Children’s playing experiences – Lego’s role in children’s everyday life

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During the last decades, marketers have actively put more effort in attracting children to become the company’s clients because small children represent the future market for all products and services. The competitiveness for attracting children to become clients of the marketers own company is very high and a lot of information is needed to achieve their goals.

Based on the theory of customer-dominant logic (Heinonen et al., 2010) there have not been studies concerning how children create value. This is seen as a gap in the area of value creation because children are just as important clients as adults. The fact that children’s preferences are changing depending on the generation they belong to, shows that there is a need to have a deeper understanding on how children are creating value.

The aim with this thesis is to research children’s playing experiences and what the value creation process looks like for them. Another purpose with the paper was to gain insight on how Lego is present in children’s everyday activities and what role Lego toys have for children. By doing this research, a new theoretical framework for children’s value creation was created together with the theory of customer-dominant logic.

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is built up by different theories that the researcher of this thesis considers relevant for the topic in order to be able to fulfil the purpose of the study. The theoretical part discusses the different parts in children’s life that may have an effect on children’s value creation, and by combining earlier studies concerning the topics, a new framework was created.

The research method used was qualitative, where four parents were interviewed by means of semi-structural interviews. Furthermore the parents were asked to write diaries about their children’s daily activities. Four children were observed during the research, all these methods helped to answer the purpose of the study.

The results were that by combining children’s consumer behavior, playful learning and different types of play together with customer-dominant logic, firms get a very accurate tool on what children needs in their playing experiences. This helps them to further market their product more efficiently. Concerning Lego’s role in children’s everyday activities, the main finding was that they are needed when children want to calm down and when they feel the need to be creative.

Keywords: Children’s value creation, consumer behavior, playing experiences, Marketing to children, Customer-dominant logic.
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PREFACE

The course Service and Customer Management at Hanken School of Economics during the fall semester in 2017 offered the students an opportunity to work on a case that Lego provided them. During the course the students had the opportunity to create a fun and exciting Lego experience, which would keep the children playing with Duplos to an older age. The aim was also to include parents, children and shoppers in the new strategy. This thesis can be seen as a follow-up for the course, since the project has been established for this course together with the Lego representatives. The representatives from Lego have assisted the researcher in choosing the right sampling strategies and methods, but because of the extremely hard competition on the “toy market” they are not able to provide any further material than what is already public. In a discussion held with one of Lego's marketing managers from Denmark, she stated their interest in hearing the results since the research is carried out from a neutral viewpoint and not from a Lego point of view. According to their wish, the representatives of Lego will remain anonymous in this paper. Assistance regarding how to carry out the research to acquire rich data was provided by two experts in the company Lego. No further information was given from inside the company, except for some tips on how it would be possible to carry out the research process.

I found it most interesting and challenging to work on this thesis. Hopefully the results will bring new information, and my contribution to the value creation process for children will bring new insights in the field. For me it has been a pleasure to perform this research and I have learned a lot during the process.

I would still like to thank the two representatives from Lego, who will stay anonymous. Further, I would like to thank Professor Luisa Agante from University of Porto and Professor Kristina Heinonen from Hanken Svenska Handelshögskolan for all support and help during this process.
1 INTRODUCTION

Different types of toys have existed for a very long time, and it is believed that the first toys were used already in the 14th century. In those days toys consisted mainly of dolls and animal figures. Today, the variety in toys and opportunities for a child to play is enormous. Toys and playing is something we all hopefully have experienced in our childhood; the playing experience is also something that may have affected who we are today. Playing is seen as being so important and a right for every child that it is recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. The playing experience is fundamental as it develops the children’s social, emotional, cognitive, physical and creative learning, to name a few – one might say that children’s play is their work. It is an important way to educate children at an early stage in their lives. (Ginsburg 2007)

Furthermore, toys play an extremely important role for the children’s development in terms of socialization skills. While playing with toys, children connect not only with the toy, but also with others such as parents, peers and other family members. These are important points to consider when playing with children. (Corsaro 1997; Seiter 1993)

There is a shortage of information about children’s everyday routines at home and how some products come to enter their life. There are several studies about children’s consumer behavior (Ward 1973; McNeal & Yeh 1993; John 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor 2001), but not about the playing situation at home. There seems to be a lack of research on that particular aspect: what the playing situation looks like, what really is taking place, and how children choose to do what they do. By observing children playing and by interviewing their parents, it is possible to find crucial points on what creates value, and in what way, in children’s everyday life concerning their playing and learning processes.

As play is considered to be a vitally important activity for children, it is still a topic that has not received enough attention in academia. Therefore the topic need for research within the topic, a research with a new and different perspective than toy-producers might have had before. The idea is to provide a fresh view on children’s value creation of playing.
1.1 Research Problem

Today, the situation on the toy market is quite different than sixty years ago when Lego was founded. After the success in children’s toys, the market has obviously become more competitive. In order to not only survive but to achieve good results, Lego needs to improve their business ideas continually.

Marketers have lately during the last decades become further interested in children as consumers, one reason for this is that they hold on to the future market for all products and services. They will build a steady stream of new business customers during their whole lifetime. It is quite simple: the marketing towards children starts from birth because marketers want to have them as customers as soon as possible. (McNeal 2003)

The fact that digitalization is moving forward at a fast pace is not news for Lego, but something they need to keep in mind. As children get more attracted by light effects and sounds that various technologies are able to provide, this also has made the game and application market grow even further since there is a great opportunity to catch children to customers at an early age. For Lego, this means more pressure from the toy market and pressure to add more technology into their playing experience. This is something they successfully have been able to avoid so far. (Lauwaert 2009)

Orientation on children’s cognitive and social learning processes, originating in Piaget’s theories (1936), is well studied. As a paradigm of it, researchers started actively to observe children’s consumer behavior, which rapidly became an important topic (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001; McNeal & Yeh 1993). The fact that there is plenty of information about how children develop, how they consume and what they are like at different ages; these studies have not shown what everyday life of a child looks like, what the playing experience really is like, and how some products are brought in to the play.

As earlier studies focus on the behavior of a child, there are less studies on what actually gives value for the child. This is crucial when developing new services or products. The value creation of a child plays an important role, since there is a lack of studies in that field. Several studies discuss how value is created for consumers (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Heinonen et al. 2010; Grönroos 2008), but none of them concentrates on how the process is created for young children. The debate between the researchers on how value is created has lately (Heinonen et al. 2010, 2013, 2015) given a new approach to take into
account customers’ past and future in order to create value. There is a gap in research on
the value creation process between children and other consumers. After all, several
studies discuss only adults as customers while, in fact, children are a main target for
companies today (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001).

The research on what children’s everyday life looks like and how children play needs to
be expanded. Because of several studies on children’s consumer behavior, many
businesses tend to forget the importance of what it is that creates value for a child – and
rather concentrate on their shopping behavior (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001; John 1999;
McNeal and Yeh 1993).

Up to now, there has not been a neutral researcher doing this type of research for Lego.
The fact that only internal research within toy companies has been done and that,
because of the competitive market, the results have not been published (Lego
representative 2018) shows that there is a need for neutral research in this market, not
only for Lego as a company but also on what creates value for children in their playing
experience. Assumably, toy producers are doing research on children and might know
how they create value since the competition on the market is so tough. However, the toy
producers are not able to share this kind of information outside the company (ibid).

With this paper, toy manufacturing companies will get an understanding on how the toys
are chosen and how children are creating value. The paper should help toy
manufacturers to better understand children, their playing experiences and everyday
routines. By holding an external view, the information gathered may be used not only for
Lego, but for any toy manufacturer. What Lego exclusively profits from this thesis, is that
the research approach is presumably different and new, highlighting the customer
dominant logic view.

1.2  Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to describe the role of toys in children’s everyday activities and
children’s value creation process. The implication of the study is to obtain information
on what every day routines of a child look like, and how the toys are getting into their
lives.

In order to fulfil the aim of this thesis, following research questions are answered:
1. What is the role of Lego toys in children’s everyday life?

2. What is children’s logic in the value creation process?

### 1.3 Limitations

This study is limited to understand the Lego’s role in children’s life, as mentioned in the purpose of the study. The focus will therefore be outside the company and the paper will not investigate the Lego group as a company per se, but instead the users of their products: the consumers.

From Piaget’s cognitive theory it can be seen that there are different stages in children’s development (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001). To get a reliable result, I have together with representatives from Lego decided to study children aged between four and eight. Piaget defines the pre-operational stage as the ages from three to seven, while Lego use a different scale. Here I shall use the age-group Lego call “early school years 4-8 years” (Lego 2004). One goal is to get children who love playing with Legos and children who might prefer other toys as well is rich data as well. Different genders took part of this research but is not at all separated in this paper.

### 1.4 Structure of the study

This paper is divided in to four different parts. First starting off with introducing the background and discussing the aim of the study. The second part is chapter two and three discussing the theoretical parts that will be used in order to build up a new theoretical framework.

The third part of this thesis discusses the different methods used in order to successfully make this research.

As last part is chapters five and six where the important empirical findings will be discussed together with the analysis which considers the theoretical part together with results from the research.
2 CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND PLAY

Children’s behavior can be hard to understand, there is still only basic knowledge about children’s cognitive development and socialization to become a consumer. The cognitive development and consumer socialization process affects the way children play, with what they play and how they play – therefore it affects their value creation process. This will be discussed in chapter 3.

2.1 Consumer socialization and cognitive development

The studies around children’s consumer behavior is based on the Swiss psychologist Piaget’s (1936) theory of cognitive development which has been further developed by several researchers. Piaget’s findings show how children build their mental models of the world (McLeod 2015). Instead of concentrating on doing research on all different age-groups, Piaget concentrated on children instead. The theory discusses the different stages of development from birth to adulthood (Flavell 1992).

Piaget’s (1936) four stages in the cognitive learning process are the sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage (John 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor 2001). In this study the interest lays in the pre-operational or perceptual stage, as mentioned earlier – this is the age-group (4-8 year) that Lego is interested in and which the research in this thesis will be based on.

![Figure 1: Piaget’s stages of cognitive development. (Modified from John 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor 2001)](image)

The first stage, from birth to approximately 2 years of age, is called the sensorimotor stage. At this stage children learn to prefer what to eat, what to watch and how to play. Tastes and smells seem to be important at this stage and children learn to ask their parents for certain things before they turn two. (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001)
The second stage is called **perceptual stage** and covers the ages three to seven approximately. At this age, children begin to grasp the difference between reality and fantasy; before this they usually think that fictive characters, as seen on for example television, are real. The children also become familiar with different brands and stores (John 1999). Several researchers state that this age-group is the most vulnerable for advertisement and marketing because they believe that what is said in commercials is actually true (Acuff 1997; Buijzen & Valkenburg 2000). John (1999) maintains that this age-group does not have any kind of negotiation skills, and that is why they nag about having something they want. This is the peak of imaginary friends, the most imaginative play is between the ages of five to seven (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001).

The third stage is the **analytical stage**, the age between approximately seven and eleven. During this age children tend to further distinguish between fantasy and reality, and are able to concentrate on one task, play or game for over one hour in average (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001). This is a major step, compared to children in the perceptual stage who are able to concentrate around 20 minutes on one task at a time (Ruff & Lawson 1990; John 1999). John (1999) states that during this stage the biggest steps take place cognitively and socially, and that during this stage they learn the most important steps in becoming a consumer.

The last stage of Piaget’s (1936) cognitive development theory is the **formal operational** or the **reflective stage** in the ages around eleven to sixteen. During this stage, children further develop their cognitive and social knowledge and goes on until adulthood (John 1999).

The age-groups are conducted by the theory of Piaget in 1936. His research covered the whole world and did not take into account cultural aspects. It has been discussed by several researchers (John 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor 2001) that the cognitive learning process happens in different cultures at different stages. For example, it is said that children in western countries develop their cognitive knowledge earlier than in other countries. Piaget’s theory has also been criticised for the fact that he did not take into consideration that every individual might be different.

In figure two, the characteristics of the socialization process for children in the perceptual stage are presented in order to clarify what children are capable of doing at that age. This is the age-group being studied in this thesis.
Table 1 Characteristics of perceptual stage (John 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Perceptual Stage, 3-7 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising knowledge</td>
<td>- Able to distinguish ads from programs based on perceptual features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Believes that ads are the truth, funny and interesting. They have positive attitudes towards ads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product and brand knowledge</td>
<td>- Recognizing brands and putting them into product categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Understanding symbolic aspects of consumption based on perceptual features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping knowledge and skills</td>
<td>- Value of products and prices based on perceptual features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase influence</td>
<td>- Use direct requests and emotional appeals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>- Value of possessions based on surface features, such as “having more” of something.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the socialization process, John (1999) has adjusted his own findings to Piaget’s theory. The cognitive stages and socialization process are highly related to each other. Piaget’s theory of the cognitive development is generally about the learning process, while John (1999) has used the cognitive stages in the concept of becoming a consumer.

Why these processes are relevant for this thesis is that it is important to know what is normal and usual for children to do or say at a certain age. Now it is easier to find out something that stands out from the theories on socialization or cognitive development in the children’s behavior that will be part of the research.

2.2 Children consumer behavior

Children are more actively becoming targets for companies; this has been the trend during the last decades. Children have more economic power than before, especially in western countries, where they have more impact on a household’s decision making. Researchers find that there might be a socioeconomic reason for this, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s. One explanation could be that parents today in the western world have a higher level of education and therefore higher salaries. There are less children per families than before, and couples are postponing having children because initially they want to concentrate on their careers. (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001)
Several scholars regard Scott Ward (1974) as a pioneer in the research of children consumer behavior. Studies of children consumer behavior is seen as a paradigm of consumer socialization. (Valkenburg & Cantor 2001; John 1999; Dotson & Hyatt 2005). Ward (1974:2) defines consumer socialization in his paper as:

“... processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace”

The children consumer behavior starts when parents are teaching their children to become independent, which happens during the socialization process of a child. Television commercials teach children to demand new products and the purchases are controlled by the children, who gain more control of the household. What the children consumer behavior actually is, is in my opinion, best described by the process from birth to consumer.

2.2.1 Path to consumer

In a child’s life, from the birth to becoming a consumer, the parents play a crucial role without being aware of it. It starts from giving weekly or monthly allowances to their children at an early age, enabling the child to consume what he or she wants. According to McNeal (1993) every child goes through a five-steps learning process in order to become a consumer.

The first step usually takes place during the age between birth to six months and is called the observing stage. Already during this age, the child has been several times at a supermarket or other stores together with its parents. The first stage is over when the child realizes on its own that it is possible to take objects with you from the store (McNeal & Yeh 1993).

