

MASTER'S THESIS IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE  
FACULTY OF LIBRARIANSHIP, INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND IT

Late adopters of e-books in Sweden and Japan  
A case study of readers

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Abstract: Even though the e-book market is increasing, little research has been done on readers who are late adopters of e-books, and their resistance and scepticism to e-book adoption. The Swedish and Japanese e-book market have had similar adoption rates since 2010. However, even though their adoption rates resemble each other, how readers gain access to e-books differ in Sweden and Japan. Swedish readers use the library, and subscription services, while Japanese readers mostly use mobile apps that specializes in certain genres, such as manga or special mobile novels called keitai shousetsu.

This study investigates the similarities and differences between late adopters of e-books in Sweden and Japan, with the use of the diffusion of innovation-theory by Everett Rogers (2003). Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted in spring 2017 with five Swedish and five Japanese respondents, all readers who had yet to adopt e-books.

The analysis found that the main factors for the respondents' choice to reject or resist e-book adoption are an emotional bond to the print format, and the reading experience. The factors were related to trust issues, and an uncertainty in how e-books would affect their personal lives as well as their social systems. There were few differences between the Swedish and Japanese respondents. The main difference was that the Swedish respondents would talk about books with people outside of their immediate family to a larger extent than the Japanese respondents.

Keywords: E-book reading, Japan, Sweden, Diffusion of innovations, late adopters, laggards, late majority

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## 1.0 Introduction

Since 2010, the e-book market has been gaining more readers over the world. While the most growth has appeared in English-speaking countries, mainly the United States and the United Kingdom, it is now visibly increasing in other countries. Two countries where the e-book market has had an upward trajectory since 2010 are Sweden and Japan.

The Japanese book market is a so-called large language market, one of the largest book markets in the world. By 2017, it was in fifth place, only behind the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and Germany (Wischenbart et al., 2017). Additionally, reading has been and is an important part of Japanese culture, with large reading communities, not only for the mass-market fiction consumer, but also the otaku consumer who are “dedicated fans of various pop culture media, first and foremost the enormous manga market” (Kamei-Dyche, 2017, p. 12). Further, smartphones are the most popular devices for e-reading. As early as in 2006, over 90 percent of the e-book market was read through a mobile phone, and even though it had decreased somewhat by 2014, smartphones were still the most popular option for e-reading (Impress Research Institute, 2014). Lastly, in 2016, 49 percent of the population read at least one book a month, although only 19 percent had ever read an e-book (Japan Book Publishers Association, 2017).

Sweden, in contrast to Japan, is a small language market. However, there are other reasons why readers would be inclined to read e-books in Sweden. Firstly, according to the national SOM research, reading print books have been stable since the early 1990s. Over 80 percent of the population read print books at least once a year (Tipple, 2019). Further, Sweden is a country where 98 percent of the population have access to internet in their home (Internetstiftelsen, 2019). On top of this, by 2016, 88 percent of the population owned a smartphone. Smartphones are an integral part of the Swedish lifestyle as they are used daily for both pleasure and work (Malmlund et al., 2016). Moreover, the Swedish population is rated at second place in English speaking proficiency, according to Education First (2019). This gives them the possibility to read English e-books on top of Swedish e-books. Therefore, even though there for example is no Swedish-region Amazon yet, it is possible to buy e-books from their catalogue, among several other international companies which offers e-books in English. While this does not grow the Swedish selection, it greatly improves the size of available e-books. As of 2017, over 62 percent of all print books in the United States were converted into e-books (Agata & Ueda, 2019).

Even though there are several reasons why both the Swedish and Japanese e-book market could be larger, the adoption rate has only in the last couple of years started increasing. Firstly, in Japan, even though more print books are converted into e-books every year, there is still a reluctance from popular

authors to convert their books into e-books. As such, around 40 percent of popular books had not been distributed as e-books by 2010 (Asai, 2016). Because of this, the e-book selection is still rather small in Japan. Secondly, while libraries in Japan offer large print collections, most libraries do not have an e-book service. By 2016, only 15 percent of public libraries offered e-books (Ikeuchi, 2017). By 2017, sales of digital books were less than 14 percent of the total book market, and almost eleven percent of those were e-manga sales. E-book sales were less than two percent (Japan Book Publishers Association, 2017).

By comparison, in Sweden, although libraries are one of the main providers of e-books to the population, public libraries have little to no control over what e-books should be available to them as publishers control which e-books they will release to libraries and when they will be released (Wallin, 2019). Furthermore, “publishers have no incentive to drive the e-book market, as it is uncertain what happens when they release a digital product” (Wallin, 2019, p. 156).

With e-book markets that are not driven forward by publishers, authors or librarians, e-book reading in Sweden and Japan is often placed in the hands of readers. They become the driving force for e-books, with publishers, authors and librarians stating that their commitment to e-books is directly related to the readers. For example, Bergström et al. (2017) found that publishers

were exercising caution and explaining the reasons that prevent them from moving to e-book production, mainly pointing to the lack of demand from readers and authors or to a specific situation with their product, such as complicated legal issues or a concrete competitive situation. (Bergström et al., 2017, p. 99)

As such, the aim of this thesis is to explore Swedish and Japanese readers unwillingness to adopt e-books by examining readers', who are late adopters, opinions on e-books and their thoughts on reading using different formats. For this, five Japanese and five Swedish people were interviewed in early 2017. They were of different age, gender, and with different occupations. As the focus of this thesis was the social aspect of e-book adoption, the diffusion of innovation theory by Everett Rogers (2003) was used.

Using the innovation-theory to research the e-book market is not uncommon. However, most research focuses on the early adopters, with less research on the late adopters and their resistance to adopt. As Rogers (2003) writes:

If diffusion scholars could more adequately see an innovation through the eyes of their respondents, including why the innovation was adopted or rejected, diffusion research would be in a better position to shed the pro-innovation bias of the past. (Rogers, 2003, p. 116)

Although the diffusion of innovation theory can be used to examine the adoption process of any group, this thesis has a focus on readers. However, for context of the study, the thesis examines the reluctance from other groups such as publishers, authors, and librarians as well. Notwithstanding, the purpose of this thesis is to compare readers in Sweden and Japan, to find if their reasons for rejecting e-books is cultural, or if there are similarities that do not appertain to where someone lives, or their social networks.

The reason for choosing this topic came after living in both Sweden and Japan and noticing many similarities among the populations, from mannerism and way of conducting themselves, to cleanliness and an interest in minimalism. The similarities were also apparent when it came to reading habits, with people seeming to choose print books without even considering e-books. As someone who reads about half of her books in e-book format, I wanted to see if it was possible to find similarities in why people from Sweden and Japan choose to reject e-books. My interest in Japan started in 2003, and I can read, write, and speak in Japanese. This was of importance for this thesis as I had interviews in Japanese and translated them myself to English.

### **1.1 Research problem and relevance**

Swedish research has shown that there is a correlation between reading print books and reading e-books. At the same time, those who read print books often have a negative opinion of e-books. (Bergström & Höglund, 2018). As such, e-book growth is related to the change of opinion in those who already consider themselves readers. It therefore becomes important to not only examine early adopters of e-books, but also those who are more unwilling to adopt. Also, late adopters constitute 50 percent of the adopters (Rogers, 2003). In addition, since late adopters are often negative and sceptical of innovations, while relying more on their peers in their social systems than outer mass media channels, a deeper knowledge of why this is could help bring light to the slow adoption rate of readers of e-books.

Despite Sweden and Japan's different situations, their e-book growth has been very similar. Comparing late adopters' opinions of e-books in Sweden and Japan could explore if e-book growth is independent of culture, or if there are culture-specific reasons for their e-book growth which cannot be replicated in another social system. Furthermore, while there is research on e-book reading in Sweden and Japan, I was unable to find any research that compares these two countries. Finally, how readers from different countries compare is important as e-books are an international phenomenon and in turn should not only be investigated as separate entities. Consequently, this thesis examines Swedish and Japanese readers who are late adopters of e-books, and their opinions on e-books in relation to print books.

This study could be of relevance to many different groups. For librarians, it helps to know more about what different users base their decisions of book format on. It can help librarians talk about e-books with their users. If they can understand more about why different people choose the way they do, it might be possible to shorten the adoption process for those who are slower in adopting e-books.

### **1.3 Aim and research questions**

The aim of this thesis is to explore Swedish and Japanese readers' unwillingness to adopt e-books by researching late adopters' opinions on e-books and their thoughts on reading using different formats.

1. What are the characteristics of late adopters of e-books?
2. How do late adopters perceive e-books?
3. What perceived attributes of e-books and reading are important for late adopters?
4. What similarities and differences are there between late adopters of e-books in Sweden and Japan?

The first question aims to examine how different generalizations about the late adopter category can be implemented on late adopters of e-books. The second question refers to how the respondents describe and talk about e-books and digital books. The third question explores the importance of different perceived attributes such as the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability for the respondents when reading. The fourth question examines how the Swedish and Japanese respondents compare to each other in relation to their views on e-book usage.

### **1.4 Definitions**

#### *Social systems*

In accordance with the research on diffusion of innovation by Rogers (2003), “a *social system* is defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal. The members or units of a social system may be individuals, informal groups, organizations, and/or subsystems” (Rogers, 2003, p. 23). It is a wide concept. In terms of library and information science, a social system can for instance be the library staff or their patrons, publishers, authors, or a specific group of readers such as children, teenagers or adults. The concept of social systems is used and examined in chapter 2, previous literature. For this thesis, the term social system mainly relates to libraries, publishers, and countries, even though it acknowledges that there are other social systems other than these that could be of interest for library and information science.

### *Late adopters*

Similar to social systems, the term ‘late adopter’ is a wide concept. A late adopter could be anyone who fits into the generalizations about late adopters, such as having scepticism towards technology and new ideas, a reliance on the past, and often mostly interacts with smaller and conservative groups (Rogers, 2003). Late adopters can be divided into the late majority and laggards. A further explanation of late adopters can be found in chapter 3, theory.

Late adopters within library and information science can belong to any social system, as describe above. Therefore, a late adopter could for instance be a publisher, library staff, an author, or a reader. Since late adopters could be anyone, and belong to any group, a clarification is needed for this thesis. Hence, when the word late adopter (as well as late majority or laggard) is used, it pertains to the reader. It does not place the reader in a specific group relating to age, occupation or gender. What binds the late adopters together, besides being late adopters, is that they are considered readers. While some of the references used in chapter 2, previous literature, section 2.3 and 2.4, have a slightly wider scope, this thesis tries to use that to examine readers as late adopters.

### *E-books*

There are many ways to define e-books. *ALA glossary of library and information science* describes an e-book as “an electronic version of a printed book that can be read on a computer or handheld device such as an electronic book reader” (Levine-Clark & Dean, 2013, p. 97). While this description is technically true, it is somewhat limiting as it only includes e-books that originated as print books. For some studies, such as Asai (2016) and Agata and Ueda (2019), this definition is used as the goal of their research was to learn how large percentages of print books are made into e-books. Even so, the most common description used in research papers for e-books is that it is a text in digital form to be read using a computer or a handheld device (Bergström & Höglund, 2014; Goto, Kim & Inagaki, 2015; Impress Research Institute 2014).

