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To earn is not enough: A means-end analysis to uncover peer-providers' participation motives in peer-to-peer carsharing☆

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the carsharing domain is growing, and new service offerings are arising. Peer-to-peer carsharing, facilitating car rental between private individuals, has attracted attention from entrepreneurs and researchers alike. Irrespective of this trend studies on carsharing have been predominantly focusing on identifying users' consumption motives in business-to-consumer contexts. Consequently, insights on consumers' motivational drivers to offer peer-to-peer carsharing services remain scarce. By conducting a series of laddering interviews with German peer-providers, we add to extant literature by uncovering four overarching motivational patterns that drive consumers' decision to participate as providers in peer-to-peer carsharing: economic interest ("earn"), quality of life ("enjoy"), helping others ("enrich"), and sustainability ("enhance"). Although self-centered motives of economic interest and quality of life are the dominating participation motives, peer-providers also seem to be intrigued by the possibility of helping others in terms of providing mobility and thereby enabling the creation of lasting memories. Paradoxically to previous assumptions regarding participation in sharing activities, sustainability is not a main participation motive for most peer-providers but is rather seen as an indirect consequence of participation.

1. Introduction

At the 2015 Consumer Electronics Show, Ford's CEO Mark Fields forecasted that in the future, globally, 34% of people will want to rent their vehicle to others (Newcomb, 2015). Various vehicle manufacturers have also taken notice of this trend. Recently, BMW, Opel, and Ford announced plans to enter the peer-to-peer (P2P) carsharing market by building a marketplace that allows car owners to rent their vehicles to others and car-renters to find the vehicles that they require (Sharman, 2015).

The focal question for managers of P2P carsharing networks, mobility entrepreneurs, and academia alike is hence not only what drives consumers to rent cars but also what motivates consumers to lend their cars. Finding an answer to this issue seems of vital importance as P2P carsharing networks have no own fleet of vehicles, but rely on vehicle owners to supply their cars (Dill et al., 2014, 2016). Nevertheless, existing research merely explores users of business-to-consumer (B2C) carsharing (e.g., Car2Go, Zipcar) (e.g., Burkhardt and Millard-Ball, 2006; Schaefers, 2013). With a notable exception of research conducted by Dill et al. (2014, 2016), who investigated characteristics of participants and corresponding effects on mobility choices, insights into the providers of P2P carsharing remain scarce. This is surprising given calls for further investigation of the sharing economy in general (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Barnes and Mattsson, 2016; Lamberton and Rose, 2012; Martin, 2016), and P2P carsharing in particular (Ballus-Armet et al., 2014; Dill et al., 2014, 2016; Shaheen et al., 2012). More precisely, literature emphasizes that cars carry various psychosocial benefits and symbolic meanings (Steg, 2005). Cars provide convenience, flexibility, independence, and reliability (Steg et al., 2001) and are part of the extended self (Belk, 1988). Thus, the question arises as to what motivates consumers to rent out such a valuable asset to others.

Consumers' willingness to lend their cars can be intrinsically and/or extrinsically driven. A study by Collaborative Fund and Startup America (2013) found that consumers lending their cars via a P2P marketplace can earn about USD 9000 annually, suggesting that participation is driven by extrinsic, monetary motives. In line with this, academic research discovered a strong domination of utilitarian motives among users of the sharing economy (e.g., Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton and Rose, 2012). According to utility theory, the intention to participate in sharing schemes is greatest when costs are minimized and benefits are maximized (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007), thus further implying extrinsic motives in the participation decision. Nevertheless, advocates of the sharing economy promote a more idealistic view by highlighting

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the altruistic, prosocial, and environmentally sustainable motives for participation (e.g., Belk, 2010; Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Ozanne and Ozanne, 2011). Therefore, these contradicting views suggest that a study of consumers' participation motives would merit an enhanced understanding of participation in sharing schemes.

To broaden academia's understanding of the P2P carsharing phenomenon, our research sets out to identify the motives of individuals to participate as providers (i.e., peer-providers) in P2P carsharing. In detail, our work offers three contributions to existing research: First, we add to literature on market-mediated sharing services, which has traditionally emphasized business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts by exploring factors influencing (non) users' preferences for sharing usage (Lamberton and Rose, 2012; Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010). Findings from B2C services may, however, not be directly applicable to the P2P case as transactions are made with strangers, involve enhanced asymmetric information, and hence increased economic risks (Ert et al., 2016; Philip et al., 2015; Shaheen et al., 2012). Second, we contribute to a deeper understanding of temporary disposition (Jacoby et al., 1977; Philip et al., 2015). Traditionally, permanent acquisition practices such as ownership and possession have been the central focus of consumer research (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012) because the majority of consumers tends to prefer selling over renting out or loaning their belongings. Yet, insights on consumers' motives to act as peer-providers granting others limited access to their possessions remain limited. Third, our study empirically broadens recent efforts on the framing narrative of the sharing economy (Martin, 2016), as it allows locating P2P carsharing within a wider sharing economy frame ranging from a sustainable to a neoliberal way of consumption.