Second step McNeal & Yeh (1993) call the second stage “Making requests”. In McNeal and Yeh’s (1993) research, requests from children to parents start at the age of six months and lasts until 2 years of age

The third step according to McNeal and Yeh (1993) is when the child starts to make selections on their own, which happened in their study between the ages two to four and a half. When shopping with their parents, the children pick up their favorite objects in the store.
During the **fourth step**, children start to make assisted purchases. They understand that the store owns the products and that money is being exchanged to get the products. Their parents are participating as much as needed and helping their children to make the purchase in a correct way. (McNeal and Yeh 1993)

The last and **fifth step** according to McNeal and Yeh (1993) is making of the individual purchases, here the children in this study were 7 to 8-year-old. This might depend a lot on the country and culture, for example on how safe it is to send a child on its own to a store.

As it can be seen by the studies from McNeal and Yeh (1993), Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) and John (1999), it is obvious that the parents play a crucial role when making the child into a consumer.

![Figure 2](Image)

**Figure 2** The five steps to individual purchase. (Modified from McNeal & Yeh 1993)

The process for becoming a consumer can be seen in five steps according to McNeal and Yeh (1993). This thesis will focus on all these steps on becoming consumers. All of these steps are suitable for the age-group that is used for this thesis, meaning that a 4 year old has already gone through the first and second step. Why this is used to answer the purpose of this study, is because every individual is different and diversity may appear in the processes. Furthermore, if a child has developed into the stage of making individual purchases compared to someone at the same age who has not, it would affect the value creation process of the child in different ways.

### 2.2.2 Marketing and Advertising to children

Television advertising aimed at children is seen as the most effective way to get them attracted to the products. It can clearly be seen from previous studies (John 1999; Valkenburg & Cantor 2001) that children in the perceptual stage are very vulnerable for
advertising since they believe that what they see is the truth and have difficulties in distinguishing between commercials and programs on television for example. The most usual advertisement for children is the so-called spot advertising, in other words one that appears in between programs and that is short (Olson & Thjømoe 2012). Especially during the early stages of life, the TV commercials affect children more. As children get older, they start using the internet, which is also full of commercials. Online marketing towards children is called stealth marketing, commercials coming up on movies and video games that is played online (Calvert 2008). Because the usage of the internet alone becomes a routine for children a little bit later, they are better at recognizing what is advertising and what is not. It is the television commercials that is a higher concern, which may affect children.

According to Calvert (2008), the most effective marketing techniques in order to attract attention as much as possible is; Repetition of the message, branded characters, attention-getting features, animation, product placement and premiums. These are the ones that best may get children’s attention and suit the consumer socialization stages (John 1999). Repetition is considered to be effective on children, as the message of the commercial is repeated several times during the same ad. Branded characters is something children also like, especially in the perceptual stage of consumer socialization process. An example of this are the animated characters that are used to attract the child’s attention, as they prefer colourful animals – this is an effective way to reach the child as children at an early age recognize different brands. Attention-getting production features might be music that children prefer. Animation characters that are funny or in some other way gets the child’s attention. Example of premiums is to hand out different toys for kids in order to fulfil their experience – for example McDonalds’ Happy meal. Parents buy also the toy for the child: usually the toy is a well-known brand, such as a Walt Disney character. Another well-known example of this is Tony the Tiger, who is the main character for Kellogg’s frosted flakes. (Calvert 2008; John 1999)

2.2.2.1 Materialism

Studies on materialism have over the years tried to find how and why people attach themselves to specific products or objects in order to boost their identity. It is seen that brand recognition starts at an early age and that even children are building their own identity with them (Rodhain 2006). As also stated by John (1999), children as young as three years are able to distinguish brands in different product categories and also
demand products by the brand name. Moreover, younger children relate material possessions to happiness and friendship: the more you have, the happier you are and this also has to do with boosting their identity (Chan 2006). Children are taught to be proud of their belongings, resulting in the fact that they want more and more possessions in order to feel good about themselves (Chan 2006).

2.2.3 Children’s influence on household purchases

Sharma and Sonwaney (2014:38) state that McNeal (1987) divided children as three markets in one. The primary market, influence market and future market;

“...they are current market that spends money on their desires, they are a future market for most goods and services and they are markets of influential that cause billions of dollars of purchase among their parents”

Where the child’s influence hits the parents is in the third market mentioned above; the influential market. In the primary market children are using their own money for their own desire, money they have got from parents, grandparents – so called pocket money. Why they also take part in the future market, is the fact that their time as customers are the longest at the moment.

Pester power, also called nagging, implies that the child is demanding products until he or she gets what he or she wants. It is seen as the most effective technique to influence the parents (McNeal 1992; Nicholls & Cullen 2004; Thomson et al. 2007; Gunther & Furnham 1998). Pester power has been defined in different way by researchers in the past. According to Quinn (2002) it is when a child is requesting products or services repetitively, while Goldstein (1999) states that it is about having the parents buying specific product or brand for the child. Proctor and Richards (2002), again, prefer to call it the ’nag factor’, and Nicholls and Cullen (2004) state that pester power is when the child is trying to influence the purchases in a repetitive way.
Children’s ability to influence their parents is something researchers do not prioritize. One plausible explanation could be that this way children get what they want and increasingly become targets for advertising and all other marketing by companies. Figure 4 from Valkenburg’s and Cantor’s study (2001) shows how often parents are situated in a purchase-related conflict with their child in a store. Often parents give in and buy something the child is demanding. Isler et al (1987) conducted a major study of children’s purchase requests: an average of 55 percent of the requests start at home for children aged between 3 and 11. Isler et al summarize the requests in one figure:

2.3 The role of play

The Lego foundation is providing different programs across the world in different cultures, trying to connect play and education under the same roof. In other words, Lego foundation:

“aims to build a future where learning through play empowers children to become creative, engaged and life-long learners”. (Lego.com)

Lego foundation focuses on children in the age of 0-12, because, during these years, children develop physically and mentally the fastest. (Lego foundation 2017)

Children are born to learn through play. Just hours after being born, they already learn by listening to different sounds and human voices (Vouloumanos & Werker 2007). Ginsburg states in the American Academy of Pediatrics report that play is very important
for a healthy development all over the world (Ginsburg 2007). Through play, a child is able to learn a lot of new things. The learning happens through joyful, actively engaging, meaningful, iterative and socially interactive experiences (Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2015). In addition, Gray (2013) states that especially joy is an important initial factor in the playing experience, since it is one requirement for the experience to be playful in the first place.

![Characteristics of Playful Learning Experiences](modified from Zosh et al. 2017)

Each one of the characteristics named by Zosh et al. (2017) is equally important for a child’s playing experience. **Joyful** - the child should find the play joyful in order to learn from it. Joy is seen as pleasure and positive emotions emerging from playing (ibid): research show that sadness and stress in life is reducing productivity in learning also for children. The joy motivates them to get interested and therefor learn while they are happy (ibid). **Meaningful** – in order for the child to learn something new, he or she must find the meaning of an experience and connect it to something they already knew. For example, a child who has just learned to talk next learns to count from one to ten and feels proud about it. What they do not know is the meaning of it. In order to learn what one and two means, they need to see one object and then two objects as for example giving them two blocks of Lego Duplo and tell them that there are two blocks. They need to count the actual objects rather than going through counting without a meaning (ibid). **Actively engaging** – studies made on children’s ability to learn through play show that they learn best if they have an active role in problem solving instead of being instructed...
all the time by parents or others (ibid). Another study (Bonawitz et al. 2011) showed that the more adults are trying to show ways of play, the less the child is interested because the child thinks that there is nothing new to explore. They like surprises and to learn things that is not yet said from someone else, surprises. *Iterative nature of play* – Iteration means that the child’s brain is working hard for flexible thinking and creativity (Kleibeuker et al. 2016). Iterative play is when children are testing their own hypotheses without really knowing it: children are like miniature scientists who want to test different things. Giving children the opportunity to learn on their own strengthens their critical thinking. *Socially interactive* – this is one of the key concepts for learning while playing. Infants are looking for social interaction and the partners around the child are therefore key resources. By sharing one own mind and communicating ideas with others, children will have a deeper understanding of things and they become socially developed as well (Zosh et al. 2017). In fact, Vygotsky (1978) highlights in his classic work about sociocultural theories that having social partners around is the most effective way for learning.

There are obviously different types of play that in different ways develop children. Whitebread et al. (2017) categorizes different ways of play as follows: *physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretend play and games with rules*.

![Figure 6](image-url)  
*Figure 6* Different types of play. (modified from Whitebread et al. 2017)
The first play type that usually is evolved for a child is **physical play**, with physical play researchers include all kind of activity play such as jumping, dancing and ball play for example. Physical play includes also action toys and construction toys such as Lego DUPLO, and the physical play type unfortunately also includes rough plays such as fighting with friends or siblings. Research on the effects of physical play is quite scarce, so there is a lack of facts how much physical play helps the child to develop. There are findings that active play of course has health benefits and that by having breaks from cognitive play and having physical play in between improves learning and attention.

**Play with objects** starts as soon as the child is able to grab and to hold on to items. Studies have shown that playing with objects supports the development of maths, language and spatial skills (Ungerer & Sigman 1984; Pellegrini 1992). Basilio (2015) studied 5-10-year-old children who had played with Lego’s and afterwards were asked to do tasks on paper. The results showed that after playing with objects, children had higher engagement and creativity for the tasks than before the play with objects. During the first stages of **symbolic play**, children play with sounds, in other words babbling and making gestures. This symbolic play is happening when the child is learning a language, numbers, music and so on. It starts from music and from what they hear. Language play, musical play and drawing/writing play are symbolic types of play. A recent study from Lillard et al. (2013) shows that **pretend play** has positive impacts on the social development of a child. Pretend play takes place when the child is pretending something on his or her own, such as drinking hot tea from a cup when it is actually empty, or pretending that toys are alive, being superheroes and so on. The list is endless, and, in a child’s mind, anything is possible. This type of play is also important in children’s life, since the creativity and social skills are developing. The last type of play according to Whitebread et al. (2017) is **games with rules**. At an early stage of life, children are starting to enjoy games with rules, and soon they are making up their own rules for new or old games. Playing together within the family games such as board games, children are learning to share, wait for their turn and understanding others (Whitebread et al. 2017).

### 2.3.1 Summary of children learn and play

Marketing for children has become a trend during the last decades. Children as consumers is an important topic at the moment for companies and is likely to attract
even more attention, since the main goal is to catch children to become customers as early as possible.

The cognitive development and socialization process to become a consumer are crucial parts of this thesis. Both affect the value creation process and are therefore important to take into consideration. Piaget’s theory on cognitive development is indeed old, but it is still relevant today. There are four stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage. Based on the theories by Piaget, extensive research has been made on consumer socialization.

Children become consumers earlier than one might think. The process starts already at birth, and at the age of seven to eight children are doing individual purchases. It must be noted that, while it may differ in various cultures, this is quite normal in Western countries. Additionally, children are influenced by a wide range of advertisements at an early age, which affects their demands and need for new products. “Pester power” is seen as the most effective way for a child to get what he or she want. More often than not, the child is able to persuade the parents, thus having an effect on purchases in the household. Materialism is regarded important for children as an identity finder and that the more children own material, the happier they feel. What is more, they also feel accepted by others around them. This is another important topic for this thesis because materialism is affecting the value creation logic for children.

In this research, the theories about consumer behavior and the steps towards becoming consumer is important because it may differ a lot between children and it also may affect what kind of play and with what they want to play with. Further, the development of a child affects both of these themes mentioned above – therefore it must at some level be discussed.

When it comes to characteristics of playful learning and types of play, these are very important in this research because here the child have the opportunity to use what they have learned during their path becoming a consumer. The characteristics of these themes mentioned above are very centric and may play a crucial role in children’s value creation logic.
3 LOGICS IN VALUE CREATION

This chapter of the theoretical part of this thesis will present background concerning the service dominant logic (SDL) and the theory of customer dominant logic (CDL). These theories are important in order to examine the value creation process of a child. In order to understand the value creation processes, both service- and customer dominant logics need to be explained. SDL approach to create value is not old, researchers are still using the approach and developing it further. Considering the thesis and the relevance of SDL, it is important to take a more modern approach and see the customers as the starting point – this is what the CDL takes into consideration.

Looking at the changes in marketing research during the last decade, it can be noted that the focus is shifting from the supplier and customer towards dealing with transactions in entire systems and networks (Holmlund et al. 2017). Further, Heinonen et al. (2010) point out that the way marketing is done has changed from being product-focused to service-focused and further to customer-focused. All these theories have its focus on value creation and therefore are interesting to examine further.

The SDL originates from the good dominant logic (GDL), which is regarded as a producer-oriented logic (Vargo & Lusch 2008). The value is created by the producer or the product, and when the customer uses the product he or she gets value from it (Vargo & Lusch 2008; Heinonen 2010). SDL was first introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004) and Grönroos (2008). According to Grönroos (2008), the firm alone cannot create value for the customers. The task of the firm is to work as a value facilitator for the customers who are using their services or products. By applying service logic, the firm has an opportunity to become a co-creator of value by interacting with customers. Knowing what the customers want and co-creating with them results in a high level of value for the customers (Grönroos 2008). Grönroos (2008) also argues that the more the company interact and engage with customers, the more it increases the creation of value for the customers. It has been argued that SDL either focused on the companies’ view on the service system as service blueprinting (Bitner et al. 2008) or on the interaction between company and customer (Payne et al. 2009). The criticism has led to further evolution of the SDL by Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2014; 2017) and others.
To summarize the SDL and its aims is that companies are striving to find solutions for the customers’ issues, and that, as the customers are taking part of the process with the provider, the customers are seen as co-producers in the service production process. The value is created together by the customer and supplier. (Vargo & Lusch 2004; Grönroos 2008)

3.1 Customer dominant logic

According to the CDL, the focus is not on the service or companies providing it, but on the customer. It is argued that the SDL is not sufficiently customer-focused, because customers are seen as partners or employees for the co-creation of value – therefore the SDL still has a strong company-based view. Instead of focusing on the companies and their services, it is suggested that companies look into the customers’ everyday life and focus on what they are doing with the services in order to accomplish the goals they have. Further, it is stated that both GDL and SDL are provider dominant logics – not considering the customer as the most important aspect for value creation. (Heinonen et al. 2010)

Heinonen et al. (2010) have in their t-model explained the customer dominant logic and how broadly the concept can be used. The model shows the relation between the traditional service company’s world and the customer dominant logic view. The timeline at the top of the figure, shows the service X, which can be any service. The extended timeline shows the different stages the CDL considers compared to traditional service management or SDL. They want to clearly point out that a service for a customer is not only used or consumed but also possibly integrated with other activities in their business life or life, which is illustrated by the boxes over the timeline; what happens before and after the service X. The CDL t-model is presented in figure 8.
The timeline shows that traditional service management and SDL do not consider important spheres in customers’ timeline. What takes place during the service X is only a small part of the customers’ life, something Heinonen et al. (2010) wish to underline. They further argue that this is an entirely different approach, since provider dominant logics are only looking at activities directly related to the service and that companies should be interested in what customers are doing with the service in order to make a perfect fit, thus creating value for them (ibid).