However, depending on the situation, e-books could include other digital media. For example, in Japan, e-books often include manga and special mobile novels called keitai shousetsu (Impress Research Institute, 2019). In contrast, in Sweden, before subscription services for e-books and audiobooks took off, the Swedish Publishers’ Association used to display the sales of e-books and audiobooks as one category. The national library of Sweden still presents all digital books in the same category.

As such, Sweden and Japan have different views on what to classify as an e-book. In Sweden, audiobooks and e-books are labelled together. However, there is no statistics on audiobook sales or readers of audiobooks in Japan. Instead, it is e-manga that is labelled together with e-books. In this study, while I

acknowledge the importance of other kinds of digital books such as audiobooks and e-manga, I have done my best to separate them from e-books.

Therefore, the definition used for e-books in this thesis is:

E-books are fiction or non-fiction electronic texts that can be read using a device, for instance a smartphone, tablet, computer or an e-reader.

It does not matter if the book originated as another format such as print or audiobooks. Digital formats that are not included in this definition of e-books are audiobooks and articles, newspapers, blogs, manga and other texts that do not count as fiction or non-fiction books. However, when the term *digital books* is used, it is meant as an umbrella term for e-books, audiobooks, and/ or e-manga, depending on if it is used in the context of the Swedish or Japanese book market.

Beside this, the thesis uses the terms *e-book reading* as well as *e-reading*. While e-reading includes all kinds of digital texts, e-book reading only includes e-books, as defined above.

Lastly, although this thesis uses the word e-books and digital books, some of the respondents who chose to write in English used the word electronic books instead. This will be apparent in the result chapter as some quotes use electronic books instead of e-books or digital books.

## **1.5 Thesis disposition**

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, research problem, and the aim and research questions which together has the purpose to explain the background of the thesis in addition to how and why this thesis was made. It also consists of a definition of e-books, social systems, and late adopters.

Chapter 2 presents previous research which is relevant to the research questions and the theory. It consists of four parts: the e-book market and different social systems, the importance of late adopters and studying different adopter categories, research on e-book adoption by readers, and the digital reading experience.

In chapter 3, the theory used in the thesis is described. The diffusion theory by Everett Rogers is used, with a focus on adopter categories and the perceived attributes that influence the adoption rate of innovations.

Chapter 4 then goes over the method that was used for the thesis by explaining the data collection, interview questions, selection and presentation of respondents, the data analysis, the ethical research positions, and lastly the

limitations. Chapter 5 provides context for the study in the form of a history of the e-book markets in Sweden and Japan, as well as their situations today.

In chapter 6, the result and analysis of the data from the interviews are presented. The data was analysed on the basis of the research questions. Chapter 7 discusses the results and the conclusions are presented. Finally, in chapter 8, the thesis is summarized.

## **2.0 Previous Research**

### **2.1 The e-book market and different social systems**

As stated in the introduction chapter, section 1.4 about definitions, a social system is a wide concept. The social systems that will be discussed in this chapter that are relevant to this thesis are public and academic libraries, publishers, and countries.

As libraries are one of the main providers of e-books in Sweden, consequently there are several studies on e-books in relation to libraries. Statistics from the National library of Sweden show over 96 million downloads of e-books had been made through university libraries while 2.3 million downloads had been made through the public libraries (National library, 2019). Although most downloads of digital media are made through university libraries, the research is more often focused on public libraries.

At public libraries, e-books are mostly dealt with in the shadow of print. This takes form in libraries being unable to market e-books to any larger extent, and a budget that might not cover the actual e-book needs (Wallin, 2019). Maybe as a consequence, library staff are unable to focus on e-books and instead rely heavily on the users' demand of e-books as a guide (Wallin, 2019; Wilson & Maceviciute, 2012).

The situation at university libraries differ somewhat from public libraries. E-book reading is growing in university settings as students and faculty need textbooks, research papers, and articles on a more frequent basis than the individual who mostly reads for leisure. In both Swedish and Japanese universities there is a decrease in print media while they are also seeing an increase of digital media used by students and faculty. Sato et al. (2012) found that the accessibility of e-books was preferred to print by researchers at universities in Japan (2012). According to the National Library of Sweden, at Swedish university libraries, users mainly use digital media, and by such, print media decreased by 3.5 million between 2015 to 2018. Even public libraries have less print media, about 20 percent less in ten years (National library of Sweden, 2019). Despite some studies showing a preference for print media (Baron, 2014) more research portray an image of how e-books are preferred over print at universities (Liu, 2006; Shabani, Naderikharaji, & Reza Abedi, 2011; Sato et al., 2012).

Besides research on libraries, publishers' thoughts on e-books are often discussed as well. Publishers in Sweden and Japan control the e-book market to a large extent. Research from both countries have found that although more publishers are gaining a positive attitude toward e-books, there are a lot of uncertainties surrounding safety, legal issues, and the lack of an Amazon-like organization to push e-books (Bergström et al., 2018; Wilson & Maceviciute, 2016; Japan Book Publishers Association, 2017).

As stated, a social system can also be a country. One report that follows e-book market trends and developments around the world, although with a focus on America and Europe, is the Global eBook. The latest report was released in 2017 by Wischenbart et al. Sweden and Japan both have their own research report that follow their countries more closely. Impress Research Institute has released a yearly report of the e-book market in Japan since 2003. The latest report from 2019 continued to show how both e-book sales and readers are slowly growing every year. The focus of the report is surrounded around how manga still have a strong hold over the Japanese book market without any change in a foreseeable future. However, while a large part of those who read e-manga are more inclined to use free services, people who read e-books mostly use paid services (Impress Research Institute, 2019). While Sweden do not have an organisation that produces such a large-scale report on the Swedish e-book market yearly, there is research produced from different sectors that look to the whole population. For example, Nordicom, the SOM research, and Internetstiftelsen looks at how the Swedish population consumes different media, among them e-books and audiobooks (Ohlsson, 2019; Tipple, 2019; Internetstiftelsen, 2019).

In short, there is much research that examine e-books in social systems. Still, there is some mismatch in where most focused is given in relation to their importance overall. Moreover, there are more studies that focus on one social system instead of how different social systems compares to each other as a way to find similarities and differences, which in turn might be advantageous for e-book diffusion.

## **2.2 The importance of late adopters and studying different adopter categories**

Within e-book research, it is common to study social systems such as libraries, universities, or young adult groups (Baron, 2014; Sato et al., 2012; Shabani et al., 2011; Lin, Liu & Kinshuk, 2015). Notwithstanding the importance of these studies, as the focus of the diffusion is often on the social system, it in turn overlooks the adopters within that social system (Läpple & Rensburg, 2011). Moreover, even the research that do study the adopter categories often put more focus on the innovative half of the adopters, disregarding the late adopters. Lee (2013) argues, “little effort has been made to examine why users develop resistance to e-books as innovations” (Lee, 2013, p. 166).

It is true that the late adopters are more difficult to convince to adopt an innovation as they are sceptical of innovations. This withstanding, around 50 percent of all adopters are labelled late adopters. Jahanmir and Lages (2015) reasons for why the late adopter category is important includes how understanding late adopter preferences and purchase behaviour contributes to the innovation’s diffusion, and as it is difficult to convince the late adopter to adopt

a product, their feedback can be used to address critical market needs (Jahanmir & Lages, 2015).

Furthermore, non-adopters as well as the late adopters often differ greatly from early adopters, as studies from Li and Huang (2016) and Chang, Lee and Kim (2006) show. To illustrate, Li and Huang (2016) saw how teachers who were non-adopters differed in mainly two aspects from the early adopters and early majority in relation to game-based learning. First, how much of a life expansionist they were. Second, non-adopters felt less of a social pressure from colleagues and parents to use games in their classroom. Even though the term 'non-adopter' was used, they explained how this term fit the description of late adopters (Li & Huang, 2016). Raynard (2017) builds on the importance of knowing and studying how the different adopter categories function within a specific social system, saying that "one campaign will not be effective across all library patrons, as not everyone will accept the innovation at the same time" (Raynard, 2017, p. 85).

In conclusion, the late adopter category can bring much of interest to research. Learning how different adopter categories behaves within a social system would benefit all kinds of research, included e-book research. However, more research is needed to understand how the adopter categories differ.

### **2.3 Research on e-book adoption by readers**

Regarding e-book readers, studies have shown that even though e-book adopters and non-adopters have many differences, both often prefer the print format (Shabani et al., 2011; Baron, 2014; Kurata, Ishita, Miyata & Minami, 2017). They share the same preference for print in terms of reading experience, and a strong emotional connection to the print format. However, as Kurata et al. (2017) found, "members of the paper lover preference cluster do not necessarily spend a lot of time reading print media" (2017, p. 890). Also, early adopters of e-books are often print readers originally (Bergström & Höglund, 2014; Bergström & Höglund, 2018).

Further, Zhang and Kudva (2014) found in their study of why people choose e-books or print that both users and non-users shared opinions of advantages (portability, storage, convenience) and disadvantages (cost, selection) of e-books. As early adopters and late adopters seem to agree on advantages and disadvantages of e-books, it raises the question of why some people choose to adopt earlier than others.

According to Jung, Chan-Olmsted, Park and Kim (2012) the early adopters' adoption rate was connected to internet usage. They found no correlation between general mass media usage and e-book reader awareness, interest, and intention to use, but internet usage related positive. Bergström and Höglund

(2018) also saw that there was a correlation between using e-books and visiting the digital library.

For the late adopter, complexity of an innovation has been known to have a negative effect on the rate of adoption of innovations. Jahanmir and Lages (2015) found that there is a positive correlation between scepticism and product simplicity for late adopters. While they might not find a product complex, they prefer those that are simpler. In e-book research, researchers seem to find the same sentiment among late adopters (Shabani et al., 2011; Bergström & Höglund, 2018).

One important factor for readers who are late adopters seem to be trust, both in the innovation as well as the change agent who wants them to adopt. As they are often sceptical of innovations, they need an opinion leader, someone in their network that they look up to, who can confirm the trustworthiness of an innovation. Singh and Matsui (2018) saw that while a general social influence did not affect late adopters in Japan to read and buy e-books, trust was one of the most important factors. The uncertainties they had were related to performance expectancy, price value, and online fraud (2018). This coincides well with the study by Myrberg & Wiberg (2015) who established that “the problem with screen reading is more psychological than technological” (2015, p. 51). Lastly, as Lee (2013) examined e-books in a mobile environment, he found that even though people in general find mobile phones useful, there is still resistance to using e-books on them. “It is necessary to provide potential e-book users in a mobile environment with assurances; for example, that it is unlikely that the user’s private and financial information will be disclosed when e-book services are used in a mobile environment” (Lee, 2013, p. 173).

