



Understanding collaborative consumption: Test of a theoretical model



Stuart J. Barnes^{a,*}, Jan Mattsson^b

^a Department of Management, King's College London, Franklin-Wilkins Building, 150 Stamford Street, London SE1 9NH, United Kingdom

^b Department of Business and Society, Roskilde University, PO Box 260, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 September 2015

Received in revised form 20 February 2017

Accepted 26 February 2017

Available online 6 March 2017

Keywords:

Collaborative consumption

PLS-PM

TRA

Car sharing

Consumer behavior

ABSTRACT

Collaborative consumption websites have enabled consumers to focus on shared access to products rather than owning them. This study aims at developing a comprehensive theoretical model to explain consumer outcomes for collaborative consumption. It develops and tests a structural equation model using partial least squares path modelling and survey data collected from a car-sharing website. The results suggest that consumer intentions to rent are driven primarily by perceived economic, environmental and social benefits through the mediator of perceived usefulness, and enjoyment, in turn driven by sense of belonging to the sharing community. Interestingly, social influence did not play a role. When making word-of-mouth recommendations, in addition to these factors, consumers also take website trust into account, underpinned by the structural assurances of the website. The paper rounds off further implications of the research for theory and practice.

© 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Collaborative consumption enables the sharing of real-world assets and resources (Botsman and Rogers, 2011), typically through websites with peer-to-peer marketplaces where unused space, goods, skills, money, or services can be exchanged. Time magazine has proposed collaborative consumption as one of the “10 ideas that will change the world” (Walsh, 2011). However, there is currently little empirical evidence regarding the future growth of collaborative consumption and its likely economic impact on incumbent industries. The few available studies in the hotel sector have indicated a powerful wind of change. Zervas et al. (2015) demonstrated that AirBnB had claimed 8–10% of revenues in the hotel sector in Austin, Texas, and exerted downward pressure on prices. In support, a report by HVS found that in the year to July 2013, AirBnB had 416,000 guests staying in New York, equivalent to one million lost room nights for city hotels (Kurtz, 2014). Not surprisingly, there is now intense commercial interest regarding the impact of the sharing economy upon industry sectors—and whether it represents a disruptive shift (Christensen, 2003). In the car industry alone, traditional car rental services, manufacturers, distributors, dealers and suppliers are likely to experience significant impact from collaborative consumption, as are supporting services in car financing, insurance, taxation, servicing, cleaning, retailing of sundries, and petrol supply and retail.

Belk (2014a) defines collaborative consumption as “people coordinating the acquisition or distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation.” Access-based consumption refers to “transactions that

can be market mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place” (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012, p. 881); such consumption is sometimes considered as pseudo-sharing when there are profit motives, a lack of feelings of community, and expectations of reciprocity (Belk, 2014b). The rapid expansion of websites aimed at collaborative consumption has been said to be leading the way for a “sharing economy” (Buczynski, 2013; Gansky, 2010; Griffiths, 2013; Sacks, 2011) where individuals are mainly interested in access to rather than owning products (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Chen, 2009; Rifkin, 2000). Fremstad (2014) calculates that the average US household spends \$9090 per annum on shareable goods, and that there is a positive inclination to share: 52% of Americans have rented, borrowed or leased items that are typically owned, whilst 83% would do so if this was stress-free (Wise, 2013). PwC (2015) predict that five key sharing sectors (car sharing, accommodation, finance, music video streaming, and staffing) will soar in global revenues from \$15 billion in 2013 to \$335 billion by 2025.

The drivers for collaborative consumption websites are broad and wide-ranging, including those that are political, economic, environmental and social. As the global economy continues to reel after the effects of the financial crisis, many are beginning to question the prevailing Western political and economic models. These models appear to have created economic disparity and division in society, consumerism and excessive use of resources that have contributed to current and future environmental problems (Agyeman et al., 2013; Botsman and Rogers, 2011). Such a trajectory for development is not sustainable, especially as developing nations begin to prosper and emulate this pattern of economic activity (Johnson, 2008). This has led some to question whether it is actually necessary for consumers to buy and own so many assets, especially during a time of economic difficulty, or whether a new model in which people share what they have will contribute to better resource

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: stuart.barnes@kcl.ac.uk (S.J. Barnes), mattsson@ruc.dk (J. Mattsson).

efficiency, social benefit and reduced environmental pollution. Thus, unifying these drivers, the concept of sustainable consumption has risen in perceived significance, defined as “consumption that simultaneously optimizes the environmental, social, and economic consequences of acquisition, use and disposition in order to meet the needs of both current and future generations” (Phipps et al., 2013: p. 1227).

A key factor that both enables and drives collaborative consumption is information technology (John, 2013a). A number of technological movements have been considered as laying the foundations for the current wave of resource sharing activities on the Web, including the open source movement, typically motivated by altruism, recognition and community sharing and improvement (Benkler, 2011) and peer-to-peer file sharing (Giesler, 2006). More recently, online social networking has provided an unprecedented new platform for supporting large-scale resource sharing. Indeed, the growth of social networking is notable as one of the most significant technological trends in the last decade, with 2.34 billion users in 2016, nearly a third of the world's population (Statista, 2016). Initial research focusing on the economic benefits derived from social commerce suggests that their value to buyers and sellers is derived from both the individual and overall characteristics of the social network involved (Stephen and Toubia, 2010). Thus, we would expect the social network to play an important role in online collaborative consumption decisions.

