>When I receive information from others about a certain car I feel more confident about my knowledge about that car.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 1.6 Disagreement: 7.9 I don’t know: 9.5 Agreement: 49.2 Strong Agreement: 31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Receiving positive information about a certain car from others makes me feel for buying it.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 1.6 Disagreement: 14.3 I don’t know: 19.0 Agreement: 30.2 Strong Agreement: 34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Experience</strong></td>
<td>Goldsmith and Goldsmith, (2011); Tindale et al. (2008 in Hogg and Tindale, 2008); Wilkie (1994); Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>I have positive beliefs and commitment to a car to which my close people own.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 9.5 Disagreement: 30.2 I don’t know: 36.5 Agreement: 12.7 Strong Agreement: 11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Consumption</td>
<td>Group membership</td>
<td>Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011); Sethi and Chawla (2014); O’Cass and McEwen (2004); Eastman et al. (1999); Scitovsky</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>I would be committed to buying a certain car that makes me belong to a certain group.</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being close to people who own a certain type of car makes me more likely to buy a similar one.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 19.0 Disagreement: 39.7 I don’t know: 14.3 Agreement: 20.6 Strong Agreement: 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Capabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a car that is similar to which close people to me own would make me more capable to buy a similar one. That includes that I would pay more money for it.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 23.8 Disagreement: 27.0 I don’t know: 31.7 Agreement: 14.3 Strong Agreement: 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td>I would like to buy a car that is similar to which close people to me own.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 19.0 Disagreement: 46.0 I don’t know: 15.9 Agreement: 14.3 Strong Agreement: 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-distinction</td>
<td>Personal Capabilities</td>
<td>I would invest more resources for the car that makes me belong to a certain group.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 36.5 Disagreement: 28.6 I don’t know: 22.2 Agreement: 6.3 Strong Agreement: 6.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>I would like to buy the car that makes me belong to a certain group.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 33.9 Disagreement: 37.1 I don’t know: 16.1 Agreement: 8.1 Strong Agreement: 4.8</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>I would like to buy a car that is different to which close people to me own.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 7.9 Disagreement: 19.0 I don’t know: 23.8 Agreement: 31.7 Strong Agreement: 4.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>In the context of belonging to a certain group I would buy the car that distinguishes me from them.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 12.7 Disagreement: 17.5 I don’t know: 17.5 Agreement: 33.3 Strong Agreement: 19.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Capabilities</td>
<td>I would invest more resources for the car that distinguishes me from others.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 24.2 Disagreement: 17.7 I don’t know: 9.7 Agreement: 30.6 Strong Agreement: 17.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>I would like to buy the car that distinguishes me from others.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 19.0 Disagreement: 19.0 I don’t know: 17.5 Agreement: 20.6 Strong Agreement: 23.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Success</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>I would be committed to the car that expresses my financial success.</td>
<td>Strong Disagreement: 15.9 Disagreement: 20.6 I don’t know: 17.5 Agreement: 23.8 Strong Agreement: 22.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Context                                                                 | In certain occasions, I would express my financial success by owning a certain car. | Strong Disagreement: 22.2
| Disagreement: 7.9
| I don’t know: 19.0
| Agreement: 34.9
| Strong Agreement: 15.9 |
| Personal Capabilities                                                              | I would invest more for the car that might express my financial success. | Strong Disagreement: 23.8
| Disagreement: 9.5
| I don’t know: 28.6
| Agreement: 28.6
| Strong Agreement: 9.5 |
| Emotions                                                                             | I would like to buy the car that expresses my financial success. | Strong Disagreement: 22.2
| Disagreement: 12.7
| I don’t know: 14.3
| Agreement: 27.0
| Strong Agreement: 23.8 |