As stated earlier, more research is needed to understand the different adopter categories. As seen above, the adopter categories can identify similar advantages and disadvantages of e-books. This withstanding, some choose not to adopt, or they have a much longer adoption process while others choose to adopt earlier. If researchers were able to understand more about why different groups choose the way they do, it might be possible to shorten the adoption process for the late adopters.

#### **2.4 The digital reading experience**

As Wolf and Barzillai (2009) mentions, humans were never born to read. Our bodies were born to speak, see, move, and think, but not to read. As a lot of reading today is done online, questions arise about if this worsens our ability for deep reading. Online reading seems to teach immediate information gathering, quick attention shifts, and multitasking. However, it does not give the reader the same room for deep reading as our focus is shifted repeatedly (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009).

Research have shown that people read differently when reading e-books versus print books. We lose focus easier, and this in turn promotes a shallower reading. As we have easy access to many sources that can remove our attention from the text, we switch our attention to receive other stimulation (Mangen, 2008). Further research by Mangen (2016) saw a correlation between the reading format and the emotional engagement. As such, materiality matters.

However, other research found that e-books can help readers focus. As they are able to easily use different tools such as a dictionary, screen settings, and narration, it becomes easier to concentrate on the text since they do not need to put as much focus on words they do not understand or are more difficult to pronounce (Larson, 2015). Earlier research by Larson (2010) saw that the e-reader invited the students “to engage with the text and put the reader in greater control than when reading printed text” (Larson, 2010, p.17).

The research seems to agree that different reading formats and reading devices make for different reading experiences. How it affects the reader is something we still do not understand completely as there are very few e-book natives compared to print readers. In addition, as D’Ambra, Wilson, and Akter (2019) writes, “[t]here is uncertainty in terms of consumer preferences for the digital medium and the traditional print medium” (D’Amdra, Wilson, & Akter, 2019, p. 873).

### 3.0 Theory

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that was chosen for this thesis. The diffusion of innovations is a widespread theory among those who research different aspects of e-books. Another theory that is often used among e-book research is Winston's (1998) theory of technological innovations, which states that the social context is vital for if innovations will be successful. It could be economical factors or a need for alternative ways to communicate. Whatever the reason, as a society is changing it might create a need for new innovations (Winston, 1998). However, there are two important differences between these theories that make Rogers (2003) the more relevant one for this thesis. First, while Winston's (1998) theory is aimed at and used for technological innovations, Rogers (2003) has a wider scope as it can be used for any innovation or idea, with Rogers (2003) arguing that "diffusion was a *general process*, not bound by the type of innovation studied, who the adopters were, or by place or culture. I was convinced that the diffusion of innovations was a kind of universal process of social change" (Rogers, 2003, p. xvi). Second, Rogers (2003) further emphasizes the individual levels of the diffusion-process. He states that the social system and peer-to-peer communication is important for the rate of adoption. An innovation can work in one social system but not in another, or peer-to-peer communication can halt an innovation as those with opinion leadership are not targeted or they form a negative view of the innovation. How well an innovation theoretically would work in a social system is not enough for the diffusion of the innovation to succeed.

#### 3.1 Diffusion of Innovations

The Diffusion of innovations-theory was popularized by Everett Rogers with his book *Diffusion of Innovations* that was first published in 1962. It aims to explain how new technology and ideas are spread, and why and at what rate they spread. This thesis uses the fifth edition from 2003, and the information about diffusion of innovation in this chapter is taken from there.

There are four key elements of the diffusion process; (1) Innovation, (2) Communication channels, (3) social systems, and (4) time. Rogers states that during the diffusion process, an innovation is communicated through a social system during a period of time. These elements are a part of every diffusion process. Rogers emphasises the importance of the diffusion being a social process. Without its social parts, such as peer-to-peer communication and different norms and structures in a social system, an innovation could not succeed.

For an individual to adopt or reject an innovation, they need to go through the innovation-decision process. It is divided into five stages, but not all prospective adopters will go through every stage. The first stage, *the knowledge stage*, begins when the adopter learns about the innovation and starts to understand how it functions. In *the persuasion stage*, the individual "forms a favourable or

unfavourable attitude towards the innovation (Rogers, 2003, p. 169). Following, *the decision stage* takes place when the individual decides on adopting or rejecting the innovation. For those who reject an innovation, there is no further step. If the individual decides to adopt an innovation, they then move into *the implementation stage* when they put the innovation to use. Lastly, in *the confirmation stage* the individual “seeks reinforcement for the innovation-decision already made, and may reverse this decision if exposed to conflicting messages about the innovation” (Rogers, 2003, p. 189).

Obviously, different aspects of an innovation are important for different adopters. As such, Rogers (2003) defines five perceived attributes of innovations that come into play for an individual to adopt or reject an innovation.

The *relative advantage* refers to if the innovation is seen as more advantageous than its predecessor, that which it wants to supersede. Depending on the nature of the innovation, as well as the characteristics of potential adopters, the relative advantage differs. The relative advantage could relate to economic factors, or social, status, comfort, time, and effort for instance. It is very common that change agents offer some incentive to speed up the diffusion process. Incentives affects the different attributes of an innovation, and specifically the relative advantage.

*Compatibility* pertains to if the innovation is compatible with the potential adopters existing beliefs and values, past experiences as well as their needs. For instance, if an innovation is more compatible with the potential adopter’s situation, they will feel less uncertain about adopting it. If an innovation clashes with existing beliefs and values, it will be very difficult to make the innovation seem profitable for the adopter. Beliefs and values are often deeply rooted in an individual’s life, and it is not easy to change those beliefs and values. It might also be that one innovation spreads from one culture to another without being properly implemented and changed to fit the other culture. This may cause the innovation to malfunction or not properly function. Moreover, past experiences of a potential adopter can also hinder or speed up the process. Adopters compare the new innovation to preceding innovations, and by doing this are able to determine if it is compatible with their lives. If an innovation is more compatible, there is less of a need for change in behaviour in the adopter, which in turn makes it easier to adopt the innovation. The needs of the adopter are important as it help them seek out information for new innovations. However, an adopter may not always know that there is a need they could fill.

The *complexity* has to do with how difficult the innovation is to understand and to use. How important complexity is for adoption of an innovation differs from adopter to adopter. While some people might not see any problem in an innovation being difficult to learn, for others it can be a deal breaker if they struggle to much with adopting it. “Complexity may not be as important as

relative advantage or compatibility for many innovations, but for some new ideas complexity is a very important barrier to adoption” (Rogers, 2003, p. 257).

The *trialability* alludes to if it is possible to experiment with and try out an innovation before fully committing to it. The trialability is often more important for earlier adopters than later adopters.

Lastly, the *observability* refers to if the innovation is visible to others. While some innovations are easy to observe without adoption, others are more hidden as they might be an idea or software that is not visible to the unaided eye. Innovations that are not easy to observe by others often have a slower adoption rate than innovations that people are able to see and touch.

For individuals going through the innovation-decision process, their innovativeness matters in how early they are in adopting an innovation, and how important different aspects are when and if adopting. They are divided into five categories, based on their similar degree of innovativeness.

#### *The innovators and early adopters*

The innovators are good at handling uncertainty about an innovation. As they are interested in testing out innovations, they often seek information outside of their local peer-to-peer networks while spending more time in cosmopolite networks. They often have a higher technological knowledge and better financial resources that allows them to seek out innovations and absorb a possible loss. The early adopters share certain attributes with the innovators, specifically an interest in innovations as well as a financial stability and technical know-how. What separates them is that the early adopters often have a high degree of opinion leadership. Early adopters are trusted, someone others look to for advice and information. When an early adopter adopts an innovation, this is a sign for many peers that the innovation is approved and trustworthy.

#### *Early majority*

The early majority is one of the larger groups, making up one third of all members in a social system. They are like the early adopters as they “adopt new ideas just before the average member of a system” (Rogers, 2003, p. 283). They differ in that the early majority does not hold any major opinion leadership within their system. They seldom lead in adopting innovations, but instead follow willingly. They stand even closer than the early adopters to the late majority and are important for the late majority’s decision to adopt innovations.

#### *Late majority*

The late majority has about the same size as the early majority, one third of all members in a system. They “adopt new ideas just after the average member of a system” (Rogers, 2003, p. 284). For the late majority, peer-to-peer communication is more important than mass media communication before

adopting an innovation. They are often unwilling to adopt innovations, and when they do, this is often a result of an economic necessity as well as peer pressure. They are often sceptical to innovations and do not adopt until most of their other peers have done so.

### *Laggards*

The laggard is last in adopting innovations, and they often fall far behind the rest, making them sometimes labelled non-adopters. While the other groups have varying degrees of communication with their own as well as other systems, the laggard have little to no communication outside of their own social system. They do not stray far from their own small group, and mostly look to the past for direction. They mostly interact with people who share their same traditional values. The laggard usually makes decisions based on what have been done before. They are very wary of innovations and do not adopt until long after the other adopter categories. As opposed to the innovator, they do not have access to the same financial stability, or at least do not spend their money as frivolously as innovators. Therefore, they must be certain that an innovation will not fail as it might have bigger ramifications for them than for the other categories.

To summarise, both the late majority and laggards often wait longer than the average early adopter before adopting an innovation. This is based on several reasons. For the late majority and laggards, hereafter called the late adopters, adopting an innovation is seldom an impulse decision, instead a lot of time goes into considering the advantages and disadvantages of adopting. Further, as the late adopter trust their peers more than mass media channels, change within their network is an important factor for their view on innovations. Moreover, as the late adopter group often is not as financially stable as the more innovative groups, they might hold off longer before adopting an innovation. It could also be that from an economic standpoint, adoption becomes the most viable option. Additionally, mainly the laggards, but also to some extent the late majority, relate everything new to what they already know and have experienced before. In this respect, they do not deal with abstraction very well, instead place more trust in what they already know to be true. Finally, for late adopters, their lack of interest can both be that they do not feel that they have the skills needed, but also that it is a general disinterest in what different technology has to offer them.