Collaborative consumption can also have negative impacts and has received recent criticism for providing communications platforms with little value-added service and notable a lack of ethics and appropriate government regulation (Slee, 2015). For example, Airbnb has been criticized by virtue of the fact that its business model has led to long-term housing becoming less affordable by the restriction of supply as a result of short-term lettings, and the likelihood that some rentals are illegal and not properly regulated. Indeed, evidence suggests that rental increases of 11% in New York severely outstripped median income rises of 2% from 2005 to 2012 (Ellen and Karfunkel, 2016). Uber has been criticized in a similar way, as a taxi service, rather than an ecological form of car sharing, that exploits workers with long hours and poor pay.

Evidence also suggests that some consumers are resistant to sharing. For example, some products may not be suitable for sharing amongst consumers due to the deep level of emotional attachment associated with them, such as Harley Davidson motorcycles (Catulli et al., 2016). Similarly, consumers may be reticent to share due to the desire for exclusivity and control, for example to enable personalization of products (Catulli et al., 2016). Catulli et al. (2017) in their study of product service systems (another name for access-based consumption) find that certain consumers who prize functional value, such as nomadic consumers, may be more amenable to sharing.

The most active market for collaborative consumption is car sharing, an area of sharing with potentially high economic and environmental benefits. According to research by Fremstad (2014), the largest gains from collaborative consumption will in fact be in car-sharing, which was calculated to be of the highest economic cost and value to households in the US. The environmental benefits of car sharing are also extremely significant. According to Berners-Lee (2010), a car produces approximately 720 kg of CO₂ per £1000 (\$1500) spent on buying it: for example, running a 1.4 TSI S Volkswagen Golf for 40,000 miles would produce 7.9 t of CO₂, but manufacturing it would produce 14 t of CO₂. Indeed, there is not a need to build or run as many cars if they are shared: cars are parked 95% of the time and therefore represent a significant untapped resource (Shoup, 2005).

Collaborative consumption through online channels is not well understood. The limited amount of research and anecdotal evidence suggests that the purchase process is being redefined and that individual motivations are likely to be quite different to previous social sharing initiatives such as open source software (Benkler, 2011), including, for example, possible new economic and environmental drivers (Hamari et al., 2015; Moelmann, 2015). However, as yet, no model exists to

systematically explain a consumer's engagement in online collaborative consumption and its key conative outcomes. The key aims of this paper are to explain consumer engagement in the collaborative consumption context and to draw practical implications from the empirical results. The research question for the study is: what factors explain a consumer's intentions to share and to recommend in the online collaborative consumption context?

This paper contributes to the emergent literature on the sharing economy, as well as that on consumer behavior, by providing a comprehensive model to explain a consumer's intention to share and to recommend in the collaborative consumption context. The theoretical foundation of the paper is the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), extended to capture key social and attitudinal factors in the online sharing environment from the literature on social commerce plus relevant factors from sustainable consumption, social sharing and Web 2.0. The findings of our research have significant implications for managers and developers of collaborative consumption websites.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next two sections we describe both the underlying theory for our study and a research model for investigation of the factors determining consumer behavior (intention to act and to recommend) in collaborative consumption respectively. This is followed by sections explaining the methodology for the research and the results of testing the research model via a car sharing website. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study for theory, a consideration of its value to practice, and some notes on the possible limitations of the study and directions for further research.

2. Theory background

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) is an important model for explaining rational human behavior in a plethora of contexts. The model has its roots in social psychology and the work of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). It is a predictive model that seeks to examine the relationship between attitudes and behavior based on “principles of compatibility” and “behavioral intentions”. TRA is particularly appropriate in contexts in which an individual has volitional control. Fig. 1 shows the basic theoretical model.

The decisions of the individual in TRA are captured by behavioral intentions, defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) as “people's expectancies about their own behavior in a given setting” (p.288) and operationalized as the likelihood of intended actions, e.g. a person's intention to rent a certain product, say a particular room on Airbnb. This measure is generally operationalized in research as a common sense notion of intentions measuring whether an agent has formulated a plan to act (Bagozzi et al., 2000). An individual's intentions to act determine actual behavior, e.g. the actual renting of a room on Airbnb, although this relationship weakens if a significant period of time intervenes and behavior becomes less connected with the intentions that had been formed. TRA posits that under the right conditions, behavioral intentions will approximate actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975): people tend to do what they intend to do. Indeed, a significant body of research has shown that the relationship between intentions and behavior is extremely strong (Sheppard et al., 1988). Thus, for both theoretical and practical reasons, the majority of academic research has tended to focus on behavioral intentions rather than behavior the outcome variable (i.e. omitting the behavior variable)—creating a more parsimonious model and enabling testing and measurement via snapshot survey.

Intentions to act in TRA are determined by two factors: (1) attitude towards the behavior; and (2) subjective norms. Attitude refers to the degree to which an individual has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a behavior in question, resulting from the positive or negative behavioral beliefs that are held about undertaking a particular behavior weighted by the perceived evaluation of associated outcomes from such behavior. For example, an individual's attitude towards the rental

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5037052>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5037052>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)