To summarize the t-model of CDL according to Heinonen et al. (2010): The customer is not only affected by the service but also important things that happen in their life around the service, such as history, things happening before the service X, what happens after service X, and what happens after that in the future. To understand the CDL the easiest way, it is best to compare it with SDL. The t-model shows that it is not only the timeframe that is broader than for SDL, but also where in the customers’ life the service affects them. The CDL also takes into consideration related activities and experiences to the service X, while SDL focus on the service X only with little understanding on related activities around the service X. The activities of the service X provider also differ a lot between the two logics. CDL does not take as much into consideration the company’s own activities as SDL does.
3.1.1 Customer value creation

This part of the thesis will present how the customers are creating value according to the customer dominant logic theory. The discussion and comparison with SDL to highlight the characteristics of CDL.

Important questions concerning the value creation process for customers addressed in Heinonen et al. (2013) are: *how* is value created? *Where* is it created? *When* is it created? *What* is value? And *who* determines value? In order to understand the value creation process of a child, it is important to first find answers to the questions above.

*How is value created?* The authors (Heinonen et al. 2013:109) clarify the idea with CDL and value creation by stating that:

> “Value emerges through customers’ behavioural and mental processes when customers interpret experiences and reconstruct an accumulated customer reality where value is embedded.”

(Heinonen et al. 2013:109)

In other words, the customer makes the value out of something, but it is the company’s task to help them build their value with their service or product.

*Where is value created?* As the t-model of CDL showed, the value is not created in the interaction with the service provider as in SDL. Instead, the value is created during the everyday life routines and how much the service or product was needed in reality. Keeping this in mind, the value creation process is an ongoing process not only during the service situation, but also before and after it. Furthermore, several researchers have stated that (Heinonen et al., 2010; Helkkula et al., 2012; Voima et al., 2011 from Heinonen et al., 2013:109):

> “Value formation is not only seen as taking place in the isolated sphere of the service or relationship, instead value is formed in the experiential context of living, often outside the direct interaction or the control zone of the provider”

(Heinonen et al., 2010; Helkkula et al., 2012; Voima et al., 2011 from Heinonen et al., 2013:109)

Previous research, then, has shown that the value creation does not take place only at the interaction with the service provider, but instead during the everyday routines and experiences the customer has.

*When is value created?* The authors give a good example of when the value is created: a holiday trip, where the value emerges before, during and after the trip. This kind of value is difficult for companies to recognize. Also, the fact that value, according to CDL, is
created during a longer period of time, makes it difficult to pinpoint when it is created compared to SDL where the value is said to be created during the exchange of service. Therefore, the authors suggest that when the value is created in CDL, it could be called value-in-experience. This would consider the whole timeframe. (Heinonen et al., 2013)

What is value based on? In the view of SDL it is argued that through market offerings of the firms’ value is served for the customers, but that the customer further develop value creation through using the service or product (Vargo et al., 2008). For CDL, value is based on the customers’ perceptions and that value is rooted in the customers’ everyday routines. Or, as Heinonen et al. (2013:111) put it:

"Value is relative on multiple levels and cumulated and formed in a process related to multiple personal and service related value frames. The customer consciously or unconsciously relates an experience to her cumulated reality and ecosystem at a specific moment, in a specific situation."

Who determines value? In SDL, Vargo and Lusch (2008) has argued that the customer is a co-creator and actor in the service situation. CDL shifts the visibility of service to invisible reality of the customer that often cannot be seen (Heinonen et al. 2010). Additionally, Heinonen et al. (2013:112) state that:

"The customer-dominant logic shifts the focus from an idiosyncratic value unit to a configuration of different actors. Value is not isolated since the reality of the customer is interconnected to the realities of others. Value is therefore embedded in the dynamic, collective and shared customer realities." (Heinonen et al. 2013:111)

To get a better understanding and to summarize the main differences between provider dominant (GDL and SDL) and customer dominant logics, a table below is provided with main characteristics.

Table 2 Differences in value creation between SDL and CDL (Heinonen et al., 2013:113)
For the research problem in this thesis, the CDL theory is a very good tool because it takes into consideration both the history as well as the future for the object studied. It is most important to get knowledge not only about the purchase, but also about the pre-purchase and post-purchase situations.

### 3.2 Own framework for the research

As we have seen, value creation process for children has not been subjected much research. By combining the activities that influence children’s consumer behaviour and CDL and finding that there is a gap in research, I would for this thesis propose my own theoretical framework for children’s value creation process. Because the focus in this thesis is to study the daily activities of children’s play, CDL is very suitable at this point. It gives space to discuss how the value creation process involving children differs to the one involving adults. The fact that there are no theories about how children create value, I would propose that the type of play and the history that the child has with activities from becoming a consumer affects the value creation of a child, and that he or she is building value from the different types of play he or she is performing.

The **cognitive development** and **consumer socialization** are related to each other. The **consumer socialization** focuses on how children become consumers, while studies on **cognitive development** concentrates on everything that a child learns and
the steps in the process. **Children consumer behaviour** is influenced by the **consumer socialization** process of a child, where many factors affect the child’s socialization into becoming a consumer. In other words, these are interrelated, and this is why I see that the components of CCB (children consumer behaviour) influence **the types of play** that children choose.

This would be the first step of how it all affects types of play children do and their learning through play as well. Additionally, I would like to add CDL to add more marketing perspective to the theory. Figure 8 below works as a map for figure 9, which is the own theory on children’s value creation. In figure 8, everything that might affect the everyday routines is taken into account. The figure is a summary of the theories and my own view of how the types of play and learning take place. This shows that consumer behavior of children also has its role in the value creation, which is why it has been added to Figure 9, children’s value creation process. This shows the focus for figure 8 and why consumer behavior is chosen as one area in the theory (figure 9).

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**Figure 8**  **How children learn to consume (own vision)**

As already stated, there is a lack of research in the field of children’s value creation process. The role of play affects the value in children, since they choose activities that give them value. I believe that children create value from the playful learning experiences discussed earlier. If the play is socially interactive, joyful, meaningful, actively engaging and iterative, it will create value for the child. Also, different types of play are activities that create value for a child. Every child is more or less able to affect what type of play to perform since they have power over their parents. Physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretend play and games with rules are all types of play that children can create value from – as every child is a different individual, it may differ a lot what type of
play is the most preferable. I would suggest that the playful learning characteristics affect the value creation of a child the most.

By aid of Heinonen et al. (2013) table of differences between SDL and CDL together with the t-model (Heinonen et al. 2010) it is possible to answer the questions of How? Where? When? What? and Who? for a child’s value creation process. The activities that children are performing should be supported by the toy-producers – in order that toy producers are in the right place at the right time. By support I mean the entire process, just like in the process of CDL; children need to be supported in their playful learning alternatives and different types of play – in order to create value for them. If there is some specific toy or brand supporting this, it may be something that they remember for a very long time.

The CDL theory makes a lot of sense when thinking about how a child creates value from something. Thinking this in Heinonen et al. (2010) constructed t-model: To exemplify, children playing with Lego bricks; how it is created – the value is formed by the child and no one else. The child plays with these bricks and builds something that he or she likes. Using his or her imagination, the child has a lot of different options what to build. This creates value for the child as the producer is helping the child in this process, and at the same time the child is learning motoric skills. Where the value is created is the same for children as it is for adults: it is a long process where the real value reveals itself after usage, or how much the child seems to need the product. With the same example, Lego have their own Cars series. There are children who cannot go anywhere without their cars characters, so there was a need for the series in real life. Next, one might ask: when is value created for a child? Since value is created through usage over a longer period it is hard to say exactly when, but during the play activities the value becomes clear. In the case of children, the value is based on the fact that the service or product helps their everyday life routines – just like for adults. Who determines value then? It is the customer and in this case the child that choose to like something or not.

I would like to propose that all the questions in CDL (How? Where? When? What? Who?) are highly affected by the characteristics of playful learning. The toy producers need to think about what creates value for the children while designing new products. In order for a child to create value through play, the playing experience has to be socially interactive, joyful, meaningful, actively engaging and iterative. Every individual decides for themselves what different types of play they prefer. This might be something that
comes from the cognitive development and consumer socialization process. Further the children consumer behavior activities may affect the types of play different children like because children learn how and what to consume.

The following figure may summarize the value creation of children and will be used as a framework for the research.

Figure 9  Research framework

The left side of the figure show those activities of the children, which I see affects their value creation the most. These are major segments and consist of several factors discussed above in the different sections. At this point it is clear that consumption vs playful learning and types of play differs from each other. I believe that the way children play is affected by their past and their consumer behavior they have grown up with.
4 METHODOLOGY

Leaving the theoretical framework behind, this chapter will provide the reader with discussion and critical evaluation of chosen methodologies for the empirical part of this thesis. The methodology chapter begins with discussion about philosophy of science and its different paradigms that may be used in qualitative researches, the first chapter discusses also the different research approaches and what it is meant by having an abductive research approach. The next section explains what qualitative research is and why it is used for this research as a method. After this, the collection of data is discussed – what different approaches is used to collect the data that is needed.

4.1 Philosophy of Science and research approach

Ponterotto (2005:127) defines philosophy of science to be the “conceptual roots undergirding the quest for knowledge”. Philosophy of science can be divided into ontology (our view on reality), epistemology (knowledge), axiology (values within research), rhetorical (language) and methodology (the process) (Ponterotto 2005). Within the field of philosophy of science, different research paradigms can be found. Each researcher has to be able to choose the best paradigm for his or her own research, the paradigm enabling the researcher to choose right the tools, instruments and participants (ibid).

The paradigms that dominates in philosophy of science have been positivism and constructivism (also called interpretivism) (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). According to Ponterotto (2005) three different paradigms can be recognized: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism-interpretivism, and critical-ideological paradigms. Constructivist philosophy means that the perception of reality is bound to context and that knowledge can be subjective and relative, in other words that knowledge is different in time and place (Patton 2002). Because the literature for this thesis considers different attributes that may affect the value creation for children, the point is that everything is interrelated and there is no one straight forward answer. Moreover, the constructivism-interpretivism view uses old knowledge as background in order to find something that is new knowledge to further build on what is already known (Hudson & Ozanne 1998).

Since the aim of this research is to find out the value creation process for children and to learn what role Lego has for children in their everyday routines, the interpretivist
research philosophy can be applied here. The idea is to build on what already is known from before. Further, this thesis will not decide what is right or wrong, but instead attempt to understand how something affects something else, and that, ultimately, there are several right answers and no wrong answers.

In research, the approach can be deductive, inductive or abductive. In deductive research approach the research is based entirely on a theoretical framework (Patton 2002), tying theory to the data that is gathered. In the deductive approach the researcher makes assumptions or hypotheses, which are being tested in the research (Patton 2002). Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) point out that having a deductive approach often associates for the research to be quantitative instead of qualitative. The inductive approach is the opposite to the deductive; when induction is chosen, the researcher will first try to collect data and after that build a theory based on the data found (Saunders et al 2012:145-146). As deduction has its roots in natural sciences, induction has its roots in social science (ibid). Furthermore, when using the inductive research approach the researcher is more interested in studying how people perceive their social environment, as opposed to studying how different variables are related to each other’s (ibid).

For this thesis I have chosen to use abductive research approach, in other words a combination of both deductive and inductive approaches. In the abductive approach the researcher moves back and forth between theories and data gathered, the aim being to find out something new. The idea is to modify existing theories, or to come up with new theories regarding the research problem. This is why the abductive approach uses existing applicable theories, but aims to create new ones or modify the existing ones. (Saunders et al. 2012)

Because the idea is to create a model of how children create value within their playing experiences and what affects the process, the theory itself will be something new. To gain information on value creation in general for adults, the theory that exists before will also be used. Also, the data gathered will play a crucial role since that will build on the new or existing theory. Therefore, the abductive approach will suit this research best since there is a mixture of old and new. From deduction the base theory gathered will be used and from induction the thesis has the interest in building something new.
4.1.1 Research method

For this thesis, I have chosen to use qualitative research method. There are two options when doing research; the qualitative and quantitative methods. The choice of method depends on what kind of research questions or problem the researcher has. If the researcher aims to get a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, it is best to use qualitative methods. In comparison to quantitative methods it is possible to come closer to the studied objects when doing a qualitative research. When using qualitative research methods, the researcher uses less objects that are studied, but on a much deeper level than what is done in quantitative methods. This gives the researcher also the opportunity to use citations from the collected data, which may help to find things that the researcher is looking for. (Patton 2002)

Qualitative research focuses mainly on collecting and analyzing of data that is not numeric, meaning that the data collected is usually in the form of words, pictures and videos (Saunders et al. 2012). Patton (2002) argues that the most common ways of collecting data is by deep and open interviews, observations and by having the objects writing diaries.

The qualitative research method is chosen to gain a deeper understanding on how children are creating value and what role Lego is playing in their everyday routines. To be able to answer this the research has to go beyond numbers and therefore quantitative research is not in this case applicable. Qualitative research gives more opportunity to understand the children on a deeper level and gives more space to understand the process. In the next section the collection of data for this thesis will be presented.

4.2 Collection of data

Because the research is qualitative, I have chosen to use several techniques to collect data in order to answer the aim of this thesis. In this thesis I have used interviews, observations and diaries. By interviews, the researcher gets more opinions from the respondents, which is needed to understand the problem of this study (Patton 2002). Further, Silverman (2011) argues that qualitative data can be collected in four different groups; observations, analysis of documents, interviews and focus groups, as well as recording of voice, pictures and other material. Silverman (2011) also states that it is possible to use these ways on their own, but it is normal to make a mixture of them.
The different topics and themes was thought from the point of view what information is needed in order to answer the research questions of the thesis.

4.2.1 Interviews

Interviews are used in qualitative research when the researcher wants to reach information that is deep, detailed and insightful (Patton 2002). In order for the interview to be successful, there has to be trust between the researcher and respondents so that the respondents’ answers or explanations give meaning and answers to the researcher. It is not possible to observe feelings, thoughts and intentions, which are easier to get from interviews (Saunders et al., 2012; Patton 2002). This does not mean that the answers are correct or wrong, but that the answers that are given should give insights for the researcher on the studied phenomena.

According to Saunders et al. (2012) there are three different types of interviews. They can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured. In order to discuss certain topics during the interview as to fulfill the aim of this study, I have chosen to use a semi-structured interview guide. It is highly dependent on the researcher what is achieved from the interview. A good interviewer knows how to ask questions in a way that the respondent wants to share his or her stories (Patton 2002). As the interview is an interaction with open questions, it is crucial that the respondent also understands what the questions are about (ibid). The most important positive side of having an interview guide that is semi-structured is that it can close gaps between theory, observations and interviews – which is exactly what is needed for this research (Patton 2002).