The generalizations about the late adopter that are used in this thesis are as such:

*Generalization: They approach innovations with scepticism*

*Generalization: Adopting when it becomes an economic necessity*

*Generalization: Decisions are often made in terms of what has been done before*

*Generalization: Late adopters have less interest in technology*

The five adopter categories approach innovations differently from each other, all in relation to their different situations. Other than the adopter categories affecting the adoption rate, it is also affected by the innovation's attributes. It is not uncommon that when an innovation is unsuccessful, eyes turn to the adopter. By contrast, less thought goes into understanding why the innovation does not meet the requirements or fit into the social system it wants to be implemented into. This is known to be the same with e-book adoption. While studying other research, I found the same sentiment being expressed by publishers, authors, retailers and librarians from both Sweden and Japan. They all expressed a willingness to focus more on e-books if there was a demand from readers. In *Books on Screens* by Bergström et al. (2017), they interviewed authors, publishers, retailers and librarians. They found in all groups that a customer need is important for their response and call to action (Bergström et al., 2017). The same voices were heard from the research done by Wallin (2019) where she interviewed librarians at public libraries who said that e-book lending is a small part of the library loans, and the users are mostly interested in print, and that an increase of resources aimed at e-books depends on "the reader's need and want of the e-book format." (Wallin, 2019, p. 114) Wilson and Maceviciute (2016) as well found that consumer demand was one of the primary forces that drives the e-book market (2016). Of course, there were other factors. Nevertheless, it is relevant to notice how consumer demand is brought up as an important factor for these groups to be more proactive with e-books. Similarly, the Japanese book market started producing e-manga as a response to consumer demand. As a consequence of there never being such a large group pushing for e-books, this might be why e-books did not see the same growth as e-manga (Kamei-Dyche, 2017). Furthermore, Rogers (2003) also mentions how change agents are often not as inclined to put as much effort in contacting late adopters because of their image of being resistant and sceptical, and in doing so it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. As there is little demand for e-books, those who can make a change are instead waiting for the demand to come before they make that move.

### **3.2 Application of the theoretical framework**

Rogers (2003) states the importance of studying why individuals reject or discontinue a new idea.

It should be acknowledged that rejection, discontinuance, and reinvention frequently occur during the diffusion of an innovation and that such behaviour may be rational and appropriate from the individual's point of view, if only the diffusion scholar could adequately understand the individual's perceptions of the innovation and of the individual's situation. (Rogers, 2003, p. 114)

This thesis looks at readers who are late adopters of e-books. As stated, the late adopters entail both the late majority as well as the laggards. It will go over the criteria for the respondents being late adopters, such as socioeconomic

characteristics, personality variables, and communication behaviour that all fit into the late adopter group.

Besides this, it also looks at the five perceived attributes of e-books and how the late adopter relates to them. Some attributes are often more important for different adopter groups, even though there is no golden standard.

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## **4.0 Method**

The following chapter presents the data collection method for the interviews, the selection of respondents, the interview questions and their structure, the analytical method used to analyse the collected data, and ethical questions that arose while conducting the interviews and the following data analysis.

### **4.1 Data collection**

Data was collected from the Swedish and Japanese book markets, with a focus on the e-book markets, to be used for context of the study. The data was collected from Swedish, English, and Japanese research sites, and structured under several categories, namely the history of e-books in Sweden and Japan with a focus on important events for the growth of the e-book market in each country, and e-book statistics from publishers, e-book loans from libraries, and e-book readers. To find the relevant data, different search engines were used, mostly Google scholar and University of Borås digital library, starting out with the search terms “Japan”, “Sweden”, and “e-books”, and expanding and modifying the search terms used to find articles and books relevant to the thesis. Additionally, the references from the articles found were examined to find other articles that would be appropriate for the thesis. Following, the data from the respective countries were compared to each other to find similarities and differences of their book markets.

Besides the data on the Swedish and Japanese book markets, the data collection method used for the interviews were qualitative semi-structured interviews. While structured interviews follow the interview guide without deviation, and unstructured interviews do not have any specific set of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews are located somewhere in the middle of structured and unstructured interviews. The semi-structured interview loosely follows an interview guide where the questions and their order can be modified during the interview (Bryman, 2016; Wildemuth, 2009). The decision to use semi-structured interviews was based on that it allows for more freedom in the data analysis, as well as an option to follow up on specific statements the respondents would make, or clarify that which would need clarification. Therefore, it was deemed the most advantageous approach to gain as much information as possible about the respondents’ thoughts on e-books.

Text conversations were then chosen for the interviews. “E-mail interviews are particularly useful for reaching a population who could not be easily reached at a predetermined time or place” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 233). Although face-to-face interviews with the Swedish respondents would have been manageable, it was not possible with the Japanese respondents. Moreover, as there is a time difference of seven to eight hours between Sweden and Japan, even video interviews would prove difficult to perform. The interviews were then performed through email and a social media app. Six out of ten respondents chose to use email correspondence. However, with four of the Japanese respondents, our

conversations took place on LINE, a social media app commonly used in Japan for instant communication.

Although I had met or knew some of the participants prior to the study, I took the role of an objective observer. However, being able to read and write in Japanese and Swedish, I could offer to perform the interviews in the language the participant felt most comfortable in. While the respondents were recommended to answer in English, so there would be no need for translation afterwards, they could choose their preferred language. Consequently, there were interviews performed in Swedish, English, and Japanese. The interviews in Swedish and Japanese were translated into English. Even though the Swedish interviews could have remained in Swedish, a choice was made to translate everything to English as that would further make the data analysis more equal.

The interviews were done in 2017 between February to April.

#### **4.2 Questions**

As the interviews were semi-structured, the questions were open-ended and written as to invite further conversation with the respondents about their thoughts and experiences. The respondents were interviewed about their reading habits and their thoughts about e-books, based on the research questions. The interviews followed an interview guide where the questions were divided into five different parts:

- General discussion about their reading habits.
- How they find new books to read.
- Their view on e-books versus print books.
- How they talk about books with their peers.
- Their view on the future of reading and e-books.

Even though the interview guide was used, since the respondents had different experiences and different interests, there would be follow-up questions that differed somewhat from person to person. Further, based on the initial questions, four themes and following sub themes were created. The four themes were also based on the research questions and aimed to further delve into the respondents' thoughts around e-books.

#### **4.3 Selecting respondents**

There was a total of ten respondents, five from Sweden and five from Japan. They were all found through purposive sampling. It is a common sampling method to use for qualitative interviews as it "places the investigator's research questions at the heart of the sampling considerations" (Bryman, 2016, p. 406). The respondents were chosen based on three criteria:

- (1) They lived in either Sweden or Japan.
- (2) They were readers.
- (3) They had small or no preference for e-books.

As such, they were late adopters or laggards in terms of e-book adoption, which would be further proven when analysing the data in chapter 6, results and analysis, section 6.2. Another reason for choosing purposive sampling was that even though I had connections in Japan, it turned out to be fairly difficult to find people willing to participate in this study. An email was sent out to certain Japanese contacts, and some LINE groups which I knew had many Japanese people in them. For the Swedish respondents, an email was sent out to an email group, and a notification was put up at public libraries and churches. On top of this, some specific people in both Sweden and Japan were contacted who might know of other people who fit the requirements and would be interested in being a participant.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

The analysis of the interviews went through several steps.

Step 1. The interviews were read several times. The interviews which were in Swedish and Japanese were translated into English, with a focus on keeping as true to the original meaning as possible.

Step 2. Significant content relating to the research questions and the five themes the questions were labelled under were marked with different colours and comments.

Step 3. Based on the five initial themes for the questions, four new themes and following sub themes were created that were based on the research questions. The data was then filed under the different themes and sub themes.

Step 4. Lastly, the content from the respondents were compared to each other, both how the respondents from the two countries compared to each other, and how they compared to each other within each country.

Step 5. The transcripts were read again so nothing of importance would have been missed while analysing the data.

#### **4.5 Ethics**

As the interviews were done in early 2017, GDPR did not yet exist. However, while there were no explicit consent forms because of this reason, before agreeing to participate, I explained the aim of my research and their involvement. As I had written contact with all respondents, I was granted to use their answers for my thesis in our text conversations. They were also allowed

to withdraw their consent if they at any time would change their mind of being a part of this study.

While the data collected from the respondents was not sensitive, and I was approved to use it, I still chose not to include the names of the respondents. This choice was made because this study entails the late majority and laggards. Although these terms may not be viewed in a negative way, this might still happen. On top of this, specifically the word laggard might sound negative in itself. To remove all names is a way to protect the respondents. I still chose to keep the two groups separate, giving the Japanese respondents pseudonyms from Japanese authors, and the Swedish respondents pseudonyms from Swedish authors.

#### **4.6 Limitations**

Although most of the issues during the making of the thesis were related to the interviews, other problems that arose during research was in relation to how Sweden and Japan defined e-books, and that different areas had been researched more than others. Statistics were therefore difficult to compare as they entailed such different things.

When doing a study that involves people, there are often things that could become troublesome. One problem when doing this study was that it involved people from two different countries where English was not a first language in neither. As some respondents were not comfortable using English when being interviewed, it was decided to use their respective languages. This meant that the interviews were done in Swedish, English and Japanese. I would then translate the Swedish and Japanese interviews into English.

Another difficulty when having respondents from two countries was how to do the interviews. As I reside in Sweden, it would not be too troublesome to use face-to-face interviews for the Swedish respondents. This would, however, prove more difficult with the Japanese respondents. I could have chosen to do skype interviews or something similar, but as there is a time difference of seven to eight hours, there were few hours every day to fit in five different interviews. In the end I choose to do written digital interviews using social media and emails when communicating with all respondents. This made the interviews more similar, giving everyone the same amount of time to answer the questions. It also gave me the possibility to ask follow-up questions based on their respective answers.

As I used semi-structured interviews, the questions came from the same interview guide, but went in different directions depending on what answers I got from the respondents. I wanted to keep the questions as open as possible to make it easier for the respondents to find relevance in the question, and that of course took it in different directions as they interpreted them differently. When

transcribing, it was therefore very important to look through the interviews many times as they would be compared to each other.

When writing questions and answers, there is always a possibility to lose something in between. The interviewer is unable to see facial expressions and body movements of the respondents, and there could be misinterpretations that are left hanging if neither part picks at the thread. This is often a job for the interviewer, to be vigilant and look for misunderstandings, but as many different languages were used, things can slip through.

Purposive sampling can give grounds for bias and errors. As I choose my respondents based on their location, and how much they read, I could of course have missed other respondents. However, as this study needed a certain kind of person, it would not have worked with just anyone, it needed to be more specific, and after discussing my thesis beforehand with the respondents, it felt right from both sides.

Finally, this study only entailed ten respondents. As it was a small study, it cannot be used to prove how the general public behaves, but instead only give an indication of how late adopters might think.

## 5.0 Context of the study

This chapter gives an overview of where e-books are today in Sweden and in Japan, examining publishers, authors, libraries, and readers as well as important events for e-books in respective country.

### 5.1 Sweden

During the last couple of years, there has been a growth of e-book sales and readers of e-books in Sweden. E-books are still behind print books, but the traction they are gaining are becoming more apparent. Even though organizations such as Projekt Runeberg who digitize books that have entered the public domain have been around since the early 1990s, it was not until after 2010 the e-book market started increasing in Sweden (Wallin, 2019). Moreover, while sales of e-books in 2010 was 3.3 MSEK, by 2018 this number reached 59.5 MSEK, an increase of 1800 percent. This said, digital books hold approximately 30 percent of the book market, with the biggest share of over 70 percent belonging to print books (Swedish Publishers' Association, 2019). While only about three percent of the public read e-books daily, closer to 30 percent read e-books sporadically (Internetstiftelsen, 2019).