To explore the P2P carsharing phenomenon with a focus on peer-providers' participation motives, this paper employs means-end chain (MEC) analysis, a qualitative research method suitable for investigating consumers' motivational patterns (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds and Gutman, 1988). The subsequent chapters are structured as follows: Initially, we discuss the current research streams in carsharing. Thereafter, we briefly describe the MEC method, the data collection, and analysis process. Subsequently, research findings will be presented and discussed, followed by implications for academia and entrepreneurs, together with identification of future research areas in the field of P2P carsharing.

2. Research background

2.1. Access-based services

In the past few decades, consumer behavior has shifted dramatically. In the 1980s, Belk (1988) proclaimed “you are what you own”, whereas today, proponents of the sharing economy and researchers blazon “you are what you can access” (Belk, 2014b; Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Popularized by immaterial file sharing services (e.g., Kazaa, Napster), sharing has matured and subsequently entered an era of on-demand sharing of physical products and services (Belk, 2014b). In line with these developments, alternative consumption modes, besides traditional ownership, have emerged (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). These are united under the marquee label “sharing economy”, including consumption practices such as access-based services (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Schaefers et al., 2015b), sharing of intangibles (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007), true sharing (Belk, 2010), and pseudo sharing (Belk, 2014a).

Access-based services, a market-mediated sub-form of the sharing economy, where consumers are willing to pay a price premium for access and subsequent use of an object (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012), have undergone tremendous change. Although initially these services were referred to as non-ownership services (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010; Wittkowski et al., 2013), in recent publications, the term access-based services (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Schaefers et al., 2015a, 2015b) has found more acceptance. Traditionally, manufacturers, retailers, and service companies have provided access-based services such as car rental or apartment rental. Today, an increasing number of consumers are entering the market by sharing and renting their personal possessions (e.g., apartments, cars, or household goods) to others, facilitated via online-based platforms. In a consumer context, this practice is commonly referred to as collaborative consumption (Barnes and Mattsson, 2016; Belk, 2014b; Botsman and Rogers, 2010), including forms of sharing and renting. However, research on collaborative consumption is still in a nascent state (Martin, 2016). While the seminal study by Barnes and Mattsson (2016) investigated societal drivers and barriers of the sharing, insights on motivational drivers of peer-providers to rent out their personal possessions to others in this new form of market exchange are largely absent.

To distinguish collaborative consumption involving sharing of resources from practices involving a monetary transaction fee, we refer to this form of consumer-to-consumer provision of access-based services as collaborative consumption services. A defining characteristic of collaborative consumption services is a triadic relationship between (1) a peer-provider offering assets for rent, designing the offer, handling the transaction, and serving as the legal contractual partner for the peer-user; (2) a peer-user renting assets owned by a peer-provider; and (3) a service enabler providing, managing, and advertising an online marketplace, connecting transaction partners, and in exchange for providing the marketplace, keeping a portion of the rental fee. Other defining features include that the peer-provider is the primary user of the asset, that the asset hand-over is exclusively handled between the peer-user and peer-provider, and that both peer-provider and peer-user may even utilize the asset simultaneously (e.g., apartment rental via AirBnB).

Carsharing is an especially adequate context for the study of collaborative consumption services because it is one of the most researched sharing forms encompassing research conducted in various fields such as consumer behavior (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Schaefers, 2013), transportation research (Cervero et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2010), and market feasibility studies (Hampshire and Gaites, 2011). Moreover, carsharing evolves in both B2C (e.g., Car2go, DriveNow) and P2P (e.g., RelayRides, Tamyca) contexts. B2C carsharing provides customers short-term access to a fleet of shared vehicles and the service provider is responsible for vehicle ownership, maintenance, and any marketing and transaction-related processes. In P2P carsharing, vehicle owners rent their personal vehicles to others for a predefined period of time and usually charge a monetary transaction fee (Dill et al., 2014; Hampshire and Gaites, 2011; Shaheen et al., 2012). In the P2P environment, service-enablers only manage a marketplace in which they connect car owners and car users and do not own a fleet themselves.

Overall, literature on consumers' motivational drivers to participate in sharing has been diverse. For instance, the narrative framing of the sharing economy depicts it as an economic opportunity, a more sustainable form of consumption, a pathway to a decentralized and sustainable economy, or, on the contrary, as creating unregulated marketplaces, which reinforce neoliberalism (Martin, 2016). In view of these manifold perspectives on sharing, our study aims at pinpointing participation motives in P2P carsharing more precisely.

2.2. Usage motives in business-to-consumer carsharing

Existing research on sharing has analyzed consumer motivation to use access-based services in general (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2015; Lamberton and Rose, 2012; Ozanne and Ozanne, 2011) and carsharing in particular.

Generally, utilitarian motives seem to play a major role for explaining the use of access-based services (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Lamberton and Rose, 2012; Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010). In line with this, the importance of economic value and convenience has been underlined in various empirical investigations studying factors that influence (non-)participation in carsharing services of (non)

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