The interviews will be held together with the parents of the child that is observed earlier for this research. It can be both parents, or just the mother or the father answering the questions. It is important to first observe children playing because I, in the role of the researcher, might have something to ask them regarding their play session. The interviews with the parents were recorded, transcribed in order to be easier to analyze. Patton also (2002) discusses taking notes, which is important because it may help the researcher to formulate other questions along the discussion. The notes will be easier to analyze afterwards and will work as a backup if something goes wrong with the recorder. I must point out that there is no need to lock the respondents into certain questions or to show what a correct answer is: I request and need answers that they themselves believe
that is the truth. By using the semi-structured interview guide there is space for this. How the interview guide is built will be discussed in section 4.3.

One expectation was to interview the parent who spends more time at home with the child, to collect more data for the research. Because some of the respondents wanted to remain, I decided not to publish anyone’s names. I understand that privacy of a child is very important for some people, therefore I wish to respect it. This does not change the results of the research on any level.

The first interview that works as a pilot was chosen with convenience, since the researcher knows the respondent – this way the interview was relaxed and no issues with trust came up. The pilot (P1) is the mother of OP1 and because she had have another child quite soon after the first one (OP1), she is permanently as a housewife taking care of the children daily. This opened an opportunity to discuss about the daily routines that they have together and how OP1 wants usually to play.

4.2.2 Observations

Beside the interviews, another method to collect data is observations. The researcher observes others in order to get a better understanding on what is going on. The observations data is usually collected by looking, recording, writing notes and listening, and the collected data is analysed afterwards (Saunders et al. 2012).

The purpose with observations is to gain insight into a social process in its natural environment (Silverman 2011). Also, the main purpose with doing observations is to understand what is happening and why this is happening (ibid). There are two different types of observations (Yin 2009; Silverman 2011; Saunders et al., 2012); participant and structured observations. The difference between these two types is that in participant observations the researcher takes part in the situation, while in structured observation this does not occur (Yin 2009). Saunders et al., (2012) state that it is more common for qualitative research to use participant observations, while it is more common to use structured observations in quantitative research. For this reason, it is obvious that participant observations are used for this research in order to fulfil the aim of the thesis. Patton’s (2015:335) checklist on strengths with having observations is extensive and clarifies why it is important to observe in this research:
Table 3 Patton’s strengths on observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Short description of it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich description.</td>
<td>Deeper understanding than having just readings, interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual sensitivity</td>
<td>Likely to choose for example the environment that might affect what happens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being open to what emerges</td>
<td>Being open the ethnographer might find something totally new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing the unseen</td>
<td>To have the opportunity to see what people don’t think about or see themselves. Routines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing old assumptions and generating new insights</td>
<td>Participant-observer can found things that no one have seen before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening up new areas of inquiry</td>
<td>Information can be transformed to usage in interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delving into sensitive issues</td>
<td>From observations we can learn things people do not like to talk about in interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting beyond selective perceptions of others</td>
<td>Data gathered from interviews does not show what is really done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting beyond one’s own selective perceptions</td>
<td>As doing observations, we can learn a lot more than from reading theories. It builds on our knowledge further.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing empathy</td>
<td>Has to consider how the participants feels about the research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spradley (2016) and DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) divides the participant observation in to five different types. The type I am about to use, is called the moderate observation type. The observer is there in between being active and passive and therefore has a good balance between these two. Even if there would be involvement from the observer, there is still space for staying objective (ibid).

Since there is not much pre-understanding on how the children will play when they are being observed, it is easiest to approach the observation by being moderate. It might feel strange for some children that a person they do not know is suddenly looking at them playing. To get them to feel as safe as possible the observations will be held in their own homes, with the parents there as well. Me as the observer will take the active role, being a little active in the play situation, but trying not to show the directions. I am a part of it, but I am not making up any rules on how or with what the playing should be performed. This also enables me to pretend being a little “lost” within the play, and to get answers from the child why he/she likes to do this or that for example.
In order to answer the research questions and to build a process on how children create value, it is critical to observe children playing. What I am interested in is not only Lego’s role in their life: it could be that they do not own Lego. Instead, I would like to see how they are playing, what makes them happy or sad while playing – do they start by playing with Lego, or does Lego come into the play with other toys? These are the kind of questions I am interested in, and these are only possible to analyse and solve by making observations. The interviews with parents will hopefully give support on this and vice versa. It is up to the parents if I am able to video record the play or not, if not, field notes will work well. The topics that will be answered from the theories will be to see how the observed children play, with what, and their reactions; also, to see what kind of toys or play they prefer. This is what I wish to observe; hopefully, the observations are information rich. The role of the observations is to give support to the role of play in children’s life and to see from where the value creation starts. Possibly, data on household purchases might also come up.

The two girls in the age of 4 and 7, who together with their parents participated in this research, were not observed at their house or anywhere else. The reason for this was that the researcher and the children do not know each other in any way, therefore the results might be false as the children would not feel safe. Furthermore, the data gathered for them was the interview and the diary; here, the diary works as the observation and gives very valuable information about the children’s everyday life.

The pilot observation was made to gain understanding of how children can be in that age and the results was that they are not able to be observed further by the researcher in this thesis. The reason is that they are too hard to understand what they like, but then again easy to understand what they dislike. The observation lasted 1 hour 40 minutes, during that time the researcher was quite actively playing with the child – letting the child lead what to do.

### 4.2.3 Diaries

With the help of diaries, the researcher gets the opportunity to see what specific phenomena look like in the everyday life from the respondent’s angle. This is usually the idea with qualitative research: to understand and to get deeper into a specific phenomenon. Diaries as a method might provide understanding in emotions beyond a
constrained research environment and gives information from different situations (Markwell & Basche 1998).

There are benefits and risk with using diaries as a method, as there usually is two sides to everything. Luckily, data is also gathered with interviews and observations. Bolger et al. (2003) argue that benefits with using diaries is that it allows the participants to write down, report and to really observe their own thoughts and emotions about the subject in their everyday living. During the situation when the actual writing is happening, nobody else, such as the researcher, is present, therefore it may be in use in natural settings. Additionally, the material catches specific and unique events that may otherwise be hard to find out (Bolger et al., 2003). Diaries also provide recent information when the respondent actively uses the diary (ibid). Weaknesses about diaries to name a few: it can occur that the participant forgets to write as agreed with the researcher, leading to false information as the participant might write things they have come up with. Another weakness is that a diary by itself does not tell the whole truth about some phenomena, and analyzing diaries takes a lot of time during the process (Bolger et al., 2003; Wiseman et al., 2005)

For this study, a diary is an efficient tool in order to get deeper into the thoughts of participants. The diary is not written by the children observed, but by the parents. The diary was structured to be open, here I did not want to set up too strict rules – there might be a risk that the diary gets unwritten then. A discussion was held with the parents that the diary can consist of themes discussed in the interview, but that it is not a must. Therefore, the diaries can be seen as more open diaries.

The idea is that the parents are the observant. This gives me as researcher plenty of information about the everyday life of their children as I am not able to be present all the time. As the aim of the study is to understand children’s everyday life and Lego’s role in it, a diary is a good method to measure this. What they actually do when they play, how their routines during the day are like, how they play and so on - the actual behavior of the children can be described by the parents in the diary. This gives me as a researcher one more alternative to reach the children’s everyday life even closer, not to forget that this method works as support for observations and interviews.
4.2.4 The selection of respondents

The aim of the study and choice of methods influence a lot the choice of respondents to the research. Because of limited time and access, it is impossible to investigate the entire target group which are children aged four to eight and their parents. Therefore it is important for the researcher to choose how many and who the respondents will be (Saunders et al., 2012). Patton (2002) divides the selections into two different groups; random probability sampling and purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is often used in qualitative surveys, since the idea is to collect fewer respondents and collect deeper information than what is needed for quantitative research (ibid).

Patton (2002) further discusses different sampling strategies that can be used naming fifteen different sampling strategies: Extreme case sampling, intensity sampling, maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, typical case sampling, critical case sampling, snowball sampling, criterion sampling, theoretical-based sampling, confirming and disconfirming sampling, stratified purposeful sampling, opportunistic sampling, purposeful random sampling, political cases, convenience sampling. For this research, snowball sampling, criterion sampling and theoretical sampling were chosen.

In snowball sampling, the information or data is gathered in a chain, starting off by asking the respondents if they may know anyone relevant for the case. By asking around, there can occur a snowball effect where further information rich cases can appear. It is also very important that the respondents are suitable for the study; with this strategy, the point is in locating the information-rich key informants (Patton 2002). Saunders et al. (2012) points out that a negative side with having snowball sampling is that data might end up being similar to each other, since participants often recommend people who are similar to themselves. The point with snowball sampling is that it gets bigger the longer it rolls, meaning more participants and more data (ibid).

In criterion sampling the idea is to meet predetermined criteria, set by the researcher. For the research the criterion was that the children should be aged approximately 4 to 8, and another criterion is that they own Lego’s toys. They do not need to always play with them, but it is important that they exist on the playing ground. By using criterion sampling, it is ensured that suitable respondents are used for the study.
Theoretical sampling strategy is also used to some extent. Patton (2002) states that theoretical sampling is about choosing cases in terms of one’s own chosen theory. The children chosen as participants is a part of the theory, and especially having customer dominant logic as a starting point, makes it important to choose participants that may be analysed over the whole timeline of a service X. Considering this perspective it was very important to fully understand from where children create value, Due to limited time I have chosen to study in-depth the behavior of five children, and interview the parents of the child.

The first interview was completely contacted using criterion sampling strategy, after this everything was built on snowball and criterion strategies suited for the research. Remarkable is also that all the respondents (parents) have participated in this study by their own will without any external rewards. Furthermore, the first interview worked as a pilot. I wanted to test what it would be like to have younger children in the research, under 2 year olds, not able to speak yet. The results from the pilot will be further discussed in the results part.

Table below presents the interviewed parents that participated in the research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>23.3.2018</td>
<td>P1 (Pilot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>44 minutes</td>
<td>5.5.2018</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>38 minutes</td>
<td>17.5.2018</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
<td>13.6.2018</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>42 minutes</td>
<td>26.6.2018</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table below presents the children observed for the research:
For O3 and O4, the observations were made from the diaries that their parents wrote, the issue with observing them was legal, trust being an important factor since the researcher and these children did not know each other from before. Even so, there is enough data gathered on O3 and O4 to analyse.

### 4.3 Interview guide

For the interviews, an interview guide was used to follow semi-structured as mentioned earlier. The first part of the interview guide was based on an introduction between the respondent and researcher, to discuss shortly about what is studied in the research and what their opinions towards the topics are. The idea with having this discussion was for the researcher to get to know the respondents opinion on a general level, and to warm up the conversation.

The usage of an interview guide that is made before the interview helps to keep the discussion within the research topics and ensures that important questions will not be dropped out (Patton 2002). Further this ensures that the same topics and questions are discussed with all the respondents (ibid). Having an interview guide also makes sure that most important topics are discussed during the interview, it also works as a memory list for the researcher what topics are answered. When the guide is semi-structured the researcher has the possibility to change directions and questions, and the order of questions if needed (ibid).

The interview guide used for this research has been constructed based on the theory and is based on chapters two and three. Because the respondents had different native languages, the interview guide has been done both in Swedish and Finnish, as well in
English for this thesis. The attempt constructing the interview guide was to first ask easier questions of the subject and step by step turn to more analytical questions. Following the interview guide topic by topic, but not question by question made it possible to have a more informal and relaxed conversation than when it would feel like a quiz or interrogation. The interview guide is found in the appendices of this thesis.

In the interviews, the themes consumer socialization, advertisement, household purchases, role of play, value creation and Lego was all used in the discussion, the idea being to have the same topics as in the theory in order to know how they feel and see the topic. The topic about cognitive development might have been the hardest one as it required more discussion about the child’s past than the other topics required. The questions themes are consumer socialization: it is discussed together with the parents whether they agree on the development, and how they see their child’s development compared to the theory. This is important as different kind of play may start at different ages, depending on the development as well. The second theme is how the child becomes a consumer. This is important to know from where and when it all started, and interesting to see if it relates to theories around the theme. The third theme is advertisement, an important theme as it may affect children a lot and their materialism. The fourth theme is about the household purchases, where I am interested to see how much the child is able to affect their toys and everything else in the family. In the fifth theme I am interested in what role play has in children’s life, as a sixth theme I discuss together with the parents how they see their children create value. The last theme is simply about Lego and the children’s feelings about them; if the child plays with other toys than Lego, then there will be discussion around toys in general as well.

The answers and discussions is free translation to English, since the respondents had as their native language Finnish and Swedish. When all the interviews was held, the interviews was transcribed and compared with each other. The same thing was done with the observations. The division in to different themes makes it easier and clearer to analyze the results in the next chapter of the thesis.

4.4 Data analysis

For this study a lot of different data was gathered by means of interviews, observations and diaries. Comparing qualitative data to quantitative data, it is known for being more rich and full than quantitative data. Because there is a lot of data, it is crucial that
collection of data, analyzing it and building theory are not seen as separate activities but instead intertwined with each other (Silverman 2005). The point with analyzing the gathered data is to understand it and to find meanings from it, to reduce, sort and rebuild the volume of your data; to identify the interesting and important patterns in the data, and, finally, to shape a model that shows the essentials about the data gathered (Spiggle 1994).

There are many different ways of analyzing the data: in this thesis, the data was analyzed with content analysis. Patton (2002) describes the content analysis as a process where meaning and content should be created of qualitative data. The goal is to transform collected data to correct conclusions that are able to answer to the research questions for the thesis (ibid).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to be more accurate to analyze the data, which is recommended by Spiggle (1994). Spiggle (1994) and Patton (2002) suggest that collected data should be divided into smaller pieces and units. Spiggle (1994) further presents seven different stages of analyzing data which are categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalisation, integration, iteration and refutation.

The process for analyzing the data in this thesis was made in eight different steps; first the data was organized by transcribing it in order to easier understand the data. Second, the data was reviewed in order to get familiar with the data gathered. Third step was about categorization, coding in different colors in order to identify patterns and different categories of data. Fourth step was the abstraction of data, to identify bigger entities with the categories as base. During stage five, comparisons were made between findings and the existing theory. Step six, integration aims at creating new theories. This is made by interlinking identified categories. Reporting is the seventh step where the results of the study is presented. Step number eight is the analysis of results, comparison with results and theory in order to draw conclusions and implications. (Spiggle 1994)

My intention with having all three ways of gathering data is to in the analysis part put everything together in order to find similarities, differences between the theories and between the observed as well. By comparing these I see that there is most potential to find something that interests and affects the results of this research.
Using a pilot, it gave me good knowledge on what age-group I should concentrate myself on in the research. It would be wrong to say that it did not give any information at all. Instead it is better to say that the observation gave the researcher valuable information about what age groups should not be considered to take part of the thesis research. After this observation it was decided that only children able to talk would participate.