In countries such as USA and the United Kingdom, e-book sales through retailers drives the e-book market. For comparison, in Sweden, libraries are an important actor on the e-book market, and long stood at the forefront. By 2012, library loans accounted for 85 percent of the Swedish e-book market (Wischenbart, 2013). Most public libraries use the platform Elib for their e-book distribution. "The company was founded in 2000 by four of the major publishing houses in Sweden: Bonnier, Norstedts, Natur & Kultur and Piratförlaget" (Wallin, 2019, p. 31). Their objectives are to serve as a distributor of e-books and audiobooks while also selling the service of converting files to either PDF or Epub format. Together with Stockholm city library, Elib decided on a model that stated that every loan of an e-book would have a fixed price of 20 SEK. Now it is free price setting for the publishers with prices ranging up to 9999 SEK for one loan of one book. The most common price though is between 20-30 SEK for most books. Only three percent of the books cost more (Wallin, 2019). This model is used by almost every public library in Sweden. The catalyst for this change came in 2011, in the form of the book *I am Zlatan* (Jag är Zlatan) when it was released as an e-book and loaned out an exceptional amount of times during a short period from the public libraries. For example, in Malmö, it was loaned out over 1000 times while the printed version was only loaned out around 70 times. The cost for that e-book came up to 20 000 SEK during a short period of time. This made many libraries put restrictions on their e-book lending as their budgets would not allow such a large portion going to e-books. Simultaneously, publishers established a waiting period on newer books, making the libraries wait up to several months before popular books were available through Elib (Svedjedal, 2012).

While public libraries are mostly tied to one supplier, university libraries sign different licensing contracts with different suppliers depending on the digital material they are interested in. Open access is important to the Swedish academic libraries and much work goes into creating contracts that allow for open access of their digital media, as well as gaining access to as much relevant content as possible. Moreover, as university students and faculty are relying more and more on the digital content, the print collections have decreased the last couple of years (Bergström et al., 2017).

Even though libraries continue to be important for the e-book market, they are no longer the main actor. During the last couple of years, subscription services have overtaken libraries as the primary channel for e-book distribution (Wischenbart et al., 2017). Although their prime focus is audiobooks, there have been an increase in readers of e-books. While e-book sales from publishers saw a decrease in 2017 of 5.4 percent, subscription services increased 62.1 percent. From 2016 to 2019, sales from subscription services increased over 290 percent (Wikberg, 2020).

One reason that subscription services work particularly well in Sweden could be because of smartphone usage. In 2018, while over 80 percent of the population owned a smartphone, only eight percent used e-readers. Swedish people are used to being able to do almost everything on their smartphones, such as using social media, watching movies, playing games or even paying their bills. E-reading is no different from these other usages (Ohlsson, 2019).

As e-books are growing in Sweden, publishers, libraries and readers are changing and adapting. Nonetheless, the print book still has a much larger share than the e-book on the book market, with no change in the foreseeable future. Although the smartphone is an integral part of the Swedish lifestyle, for reading it is still unable to compete with the print book on the Swedish market.

## **5.2 Japan**

The Japanese e-book market consists of e-books, e-magazines and e-manga. While e-magazines often stand by themselves, e-books and e-manga are put in the same category for statistics. The latest study by Impress Research Institute (2019) explained that while the e-book market is growing every year and has since their first study in 2003, e-manga have always been the primary component with around 75 percent of the e-book market. Still, in 2018, print accounted for 86 percent of the total book market, while e-manga made up eleven percent, and e-books only two percent. Moreover, 53 percent of the public read e-manga at least once a week. In comparison, 21 percent of the public read e-books at least once a week (Japanese Book Publishing Association, 2018).

The drive for e-reading came in the early 2000s when a new flip phone from Docomo launched that simplified text messaging. With the introduction of the

mobile, short stories called *keitai shousetsu* became popular to read on them. These short stories are often no longer than 100 words and made to be read on a mobile. With this, a growing demand for manga to be made available online came from the public. Shortly, the publishing industry saw an increase in illegal copies of manga being shared online and was forced to create a legal alternative for the Japanese market (Birtle, 2011). By 2011, statistics showed that over 85 percent of e-book sales were e-books made for mobiles. On top of that, most of these e-books were manga, and the second largest percentage belonged to *keitai shousetsu*, with actual e-books only making up a tiny portion (Parry & Kawakami, 2017). Noticeably, although print media is still the largest part of the book market, e-manga and manga are important for the Japanese book market.

Mobiles are the leading choice for e-reading in Japan. As early as in 2004, one third of readers used mobiles for their e-books (Ueda, 2014). In comparison, only a small percentage of the population used specific reading devices such as Kindle or Kobo to read e-books. Still, this has not stopped companies from making their e-readers the go-to device for e-reading. The earliest attempts at e-readers came in 2004 when both Sony and Panasonic made their own e-readers. As neither was successful, both the Panasonic Sigma Book and the Sony LIBRIe were discontinued a few years later (Parry & Kawakami, 2017; Impress Research Institute, 2014). The biggest problem that both Panasonic and Sony as well as other companies faced were the book selection which were not satisfactory to the costumers. The first e-readers could not offer more than a few thousand books in Japanese. By 2010, the e-readers offered around 20 000 different titles. This was still far behind the USA, where the Amazon Kindle from 2007 offered over 90 000 e-book titles. The lack of a larger e-book selection in Japan was mainly because of publishers and authors negative attitude towards them (Parry & Kawakami, 2017).

Albeit publishers' relationship to e-books in Japan is progressing, an unwillingness to increase the number of e-books remains. While print books have a system that publishers are used to follow, there is still a lot of uncertainty on how to relate to e-books. Print books have had a resale price maintenance system since 1910. Publishers set a fixed price of print books which then cannot be changed by either wholesalers or bookstores. As e-books are not categorized in the same way as print books, they do not belong to the same system. Consequently, retailers have more freedom in setting and changing the prices for e-books (Japan Book Publishers Association, 2017).

Still, print books that are converted into e-books are increasing. By 2005, less than nine percent of print books were made into e-books. By 2017, this had gone up to almost 27 percent. While this is still a low number, it has been rising more rapidly the last couple of years (Agata & Ueda, 2019).

As publishers are gaining an increasing interest in making more e-books available to the public, another issue is licensing. Publishers who buy the right to a print book from an author do not automatically gain the rights to the e-book. Instead the author owns those rights and can decide if they want to sell them as well or only the print rights. Therefore, as publishers have not been pushing for e-books, many books are only available in print format. Besides this, there is a negative or ambivalent attitude among popular authors in Japan to releasing their books as e-books. By 2014, neither Haruki Murakami nor Keigo Hisahino, two of the most popular authors in Japan, had a single title released in e-book format in Japan, although their translated copies had been released as e-books in other countries. By 2010, over 40 percent of popular Japanese novels had not been made into e-books, and still today popular authors are reluctant to turning their books into e-books (Asai, 2016; Asai, 2017).

Besides the mixed feelings from authors and publishers, it was only in 2011 that the library law included a statement that public libraries should be able to offer e-books as well. This is still in its infancy though. By 2016, a nationwide survey saw that only 15 percent of public libraries could offer e-books, and there was a hesitance among library staff about e-books and how to provide them to the public (Ikeuchi, 2017).

While there is still some reluctance in many sectors, there is a growth of e-books in Japan, both in sales, loans and readers. As it is gaining more traction, there will probably be more action from publishers, authors, libraries and the government.

## 6.0 Results and analysis

The following chapter presents the participants, the results from the interviews, and the analysis, which was described in the method chapter, section 4.5. The result is divided into four themes that are based on the research questions. The four main themes as well as their sub themes are presented below.

- 1) Confirming the late adopter generalizations
  - a) Generalization: They approach innovations with scepticism
  - b) Generalization: Adopting when it becomes an economic necessity
  - c) Generalization: Decisions are often made in terms of what has been done before
  - d) Generalization: Late adopters have less interest in technology
- 2) Perception of the e-book
- 3) The perceived attributes of e-books according to the respondents
  - a) Relative advantage
  - b) Compatibility
  - c) Complexity
  - d) Trialability
  - e) Observability
- 4) The future of print books and e-books according to the respondents

Sub themes were used when analysing “confirming the late adopter generalizations” and “the perceived attributes of e-books according to the respondents” to further explain the results. The intention was to elucidate different parts of the themes in order to provide as broad a picture and deeper understanding as possible of the late adopter category and their thoughts on e-books. This was done in relation to the diffusion of innovation.

### 6.1 Presenting the respondents

The respondents from Japan came from south of Japan, Okayama municipal. The Swedish respondents came from south of Sweden, in Småland. All respondents were given pseudonyms.

#### Japanese respondents

**Kawakami** is a 16-year-old student at junior high school. She has liked reading since she was a child. As she will start high school in a few months, she is now studying to take the entrance exams and is therefore unable to read as much as she usually does. She likes reading romance novels and manga. Although she does not have time to read fiction while in school, she reads when travelling and when she is at home. Her main choice when reading is print books. However, she does read manga using her smartphone as they are free of charge. She does

not talk much with her friends about books, and she cannot remember seeing that many people around her reading, neither print books nor e-books.

**Hiromi** is a 23-year-old university student who is studying to be a nurse. Her favourite genres to read are fantasy and slice-of-life fiction. She also reads manga. She does not like to read when travelling, and likes to sit down for longer periods of time when reading. Therefore, she only reads at home. At school she has noticed many of her classmates using the internet to search for information as well as reading their textbooks in e-book format on their tablets instead of using print books. She sometimes searches for information online, but always opts for reading the print book. She has read manga on her smartphone, but even with manga she would rather have the print version. She explains that other than the reading experience, she likes to buy books and own them herself. Her friends do not read books as far as she knows. Instead they read magazines about fashion and fortune telling.

**Ogawa** is a 31-year-old teacher. She reads whenever and wherever, whether it is in the waiting room at the hospital, during her son's music lesson, or before sleeping. The genre she most consumes is popular fiction, literature that will be adapted into movies and TV shows. Other genres she reads are manga and non-fiction books about special education that she can use for her job. She goes to a bookstore every weekend to peruse their books. As her son does not read as much as he used to, she likes to talk to him about books to get him interested in reading again. She only reads print books and have never tried reading using any other format. She is not interested in reading using other formats.

**Kenzaburo** is a 63-year-old retiree who now studies theology in Kobe during the week. He reads the Bible every day, as well as theological books that he borrows from the school library. He might use the internet to find certain texts or books in e-book format if he is unable to get them in another format. However, he always prints them out so he can read them on paper. One of his daughters reads books as well, but his wife mainly reads magazines. He is not interested in reading e-books, mostly because of it not being comfortable. He has not noticed any change in how people around him read.

**Sayaka** is a newlywed 29-year-old office worker. Besides fiction, she likes to read manga, and goes to an internet café once every three months where she can read as much manga as she wants by paying an entrance fee. Because it costs money to go to the internet café or buy her own books she has started to read manga on her smartphone as well. In this way she can read manga for free. She likes to talk about what she is reading with her husband, but beside her husband, she rarely talks to other people about her reading. Her husband likes to own his books and they therefore have a lot of books in their home.

### **Swedish respondents**

**John** is a 28-year-old programmer who loves to read science fiction novels. He always brings a book with him so that he can read if he gets a few minutes with nothing to do. He mostly reads print books, but has listened to audiobooks a few times. He sees some advantages with e-books, such as portability and availability, but thinks the price is way too high. However, he mostly borrows his print books from the library as well, and seldom buys books anymore. If his friends are interested, he likes to talk to them about books, but he does not care about recommendations but instead finds books that seem interesting in the moment.

**Sofie** is 41 years old and works as a social worker. She has recently gotten into reading, and now reads at least once a day, albeit mostly biographies and crime novels. She tries to read all her books in print format, but articles and other documents from work she sometimes read on her computer. She also reads an e-magazine using her smartphone. Most of the time, she goes to a bookstore or the library and tries to find something that looks and sounds interesting. However, sometimes she gets recommendations from a friend, or hears about a book on TV that she wants to read. She tried using audiobooks in her early twenties, but had a bad experience which shaped her impression of digital books. She knows she is comfortable reading print books, and wants to continue using that format. She wishes she had a book club where she could discuss books more than she is right now.

**August** is a 59-year-old dentist. When it comes to books, he mostly reads fiction. Other than that, he is an avid reader of several newspapers. At home he tries to only read in paper format, while at work he reads articles and such on his computer. However, he only reads shorter articles on his computer, as not to strain his eyes too much. He also feels that what he reads on the internet is often shallower than in paper format, the articles are shorter and more concise. Also, the filter bubble becomes much more evident when searching online. While he has chosen the newspapers by himself and uses a subscription service for them, with books he likes to borrow them from friends or buy second-hand books from antiquarian bookstores. He believes print books will probably stay, even if he has seen a trend that pushes for e-books even though most people seem to prefer print books.

**Moa** is a 58-year-old librarian. She reads almost everywhere, whenever she has a few minutes to spare. Even though she buys books, they often stay unread while the books she borrows from the library are the ones she reads. She is not very interested in reading the more popular books. Instead, she looks for certain topics or authors she finds interesting and finds as many books as possible surrounding that certain topic or author. She has no interest at all in reading e-books or anything using her smartphone or computer, even if she has tried downloading an e-book to understand how it works. For Moa, reading print books is something that has been a part of her life since her childhood. Growing up with parents who

worked as journalists and authors, books were an important part of their lives. She still feels the same. Reading and owning books is an experience.

**Karin** is a 25-year-old youth leader. As a child she used to spend a lot of time at her local library after school. It became a place of comfort for her, being surrounded by books in such an environment. Her favourite genres include historical novels or something light-hearted. She also reads the Bible daily. If she does not have the print version at hand, she uses her smartphone to read a chapter. Other texts she reads online are various articles. When finding books to read, she is sometimes recommended books by co-workers or by her family. Other times she reads the blurb on the back of the book to try and get a feel of it. She has tried reading different formats. Her least favourite format is audiobooks, with e-books a close second. As a youth leader, she has noticed a shift in how younger people read, with the internet becoming very important, and books less and less so.

## **6.2 Confirming the late adopter generalizations**

*Generalization: They approach innovations with scepticism*

Regarding the interviews, several of the respondents talked about how they did not have any interest in e-books at all. For August who is very specific about what he reads and where he gets his information, e-books were not something he would choose himself. He had never had any interest in reading e-books, instead held firm beliefs that it would probably not be comfortable, both when holding e-books, as well as for his eyes. He also did not see any real need in the Swedish society for e-books as print books work fine.

I believe that there is no real need at all when it comes to digital reading of books. It is mainly because the IT industry is so positive toward technology that we are walking in this direction. Many have a “religious” feeling that everything must be digitalized, only because it can be done, and some people believe it would save the world. (August)

A similar opinion comes from Ogawa, who makes a comparison with the music industry in Japan and how CD sales have shrunk the last couple of years because of people using online services such as YouTube or Spotify. She worries that the print book might decrease just as CDs and movies have done.

I am afraid that the advance of the technology like PC and smartphone prevents people from reading. We can read novels and comics and news on the web. It is the same in the music business, most of the music can be listened in Youtube etc, so the CD sales are getting less. (Ogawa)

Almost all the respondents echo this sentiment, a worry that e-books will replace print in the future and how that will affect their own reading. Sofie states that as

the print format is very important for her reading, she might not continue reading at all if there was only the e-book format in the future.

I found this generalization to be true.

*Generalization: Adopting when it becomes an economic necessity*

When talking to the respondents, I found that most of them preferred to buy their books, and only two of the Swedish respondents and one of the Japanese respondents said they sometimes borrowed books from the library or from friends. Only John almost exclusively borrowed books from the library and rarely bought books.

While John could accept reading e-books if there was no print option, he pointed out that he would rather not buy an e-book but instead preferred if they came for free together with the print version. He mostly borrowed books from the library, and while he had access to a large selection of print books from the library, he found the e-book selection lacking.

It is not fun to pay the same price for an e-book as a paper book. I would like paper books to have the option to download the book in a digital format for free, instead to have to pay for a book twice to get it in paper and digital formats. (John)

Therefore, if he needed a book that only existed as an e-book, he would have to buy it instead, and this made him not choose e-books.

Although the respondents wanted to buy their books, several said that because of the price they would sometimes choose other options. Kawakami liked to read manga. She had found three different apps on her phone that had free manga for her to read. Although she would like to read them in print format, it would cost her much more to buy every copy, so this was an acceptable complement. Sayaka shared this opinion with Kawakami.

I can read manga free of charge with smartphone. In order to read paper manga, I have to buy the manga, or pay to enter an internet café. For this reason, I read manga on my smartphone. (Sayaka)

For the respondents that had to find books and/ or articles for school or work, the digital version had sometimes been the best option as they did not want to buy something they would only need for a short period of time. However, both Hiromi and Kenzaburo would then only find the digital version and print it out as they wanted to be able to make notes and comments in the margin of the paper, but they were thankful that they had been able to find what they needed in an e-format, even though they went out of their ways not to read it in that format later.

I found this generalization to be somewhat true as most of the respondents did not choose print books or e-books out of an economic necessity.

*Generalization: Decisions are often made in terms of what has been done before*

For two of the respondents, this was obvious in how they spoke of reading in relation to e-books. Sofie had a bad experience that has shaped how she looks at e-books and audiobooks now.

The last time I tried [audiobooks] was in 2004. ... But I did not like the voice of the reader. The quality was not very good then as well. This might be the reasons that I never started liking audiobooks. It could have been a good option since I during this time did not like reading books, but as I said: audiobooks did not work for me and I have not tried it since. (Sofie)

While this was an experience she had with audiobooks, it also shaped how she perceived e-books. Her bad experience had made her weary of trying it even 13 years later. Rogers (2003) explains this as innovation negativism. “[It] is the degree to which an innovation’s failure conditions a potential adopter to reject future innovations. When one idea fails, potential adopters are conditioned to view all future innovations with apprehension” (Rogers, 2003, p. 245). Moa comes from a home with two parents who worked as journalists and authors, and print books were always very prevalent in their home, covering the walls and even keeping stacks of books on the floor. Her home environment was important to her and still today she wanted to hold tight to that part of her childhood.

However, even other respondents shared their opinion, that print was something they always had used and had always liked the format and were therefore not interested in changing. Karin explains that as a child she spent a lot of time at the local library, and even today the smell and feel of books calms her down. Of the Japanese respondents, both Hiromi and Ogawa had experiences which resembled those Karin had, with the smell and feel of books from their childhood being important and how it had shaped their thoughts on books.

I found this generalization to be true.

*Generalization: Late adopters have less interest in technology*

That e-books are uncomfortable to read were something several respondents could agree on. Kenzaburo has had to read e-books a couple of times because of his studies, and even though he does not find it difficult, he has yet to have a good experience while reading e-books.

I have read electric<sup>1</sup> books, but it was not comfortable. I do not know for young people's opinion, but for 63 years old man, I could not find any merit in electronic books, except copy and paste easiness. (Kenzaburo)

August's answer resembled Kenzaburo's thoughts about comfort and disinterest in e-books. Although he does read newspapers on his computer, he prefers print but accepts that sometimes he is unable to get the print version.

It is often a matter of the overview, which can never be the same in a computer. I also do not think it would feel as good to read on a tablet, when you are on your back reading, as I often do. The light from the computer screen often makes it much harder to read. (August)

For Moa, she feels she does not have the skills needed for e-books. She has tried downloading an e-book for her job, but never came further than that.

I have downloaded an e-book to know how it is done, but it does not interest me to read in this new way. A reason could be that I am not technically interested at all and do not have the technical equipment needed to try it. (Moa)

I found this generalization to be true.

### **6.3 Perception of the e-book**

While we never talked specifically about how they perceived the e-book, as they talked about the e-book in relation to other texts it was possible to see how they perceived it. Although almost all respondents said they read online on their computer or on their smartphone, whether it be newspapers, magazines, the Bible or manga, this was not an activity they found comfortable with a book. Therefore, while an e-book could have the same text as its print version, it was still seen as something different. Mostly, the e-book was not seen as a real book. They compared it to a print book where you can feel the papers and smell the ink, something most respondents deemed important for it to be classified as a 'book'.

Most of the respondents never really thought about e-books, so they had a hard time defining what they were. The most common definition was that it was a digital book, that the text from a print book was available online. They also put e-books in a different category from all other texts they would read. Three out of five Japanese respondents stated they read e-manga on their smartphones, but they did not see this as e-books, and barely as e-reading. Hiromi read a lot of different genres, fiction and non-fiction. She stated she did not read books on her smartphone or her computer at all. However, after talking for a while I found that although she said that she read a lot of manga, and all her reading is in print

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<sup>1</sup> A written error by the participant. Should say 'electronic books' or 'e-books'.

format, she realised that she sometimes read manga on her smartphone if she was unable to attain the print format. Manga was first seen as a type of print book, but when she realised that she had read e-manga, she changed her definition of the book and excluded manga from it. She still was firm in that she did not read books on her smartphone or computer, although she changed the definition to fit her narrative.

Kenzaburo used different wordings when talking about either e-books or print books. When he talked about the paper formats, he would always use the word book, while when he talked about something he read or found online he said texts or files. “If the paper books were not available, I had to print out the files of the thesis.” (Kenzaburo)

#### **6.4 The perceived attributes of e-books according to the respondents**

##### *Relative advantage*

Many of the respondents could come up with several reasons for e-books being more advantageous than print books, just not for them. Sofie describes this very well when she first talks about the importance of the feel of the book and how the e-book can never feel as good as the print, but then when we started discussing how e-books can be beneficial she was able to come up with many reasons that e-books are more advantageous. For example, she talked about how easy it is to use, and that everything can be done from your home. She finishes by saying “so, yes, maybe there are more pros with digital reading, but even so I want to use a paper book” (Sofie). For her, it did not matter that e-books could offer things that her print book could not as what was most important to her was the reading experience.