The themes discussed during the interview with P1, were the same discussed with the other ones. Something noticed from this interview was that it was hard for P1 to answer the questions concerning the child cognitive development, this was further discussed and P1 stated that it might be something that comes later – when OP1 is older and it is easier to connect all different stages to one whole set.

4.5 Quality of the study

For qualitative studies, there are several applicable concepts to discuss in the research. Wallendorf and Belk (1989) discuss different criteria how to gain quality for the research that is made, in other words how to get trustworthiness for the study. Quality in research is discussion about how the researcher has been able to gain trustworthiness in the study, concepts that are discussed in within trustworthiness are: Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, integrity (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). These concepts will further be discussed in this part of the thesis. Trustworthiness means the truth, where the point is to prove to the reader of the thesis that the results are authentic and real (Silverman 2005).

To assess credibility for the research, Silverman (2005) argues that one effective way of proving it by using triangulation of data. Triangulation means that multiple methods are used in collecting the data, therefore the data collected should be reliable. Further, the interviews and observations were completed anonymously, which would reduce nervousness from the respondents’ side. The location was also thought to be as relaxed and safe as possible in order for them to feel safe. For the category credibility, triangulation works for gaining it quite well. Interviews, diaries and observations together with pre-understanding for the respondents give credibility for the research (Wallendorf & Belk 1989).

When assessing the transferability it is common to triangulate by purposive sampling, meaning that observing during different times and settings (Wallendorf & Belk 1989).
This is done in the research, since different locations and people are used as respondents and objects.

*Dependability* is assessed when making observations over a longer period of time to search for differences between the results. Since there is lack of time doing the research, this could not be assessed (Wallendorf & Belk 1989). The authors (ibid) further discuss that to assess dependability it can also be made by triangulation, detailed transcripts and audio or pictures. These are used in order to assess the dependability of the study.

*Confirmability means* the data should be neutral for the researcher and that the findings are determined by the informants of the research (Wallendorf & Belk 1989). The whole research process in this thesis is neutral to a high level as the researcher does not work for Lego and neither has he had any information from the company that would not be publicly available.

*Integrity* is the last category of assessing trustworthiness according to Wallendorf & Belk (1989). With integrity the authors (ibid) mean that interpretations are not filled by lies of the researcher or receiving not truthful information from the informants. Issues with this might be if the respondents dislike the researcher or if they want to give an answer that sounds nice but is not the truth; here the observations might help a lot (ibid). An effective way of assessing integrity to the research is by gaining trust from the respondents and by giving information before observations and interviews about the occasion. Another important point is the sampling strategy used. In this study, snowball sampling was used, the reason being to gain trust between both sides, participants and researcher. Also, the fact that interviews were friendly and anonymous assesses integrity for the study (ibid).
5  EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter will present the results of the research from the interviews, diaries and observations. Since the results are based on the questions that were asked, this part of the thesis will be divided in to the themes asked. The focus in the empirical findings will be between the theory, observation and interview – going back and forth between the data helps to find differences and similarities between children’s actual play and what the opinions of parents are.

5.1  Pilot

The results from the observation were basically that OP1 was not able to concentrate on one thing, but instead he wanted to show all his toys, books and stuffed animals at the same time. This made it a disorganized situation and it would be hard to make several analyses on children this young. The only thing he played with more than 5 minutes was in his toy-kitchen, cooking “food” for us.

From the pilot interview, more information was gathered than from the observation. Still, as the observation not was very successful this gives limitations for the age-group that was used further on.

5.2  Findings from different themes

In order to make it clear for the reader what the findings are on different important themes, they are divided separately in to different topics in this chapter. The most important themes are discussed in order to fulfil the aim of this study.

5.2.1  Consumer Socialization

One thing that all of the respondents had in common in their answers was that everyone put a lot of value on pre-school and kindergarten as different makers in their children’s development. Many think that they might learn something new every day, and that is something that does not occur at home. The majority of respondents said that they are able to recognize a lot of the development while one said that s/he only recognizes the development in bigger steps, not considering it all the time.

“...I have definitely thought about it, it can clearly be seen that a lot of skills are improving with high speed – he might learn new things there just in one day which amazes me every time.” (R1)
“... I think that one very important thing that have developed her thinking is her friends. She learns a lot of new things that has not been taught in kindergarten. The steps are in a way very small, but then when I think about her development they seem like big steps.” (R4)

The pattern of children growing into consumers were quite similar for everyone interviewed except for one. For other parents, it was quite clear that the child is almost every time with them when they go shopping, while one said that they are trying to avoid it.

“... We actually try to always avoid shopping with the children if it is possible, the shopping goes faster without children and they do not get exposed to buying stuff. I think that is a good thing as well.” (R4)

In contrast, the rest of the parents interviewed did not have an opinion on bringing children shopping – except the fact that they have to do it.

“Living in an urbanized area, forces me to take him with me shopping and I think that we both enjoy it.” (R2)

When discussing about what catches the children’s attention in any stores, the answers were similar. It seems that whatever gender or age, children are interested in the same objects in stores. Fruits, toys and candy were the ones standing out in discussion with the parents. A few of the respondents said that their children are attracted by everything that comes in bright colours, this might be one reason why fruits are very interesting. Another one further states that fruits are children’s candy.

“Anything that has a car on the package gets attention, he is a lot into cars. This is something we never have encouraged him to, it has come from somewhere else.” (R2)

“Her (O3) favorites are definitely fruits, if we consider in a grocery store. To toy-stores we do not really take her, we are trying to avoid new toys all the time when there is enough already.” (R3)

“... I think that her (O4) friends give the idea of getting something, for example if someone gets a new bike she might ask for one as well. If we see stuffed animals, I try to distract her with something else, usually she spends a lot of time looking at them.” (R4)

5.2.2 Advertisement for children

During the discussion about advertisement for children, a lot of interesting points came up. This is a topic not easily recognisable by means of observations, trusting more the facts that the parents say.

Only one of the four respondents that took part in the interview, said that their children do not play any videogames at home. Three out of four said that they let them play
videogames on tablets or their parents’ phones. One very interesting point is that the ones not using videogames do not have any issues with advertising yet.

“... I think that she (O3) does not know what to ask for because we have been quite careful with television and video games for example. One might say we are a bit old-fashioned but we are trying to protect our child from all advertisement while it is still possible.” (R3).

“... Actually, she asks about new games while playing on her or our phones. I have not considered this before, but it is obviously because of the ads that are coming up during the game.” (R4)

Further, another respondent also discusses the issue with having pop-up marketing for children:

“... One thing I have noticed is that if I let him play on tablet or phone, there are ads popping up in between the games. Those are things he strongly reacts on and tells me that he wants this and this game.” (R1)

One very interesting point was given from one of the respondents, that when his child learned to read she was suddenly able to recognize more of the ads and they attracted more of her attention.

Another interesting point is how children are at a very young age already able to link advertisement to the fact that the product can be bought.

“The link between ads and that something can be bought was there very early, this surprised me a lot. For example, that O2 sees a Lightning McQueen (Lego car) somewhere – suddenly he tells me that we should buy him one from the store. How does he know that they can be bought? Why is there not the same effect on things that is not for sale? Such as trees or a playground.” (R2)

“... Or that he sees a police car on TV or somewhere else – if he likes the car he immediately connects it to buying and a store, that there must be a corresponding toy which can be bought” (R2)

One of the respondents said that direct ads towards children is something that O3 ignores quite a lot. The reason might be the fact that she does not yet understand that almost everything is possible to buy. One interesting point was about an ad from a marine company which includes mermaids, this O3 was very happy about.

“Considering all the media available, O3 sees a lot of commercials. The ones she prefers are colorful, and animals attracts her attention. One that O3 especially loves has mermaids but because she does not know it is an ad, she is not able to ask for the product or service the company of the ad provides - which in my opinion in nice. She often admires ads, but never asks that “look mom I want this.” (R3)

From advertisement and what attracts the children’s attention, some common things came up during the discussion. The colours, if they are bright and look nice – it does not even matter what product it is - children get interested right away. Another thing that the children had in common is that if there is a voice telling them to buy it, or saying
something that it will be the greatest thing to do, they react on it and ask their parents to get it for them. There can be seen a huge difference between those who are playing with tablets, phones and watch television compared to the children that are not doing so. The ones doing it are exposed to advertising and, as it can be seen from the research, it has an effect what they want to have and what they play with.

The discussion about materialism continued on the same path, meaning that the same differences came up. The ones using electronic devices for playing were the ones more materialistic, obviously because from advertisement they learn how to recognize brands. The biggest thing in common respondents was that children learn about the brands in kindergarten and school from their friends, and therefore ask to get the same products in order to boost their self-confidence.

“... He is very materialistic, but I see it as we parents and adults do – we have our phone in our hands all the time versus he has his Lego car with him all the time. These are of course strong brands these Lego cars and I think it may boost his feelings about himself.” (R2)

“Yes, he prefers some toys and know their brand by their names. Much more materialistic than I was at his age, very important about what he owns” (R1)

In comparison between child O2 and O3, the parents have totally different opinions on the level of materialism in their own child. Interesting to see that some children do not need it to have high self-confidence.

“She might tell us about what her friends in kindergarten own, and that she likes what they have - but she still does not ask it from us. Her confidence is in my opinion quite high and to have it she has never needed items to boost it.” (R3)

There are clearly differences between the levels of materialism, but, again, three out of four children seemed to be materialistic to some extent. It is hard to say whether they are just boosting their self-confidence, or something else. In my view, there is more to it than that. I shall discuss this further in the analysis part.

5.2.3 Household purchases

On a daily basis, the children influence a lot what the family consumes as a whole. If not directly buying something for the child, the parents might still think about their opinion regarding food and everything else that has to do with the household. One of the respondents had an interesting point regarding the indirect effects on purchasing:

“... We never had breakfast with his mother and I together in any fancy brunch places, now we do and it costs us a lot on a monthly basis. The reason for this is because in the morning it is quite a hassle to get O2 to kindergarten, we are always in a hurry in the mornings. So, when we have
dropped him off to kindergarten we have this 30 minutes when we can relax together just the two of us. This kind of purchases did not happen as often before.” (R2)

Further, another respondent states that:

“I would say that our children affect the purchases of this household to a very high level, one reason is that O4 suffers from food allergies which puts us in the position to think about what we eat through her. Another quite funny thing I realized is that while buying furniture for example, I think about our children and their opinion about the furniture – so even in a situation like this it affects the purchases.” (R4)

It became very clear that everyone had the same opinion: children influence the household purchases on a high level, but the products differ. One of the respondents compared the children’s effect on purchases on their own hobbies, saying that the amount which goes according to the child’s preferences is so much more than their own that is not necessary to put down on paper.

When discussing household purchases it is also crucial to consider the way and amount of demanding the children are doing. This was very different between the children studied. To some point everyone uses whining as a tool to get something, but there were differences in what way they perform it.

All other respondents were quite in line with R1, the only thing two of the rest added was that their children do not whine or demand something during the time at the store – but in fact it happens back home in their own house. They said that they feel that it is in the context, that it would be ok to whine in their own home.

“O3 is very hospitable with any other people outside her family and I think it may affect her behaviour outside the house” (R3)

“… the whining happens, but very seldom at the store. If O4 is with us at the store, she might look for toys she likes at the store but does not actually ask for them there. When we come home and she gets tired, then the whining and demanding for these toys starts. I think this is weird, but at the same time it is better this way, we avoid buying something for her every time.” (R4)

“… Sometimes we buy the product just to make her happy, but not because of the whining. Actually, she might have a higher chance of having something she likes without the whining part. Since we parents might listen to her seriously.” (R4)

“…Because O2 has a lot of toys already, a lot of buying happens in an organized way. We do not buy toys because he tells us to do it, we buy them to make him happy and this does not happen very often. I would say that maybe 10 percent of what he tells us to buy we give after and buy it for him, other 90 percent we do not. But then again, O2 is not a child that whines to get something.” (R2)
As it can be seen, everyone is pretty much in line with each other concerning the level of whining. As we know so far, there are always some kind of conflicts with children while doing shopping. How the conflicts are solved if there is any, this again differs between the respondents involved. There were three different categories: 1. The parent gives up and buys the toy. 2. The parent gives a very strict no as an answer or 3. Negotiations that may result in purchase, or not. Every one of the respondents said that they try to negotiate every time to some extent. The issue sometimes is that if the parents are tired, there is no room for negotiation with a child that is whining, therefore the child wins and gets the toy. Even this happens once in a while for everyone, the third type, which is negotiations resulting in no purchase, is the most used one.

"If we have a conflict I really try to stick to my opinion that he does not need it, sometimes it is hard because of the whining but not often." (R1)

"I think that it is the same for all children, the easy part is to avoid candy and toy aisles but the hardest part is by the cashier. There is always small toys and candy with nice colours that he gets interested in. But there I am very strict, he can whine but usually I am not buying anything from there." (R1)

Further, respondent 4 states that if there are conflicts, they try to solve it by conversation with O4.

"... there is not often conflicts within stores, no matter where it happens -- we try as parents to solve them with conversation. We seldom say “no” immediately, but the conversation is going to that direction. I think O4 might learn to negotiate and that their discussions do not always end their way." (R4)

5.2.4 Types of play

The way children play is able to see both from the theoretical part, the interview with the parents, from the diaries and from the observations made. For this topic, the observations and diaries give a lot of good data for the results. As a reminder, I would like to present the characteristics of types of play, the same figure as figure:
Figure 10  Characteristics in types of play (Whitebread et al. 2017)

During the playtime with O1 he introduced his phone, which he felt proud of: he feels that it is important that mom knows where he is. During the observation we played with Nintendo switch for just 5 minutes while all the other play was activities including toys or imagination. He felt really proud of his toys, showing all of them but not playing with one single toy for very long. One of his toys was dominating over others, which are the Plus-plus. This is a Danish toy company – their product is building bricks, so there are a lot of similarities with Lego. Plus-plus only comes in one shape, which gives children the imagination flow where-ever, and it is possible to build anything.

"..at first I build from these plus-plus bricks a big bus, then I changed it to a boat and then I built an airplane from the same bricks". (O1 statement of plus-plus)

The type of play together with O1 was within a very wide range. He enjoyed physical play: playing football on his backyard, playing with objects – the plus-plus and many others and games with rules – inside and outside different games where he himself made up the rules, using his imagination.

It became also clear that plus-plus was something that he had started playing with in preschool with other kids and that he liked them a lot because it is possible to build whatever comes to mind. Another interesting fact while the play with O1, is the fact that one play or playing with one toy or one activity did not last longer than 10 minutes. There was a high tendency to change the play in order to show as much as possible, or O1 got bored quickly with what he was doing. What also was interesting was that O1 had Lego bricks
but they were still in their packages unopened: he told me that he gets bored of them because they take too long to build. O1 had two packages unopened that were for children in the age of 7-14. O1 had other smaller Lego’s that were built, but he is really not a huge fan of them because it takes too much time to put everything together.

The observation with O2 was very different comparing to O1, with O2 concentrating at one play pretty much. The different types of play that was involved in O2 playing was the symbolic play; where he talks all the time with his toys and between them as well, play with objects played a crucial role as he walks around with his Lego cars all the time whatever he does, and pretend play using his imagination and changing what the cars are able to do.

An interesting thing that occurred before dinner was that an adult cleaned the table after which O2 truly wanted to take part of that as well. The observation with O2 started off by eating for 30 minutes, one point worth mentioning is that O2 had 2 cars all the time on the table while eating. This could be one reason why it takes such a long time to eat. The cars where Lego’s Disney Cars series “Lightning McQueen” and a “Sheriff” car from the same series. These two O2 assembled and removed three times during the dinner. O2 felt so attached to the Lego cars that he took them everywhere he went. O2 is very different from O1, he has other toys than Lego but prefers Lego all the time over other toys. After he had eaten, he went to the sandbox to wash his Duplo truck and left it there during the play.

After this, we played at the sandbox for a while – not with anything else than the Lego cars or the Duplo truck, even if other toys were available. This play lasted for 5 minutes. Then O2 wanted to test his balance by walking on the edge of a stone fence on the yard, while still holding “Sheriff” and “Lightning McQueen”. Not giving them up at all, he seems to be very interested in cars. This occurs also after he rolled around with his scooter on the yard, which is a “Volvo” (car brand). After a while, he came to me and said:

“Can we go inside and play with small Lego bricks?” (O2)

The answer obviously was yes, so we then went to a room where O2 toys and Legos are kept. We built and played with Legos around 45 minutes, everything that was built had something to do with cars or engines. Here O2 did not let me participate that much, instead he wanted to build everything on his own: if I tried to build something, he took my bricks and told me they are his, he was right though. He built a quad bike, a podium,
a pit-stop for the cars and he put wheels around his car-circuit that was there in big pieces. While O2 was busy building his circuit, I built a duck for him, which he was very impressed by. Even if the plays consisted of different types, the car theme was something that dominated in all different ways of playing. For O2, also physical play can be seen as using of construction toys and that they go to the playground several times per week with his parents to play. There O2 gets very active, running around and using all the equipment available. This occurred in the diaries from the parent of O2. Further, R2 stated that:

“... I do not remember a single day after Christmas (6 months ago) that O2 would not have carried two cars in his hands anywhere he goes, the cars change but usually they are from the Lego Cars series.” (R2)

This comment actually confirms O2’s need for having the Lego cars in almost all his plays he performs.

O3 play is much like O1’s: she is very active and loves to play outside all kind of active plays with her friends. Plays with rules also occurs. She recently learned to swim, which she now feels is a very pleasant way of playing. While learning to become a better swimmer, she does not want anyone to help her out at the swimming pool, in other words she is very strict about learning it on her own. O4 is very similar as well, loving to play outside with her friends during evenings and weekends. If the weather is bad and there is not a possibility to play outside, then she loves to draw or play with Lego’s.

For both O3 and O4 the physical play, play with objects, pretend play and games with rules are the most common ones. There is a wide range of different plays to choose from. From O3 for example, we have seen that she loves playing active plays together with her friends, because she asks for it first thing in the morning. O3 and O4 both love to play outside with their friends, which keeps them very active as well. If there is a possibility to play outside they prefer to do so, and if there is time in the evening they both play with toys inside to calm themselves down after a hectic day. For O4, for example, building and playing with Lego’s calms her down as well the need of deep focus on building something out of the Lego bricks. Back home at O4’s house, she often also plays with her stuffed animals. There the play is playing with objects and pretend play, according to R4 he does not exactly know what O4 is doing, but several times he has seen her putting them up for drinking coffee or tea. They are plays where she uses her imagination, adding things she learns from her parents and friends.
While discussing what the parents see as their child’s favorite play, the answers were obviously very different from each other.

“I would say that she likes almost everything, her favourites might be to play with Barbie and toing draw pictures - but then again she loves to be outside running with her friends. One interest thing is that she packs every day her Barbie in her backpack and takes it with her to the kindergarten - what happens there I do not know, I would not be surprised if she leaves it in the backpack for the whole day.” (R3)

One of the parents summarized it very well during the discussion about active play: children often do things their parents do not understand or like, they do not like it and try to stop it. R2 pointed out that the child might try to learn something from what he or she is doing:

“There are things that we as parents do not understand why they are funny, but still I have chosen to let him do it – if he thinks it is fun and does not hurt anyone, then go ahead. An example is that he is pouring sand out somewhere and I do not like it, then I stop to think about it that O2 seems to enjoy it – I let him do it. His plays can sometimes be like that, I do not get it – but it is enough if I see him enjoy it.” (R2)

From the discussions it occurs that parents tend maybe to forget the importance of being silly once in a while, and thus stop their children from being creative and learning on their own.

5.2.5 Playful learning

In order for children to like what they are playing with, there are different characteristics of what is important for their playing experiences. These were discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, and are brought up here as a reminder:
From all the interviews, observations and diaries written by the parents it can clearly be seen that the plays the children are performing consists of these characteristics. These are things the children clearly never think about themselves, but still affects a lot if they want to perform the play or not.

Joyful play, as the child should be led to play the ways they feel joy from in order to learn more. All children are different, and this is why the joyful play is different for everyone. O1, who likes to perform all kind of different types of plays feels joy from them. It could clearly be seen what he likes to do and what not, if there is no interest in a play the possibility of learning from it is very low. For O1 it is about plus-plus toys and active plays outside, playing football for example. For O3 and O4 it was about playing outside all kind of active plays, such as hide and seek with their friends. For O2, the play is a little bit different, he likes alone time while playing, it could be seen that for him the joy comes from assembling Lego bricks to something he has not done before. He also like to play outside – but not as active plays that the other children in this research like, but in a more sophisticated way and always including his Lego car toys. That is something that creates joy for O2.

That the play is meaningful is not only personal, there are plays that are more meaningful than others, which does not depend on the child’s opinion. Play outside with friends or parents, or building and playing with Lego’s, Plus-plus or stuffed animals all have a meaning. Adults might not think about the fact that during whatever play, the children actually learn. By playing outside with friends there is hidden a lot of playful learning just as in meaningful play. The child is surrounded by other children, and as a group they learn how to communicate and interact, they learn that there are different rules in different plays. These are things they are proud of to learn and tell their parents proudly what they learned during the day. When building with Lego or Plus-Plus, the same things could be noted. O1 said that he thinks the things he has built are really cool, which indicates that he is proud about what he has done - and again he learns a lot from it. The meaningful things are the ones as children learn something new, which happens very often while playing, and it could actually be seen that it gives them joy as well.
As discussed earlier, by actively engaging while playing helps children to learn and children generally do not prefer parents or others to show how something is done. They want to find out things on their own and may find it uninteresting if something is spoiled in a way. The children that were observed for this research showed that they did not want much instructions on how to do something while playing. For example, while playing football with O1 at their backyard, he did not pay attention if I tried to give him instructions on how to kick the ball better. Similarly, while playing with plus-plus I built something with them and showed it to O1; after this he did not want to play with them anymore that day. For O2, the things with Lego had the same structure as for O1, he did not actually want me to build anything and if I did, he broke them down to smaller pieces. While he was building on something it could be really seen that he did not want any help, and this definitely indicates that he is actively engaging in his own play. The active engagement was very present in O3's play when she was learning how to swim. While she was trying diving to reach the bottom of the swimming-pool, even if her parents told her to try some techniques to reach the bottom, she did not even try them out. She wanted to find her own way of doing things, which is good and joyful for her if she succeeds.

For the playful learning to be achieved, the play should contain of iteration, which is the space of flexible thinking and creativity. In the children observed, it was seen that they got this the most out of plays where they need to concentrate and not from very active plays with rules for example. The iterative play can be something that is not possible to see, but by recognizing the child concentration might be one sign of iterative play. This happened very often during the observation and came up as well in the interviews. Seeing the children concentrating on building something with Lego's, Plus-plus or when they were drawing something, it could be seen that they tried new things on their own in order to learn. While trying new things something that is not advised them to, it usually is because they feel joy from it and at the same time learn from it.

The last characteristics in playful learning being discussed is the importance of being socially interactive. All children who are socially interactive for a longer period of time learn from the group communication and sharing skills and develop socially as well. Every one of the children involved in this research was socially interactive in kindergarten, at school or at home with their friends and therefore they had this skill in them. This was also something that came up in the interviews: that the children have developed in communication very much since they started kindergarten or school. Every
one of the children is socially interactive almost every day, during summertime they are playing outside with their friends when school or kindergarten has its summer break. Every parent said that their children like the most to play outside with their friends. This has to be because the children feel joy from it, and because they can practice their social skills with them.

5.2.6 Role of play

The role of play in children everyday life is very important, and all of the parents interviewed agree on this. According to R1, the role of play is crucial for children but she wanted to point out that different kind of plays are important at different ages. R1 also points out that the older the child gets, the more active play has got involved to the daily routines. As well for R2, he says that it is very important and that they as parents want to let him make the decisions on how to play, or what to play with. Every one of the respondents agrees that play is everything in children’s development. R3 had a very clear vision of what the role of play is for children and why she sees it as very important:

“I see that somehow children playing is their way to learn how it is to be a part of a community, it is very important. They are trying to be like adults, they learn from us and new words and stories might come up while they are playing on their own. I can definitely see same manners that adults have in their plays” (R3)

This was something that all the other respondents also answered, but in other words. The role of play could be seen to be crucial in the diaries the parents had written for days. There it was really seen that play is the most important activity in children’s everyday routines. It was written several times in the diaries that the children actually were asking permission to play first thing in the morning. One example is presented below with a free translation from one of the diaries written from the parents. The diary was written during a trip with family friends and their children:

“First thing in the morning when she (O3) woke up, she asked if she can go and play with her friends before breakfast is served – I said she could. After breakfast we took a walk around the hillside to take a look at an old castle ruin, it was hot and this kind of trip is very long for children in her age. After we had lunch in the castle, the children started to search for the princess of the castle – they got pretty soon tired of doing it because of the heat. When we got back to the house she (O3) went straight to the swimming pool, this time she wanted to learn how to dive and threw rings to the bottom to get them up. The diving looks every now and then dangerous, wanting us parents to help her – but it is restricted, and she does not want help at all...” (R3)

Wherever and whenever, it is possible to play. As the citation above shows, playing all day everyday makes the children clearly happy and it is not dependent on where it takes place.
5.2.7 Value Creation

While discussing with the parents about value creation and thinking about the observations made, there was a lot of different answers concerning how children create value and whether they create long term value.

The discussion about value creation for children with R2 was very interesting and he gave a quite in-depth view on how he sees it. R2 stated that he sees value as a short term feeling for children as young as four. We discussed the question whether children are able to enjoy unique situations again later on? Or are they enjoying the situation one hundred times, when they get the same feeling these one hundred times for example.

“I do not think there is permanent joy or joy that lasts for a longer time, I see it as value and joy in the moment. Some of his toys I can see that the value has lasted for a longer time, therefore my statement might be wrong to some point. I can also see that he values his friends and that they share the same things, further O2 values playing by himself. But certain things, as playing with his best friend or meeting his grandfather – these are something he values the most, I think.” (R2)

One thing that R3 said, was that in order for a child to create value that lasts for a longer time, it has to be something very special.

“One good example of O3 and her value creation is that when she was only two years old, our neighbour gave her strawberries - a few weeks ago (2 years later) O3 said to me that ‘It was so nice when X offered me some of her berries.’ .... I need to say that it is so dependent on different events.” (R3)

The discussion also pointed out that value is usually created for a shorter period of time, comparing to how it is for adults. The ones who creates the value however was quite clear for R3, she said that for O3 value is created by her friends and her parents usually. Even if it was stated that value is created for a shorter time of period, there are special events that children hold on to for a longer time of period.

The discussion of when they can see that value is created for a child varied quite a lot from each respondent. What I was able to see was that the children playing valued every second of their play, as long they were doing something they decided to do, and that the play was not made up by someone else. One of the respondents felt that children actually can create value and joy over a longer term:

“When she (O4) plays with his little brother or when she is building something with Lego bricks, these are different kind of values but somehow I sense that there is so much joy – that I think it lasts for a longer time in her” (R4)
How, where and which children creates value were difficult questions for the parents to answer. Still, there were good answers concerning the value creation as a whole. R4 had the opinion that anyone can create value to small children, as they usually are less shy of strangers. R4 goes further, saying that it is very hard to predict how or where it happens, but if it does they recognize it from the reactions of the child. Altogether, the parents had the same reactions on how, where and who creates value for children. It can be anything: that the child gets a gift or that they understand something on their own for example. Where the value is created is not contextual and can happen anywhere the joy or value is created in the first place.

5.2.8 Lego

The discussion about Lego was held to bring up the parents’ opinion in what way Lego is present in their children’s life and what role it has in everyday life of children. Every household consisted of Lego’s except for one house – the R3 and O3 did not have Lego’s at their house because O3 has never required them. They also like to not have a lot of toys at their house, since the children get to play a lot with toys in kindergarten.

The rest of the households that took part in this research have Lego bricks at their houses. O1 does not really play with them even if he has some, he told me that he loses interest after a while when the building gets really hard. Compared to the other two children who have Lego’s at home, this is totally the opposite. It seems like O2 and O4 are breathing and living through Lego’s, but in a different way. O2 is very attached to the Cars brand of Lego, while O4 plays with any Lego’s that are available and still thinks it is fun. O2 does play with other Lego’s as well, but the same kind of satisfaction as with the Lego Cars brand could not be seen. Almost everything that was built with other Lego’s during the observation was built around the Lego Cars that he carries around all the time.

According to respondent 2, he also enjoys when he sees the satisfaction on O2 while he is playing with Lego’s:

“As we discussed before and you saw it during the observation, it is unbelievable that O2 does not leave his Lego cars anywhere – he needs them all the time in his hands. He loves to break them apart and to put them back together.” (R2)

“... He plays with Lego anywhere at any time, just give him them and he will be in to it in-depth. I actually like the fact that it calms him down, he clearly enjoys it.” (R2)

Also, respondent 4 has the same thoughts about O4 playing with Lego’s:
“... I enjoy that she enjoys it, the way she plays with Lego’s makes her calm and the play is never rough in a way – not even if she has friends over. The play with Lego’s is always calm and I can see her enjoying it as she puts a lot of effort in building something new” (R4)

These two comments show what the parents think Lego’s role in in their children’s life. It could also clearly be seen from the observations with O2 that the level of concentration is very high while playing with Lego’s and something R4 also discussed about. The role therefor is to concentrate in-depth, to use a lot of imagination and to calm down by concentrating. The observed learn a lot during the play with their Lego products as they need really to concentrate in order for the play to be joyful for them. Also, the fact that the Lego cars that O2 owns were part of many stories he told me during the observation shows that he values this particular brand very highly.
6 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will discuss the results from the research, conclusions regarding the research questions and the purpose of the study. The analysis will consist of my own vision of children’s value creation and how companies should take them into account. The analysis will have the same structure as the results chapter in order to keep the structure clear. The conclusions are compared to the theoretical framework chosen for this thesis in order to find similarities and differences. After this, the new framework of children’s value creation is revealed together with managerial implications. The last section will discuss future research.