One of the respondents that did not see many advantages with e-books at all was August. He felt the overview of the e-book could never be the same, and reading on a computer or a smartphones did not sound comfortable to him. He also talked about different studies he had read that discussed how different reading affects people differently, and that in a world where we trust technology more we in turn become more closed off, and that this will have a negative effect for the future of the democratic society.

The Japanese respondents saw some advantages with e-reading, although not specifically e-books. As all but one liked to read manga, they had a more positive look on e-reading. They explained that manga in Japan often do not have that much text, and you can read one comic book much fast than a normal fiction book, as well as it being easier to read for a shorter period of time, whereas when they read fiction they wanted to read for a longer period of time. Three of the respondents said that they could read manga on their smartphones sometimes as it would be too expensive to buy manga all the time. They had installed apps with manga they could read for free on their smartphones.

I found that although there are many good qualities to e-books, the most important quality according to the respondents was the reading experience. Even though e-books could offer much, as the reading experience might lessen, no other advantage could make up for it.

### *Compatibility*

For the respondents, print books had shaped their childhood, and were able to give them something that they could not see e-books replacing. As Rogers (2003) writes, “old ideas are the main mental tools that individuals utilize to assess new ideas and give them meaning. Individuals cannot deal with an innovation except on the basis of the familiar” (Rogers, 2003, p. 243). I found this to be true to how the respondents talked about books and reading in general. As mentioned with August at the end of section 6.2, he rejected devices for e-reading because they might irritate his eyes, without even thinking about how this could also be true for print books if read in the wrong light. He trusted older concepts of reading more than newer ones.

For the respondents, print books were important as they could make them feel calm, it was easier to concentrate, and it was a part of their lifestyles. Almost all the respondents bought books instead of borrowing from a friend or loaning a book from the library, and they went to physical bookstores to find new books to read and just peruse among the books. If they read e-books, they would not just have to give up the reading experience when reading a print book, but how they found and bought books would also change completely. This was prevalent with Ogawa who would go to a bookstore as often as she could, at least once a week. Even though she often would buy books, it was also something she enjoyed, just being in the bookstore.

Many of the Swedish respondents bought second-hand books as well. For them this was great because they could find books that they would not find in a regular bookstore, as well as it being better for the environment.

I found that although e-reading in general is compatible with the respondents' lifestyles, such as reading shorter articles from a newspaper or reading a comic, there were more to reading print books than just the reading experience.

### *Complexity*

None of the respondents said they thought e-books sounded difficult at all. All but one were used to using their smart devices as well as their computers on a weekly or even daily basis, so there was never any question about e-books being difficult. Moa was the only one who said she did not have much knowledge about technology, but even she had without any problems been able to download an e-book and test it out.

I found complexity not to be an issue for whether late adopters adopt or reject e-books.

### *Trialability*

Although all participants had downloaded an e-book at least once, only one had read an e-book from beginning to end. There was almost no knowledge about how and where to find e-books. Several of the respondents admitted to their awareness level of e-books not being very high. Sofie said that “I have way too little knowledge about digital formats, so it is very difficult to say what kind of changes or improvements are needed” (Sofie). August had found different newspapers online that he thought was adequate for extra information about the topics he was interested in, and he had spent time finding the newspapers that he felt was good enough. When he talked about books, as he said he mostly bought or borrowed books from friends and family, he did not know how his local library worked and how easy it was to borrow either audiobooks or e-books there. “it’s many years since I checked”, he stated.

I found that there needs to be a general interest in e-books before trialability comes into question.

### *Observability*

Most of the respondents said their reading was something they seldom shared with others. They might want to talk about specific parts if they read something very interesting, but mostly they did not talk about reading. Hiromi said her friends “often read magazines, like magazines about fashion and fortune telling (palm reading, blood type etc.). I have not seen them read a lot of novels” (Hiromi). While they would talk about other things, reading would seldom be a topic they talked about. Kenzaburo and Sayaka had similar experiences. While they did know that their family members read sometimes, they also rarely talked about reading with anyone outside of their families. For Ogawa, she was the only one of the Japanese respondents that would try to get her friends and family involved in reading and talking about what they read the most. Together with John, they were the ones that would read whenever and wherever they had a minute to spare, while many of the other respondents mostly read at home by themselves.

Ogawa was often inspired to read by celebrities or TV personalities when they would mention books that they enjoyed. She had never seen anyone talk about e-books though. Two of the Swedish respondents, Sofie and Karin, had the same mentality that they would choose a lot of their books based on what they read in magazines or saw someone promote on TV. Moa had a completely different opinion. Instead of choosing what was popular and many people recommended, she’d rather read about topics that really interested her. She would completely dive into that topic. It could have been presented to her from a friend that she trusted, or she stumbled over something and wanted to learn more about it. John

was the only one that said he mostly picked out what to read on random and did not listen as much to what others recommended. Moa and August also belonged to book clubs where they could talk about what they had read, and get recommendations.

I found that there was little observability of e-books and reading in general among the respondents. Many did have specific friends or others they trusted and would be more inclined to take book recommendations from. However, there was a difference between the Swedish and Japanese respondents here. Even though none of the respondents would discuss or share their reading to a greater degree with other people, the Swedish respondents were more inclined to do so than the Japanese respondents who mostly talked to their family members about reading, if they discussed books and reading at all. To summarise, the importance of observability in relation to reading is related to where it is coming from.

### **6.5 The future of print books and e-books according to the respondents**

When the respondents thought about the future, they all shared the same opinion that e-books will mostly likely continue to grow. How this would affect print books and their own reading, that was not as obvious. Some of the respondents could accept that they would probably have to read more e-books in the future. Sayaka and Kawakami, as they already read manga on their smartphones, said they might start reading e-books as well if it was possible to get them for free. Kawakami said she thought that if more people would start reading e-books, they would probably use their smart devices and not a specific e-reader.

Hiromi also believed that e-books would increase more the coming years. As she had started to see a change at her school where more students use their computers for information instead of books, this would, according to her, probably continue increasing. For Hiromi, this was a sign of how reading would change. For her own part, she did not believe her reading preferences would change. If print would be available, she would always choose that first.

Ogawa had more of a worried outlook on the future of reading. Although she thought e-books would grow, she also believed that this change from print to digital media might mean that fewer people total would read books. She had noticed how several bookstores had closed in her neighbourhood and how friends and co-workers instead of reading used their smartphones for social media and games. Similarly, Kenzaburo had noticed that less people are buying and reading books, but he was uncertain about the effect this would have on reading in general. His way of reading would probably not change that much, and he did not think e-books would grow very fast as he had seen very little change in how people read, and almost no one talking about e-reading.

John hoped that in the future there would be room for more non-digital spaces as he already could see a big need for it. He also had hope that even though e-

books would continue to grow, Swedish people would probably continue to prefer print books. Beside this, he hoped that the government would continue to make sure there are working libraries as he believed that is where most people will get their books in the future, whether they are in print or digital. As we are going toward a society where people value minimalism more, owning books might not be of as much importance. Still, holding a print book and not an e-book will probably continue to be a preference for most people, and as such libraries will continue to be important.

Sofie believed, just as the other respondents, that digital reading will increase a lot more in the future, but she was pessimistic about it.

My big fear is that digital formats would take over so much in the future that it would not be any paper books to borrow at the library. For me, as it is right now, that would mean if books disappear, I would not continue to read... but you never know. (Sofie)

August thought that there is a big chance that when digital reading takes over it will change how people read. Deep reading will probably worsen, something he backs up with scientific articles he has read about how different reading formats affects the reader. He also believed it might make people less aware of what exists outside of their bubble. When people read online, they only look at what they are interested in, and other information or opinions have a harder time getting into that bubble, according to him. Print books will probably still exist for some time, but newspapers will most likely only have a digital format, and he is not happy about when that time comes. He believed this development with e-books is not because of a need from readers, but that publishers and the IT world have decided that is how it should be.

Moa was divided in her feelings about the future of the e-book. She had accepted that e-books will increase more, but she was also certain that specific genres will continue to be preferred in its print format, and therefore print will never disappear completely. Genres she believed will stay in print format is the picture book, young adult novels as well as popular fiction for adults.

Karin thought that since Swedish people are very conservative when it comes to reading, e-reading will grow at a slow pace. She had seen a change in how the younger generations read, and that they are not good at source criticism. The older generation have a lot of knowledge that needs to be passed on to the younger generation, but maybe more people need to accept e-reading to a bigger degree before they can pass it on to the younger generation. The older generation might have to lead the way, but as stated, they first need to catch up to the younger generation in technology before this can happen.

## 7.0 Discussion

The general feeling after the interviews was that all respondents had decided not to adopt e-books based on two reasons. First, they all had strong ties connected to the print books that made them feel it was important to keep to that format. Second, it was not a matter of both, but either or, and by choosing the e-book instead of a print book it might mean that they would involuntarily be part of the decline of print books. However, their reasons mostly seemed to rest on an uncertainty in how e-books would change both their personal lives but also places such as bookstores.

*Print culture is important for Swedish and Japanese readers.*

To be able to hold, feel and smell a book is something that is highly regarded among readers from Sweden and Japan. While it might be even more so for late adopters, it is not uncommon to hear from those who read e-books. I found in several studies that although people might have a positive attitude toward e-books, the e-book experience is seen as less than the print book experience in terms of the emotions it evokes, deep reading and immersion into the book. Further, it is possible to display a print book, and there is a badge of honour in the observability that comes with print books. An e-book can never have those qualities and in turn people are less willing to pay for an e-book (Bergström et al., 2017). Kenzaburo and August's strong opinions on comfortability relates to the research on how the reading experience changes depending on the reading format and reading device (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009; Mangen, 2008; Mangen, 2016).

Although reading was something the respondents mostly did by and for themselves, they connected print books with physical bookstores, second-hand stores, and the library. For them, there were a lot of emotions connected to how they found their books; it was more than the reading experience that was important. Although there are not many studies that can back up this find, Bergström and Höglund, for example, found in their research from 2014 that there was a weak correlation between library visits and reading e-books. In later research, they found that although library visits do not impact if an individual read e-books, it is an important factor for reading print books (Bergström & Höglund, 2018).