6.1 Consumer Behavior

Everything considered in the theoretical part and as the results show us, consumer behavior is something children learn from others, and it may also affect the ways of play they perform. The results from this research supports the theoretical framework concerning consumer socialization and cognitive development, how children become consumers, marketing towards children and what role children have in household purchases. The only thing that was totally different between theory and respondents for this thesis was the household purchases.

Considering the consumer socialization process for human beings and their cognitive development as well, the research did not find anything new regarding the topic. The only thing that might be different, which also was discussed with respondents, is that Piaget’s (1936) theory of cognitive development seems very strict when it comes to age-groups. The same applies to the issue concerning steps to consumer: the results show that children become consumers earlier, making their first purchases on their own before turning seven years old, as McNeal and Yeh (1993) have stated.

Comparing to the theories about how much whining might influence what the parents are buying, did not hold up in the opinion of the respondents. It turned out that obviously the parents think about basic needs what the child would prefer such as food, but when it came to the whining and the effect of it, the results were not as powerful as predicted based on the theory. The percentage of whining in the first place was less than in research by Valkenburg & Cantor (2001). A very interest point that came up was something not
discussed by previous authors: how much children affect parents' purchases outside the time spent with the child.

The discussion with the parents about marketing towards children came up with different results. Even if there was no discussion about how parents think their everyday habits and routines affect the amount of marketing and advertising the children takes in, there was a clear link between television and games, and how attached children get to demanding products. Furthermore, they learn that something is possible to buy and that it is easy to do. What Calvert (2008) pointed out was the most effective marketing techniques in order to attract children’s attention. It is easy to say that several of the author’s techniques works as well on the children in this research. Branded characters are what first comes to mind, a point which became quite obvious with both O1 and O2 during the observation. The fact that O2 is not able spend a whole day without his Lego Cars toys really shows how well the branded characters affect him. As the parents were not able to tell from where the interest for these particular toys comes, I would say that everything that happens in his everyday life has encouraged him to prefer these toys.

It all starts from advertisements as a young child is not usually able to distinguish between what is real on television or social media and what is not. In other words, how children learn how to buy is from a person or character that tells him/her to do it. In the case of O4, stealth marketing mentioned by Calvert (2008) was something that also came up in the interview – ads during games or cartoon films on tablets or phone. This works so well, that after a while and several stealth ads, the child thinks that the product is needed and asks the parents for it. One effective example of repetition is when O1 saw a television ad about a vacuum-cleaner: as the person speaking told him it is the greatest vacuum-cleaner and a thing every home should have, he asked his mother for one.

What can be seen in the age-group that is researched in this thesis is that children are very vulnerable when it comes to advertising, and that it should not be used in a wrong and aggressive way. In order to keep children safe from marketing they should have very tight rules about the use and that it is controlled by adults. I am not saying that it is very bad for children to see ads, but, in my view, it seems like the need to consume and how children learn that something is possible to buy is learned from the ads.

There are clearly differences between O1, O2, O4 and O3 as a separate group. O3 is not affected by direct advertising at all, which can also be seen in the ways she is playing.
The play is different and not as materialistic as it is for the rest of the children. As the parents of O3 try to keep her from watching television or playing games on phones, she is less exposed to advertising than other children with less restrictions. The differences in playing activities is that her playing experiences consists of more active plays and outdoor playing than with the other children observed. While materialism in theory discusses that friends might also be influencing materialism for children, this did not apply to O3. In my view, this is interesting because there clearly is a link between children exposed to advertising, materialism and children consuming. The fact that O3 sees ads once in a while in the newspaper for example, she still does not assume that the product or service is possible to buy.

Taking a closer look on the results in the research, it is in my opinion clear that advertisement for children and to what extent they are able to affect the household purchases directly leads children to becoming more materialistic. On the whole this leads to what play they are playing and what kind of play satisfies them. Figure 8, introduced earlier, can be seen to add up the results and that all factors discussed have an influence on how children choose to play.

### 6.2 Types of play

The different types of play are very relevant and from the research many different types could be found. Theory of different types of play from Whitebread et al. (2017) could not have been more accurate as all of the characteristics were found in the observed children. The children have their different history and background, which revealed different types of play for everyone.

In my opinion, it is possible to see the relation between the children’s development and consumer behavior and the types of play the children like to perform. This is an interesting point that came up during the research and started to make sense after combining theories and results. As several studies show (Vouloumanos & Werker 2007; Ginsburg 2007), children are born to learn through play, and by choosing the type of play on their own they at the same time express what they value the most. Meaning that children seem not to take part in plays that they do not feel interesting themselves, it is good that they have a lot of options available to feed their own interests.
The five different types of play discussed in the theory were strongly present in the children’s play that took part in the research. Physical play seemed to me very important for children as the ones in this case liked to dance, play games outside and to build with their toys. This is one of the most popular type of play concerning the children observed, together with play with objects, which, in my opinion, has quite the same characteristics as the physical plays. Play with objects seemed to be more important for two out of four children, which made me think about why they might be an important part of the play. This needs to have an even deeper understanding of the child in person, because everyone is different. Playing with objects might be that some particular toy or other object is part of the play. As we have seen from O2, the Lego cars took part of almost every play he performed; also, it was important for O1 to have something to hold on to in his plays. As it starts with physical play while the Lego, Plus-plus or whatever toy is built it after this turns to playing with objects because the toys are part of the play. In my view, pride could really be seen: firstly, the built toy was in the play because the children felt proud of building it themselves, and secondly, there was a sense of pride that the child owns these particular toys. The fact that one of the respondents pointed out about walking around with toys might be a gesture to imitate their parents as adults tend to have their mobile phone out all the time.

When it comes to play with rules, the parents thought that this is very crucial and that their children learn a lot this way. While playing with friends, in particular games that have rules, there usually came up conflicts that the children needed to solve. This is something that also Whitebread et al. (2017) discussed: children need conflicts to learn from them. As they are negotiating for the first time on their own without help, they learn from it and grow their social skills this way. One interesting thing to point out was that while playing with the observed children, they made up their own rules for the play; this way they could get as much satisfaction from it as possible.

One of the types of play is symbolic play, which consists among other things of making different gestures. The gestures were something that the children had learned from their parents, friends or at kindergarten. Overall, it seems that kindergarten influence a lot what the children want to do, and also a lot of gestures are learned from there and then showed at home to the parents. A lot of gestures also come from the fact that children are aiming to be like their parents, doing things their parents do and feeling proud about
it. Furthermore, they may say a lot of things the parents have said before, even if they do not understand the meaning of it.

From the types of play, it is impossible to point out one type that would dominate over another because all children are different. But I feel that it is very important to combine these types of play with the next chapter playful learning – this tells more about why something is chosen over another thing in children’s mind, and why they therefor create value based on something. Altogether, all the types of play are important in children’s life, just as the literature pointed out. One thing that really matters that came up in the research was that the parents told me about their child, how they see them and what they like the most to play with. When going further, it appeared that every child plays different types of plays and enjoy them. They just need to do it in their own way.

6.3 Playful learning

The results from playful learning show that it would be natural and logical to combine the characteristics from playful learning together with the different types of play. The characteristics presented by Zosh et al. (2017) are very accurate on what is important for children in their playing experience in order for them to learn. Children need to feel that it is important for them to do it.

From the observations, it could be seen that the children do not understand the meaning of a play every time. It depends on what type of play they perform. For example, I think that they do not consider the importance of building with bricks – they are not able to understand in what ways the play develops them, they just do it because they like it. This might be different in plays with rules, where they can feel that it has a meaning to play with friends and the meaning for children usually is to win. Play to be meaningful is very hard to see, but obviously if there is a meaning that the child can feel, they learn more effectively at the same time. This is the only characteristic that is not as simple to see as the other ones mentioned by Zosh et al. (2017); for the other ones it could be found in the answers of respondents or from the observations with the children.

Plays where children build something with for example Lego’s or Plus-plus, the play can therefor consist of iteration where the children are working hard and testing their hypothesis (Zosh et al. 2017). This was clearly going on every time the observed were building something. For example, while O1 was playing with Lego and building
something, he needed to test which brick fits best and where. The level of concentration could be seen to be very high at moments like this, and the creative thinking develops a lot. When the child finally finds a solution, relief and joy can be seen from his/her face. From the observations it could be seen that the solution might be the thing the children are looking for, and why they try again and again to succeed. They feel proud of what is done after putting their hypothesis into action.

The one characteristic proved to be very accurate, as stated by Zosh et al. (2017), was the importance of active engagement. It was noticed in several observations that the child did not like when a parent, friend or stranger interfered in their playing habits and several times some of the observed took the toy away to play with it himself/herself. This is exactly what Zosh et al. (2017) pointed out, and this was something that occurred quite often while playing with the children. I do believe that this has nothing to do with the fact that children want to learn on their own. Instead, I believe that they are just being selfish and do not have the knowledge of sharing yet, but at the same time they learn by thinking on their own. This can also be combined with iteration in my opinion, as the child wants to test their own hypothesis to achieve something without the help of others.

Every child seemed to be socially interactive, this was one of the characteristic that Zosh et al. (2017) also pointed out to be important. But the fact is that during the observations there was not a lot of play in bigger groups and therefore the active engagement of the child took over. The children might ask questions if they were uncertain how to build something or for what something is used, but other help they did not ask from me. From the interviews there was more data concerning the characteristic, in fact all the parents said that their child enjoys a lot spending time with them and with their friends, and that they think it is because they have the possibility to develop socially. Also, they observe what adults are doing and learn more that way.

The concept of joyful seemed to be the most important characteristic in the children’s playing experiences. Doing something that creates joy and other positive emotions helps the children to stay interested, this helps them to learn more productively. As every observed child liked different types of play, joy was the dividing factor. With every child, joy and happiness could be seen on their face while they were playing with the things they had chosen. However, when we tried out something new that the children did not like, there was no joy in their expressions, and they said that it is boring, or then they just stopped the play without saying anything. So, in order to keep up the interest the play
needs to be tailored according to his/her preferences. Otherwise there is no point in doing it. From the research made, it could clearly be seen that joyful playing experience is the key to learning through play.

6.4 Customer dominant logic

When it comes to the theory of customer dominant logic, it was clearly hard for respondents to give answers on the questions how, where, when what and who regarding value creation for a child. This is very understandable, since the theory is not easy to understand for anyone. What I learned was that the actions of the children during the observations gave more information than what the parents were able to provide on the topic.

The value is created through the different types of plays and the different characteristics of playful learning, depending on what the child prefers. Comparing provider-dominant logic and customer-dominant logic, the cdl is the one that may be used to explain how children create value. It can be used as it is used for adults, the only thing that is needed is information on children’s playing experiences, then it may be successfully used in companies and for marketing to children. Even if parents are the ones making the purchase until the child reaches a certain age, the children are the ones clearly deciding what they want. There is so much going on in children’s life over a longer period of time, which traditional service management and service-dominant logic does not take any stands to. Therefor cdl is a very good tool to use as it considers all different stages in children’s everyday life and not only the service situation.

6.5 Summary of analysis

It seems like some of the characteristics from types of play and playful learning go hand in hand and therefor belong together. One would not exist without the other. This is why I would like to adjust the research framework (figure 9) as new important information came up from the results of the research. The theories chosen for this research seemed to be appropriate, because the theories and the results in this research were much alike each other.

Why playful learning, consumer behavior and types of play are related to each other to understand the children’s value creation process is because everything starts from the child’s past and therefor the socialization process and how they become consumers. A
child does not know what they should get interested in: they need someone to point out a direction, and here the importance of parents, siblings and friends steps in. I would claim that the process of the child’s development into a consumer has to do with what types of play he or she prefers, and what he or she considers being playful learning. Even if the child alone does not choose what toy or plays to use, they still are the ones that are able to create value for themselves.

An important point concerning children’s value creation in this research is that the consumer behavior shows a path for the child what products they would like to have and therefor affected their types of play as well. The real value is created from the fact whether the toy is suitable for the types of plays that children have? And do they have the characteristics of playful learning? These two are the most important for a child as they are creating value over a longer time of period.

Lego’s role in children’s everyday life and routines varied a lot between the children. The ones having Lego bricks also varied in the purpose of use, as some children are attached to the brands and others like to play with them because they learn something new from building things, and also because they calm down from doing it. This has to do with the level of concentration put into the playing experience. Still, it is difficult to tell what the role is for children in their daily activities, but it differs a lot. Something that was especially seen from the results was that the children playing with Lego’s had a high level of concentration, and their ability to do something over a longer time of period was longer than for others. I would like also to point out that it is important for children to build and to test their own hypothesis, and that this is the perfect way to do so.

6.6 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter will discuss more in general the theories used and the findings of the research. Furthermore, theoretical implications, managerial implications and future research is discussed.

The different areas chosen to build on children’s value creation and how it looks like seemed somewhat weak at the beginning of this research. After the interviews with the parents and after watching how children play, I realized that for example consumer behavior and how children grow into something has a lot to do with how they create value for them. In addition, the flow of the theory that I came up with in the end seems clear
to me, and reading through the theoretical part and the results of the research, the connection can really be understood.

Considering what the purpose with the study was, that was to research Lego’s role in children’s everyday routines and to find out how children are building on their value creation process. Both of these purposes have been answered in this thesis and also individual contribution to the theory has been given in theoretical implications.

### 6.6.1 Theoretical implications

In my opinion, the playful learning and types of play should not be separated from each other, and I find it surprising that there is no discussion about how the consumer behavior affects the way children play. Therefore it is included in the research framework and combined together in the new research framework where the children’s value creation logic will be explained:

![Figure 12: Model of children's value creation](image)

Types of play and playful learning are very similar, and one is not taken away because of the other. Consumer behavior is very broad as the theoretical part in this thesis is proving. This is why the theory of children’s value creation should see that the starting point of everything might be in the consumer behavior and in the environment of childhood. So, when types of play and playful learning are collaborating with each other
these are the three areas that creates value for the child. Why the Customer-dominant logic is in the centre is for the companies who are trying to attract children to become their customer. This is discussed further in managerial implications.

CDL would be the most relevant way to market toys for children as it should look into history of the child instead of only looking at the purchase of a specific item or service. Firms have to go beyond the interaction with the children: they need to know what the future or history of the children looks like in order to have the knowledge needed for supporting children’s everyday routines. In fact, I would argue that Heinonen et al. (2010) t-model of CDL is exactly what is possible to do for children as well since the age of the first individual purchase is quite low in Scandinavian countries.