The Swedish and Japanese populations are adept technology users. In the Swedish publication by Mediebarometern from 2019, over 80 percent of the Swedish population owns a smartphone or a personal computer, and 71 percent uses social media daily (Ohlsson, 2019). In Japan, NHK has since 1960 every five years been conducting a survey called the NHK Japanese Time Use Survey. It monitors how Japanese citizens use media in their daily lives. The latest study was done in 2018 and it showed that smartphones are heavily used when people are commuting to and from their work or school. Smartphones have become an integral part of the lives of especially young people who use it for social media,

email, and videos among other things (Yoshifuji, Watanabe & Hayashida, 2019). All but one respondent were avid smartphone and internet users, the Japanese respondents would read e-manga, and the Swedish respondents read e-newspapers and e-magazines. While smartphones were used for e-reading, it did not automatically make the respondents more interested in reading e-books. This is similar to Lee's (2013) findings that "there is not much variation among people of different innovativeness concerning the usefulness of e-books in a mobile environment" (Lee, 2013, p. 173). Even though technology knowledge and interests are important for the adoption of innovations, this does not seem to be one of the main reasons why Swedish and Japanese people not adopt e-books. They are clearly used to reading newspapers, magazines and manga on their smartphones, as well as performing many other tasks on them. The response from the respondents also relate to the results from Jung et al. (2012) who could not find any correlation between general mass media usage and e-book reader awareness, interest or intention to use.

*There is a fear in Sweden and in Japan of the uncertainty e-books bring.*

While all respondents were sure that e-books would continue to grow, there were a wondering and a worry about what would happen as they do. Many of them worried that e-books would be the reason that the print book as well the newspaper would disappear. There would no longer be a need for print books. However, recent research has found the opposite, that e-books complement print books instead of replacing them (Bergström & Höglund, 2018). Still, the uncertainties that the respondents had seem to be echoed in other sectors as well.

Although e-books are not a new phenomenon but have been around for over 20 years, albeit gaining traction among the general public for around 10 years, there is still a lot of uncertainty about e-books and how they will affect the world. Even though a more positive attitude can be seen among all sectors, there is still a wish that someone else will take the lead. There is a belief from many Japanese publishers that for a growth in e-book sales there need to be an Amazon-type solution, a bigger organization that is able to push for e-books without worrying about sales. As no organization has taken that role in Japan, publishers and authors are not as willing to invest in developing e-books (Parry & Kawakami, 2017) Swedish publishers have shown the same sentiment, a wish for a bigger retailer such as Amazon that can push e-books instead of them (Bergström et al., 2017).

Japanese publishers were forced to make manga available online because of consumer demand. There was a surge of illegal copies being uploaded online, and to stop or at least halter them publishers needed to provide a legal option that they had more control over. Publishers initial reasons to make digital versions of their content was not because of a belief in that e-books would be positive for them, but to regain a control over what they were losing (Kamei-Dyche, 2017). Similarly, Swedish publishers regard e-book production as being vulnerable to

online theft and do not appreciate the existing means of protection (Bergström et al., 2017). Moreover, even though almost every library in Sweden can offer e-books, it is user demand that have made libraries put more effort on e-books, as long as they do not compete with print books (Wallin, 2019).

Thus, readers seem to mirror the opinions publishers, authors, and libraries have about the uncertainties of e-books. In addition to a fear of how e-books will change their reading habits and social systems, research by Singh and Matsui (2018) found that trust was an important factor for adoption of e-books. While this thesis did not find any specific evidence of how important trust was for adoption, as the respondents had yet to adopt e-books, the uncertainties may relate to trust issues. For instance, a lack of trust in comfortability, relative advantage, and compatibility with their lifestyles. For a late adopter, the uncertainty and resistance toward e-books need to be understood in order to reduce their resistance of adoption before any other advantages become relevant. “Finding out the demographic and psychographic characteristics of these groups, as well as key opinion leaders, will help your marketing efforts and ease the diffusion of e-books” (Raynard, 2017, p. 85).

*Late adopters have very similar opinions.*

One difference between the Swedish and Japanese respondents was that the Swedish respondents talked about e-newspapers and audiobooks in relation to the e-book while the Japanese respondents instead talked about manga. Culture seemed to matter to some degree of what was considered an e-book. Still, most of their thoughts and opinions about reading were echoed on both sides. However, one could also argue that these differences are what make the respondents and countries similar as the e-book is second to some other kind of digital book. Another difference was the concept of reading as a solo activity. While most respondents preferred to read by themselves in their homes, the Swedish respondents were more inclined to discuss their reading with people outside of their immediate friend group. The Japanese respondents mostly talked to their inner circle, namely their family and closer friends.

Sweden and Japan do not share the same history of neither print nor e-books. Still, their late adopters' thoughts about print books and e-books are related. Their opinions of e-books did not differ based on their culture. The older respondents had a more dogmatic view on reading than the younger respondents, as was noticeable among the Swedish and Japanese respondents. The older respondents all stated the importance of the print book, how it had been important for their reading and that it had a significance in their society that e-books could never achieve. Earlier research has also found reading that e-books are more common among the younger generations (Bergström & Höglund, 2017; Kurata et al., 2017).

In Sweden, the more popular books are being digitized, with the smaller genres having a low chance of being made into an e-book. In Japan, as authors have control over their e-books and popular authors are not releasing their books as e-books in Japanese, it is other fiction that is digitized. Even though the selection of e-books differed in Sweden and Japan, this did not seem to be of importance for the respondents' adoption or rejection of e-books. As most respondents had little to no knowledge about the e-book selection in their country, they were unable to have an opinion on the e-book selection.

#### *The future of e-books*

As reading is something most people do by themselves, maybe e-book reading does not need exposure to grow. There has not been much exposure for e-books in Sweden and Japan, but still the e-book market has increased in the last years. The respondents will probably take longer to adopt e-books, but they had all resigned to the idea that e-books will become a bigger part of the book market. Even though none of the respondents wanted to use e-books, some had found peace with the thought that they would probably use e-books more in the future, for studies and because of accessibility. In some areas, such as reading for studies or for work, e-reading did not seem very far away. For leisure reading, they were more adamant that they would keep to print books.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

### **8.1 Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to explore the opinions of late adopters of e-books in Sweden and Japan through four research questions. This was done with the use of qualitative semi-structured interviews with five Swedish and five Japanese readers who did not read e-books.

Through the interviews, this thesis saw that the main characteristics of readers who are late adopters of e-books were a scepticism to e-books and how e-books could be advantageous to them. They were also uninterested in technology, at least for reading books. Finally, they based much of their standpoints on their relationship to print books. They had strong bonds to print books that were mostly rooted in their childhoods.

As the respondents did not read e-books, they found it difficult to define them. They perceived e-books to be uncomfortable, especially if they would read for longer periods of time, which was something they all preferred to do when reading. Together with a lack of attributes they associated with reading, such as the smell and feel of a print book, they hesitated to see e-books as “real” books. This also made it difficult for them to imagine the future of e-books and reading, even though they all shared the same opinion that e-books would continue to grow.

Notably, this thesis found that for late adopters of e-books, the most important factors for their preferred reading format seemed to be the reading experience, and strong feelings for the print book rooted in their upbringing. However, this was tied together with an uncertainty about how e-book reading would change their familiar patterns such as reading habits, libraries, bookstores and deep reading. From the analysis it became obvious that for the late adopter it is important to remove their uncertainties about e-books before they feel comfortable enough to adopt. As long as the uncertainties are stronger, adoption becomes near impossible. Although, it was clear that some respondents were closer to adopting e-books than others. Further, even though the respondents were not very interested in reading e-books, they did not find them to be complex.

As for the differences between the respondents there were very few that separated the Swedish and Japanese respondents. There were two clear difference. First, how they defined e-reading differed as the Japanese respondents would read e-manga and the Swedish respondents would read e-newspapers and e-magazines. Although, what they included when talking about e-books seemed to stem more from dialectical differences in their cultures than anything else. Second, the Swedish respondents would discuss books and reading with more people than the Japanese respondents who mostly talked about reading with their closest family members.

This thesis found that late adopters in Sweden and Japan behave very similar, although their cultures and situations look very different. While this is a smaller study, and more research of different adopter categories need to be made on a larger scale to understand how different adopters behave and think, it could to some degree show what a late adopter values when deciding to adopt or reject innovations such as e-books.

## **8.2 Further Research**

While researching similarities and differences between Sweden's and Japan's history with e-books, there were many topics that came up that would be interesting to delve deeper into.

As my thesis looked at the late adopters of e-books, it would be interesting to examine readers from Sweden and Japan who instead are innovators when it comes to e-books, to see if there are more similarities between different readers.

My research led me to look at all different aspects of diffusion of innovations, and from that I could see that there is very little studies or information at all about communication channels and e-books. Wilson and Maceviciute (2016) found from their study that Swedish publishers prefer to sell through their own websites instead of going through other channels (2016). This gives them more control over their books. As publishers mostly focus on print books, the drive to promote and advertise their e-books is very small. One smaller publisher stated in Books on Screen (2017) that

Sweden is small and there is a very small group of media who set the direction of fashion and behaviour and thinking. I have never seen this group promoting e-books in any way. If they start doing this, the demand could be created very quickly. So far, I have not seen an advertisement of a single e-book on the TV, or a celebrity author holding an iPad and showing: look this is my new e-book. (Bergström et al., 2017, p. 100)

It would be very interesting to look closer at why e-books are not being advertised as much as they could, but also look at how they are being advertised and what reach it does have.

Another interesting thing to research further is how important a bigger corporation such as Amazon is for the e-book diffusion. In both Japan and Sweden, there is a belief from publishers that for a bigger growth in e-book sales there need to be an Amazon-type solution, a bigger organization that is able to push for e-books without worrying about sales (Parry & Kawakami, 2017; Wallin, 2019).

Lastly, as the corona virus, or covid 19, has taken a hold of the world, people are forced to stay in their homes and find entertainment in different ways from what they are used to. Subscriptions services are seeing an increase in subscribers these days (Svenska Dagbladet, 2020). It would be interesting to look back at this period when the world has gone back to normal and see if we will see a decrease in users of e-books and audiobooks, but even more interesting would be to see what this will do for the future and diffusion of e-books.

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## **Appendix – Interview Guide**

*As the questions were semi-structured, they differed somewhat from person to person. All questions below were not asked to all respondents as they might have answered one question together with another question. However, all five different areas after introduction were asked to all respondents even if there were some differences in the questions.*

### **Introduction of master thesis**

I begin by introducing my master thesis, its aim, as well as what I need from my respondents. Their interviews will be confidential. Therefore, I will not use their real names. If they change their mind about participating, they can contact me and ask that I remove their content.

### **General discussion about reading habits**

- Tell me a little about yourself (age, occupation)
- What does your reading habits look like?
- What formats have you tried when reading?

### **Finding books to read**

- How do you decide on what books to read?
- Do you buy or loan books?
- Do you ever use the internet to find books?

### **E-books versus print books**

- What are your thoughts on e-books?
- How much do you know about e-books?
- Have you ever tried reading an e-book?
- What positive aspects can you see about e-books?
- Do you read something using your smart device or computer?

### **How they talk about books with peers**

- Do you know if your friends or family read books as well?
- If yes, what do they read? Do you talk about reading with them?
- If no, what do they do instead?
- Do you have a special group or community where you can talk about reading?
- Would you say reading is something you do by yourself or share with others?
- Do you know if others around you (friends and family) read using other formats than printed books?

### **The future of reading and e-books**

- What are your thoughts on how e-books are growing in your country?
- Have you seen a change in how people around you are reading?