**6.6.2 Managerial Implications**

The results gathered in this thesis may be used for Lego, or any other company that is in need to produce value for children as their customers.

From the figure (figure 12), it can be seen who are responsible of the value creation: the company using CDL as a strategy to fulfil their customers’ desires. The CDL is in the centre because, in order to use it in a proper way, the company needs to have information about the children; what types of play they prefer, what playful learning is about and the consumer behavior. The idea is to give implications from the empirical findings for toy manufacturers how they would be able to take advantage of the value creation process for children.

What this all means to Lego is that they should seriously consider that the environment children are growing up in is continuously changing, and therefore their consumer behavior will change to some extent during the coming decades. This does not mean that children will forget about Lego, but I would like to point out that it is very important to keep up with trends in children’s life in order to continue their success. Not only to consider in what kind of situations children might play with Lego’s, but also what kind of Lego’s will satisfy children in ten years from now. In order to achieve this, I strongly suggest they consider the usage of customer-dominant logic and try out how it works. The company will gain more understanding about the children’s daily routines, which will help them develop their products further.
6.6.3 Future research and criticism

The methods used to perform this research turned out to be good choices, because a lot of different data was gathered. The issue with this research was the resources such as time and people taking part of the research. It was hard to find respondents doing the research in person. Therefore I would suggest to have group-observations and group-interviews in the future in order to save time and to get more respondents to take part in the research.

Doing research that includes children is always risky, and the contracts with the parents need to be very clear. As no studies on the value creation of children have been carried out before, I suggest that everything related to this helps to build on the theory in this thesis and make it even stronger.

For the future, I suggest that research needs to be done in the same field and with the same purpose, but with more respondents and observed children. This way it would make it easier to prove that the theory of children’s value creation (Figure 12) should be integrated into companies’ habits.

It might be a good idea to divide future research into smaller units, so the empirical study would be as clear as possible. For example, to study the types of plays and how that alone affects the value creation of a child.
APPENDIX 1      SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Rubrik: Barnens lekupplevelser – Legos roll i barnens vardag.

Introduktion till ämnet

Leksaker för barn har uppkommit redan på 1400-talet, då största delen av leksakerna bestod av dockor och djur. I dag finns det tusentals olika leksaker och lika många olika sätt att leka med dem på. Lek och leksaker har vi alla upplevt under vår barndom och de är oerhört viktiga på flera sätt. Lekupplevelsen utvecklar barnens sociala, emotionella, kognitiva, fysiska och kreativa lärande, för att nämna några aspekter. Det är ett viktigt sätt att utbilda barn på redan i början av deras liv. (Ginsburg 2007)


Barn har länge varit en viktig målgrupp för företag – ju snabbare de blir kunder desto längre är de kunder. Det har inte offentligt visats hur företag fångar barn till kunder, eftersom det är en stor konkurrensfördel. Det som avhandlingen också kommer att
försöka påvisa är vad som är värdeskapande för barn och vad det i så fall är viktigt att tänka på för företaget.

**Motivering av studien och en syftesformulering**

Lego är ett mycket traditionellt och gammalt varumärke och under sina verksamma år har företaget flera gånger varit på väg att gå under. I dag är Lego trots alla motgångar en av världens största leksaksproducenter och deras affärsverksamhet verkar fungera bättre än någonsin tidigare. Ett stort beslut de fattade tidigare var att inte beakta digitaliseringen som hela tiden sker, utan i stället lita på att barn verkligen vill leka fysiskt med någonting. (Lauwaert 2009)

Legos beslut att inte använda sig av digitaliseringen och nya teknologier, vilket många andra producenter har gjort, gav incitament att studera vad det är som barn verkligen värdesätter och hur värde produceras för dem. Det att ingen neutral forskare har utfört denna typ av forskning tidigare för Lego är ett annat motiv för att djupare gå in i ämnet.


Syftet med denna avhandling är därmed att beskriva leksakernas och lekens roll i barnens dagliga rutiner samt att beskriva hur barnens värdeskapande process ser ut. För
att även ha Lego med är ett syfte också att se hurdan roll Lego har i barnens vardagliga liv.

**Presentation av tidigare forskning**

Teoridelen har byggts upp i två olika kapitel eftersom ämnena skiljer sig mycket från varandra. Genom att ha två olika kapitel är det tydligare för läsaren att följa med. Första kapitlet behandlar hur barn lär sig och deras lekupplevelser. Referensramen baserar sig på litteratur om barns konsumentbeteende, socialiseringsprocessen av konsumenter, kognitiv utveckling, materialism och hur stor betydelse lekupplevelser har för barn. Andra teorikapitlet är uppyggt på litteratur om logiker kring värdeskapande, där den kunddominanta logiken är utsedd som lämpligast för den utförda undersökningen. För att ge läsaren en djupare insyn i dessa teorier som använts och varför presenteras dessa noggrannare i detta kapitel.

**Hur barn lär sig och hur de leker**

Vid diskussion med en representant för Legos marknadsföringsavdelning tyckte vi båda att för att kunna förstå hur barn producerar värde måste man förstå hur barn lär sig och hur de leker, samt ha en uppfattning om vilka färdigheter som utvecklas i vilken ålder.


Eftersom avhandlingen går ut på en kvalitativ studie är det viktigt att veta hurdana barn är i denna ålder, för att göra det lättare att hitta skillnader och likheter mellan teori och insamlade data.


Det är viktigt att påvisa hur barn begär saker, eftersom det påverkar hur leksaker kommer in i deras liv. Det är också intressant att se på vilket sätt de lär sig och växer upp för att påverka hela familjens liv som de gör.


För att sammanfatta avhandlingens andra kapitel är det viktigt att förstå varför dessa rubriker är viktiga för avhandlingen i sig. Företag har som mål att nå barn som konsumenter så tidigt som möjligt. Den kognitiva utvecklingen och socialiseringsprocessen till konsument är båda viktiga, detta påverkar värdeskapandet vilket är ett relevant ämne i avhandlingen. Allt detta som nämns ovan påverkar barnets värdeskapande process, vilket hör till syftet att undersöka.

**Logik i värdeskapande**

Avhandlingens tredje kapitel handlar om värdeskapande och vad logiken bakom det är. Tjänstedominanta logiken och kunddominanta logiken ställs mot varandra och påvisar varför den kunddominanta logiken lämpar sig bättre för denna studie. I kapitlet diskuteras även på vilket sätt barn skapar värde, eftersom det inte finns tidigare studier kring ämnet.

Undersökningar inom marknadsföring har under det sista decenniet förändrats väldigt mycket. Fokus har flyttats från ett leverantörs- och kundbaserat perspektiv till att kunna hantera transaktioner i hela nätverket (Holmlund et al., 2017). Heinonen et al. (2010)
påpekar även att marknadsföringen har genomgått en stor förändring från att tidigare varit produktfokuserad till mer servicefokuserad och ännu vidare till att vara kundfokuserad. Alla dessa teorier har fokus på värdeskapande och är därmed viktiga för denna avhandling. I dag är de facto kundfokusering alltmer aktuellt inom marknadsföring (Heinonen et al., 2010).

Det finns olika sätt att se på värdeskapande och för denna avhandling har det kunddominanta perspektivet valts eftersom det fokuserar starkt på kunderna, i detta fall barn. Det som behövs för att ett företag ska bli kundfokuserat och dra nytta av Heinonen et al.s (2010) modell är att ha djup kunskap om sina kunders aktiviteter och erfarenheter. Denna kunskap skall sedan användas för att erbjudas tjänster eller produkter som stöder kunderna (ibid). Den kunddominanta logiken kan förklaras med hjälp av en figur (Heinonen et al., 2010):

Figuren i avhandlingen (figur 6) visar vad den kunddominanta logiken går ut på. Kunden påverkas inte bara av tjänsten utan också av saker som händer i livet omkring tjänsten. Historia, alltså det som händer före tjänsten X, spelar roll; annat som påverkar är bland annat vad som sker efter tjänsten och även långsiktigt i framtiden. Tidigare modeller har varit mycket tjänstefokuserade och inte sett tjänsten som en helhet, där allt som händer i kundens liv är viktigt för företag att ta hänsyn till.

Val av metoder och material


Observationerna tog längre tid, 1,5 timme till cirka 2 timmar medan intervjuerna var mellan 38 minuter och 50 minuter långa. Intervjuerna bandades och transkriberades för att användas till analys, under observationerna användes fältanteckningar.

**Resultatredovisning**

Undersökningens viktigaste resultat kommer att redogöras i denna del av sammanfattningen. Resultaten diskuteras i olika teman, i samma följd som intervjuguiden var uppbyggd.


Flera av föräldrarna diskuterede reklamens betydelse och att barn tidigt blir utsatta för reklam. Alla föräldrar låter sina barn spela på telefon eller datorplatta, och de har märkt att de flesta frågorna om nya spel eller leksaker kommer via andra spel. En respondent hade också lagt till märke att nästan allt där det görs upprepningar leder till att deras barn börjar tala om produkten efteråt. I alla hushåll tittades det inte på tv, vilket gör att barn ser mindre reklam. Föräldrar till dem som tittar på TV hemma eller spelar spel på telefon eller datorplatta berättade att reklamer som väcker barnens uppmärksamhet inte behöver vara produkter riktade direkt till barn, utan de kan även ha rätt färger, rätt ljud eller vara roliga på något annat sätt som attraherar barn. Respondenterna hade svårt att nämna specifikt hurdana reklamer som attraherar, men nämnde dessa attribut ovan. Det fanns ett tydligt samband mellan att barn tidigt blir utsatta för reklamer och att de
relativt tidigt blir materialistiska individer. Varje respondent tyckte att deras barn är materialistiska, det är mycket viktigt vad de klär på sig, vilket märke leksakerna är och så vidare, och alla respondenter tyckte entydigt att reklamerna i hög grad påverkar detta.

Alla fyra respondenter var i stort sett av samma åsikt i diskussionen omkring barnens inverkan på hushållets inköp. Diskussionen visade att barnen direktt och indirekt påverkar nästan alla köpval som föräldrarna gör. Direkt påverkar barnen mest familjens inköp med tjat och genom att föräldrarna vill uppmuntra dem, men det intressanta som kom fram var att indirekt har barnen också påverkat hushållets inköp. Respondenter har börjat tänka på vad barnen tycker om möbler och annat som köps hem.

av det hon själv får till stånd. De två andra barnen lekte mycket med kramdjur, de höll te- och kaffestunder tillsammans med sina mjukisdjur.


Eftersom alla barn är olika och värdesätter allt på olika sätt kan det vara svårt att dra slutsatser om specifika attribut som skapar värde – men i stora drag går det att göra. Det som tydligt kom fram var att människor skapar värde för barn. Vissa leksaker skapar värde över en längre tid och särskilt en bred variation av lekar visar vad som värdesätts högst av allt. Två respondenter diskuterede också att eftersom de njuter mycket av tid med föräldrarna kan de i hög grad påverka barnens värdeskapande process. Diskussionen kring värdeskapande lutade också mycket mot hur barnen leker. Respondenterna diskuterade situationer där de kan se att barnet njuter av vad det gör och skapar värde av vad det just då håller på med.

**Konkluderande avslutning**

Barn har sakta men säkert blivit målgrupp för olika företag, inte bara hos företag som säljer produkter och tjänster för barn utan också andra företag som väntar på att få ut en långvarig kundrelation av dem. Detta gör att allt mer undersökningar och information finns tillgängliga hos företag, men det är data som inte är offentliga på grund av konkurrens.

Trots att det deltog barn i olika åldrar i undersökningen kan man se att det de värdesätter är lika. Är de fyra eller sju år gamla spelar ingen roll - leken kanske ändras en aning, men värdeskapande hålls relativt lika. Det som barnen vill ha är tydligt att leken skall vara någonting där de lär sig någonting nytt. Utgående från den insikten har det diskuterats i avhandlingen att leken skall vara glädjefylld (joyful) för barnet; barnet skall också känna att leken har någon större betydelse (meaningful), leken skall innehålla aktivt deltagande (actively engaging) samt iteration (iterative). Tillsammans bidrar dessa faktorer till att leken innehåller någonting barnen känner sig glada och nöjda för, samtidigt som de kan lära sig nya saker och hitta sitt eget sätt att skapa värde.

Det att barn blir konsumenter vid en tidig ålder tycks ha mycket med butiksbesök att göra. De barn som sällan gjorde besök till butiker verkade vara mindre materialistiska och krävde inte lika ofta att få leksaker eller andra produkter.

För barn som tycker mindre om aktiv lek hade Lego en enorm roll i vardagen. I undersökningen kom det fram att de som leker med Lego verkligen njöt av att få koncentrera sig på bara en sak, att använda sin fantasi och bygga. Det visade sig också att barnen som leker med Lego lugnade ner sig när de koncentrerade sig, när de använde sin fantasi inkluderades också andra slags leksaker än Lego i leken. För ett av barnen som deltog i undersökningen var Lego också en del av aktiv lek, legogubbar och -bilar var med honom också utomhus. Man kunde säga att Lego innehar en stor roll i vardagslivet för barn som har Lego hemma. Det som var markant var att under leken lugnar barnen sig och man kan se att de njuter av att få bygga i lugn och ro med hjälp av sin egen fantasi.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX 2 
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Introduction of the researcher and respondent
Aim and purpose of the research
Respondents' role in the research, permission to recording and videotaping.
Do the respondent have any questions at this point?

Background

Gender
Age
As an introduction, please tell me in short about you and your family?

Topics 1-5 under the rubric: Children learn and play

Topic 1: Consumer Socialization
- What have been important things in your child’s cognitive development?
- Are you able to recognize steps in his/her development?
- Do you see your child more developed than others in the same age?
- If yes, in what way?

Topic 2: Steps to Consumer
- When did your child start to visit supermarkets?
- What attracts his/her attention in stores?
- Why do you think these products get attention?

Topic 3: Advertisement for children
- Considering all the media available what is he/she reacting on?
- How has this affected him/her?
- What attracts his/her attention?
- Why do you think it attracts attention?
- In what way is he/she materialistic?

Topic 4: Household purchases
- On how high level do you think he/she influence on what you are buying?
- How is he/she demanding products?
- If there are conflicts, how do you solve them?

**Topic 5: Role of play in children’s life**

- What kind of play do he/she do?
- Where does he/she usually play?
- With whom and with what?
- What is your opinion of the role of play in your child’s life?
- What would you say to be most important toy for him/her? Why?

**Topic 6: Children’s value creation**

- What do you think creates value for children?
- In what kind of situations can you recognize that value is created?
- How do they create value?
- Where is value created for children?
- Who is creating value for the child?

**Topic 7: Lego**

- Do you have Legos in your household?
- Does your child/children play with them?
- When is he/she playing with them?
- How is he/she playing with them?
- Would you change something in Legos? If so, what?